



PRINCIPALS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND  
ATTRIBUTES (KSAs) OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOL LEADERS

A Dissertation Presented to the  
Faculty of the College of Education  
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctorate of Education

by

Robin Williams

December, 2010

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## DEDICATION

To my family, Ronald, Nia, and Morgan, who supported me through this educational endeavor. Without your support, I could not have accomplished this wonderful milestone.

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### Abstract

This study addresses the knowledge, skills, and attributes of success school principals from the perspective of 310 practicing principals from a large metropolitan area in the Gulf Coast region of Southeast Texas. Although the duties and responsibilities of the principal have escalated and intensified in complexity over the years, the expectations of the principal are twofold, to provide instructional leadership, in addition to, managing the day to day functions of the school. Time, social factors, and economic trends have served as catalysts for determining what knowledge, skills, and attributes are necessary for successful school leadership. With the current accountability system created by the No Child Left Behind legislation (2002), principals must be astute in determining educational goals, fiscal constraints, personnel issues, curriculum development, and functional use of time and space. They are required to provide leadership in revamping the school and district. Barth (1990) reported there is a shortage of knowledge concerning the skills that are essential to be a successful school leader; especially since there have been changes in the expectations of the role of principal.

This paper empirically explores the results of over 300 surveyed principals' perceptions of the knowledge, skills, and attributes necessary for successful principals in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) will be used for all data analyses. Descriptive statistics will be reported for all variables. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) will be used to determine if there are statistically significant differences on the survey items by principal and school demographics. The findings for

the current study will be useful for future and practicing administrators, in addition to, institutions who provide principal's certification.



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The first schools in the United States were created in colonial times. The schools were inspired by the influence of the Latin Grammar schools which originated from the British school system. The curriculum consisted mostly of reading and writing so the students could become astute in comprehending the scriptures. The goal of education was to provide enough education so that the students could become clergyman or politicians within their colony (Engelking, 2008). Massachusetts was instrumental in providing a systematic way to educate its' youth. By 1642, Massachusetts passed a formal law mandating parents and masters of apprentices to allow their children to learn the standards of religion and the laws of the commonwealth. The 1642 law was commonly referred to as the Old Deluder Satan Act which mandated schools be formed where 50 or more households existed (Engelking, 2008). As the school became more complex and the duties of the teacher escalated, the concept of the head teacher evolved to take care of the day to day operations of the school. By 1839, Cincinnati, Ohio hired the nation's first school principal. The principal was responsible for monitoring the students' daily attendance as well as enrollment numbers and overseeing the sanitation of the school (Engelking, 2008).

The role of the principal continues to change to meet the needs of the community that it serves. Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) maintain that there are four key factors that influenced the development of the principalship: (a) the brisk advancement of cities during 1850-1900, (b) the categorization of students using graded schools along with the problems encountered in organizing the students and the curriculum, (c) the restructuring

of schools and the merging of departments under a central leader, and (d) the development of “head assistant” to relieve the principal from teaching classes.

Pierce (1935) reported before 1850 the principal participated primarily in clerical duties such as reports, records, and school organization. By the turn of the twentieth century, the essential characteristics of the position had been established and have remained consistent over time. Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) reported three crucial roles of the principalship had evolved: (a) organization and supervision of the school, (b) the management of teaching, and (c) regulation of staff development. Although the duties and responsibilities have escalated and intensified in complexity, the expectations of the principal are twofold, to provide instructional leadership, in addition to managing the day to day functions of the school. Time, social factors, and economic trends have served as catalysts for determining what knowledge, skills, and attributes are necessary for successful school leadership. With the current accountability system created by the No Child Left Behind legislation (2002), principals must be astute in determining educational goals, fiscal constraints, personnel issues, curriculum development, and functional use of time and space. They are required to provide leadership in revamping the school and district.

The present study investigated the knowledge, skills, and attributes needed to be a successful school administrator. Chapter 1 begins with a brief discussion of the importance of the principal, what successful principals do, the role Effective Schools research plays in regards to the principalship, the purpose of knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs), women in school administration followed by the importance of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) in developing standards to

standardize principal's preparation programs. Next, the chapter will discuss the inception of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) test which is the state test Texas uses to assess students in third grade through tenth grade to determine their knowledge of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), the state curriculum for Texas. This chapter also describes the research questions to be answered in the study; definition of terms, and the need for the present study.

### Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the critical role the principal plays in the educational process which gives way to the importance of understanding what knowledge, skills, and attributes principals perceive are essential to be a successful administrator. MacNeil and Olsen (1998) conducted a study entitled the Knowledge, Skills, and Attributes (KSAs) for Successful School Principals. This study laid the foundation for the current research. Over 200 principals were asked their perceptions about the critical KSAs which are needed to be a successful school leader. After determining what they considered to be the critical KSAs for a successful principalship, the current research wants to further the initial findings by getting the perceptions of 310 practicing principals on the critical KSAs needed for success. For this purpose, Barth (1990) argues that there is a shortage of knowledge concerning the skills that are essential to be a successful school leader; especially since there have been changes in the expectations of the role of principal. There is also, however, a scarcity of research that has been done that isolates the skills needed by a school leader at the elementary and secondary level (Gibbs & Slate, 2003; Liethwood & Riehl, 2003). As the complexity and nuances of the principal's role continue to advance, additional research on the

knowledge, skills, and attributes required to be a successful principal is needed. The ultimate goal of the principal is to provide leadership that will promote lasting improvements which entails academic success for all students. There is growing pressure for principals to be successful in leading their schools in meeting the standards set by the No Child Left Behind legislation (2002). It is imperative that principals are adequately prepared to meet the challenges of education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. By identifying some of the essential knowledge, skills, and attributes associated with successful principals, schools and school districts can ascertain the most qualified people for the job of principal.

Leadership is critical to the success of an effective school (Marzano, McNulty, & Waters, 2005). Although it is often assumed that practices involving leadership traditions in schools are based on a comprehensible, well-stated body of inquiries conducted over the years, this presumption is inaccurate. Little research has been conducted on school leadership. Marzano et al. (2005) reported that over the past 35 years, they have discovered nearly 5,000 articles and studies pertaining to leadership in schools. Only 69 of the studies explore a quantitative connection between school leadership and the success of the students. As a result, there is a paucity of empirical research on leadership in the school setting. Marzano et al. (2005) reported "...far less research on school leadership has been done than one might expect" (p. 6). Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, and Meyerson (2005) echoed the same sentiment in reporting there is a scarcity of solid and coherent research that delineates the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed by principals. Additional empirical studies pertaining to school leadership are necessary to



advance the knowledge base of education. The current study will address the following research questions:

- (a) Are there differences by principal gender, years of experience (YP), and TAKS rating on principals' perceptions of Communication (Interpersonal, Communication, Positive Disposition, Ethical, and Good Communicator) needed to be a successful school leader?
- (b) Are there differences by principal gender, years as a principal (YP), and TAKS rating on principals' perceptions of Leadership (Leadership, Management, Curriculum, Technical, Visionary, and Organizer) needed to be a successful school principal?
- (c) Are there differences by principal gender, years of experience (YP), and TAKS rating on principals' perceptions of Fiscal and Legal (Fiscal and Legal) needed to be a successful school leader?

#### The Importance of the Principal

Marzano et al. (2005) reported leadership in the traditional sense of the word is believed to be vital to the success of a school. Furthermore, for many years people have presumed that leadership is essential for the success of any organization. The beliefs concerning leadership in education are not unlike the beliefs regarding leadership in other organizations. Given light to the perceived importance of leadership, it is no wonder that an effective principal is a prerequisite to having an effective school. Barth (1990) stated the principal is accountable for virtually everything that occurs in and out of school. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) found that effective school leadership has been directly linked to students' success in school. Richardson and Lane (1996) also found that the

principal is viewed as the key determinant of a school's effectiveness. Bennis (1997) reported organizations will not experience success without presence of effective leadership. Peterson and Kelley (2002) reported research has revealed the presence of powerful principal leadership is a critical component needed to successfully supervise detailed systems and head instructional advancement. Schools must have the leadership of the principal to enable the organization to move forward efficiently while continuing to improve instructionally. The key factor in beginning, executing, and maintaining, high-quality schools is the principal (Peterson & Kelley, 2002). McEwan (2003) stated lawmakers have come to realize that teachers, examinations, and books are unable to yield results without the presence of an exceedingly effective principal to aid, model, and guide the school.

Policy leaders at both the state and local level have examined the role of the principal as a key component to the success of schools. Leithwood, Seahorse-Louis, Anderson, and Wallstrom (2004), for example, reported each state plays a critical role in the enactment of educational leadership. Much attention has been focused on state standards and accountability systems which are spurring local resolutions and policies in ways that have never been seen. According to the Texas Education Agency (TEA, 2010) Texas Education Code (TEC) §21.046(d) mandated the Board to consider the knowledge, skills, and proficiencies essential for principals. These mandates were developed by reviewing relevant organizations at the national level and by the State Board of Education. The TEA (2010) specified in TEC §241.01. how critical the principal is in producing effective schools, as well as student achievement. The standards implemented

by the TEA ensure that each candidate for Principal Certification is of high quality and have the knowledge and skills needed for success.

### Successful Principals

Leithwood et al.'s (2004) review of the literature found that the role leadership plays can be significant; although at times it underestimates the effect leadership has in improving student achievement. The authors found that there are few documented cases in which a school in "need of assistance" was rescued from failure without the involvement of a strong leader. Although there are other contributing factors in turning around a school in need of assistance, strong leadership is the catalyst for change.

Leithwood et al. (2004) stated there is a common set of practices that successful leaders rely on in varying situations. One such practice involves setting direction for the organization. When the leader provides direction for the organization evidence implies the leader experiences a great deal of influence within the organization. Leithwood et al. (2004) also assessed setting direction is focused on facilitating one's colleagues understanding concerning the organization, its practices, and goals that can under gird the organization's purpose or vision. The principal determines the goals while assisting individuals in understanding their responsibilities at work and how their role fits into the common purpose of the organization. This harmonious relationship in part enables the principal to experience success as an administrator.

O'Hanlon and Clifton (2004) conducted a study of principals to determine the key to success in schools just as leaders and managers are in other professions. The authors began by conducting focus interviews which included principals who were identified as excellent by those who prepare principals in California, Nebraska, Illinois, New Jersey,

Virginia, and Alabama. The Gallup Organization interviewed a few of the principals who had been recognized as Principal's of the Year in their states spanning a two year period by state affiliates of the National Association of Elementary School Principals and the National Association of Secondary School Principals. Principals from urban high schools to rural schools participated in the study. O'Hanlon and Clifton (2004) reported the principal has a great deal of power in the school. The drive and tenacity of the principal is responsible for what happens in the school. The principal also creates and environment in which teachers and students can flourish.

### Effective Schools

The Effective Schools research provides educators with the essential elements to ensure all students learn in a democratic environment. With that said, educators want to produce a school in which every child is afforded the opportunity to learn. Peterson and Kelley (2002) reported that the principal is important to the success of the school. As a result, a full understanding of the Effective Schools research is needed to completely comprehend the impact the principals have on the instruction as well as setting the vision for success. Smulyan (2000) reported an analysis of effective principals focused on three key elements: the task responsibilities of the principal, the skill sets brought to the job, and the function the principal serves in the school and the system.

Lezotte (1992) stated that an essential component to the Effective Schools research is the presence of instructional leadership. As the research continues to advance, it is clear that the instructional leader provides a laser-like vision to ensure learning takes place in a democratic environment that is inclusive of all learners. The vision provided by the leader is communicated in such a way that the others in the school are able to share

the vision as well as make a commitment. It is impossible for the vision to come to fruition unless there is support from individuals within the school to assist with the implementation. Lezotte (1992) stated effective leaders establish commitment from individuals to meet the needs of the school. It is through this commitment that education for all students is improved.

### Knowledge, Skills, and Attributes (KSAs)

The business industry and the field of education are similar in that human capital is a necessary component to the success of both fields. Sims (2002) stated organizations have discovered continuous success is contingent upon getting the most out of their employees. Human resources management (HRM) is a term which refers to the “...philosophy, policies, procedures, and practices related to the management of an organization’s employees” (Sims, 2002, p.2). With that in mind, one of the goals of HRM is to focus on developing highly effective employees and organizations. Organizations have come to the realization that their capacity to draw, develop, and maintain capable employees is paramount to the success of the organization. Sims (2002) reported top management must anticipate the needs of the employee and plan for the future of the company. The principal, in this case, is the equivalent to the CEO of a Fortune 500 company in that they both have been given the responsibility of leading an organization in an efficient and effective manner while producing successful results.

The field of education, in some instances, mirrors the business industry in that attracting, developing, and maintaining capable employees is critical. Attracting qualified candidates at the principal’s level is essential to the success of any school. Barth (1990) stated the principal is the means to a good school. However, due to the lack

of empirical research delineating the knowledge, skills, and attributes needed to be a successful school administrator; it can be difficult to isolate the key characteristics of effective school leadership. Catano and Stronge (2006) reported that describing the role of the principal can be a rather difficult task due in part to the complexity of the job regarding responsibilities, skills needed to perform the job, and ethics. The Texas Education Code (1999) provided clarity for those seeking administrative positions in Texas by delineating the knowledge, skills, and proficiencies needed to ensure each candidate for principal's certification is of the "highest caliber" and holds the necessary skills for success. The principles identified by TEC §21.046 (b) (1)-(6), specifically §241.15 of the chapter, places an emphasis on the following areas: (1) instructional leadership, (2) administration, (3) supervision, (4) communication skills, (5) curriculum and instruction management, (6) performance evaluation, (7) organization, and (8) fiscal management. By providing a clear job description of the expectations of the role of a principal allows principal preparation programs to effectively and efficiently train aspiring school administrators. Lee and Krayner (2003) reiterated job descriptions should accurately describe the responsibilities that encompass the job. The job description should contain the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) needed to be successful on the job.

### Women in School Administration

The study of women in educational administration has been reviewed with varying degrees of interest over the past two decades (Smulyan, 2000). A great deal of the earlier research involving women focused on their numbers and their under representation at all levels of school administration while exploring the reasons for their

absence. Early on in the research, there was a void in reporting issues involving women in school administration relating to power or ideology. The terms leader and leadership are genderless words uninhibited by the upheaval of such words as chairman, chairwoman, and chair (Thompson-Witmer, 2006). As more and more women assume positions in educational administration, it is necessary to refine the qualities which are reflected as feminine leadership. Boatman (2007) reviewed the progress of women in leadership over the past twenty years and found in general, leadership entails modifying and adjusting to fit certain situations regardless of gender. Leadership also involves power and authority which may result in positive social change. There is an ethical component of leadership which requires leaders to hold themselves to a higher standard which exists for the common good of all others. Boatman (2007) believes there are three characteristics which women possess that are associated with effective leadership. First is a woman's ability to be reflective about her leadership. Women view leadership as an opportunity to learn. Second is a woman's ability to empower those she leads. Women seek a democratic form of leadership and encourage others to participate, while at the same time, provide the energy to excite others about their work. Third is transformation. Women in leadership provide opportunities for others to evolve as leaders to make society a better place for all. Women leadership is complex, multi-faceted, and passionate which elevates others to higher heights for the good of the organization.

#### Tenure and Retention of School Principals

Fuller and Young (2009) reported that while much research has been done on teacher retention, little evidence exists about the retention of school principals. Fuller and Young (2009) conducted a study to determine the retention and tenure rates of

recently appointed principals in the Texas public system from 1996-2008. They followed a cohort of newly hired principals for 13 years. The researchers wanted to ascertain the length of tenure and retention rates of recently hired principals. Fuller and Young (2009) also wanted to determine if there were connections between individual and school traits and the tenure and retention of principals. The researcher reported seven major findings:

1. Elementary school principals have the longest tenure and the largest retention rate while the reverse is true for high school principals. High school principals have the shortest tenure and the lowest retention rates.
2. High school principals' retention rates are reported at approximately 50% at the conclusion of three years. By the time the fifth year comes around, only 30% of the newly hired principals are still employed.
3. The level of student achievement is a factor in determining the retention rates of principals during the first year of employment. Principals who work at schools with low student achievement have the lowest retention rates and the lowest tenure. Principals who work at school where student achievement is high report higher tenure and higher retention rates.
4. The socioeconomic makeup of the school is a factor in retention rates and tenure. The higher the poverty the less the retention rates and tenure. The higher the socioeconomic status of the students, the higher the retention rates and tenure.
5. Suburban principals tend to have greater tenure and retention rates in schools that are mostly white and low poverty. Rural principals have a slightly lower retention rates and tenure.



6. The personal traits of principals, such as race, gender, age, have only a small effect on retention rates.
7. Retention is minimally affected by the certification tests required to be a school principal.

Fuller and Young (2009) report that the results of the survey are indicative of principals and tenure, however the results are not definitive. They also discovered that the average tenure for elementary principals was about 5 years. The average tenure for high school principals was slightly lower and averaged approximately 3.8 years.

#### Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) Test

The need for school accountability started several years ago with the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation which significantly altered the role of the federal government in education (United States Department of Education, 2002). The primary purpose of NCLB was to ensure that all students received an appropriate education in which they achieved important learning goals while attending schools that were safe and taught by teachers that were deemed highly qualified. President Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) bill in January of 2002. According to Yell and Drasgow (2005), in years past, the federal government had never allocated more than 10 % of the overall funds needed to adequately finance education. As a result, the states were responsible for ascertaining the remaining 90% of funds needed for education (United States Department of Education, 2002). No Child Left Behind was intended to be an all inclusive and intricate education law which enhanced federal funding for each state by as much as 25% from the previous year. Although the law increased the amount of funding states received for education, the law also set an unprecedented amount of input by the federal

government in education. The law also stipulated federal mandates and constraints of states, school districts, and public schools. As a matter of fact, NCLB signifies the most noteworthy extension of the federal government's influence on education in the history of our nation (Yell & Drasgow, 2005).

A few of the constraints of NCLB were that states would construct assessments for students that would facilitate data driven decisions by schools and school districts as an essential component of the education system and to ensure all schools are accountable for the performance of students (Yell & Drasgow, 2005). There was growing concern for the plight of education as far back as the Reagan administration. During the Reagan administration, the Commission on Excellence in Education was formed to analyze the condition of the nation's educational system. As a result of the commission's investigation, the commission authored a report entitled *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). This report stated the nation's educational system was not meeting the needs of students it served and the students were falling further behind their foreign counterparts. Consequently, the commission called for a firm commitment towards education to ensure the nation's students kept pace with other foreign countries.

In 1993, the Texas State Legislature established the accountability system which would be used by all public schools in Texas (Office of Governor Rick Perry, n.d.). The accountability system was responsible for forming the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS test) from 1991 to 2003. The TAAS test was not viewed as a rigorous assessment by many including Governor Rick Perry (Office of Governor Rick Perry, n.d.). As a result, Governor Perry wanted to increase the accountability of the schools in

Texas to ensure students were receiving an adequate education. Being mindful of the commitment to education, the state of Texas adopted the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills test (TAKS) in 2003. This test promised to be more rigorous than the TAAS test and assess whether students were meeting the standards of the state curriculum (Office of Governor Rick Perry, n.d.).

The TAKS test was developed by Pearson Educational Measurement under strict scrutiny of the Texas Education Agency. Though the test was developed before the passing of NCLB, the test was in compliance with the mandate of NCLB pertaining to assessment of students in Texas (Texas Education Agency, 2010). The TAKS test assesses students in both primary and secondary school in the subjects of reading, math, writing, science, and social studies. The test assesses students over their understanding of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) which is the state mandated curriculum. The TAKS test is used as a monitoring mechanism by the state of Texas and the federal government to measure the academic progress of students (Texas Education Agency, 2010.). Each state is responsible for setting the proficiency standards for achievement with the understanding that the proficiency rates increase over time. The proficiency standards are commonly referred to as adequate yearly progress. If a school is deficient in meeting the adequate yearly progress, federal sanctions are administered and corrective actions must be taken to ensure academic success for all students (Texas Education Agency, 2010).

The Texas Education Agency (2010) stated each public school in Texas receives a rating from the state which denotes how well the students performed on the TAKS test. The ratings are as follows: Exemplary, Recognized, Acceptable, and Unacceptable. To

receive the Exemplary rating, which is the highest rating, several indicators have to be met. These indicators include: 90% of all students taking the test were successful on all tests given by the school, 95% completion rate, and a drop out rate is 1.8%, or meets the required improvement (Texas Education Agency, 2010). The indicators for a Recognized campus include: 85% of all students taking the test were successful on all tests given by the school, 95% completion rate, and a drop out rate is 1.8%, or meets the required improvement (Texas Education Agency, 2010). The indicators for an Acceptable campus includes: 70% of all students taking the test were successful on all tests given by the school, 75% completion rate, the drop out rate is 1.8%, or meets the required improvement. The Academically Unacceptable rating indicates that a campus did not meet the passing standards of the state of Texas in one or categories of the TAKS test which includes the TAKS passing rates, drop out rate, and completion rate (Texas Education Agency, 2010).

#### Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISSLC 2008

The educational reform movement which began in the early 1980s spawned the conception of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards (Meier, 1999). According to the Council of Chief State School Officers (1996) in 1994, the standards were developed to strengthen preparation programs, provide professional development for school leaders as well as construct a framework of responsibility for assessing candidates for licensure. Fullan (2000) explained that the standards recognize that effective leaders have dissimilar beliefs and may conduct themselves differently than the custom of the profession. However, the common set of standards is necessary for school leaders to be successful in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The standards are research based and

are endorsed by many of the education associations across the United States (CCSSO, 1996). Currently, there are 24 state education agencies that have formed an alliance to bring life to the ISLLC initiative. Texas is one of the states that participated in the formation of the original ISLLC standards. The standards were written in a partnership with the National Policy Board of Education Administration (NPBEA) between 1994-1995. They have been endorsed by several national associations. This broad support builds continuity among educators by defining what knowledge, skills, and dispositions principals need to have.

Recently, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) and the ISLLC Steering Committee worked together to refine the ISLLC standards to include a research base to support the standards (Wallace Foundation, 2010). According to the Wallace Foundation (2010), the revised standards have been renamed the Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008. These standards were approved by the NPBEA Executive Board on December 12, 2008. The NPBEA Steering Committee followed a four step process for revising the standards. First, the committee developed a strategy in which to solicit input about the standards from members of the NPBEA. Next, the committee formed a national Research Panel that was representative of scholars in the field of education. In turn, the Research Panel identified the research base for revising the ISLLC Standards. Then, the NPBEA Steering Committee received feedback from an assortment of organizations such as: National Staff Development Council (NSDC), National Governor's Association (NGA), Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), and the Research Panel. These contributors created a revised draft of the Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008. As a result of the revisions, the

contributors developed the Model Performance-Based indicators of the six ISSLC Standards (Wallace Foundation, 2010).

#### Definitions of Terms

1. Knowledge: Buckingham and Coffman (1999) stated knowledge can be divided into two categories: factual and experiential. Factual knowledge is based on ideas or concepts to which any person can have access. Experiential knowledge is ascertained from firsthand experiences which are learned subjectively.
2. Skills: Buckingham and Coffman (1999) reported skills are competencies that can be transferred from one person to another.
3. Attributes: Sperry (2002) defined attributes as the inner or personal qualities that are believed to constitute effective leadership.
4. Curriculum: Sigford (2006) reported that curriculum is a mixture of what is taught, how the information is taught, how educators determine the information has been learned, and how the content is modified to meet the needs of diverse learners.
5. Leadership: In review of the literature, there have been many definitions provided to explain the concept of leadership. For this study the following definition provided by Skrla, Erlandson, and Reed (2001) stated that providing leadership is the rationale direction for people and groups; defining the school's culture and ethics; assisting in the creation of a shared vision for the school; devising goal statements and establishing priorities for change for the teachers, students, and community while ever mindful of the district's goals and objectives.

6. Law: Skrla et al. (2001) defined legal and regulatory applications. The authors' definition will also be used to define law. Law is performing according to federal and state constitutional stipulations and legislative standards; working under the guise of local policies, practice, and dictates; understanding the principles concerning civil and criminal liability for negligent and intended torts; managing contracts and fiscal accounts.
7. Fiscal: Providing a general definition for fiscal, Skrla et al. (2001) stated it to be acquiring, allocating, supervising, reporting, and assessing finances, individual, materials, and time resources to achieve results that are reflective of the needs of the school; preparing and developing the budget with the proper staff.
8. Interpersonal: Skrla et al. (2001) used the term interpersonal sensitivity which for the purposes of this study will be the accepted definition of interpersonal which is recognizing the needs and apprehensions of others; interacting diplomatically with others; dealing with conflict; acquiring feedback, acknowledging cultural diversity; interacting with individuals from various backgrounds; working under stressful situations or disagreement.
9. Communication: The term communication as defined by Marzano et al. (2005) refers to the degree that the principal creates opportunities for interaction with and among teachers and students.
10. Technical: Sperry (2002) defined technical skill as mastering skills related to a specific job position, the ability to problem solve, adequately manage time, monitor performance and provide training and development.

11. Positive disposition: O'Hanlon and Clifton (2004) refer to the term as positive principal which is defined as a person who possesses kindness, consideration, and thoughtfulness while at the same time upholding high expectations for student and teacher achievement.
12. Visionary: McEwan (2003) uses the term Envisioner which is defined as a highly effective principal that is inspired by a sense of determination. The vision is focused on achievements of the school. The mission is the driving force of the school which focuses on the best interest of the students.
13. Ethics and Values: Starratt (2005) reported ethics and values as regarding each individual in the school as a human being and treating each person respect.
14. Good Communicator: According to McEwan, (2003) the term good communicator is referred to as an authentic and open individual with the capability to listen, understand, relate, and connect with school constituents in a constructive way. In addition, good communicators have the to the ability to educate, impart information, and inspire individuals in big group settings.
15. Organize: For the purposes of this study, organize is defined by Marzano et al. (2005) as the degree to which the school leader sets up an array of customary operating procedures and routines.
16. Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills Test (TAKS): As reported by the Texas Education Agency (2010) the TAKS test measures a student's mastery of the state-mandated curriculum, the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). TAKS is administered for grades 3–9 reading, grades 3–10 and exit level mathematics, grades 4 and 7 writing, grade 10 and exit level English language arts



(ELA) Grades 5, 8, 10, and exit level science, grades 8, 10, and exit level social studies.

17. **Accountability:** As reported by the Texas Education Agency (2010) the state accountability system assigns ratings to every campus and district in the Texas public education system each year. In most cases the system assigns one of four rating labels —ranging from lowest to highest—*Academically Unacceptable*, *Academically Acceptable*, *Recognized*, and *Exemplary*. To determine the rating label, the system evaluates indicators of performance, including assessment results on the state standardized assessment instruments as well as longitudinal completion rates and annual dropout rates.
18. **Effective Schools:** Lezotte (1992) defined Effective Schools as a place where all students can learn. The school is student centered and offers academically rich programs. Generally, campuses and districts earn ratings by having performance that meets absolute standards or by demonstrating sufficient improvement toward the standard.

### Need for the Study

Peterson and Kelley (2002) stated that across the country there has been a shortfall of highly qualified principal applicants. It has been projected that as many as 60 % of principals intend to retire, resign, or vacate their position within the next 5 years. Darling-Hammond et al. (2005) stated that despite the principal shortage, principal preparation programs are graduating a growing amount of certified administrators. Regrettably, the methods and standards in which numerous principal preparation programs usually screen, choose, and graduate candidates are often times undefined,

haphazardly applied, and fall short in rigor. Consequently, newly certified school leaders are given credentials to become administrators based solely on their performance on coursework as opposed to their all-inclusive assessment of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to be a successful school leader (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005). Engelking (2008) reported that while there is no magic formula for determining the most important knowledge to possess, the belief is that effective leadership comes from individuals that are able to utilize a variety of skills and attributes.

Leithwood et al. (2004) reported that a striking amount of research implies that leaders act and react differently depending on the circumstances and the individuals working at the time. The authors also stated the need for leaders to be trained using vast repertoires of techniques by creating a bank of practices from which the leader can draw from in any given situation as opposed to leaders being trained in one “ideal” set of standards. By training principals about the knowledge, skills, and attributes needed to be a successful school leader principals can improve their skill set in order to successfully deal with varying situations that occur on a day to day basis.

MacNeil and Olsen (1998) conducted a preliminary study of principals and their perceptions of the principalship. The MacNeil and Olsen (1998) study is the foundation for which the current study has evolved. The current research seeks to add to the findings of MacNeil and Olsen’s (1998) Knowledge, Skills and Attributes (KSAs) for Successful School Principals, which was a paper presented at the 52<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting of the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) in Juneau, AK.

They surveyed nearly 215 principals to determine the knowledge, skills, and attributes they perceived as critical for being a successful principal. Through the use of

cognitive interviews, the authors were able to ascertain relevant information that greatly enhances the field of education. The current study seeks to further investigate principals' perceptions about the essential KSAs needed to be a successful school leader. As states begin to reevaluate principal preparation programs, the current study can add to the research by providing empirical data that delineates the knowledge, skills, and attributes practicing principals perceive as important to be a successful school leader.

#### Limitations of the Study

The participants of the study were not randomly selected, thus selection bias is present. The large magnitude of the study somewhat controls for the bias inherent in the study. Over 99 different graduate students conducted four interviews of principals of their choice. Each of the four interviews was amassed and duplicate interviews were removed resulting in 310 principals for the study. The graduate students represented several cohorts which embodied a variety of school districts therefore reducing the amount of selection bias. The diverse nature of the interviewers assisted in securing the diversity of the participating principals. Also, the survey solicited principals to describe successful behaviors of a principal based on their perceptions. The principals' perceptions may not accurately reflect actual behavior.

A review of the literature concerning the knowledge, skills, and attributes needed to be a successful school administrator follows. Chapter 3 includes information about methods, procedures, and data analysis, followed by a discussion of the results in chapter four. In the final chapter, the implications of the results for the research, practice, and policy will be discussed, and concluding remarks will be provided.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### Introduction

This chapter represents the justification for conducting the research on the knowledge, skills, and attributes perceived as important for principals to be successful in school leadership. Many authors have identified skills sets, traits, and attributes which describe successful leaders in the field of education as well as the business industry (Marazano, 2003; McEwan, 2003; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Bennis, 1997). More specifically, educational researchers have begun to study school leadership and pinpoint what effective leadership looks like in practice. The current study seeks to expand upon the existing literature in order to further the knowledge base on what practicing principals perceive as the critical knowledge, skills, and attributes needed to be successful in school leadership.

The National Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008 provides a research based foundation in which to guide those professionals seeking the principalship. In reviewing the literature, a thorough investigation was conducted to determine what knowledge, skills, and attributes are needed to be a successful principal. First, a review of the National Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008 will be discussed as well as their impact on setting standards for the certification of school administrators. According to the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA), the standards include the knowledge, dispositions, and performances needed to be an effective school principal (The Wallace Foundation, 2010). The standards allow states to align their expectations as to what qualities are essential for principals. In doing so, the standards

have provided a framework for which administrators are to be held accountable. In a time when the demands upon education are plentiful, the standards have proven to be instrumental in standardizing the expectations of an effective principal.

Principal preparation programs are essential to developing individuals who are seeking the principalship. Shen et al. (2005) stated that principal preparation programs have been charged with providing the critical knowledge needed to be an effective principal. It is through these programs that principals will become equipped with the essential knowledge, skills, and attributes, necessary for school leadership. Current research was reviewed to determine principals' perceptions of the relevance of course work taken to obtain principal certification. As institutions of higher learning begin to bridge the gap between theory and practice, it is my hope that the current research can further expand the quality of instruction presented to aspiring principals.

The following review of the literature denotes the relevant literature for my research study which includes the examination of the knowledge, skills, and attributes needed to be a successful principal. The chapter is arranged into six sections (1) the National Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008, (2) principal preparation programs, (3) the knowledge needed to be a successful principal, (4) the skills needed to be a successful principal, (5) the attributes needed to be a successful principal, and (6) women in school administration.

#### Standards Developed to Provide a Framework for School Leadership

In 1996, the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) began working on the development of standards for school leaders (CCSSO, 1996). The standards are rooted in research and reflect the wisdom of practitioners; the standards

were composed from a variety of state education agencies and represent a variety of professional organizations (CCSSO, 1996). According to the CCSSO (1996) the following associations endorsed the standards: American Association of School Administrators (AASA), Association for Supervision and Curriculum and Development (ASCD), Association of Teacher Educators (ATE), National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), and National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP). The work of the consortium creates a vision of leadership in education that is designed to meet the needs of future school leaders.

Originally, the standards were developed to be well-matched with the new National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) Curriculum Guidelines for those in school administration. The standards also were developed to work in concert with the NCATE standards to boost the skills of school administrators and to connect leadership with efficient learning processes and respected outcomes (CCSSO, 1996). The intent of the standards was two fold, to engage professionals in invigorating conversations about educational leadership and to provide stakeholders with the information needed to improve educational leadership across the nation.

The Wallace Foundation (2010) reported it became evident to the ISLLC that there was a need to strengthen the standards by providing overarching principles to guide the development of the standards. The principles would serve dual purposes. First, the principles would serve as a litmus test to be reviewed regularly to examine scope and focus of developing products. Second, the principles provide meaning for the standards that have been developed.

In the past few years, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration in conjunction with the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) sought to revise the ISLLC standards to include a solid research based foundation for the standards (Wallace Foundation, 2010). The NPBEA Steering Committee felt that the standards should:

- reflect the centrality of student learning
- acknowledge the changing role of the principal
- recognize the collaborative nature of school leadership
- be high, upgrading the quality of the profession
- inform performance based systems of assessment and evaluation for school leaders
- be integrated and coherent
- be predicated on the concepts of access, opportunity, and empowerment for all members of the school community

The goal of the NPBEA was to provide direction through the use of standards for school leaders. As the team reviewed previously endorsed standards, they came to the conclusion that there had been a modest amount written for the direction and performance of the educational administrator (Wallace Foundation, 2010). These standards were not only written for principals but other leadership positions in education as well. The original framework (CCSSO, 1996) used knowledge, dispositions, and performances which were borrowed from the Interstate New Teachers Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC). The standards take into account the differences of school leaders and the districts that they work for as well as the framework in which the

leader is to function. Because of the complexity of the role of principal, the Consortium believes that new types of leadership will begin to evolve within the field of education. By providing the knowledge, dispositions, and performances needed to be an effective and successful leader, they also believe that the leaders of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be adequately prepared to lead in an educational setting that continues to change with time (Wallace Foundation, 2010).

The newly formed standards, the Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008, include six standards which delineate the research based knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed by administrators (see Appendix B). The standards are not listed in order of importance. They simply state the expectations of proficiency for each standard (Wallace Foundation, 2010).

#### Principal's Perceptions of Principal Preparation Programs for School Leadership

Principal preparation programs are responsible for providing an academic curriculum that is rigorous and adequately prepares future administrators for a role in leadership. Levine (2005) questioned whether or not principal certification programs are realistically preparing administrators to lead. The preparation programs are critical in bridging the gap between theory and practice. These programs must be aligned with the current demands of being in school leadership. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) concurred by stating effective school leadership has been directly linked to students' success in school. Richardson and Lane (1996) further explained the principal is viewed as the key determinant of a school's effectiveness. Indeed, Peterson and Kelley (2002) similarly reported that the principal is important to the success of the school as such it is imperative to study their role more critically to enhance the preparation process. With so much



emphasis placed on the significance of an effective principal, it would behoove principal preparation programs to reevaluate their programs in order to ensure that they are preparing aspiring educational leaders to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century schools. The current research will add to the knowledge base regarding the knowledge, skills, and attributes that are perceived as important to be a successful school principal. A practicing principal has a significant amount of knowledge about what is required to be an effective school administrator. Their perceptions should be considered when determining what is taught in principal preparation courses.

Public Agenda (2003) examined, through the use of a survey, the courses taken in leadership preparation programs and asked principals how valuable those courses were in preparing them to become an administrator. Seventy-eight percent reported that the courses in instructional leadership were valuable in conducting their jobs. Eighty percent stated courses pertaining to school law were valuable to their job. Courses dealing with finance reports and ethics were reported at slightly above fifty-five percent. The implications of these findings are that although the standards have been put in place and endorsed by several education associations, the leadership preparation programs must ensure that what is taught at the graduate level is relevant, meaningful, and in touch with what is expected of administrators in schools today. Although the survey conducted by Public Agenda (2003) was favorable towards preparation programs, further research found that students were dissatisfied with the information imparted while studying to become a school administrator.

One such study, conducted by Barnett (2004), cautions that principal preparation programs may not be providing the knowledge for principals to be successful.

He conducted a survey which was based on the ISLLC Standards for School Leaders. In his study, he interviewed practicing school administrators to determine the frequency of practice and preparedness in relationship to the ISLLC standards. He interviewed Morehead State University graduates and graduates from other principal preparation programs (number of participants not specified). Barnett (2004) also asked the participants to rate the effectiveness of their principal preparation programs and the degree to which they completed practices pertaining to the ISLLC standards. A Likert scale was used with one meaning they never completed the practice and five meaning they always completed the practice. The respondents also rated their satisfaction of their principal preparation coursework and found that they frequently engaged in the six ISLLC standards; the standards were also an accurate reflection of a leader's daily practices. Overall, the respondents reported that the course work taken seemed to be lacking in imparting essential knowledge and skills needed to be a principal. Satisfaction of training provided as reported by MSU graduates:

- Standard One-vision-rated as adequate
- Standard Two-instructional leadership-rated as adequate
- Standard Three-Student Safety, Day to Day Operations, Input from Stakeholders-second highest rating
- Standard Four-Communication with parents-lowest rating
- Standard Five-Confidentiality of students and faculty-highest rating
- Standard Six-Understanding of Political, Social, Economic, Legal-less than adequate

Satisfaction of training provided as reported by Non MSU graduates:

- Standard One-vision-rated as adequate
- Standard Two-instructional leadership-rated as adequate
- Standard Three-Student Safety, Day to Day Operations, Input from Stakeholders-second lowest rating
- Standard Four-Communication with parents-lowest rating
- Standard Five-Confidentiality of students and faculty-highest rating
- Standard Six-Understanding of Political, Social, Economic, Legal-less than adequate

In conclusion, Barnett (2004) reports that practical experience is described as one of the most meaningful experiences in the preparation program. The instruction provided aspiring practitioners must be meaningful and authentic to meet the needs of school leadership.

### Important Knowledge of Successful Principals

School leadership requires the principal to be knowledgeable about many components of education. Determining what knowledge is most essential to possess for the principalship can be a daunting task. There is so much knowledge to be learned. In review of the literature, several common themes began to arise as to what knowledge is believed to be essential for a principal to be successful. Knowledge of the curriculum is one such knowledge that is well documented in the literature (Fullan 2000; Marazano, 2003; Kajs, Decman, Cox, Williams, & Alaniz, 2002). The principal must have a keen set of knowledge about the curriculum to achieve maximum student success. There is no denying that with all of the accountability reforms placed on schools, principals must be well versed in the best practices in curriculum and instruction to meet the standards set by

the state of Texas as well as federal mandates. Another knowledge that has surfaced as important is knowledge of the law. Legal matters occur in schools daily (Sughrue & Alexander, 2003). The principal has to be aware of the laws and regulations which guide their decisions. There are resources available that can assist principals when making decisions about legal matters when the answer is unclear. Both knowledge of the curriculum and law will be discussed at length to illustrate their significance in the literature.

### Knowledge of the Curriculum

Over the past 25 years, there have been three instrumental political reforms which have shaped the educational landscape that exists today. With the release of a Nation at Risk (1983), Goals 2000, and the standards reform movement (1989), change ran rampant through the nation's public school system. As a result, the political will to revamp our system achieved an all time high. As the history of education is reviewed, at no time have so many key players joined forces to allocate resources, produce legislative mandates, federal initiatives, and business industry interventions, to determine the direction of the nation's public school system (Tirozzi, 2003).

Marzano et al. (2005) reported that a significant issue that plagues public education is the lack of student achievement. In response to the poor performance of public schools, politicians have placed education at the top of their agendas. The first reform effort was the Nation at Risk report. In 1983, a Nation at Risk was released and gave a scathing report on the quality of schools in America (Tirozzi, 2003). This report sparked the interest of the public and called for the overhaul of every school in the United States. The report insisted upon a curriculum that had depth and complexity, elevated

standards for graduation, reorganized school day and year, along with setting accountability standards to ensure the reforms came to pass (Tirozzi, 2003). Fullan (2000) reported that the pressure mounted to improve schools and the public wanted solutions as to how the schools would solve the problems. As a result, schools have found themselves embroiled in a long term reform movement calling for changes in the way public schools educated the students (Cawelti, 2003). The principal would prove to be an essential component in the reorganization of the educational system. Business leaders and institutions of higher education have also sounded off regarding the reform of public education asking that students be better prepared when leaving high school. Public schools found themselves in the mist of a “standards-based” reform (Cawelti, 2003).

The second reform occurred in 1989 when President George W. Bush called for a national convention concerning education in which governors, policy experts, and business leaders alike convened to discuss educational issues at hand. The result of the convention was an agreement on six broad educational goals, to be reached by the year 2000, for America’s public schools (Tirozzi, 2003). In 1994, Congress lent more credibility to the goals from the 1989 convention by endorsing them as the Goals 2000 legislation. President Clinton used the legislation for his educational reform platform. The Goals 2000 legislation was instrumental in getting states to implement the goals and determine whether the goals were obtained. Goals 2000 was responsible for setting national expectations for the nation’s public schools. These expectations have provided the focus for school leaders for the past 10 years (Tirozzi, 2003).

Marzano (2003) reported that not long after the educational convention, which was spawned by President Bush, two groups were created the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP) and the National Council on Education Standards and Testing (NCEST). These two groups were given the responsibility of determining what knowledge and skills are critical for each subject area. The groups are responsible for the inception of the third reform which dealt with educational standards. By 1995, experts in more than a dozen subject areas had developed documents outlining what students needed to learn and do concerning specific content areas, in essence, the standards students should be able to meet (Marzano, 2003). The standards movement has been noted as one of the most, if not the most, influential movements relating to curriculum in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Marazano, 2003). No other time in history has been identified as so influential in producing the knowledge and skills critical for students to master in each subject area. In contrast, the standards were so comprehensive that the amount of information identified as essential burgeoned and became difficult for K-12 public schools to accommodate. The complex issues regarding curriculum for educational leaders over the next 10 years may be great; however, the research which exists can provide guidance to ensure substantive changes will be made. By reducing the amount of content to be taught and mastered at each grade level, will allow students acquire a deep and rigorous understanding of the curriculum (Marzano, 2003).

With the standards-driven reform efforts ever present, recommendations that administrative leadership must be focused on the instructional component began to move to the forefront. If school leaders are to better serve the schools they are responsible for leading, the leaders must be knowledgeable about the best practices in curriculum and

instruction (Kajs, Decman, Cox, Williams, & Alaniz, 2002). The Effective School Research is clear in stating an effective principal is an instructional leader who provides a vision of excellence which radiates throughout the organization (Weise, 1992). The leader provides a crystal clear mission while garnering support from the staff to achieve the stated goals and objectives (Kajs et al., 2003).

By 1980, the focus of the principal had evolved from that of leader as manager to leader as instructional expert (Williams-Boyd, 2002). The principal is seen as a professional expert who specializes in curricular matters responsible for navigating effective teaching and learning within the classroom. The principal is in charge of organizing, directing, aligning the content taught within the school, establishing and evaluating goals for faculty and staff, rigorously monitoring work in the classroom, determining the impact of teaching, and the success of the students.

Having a deep understanding of the curriculum is an essential knowledge the principal needs in order to be an effective leader. Gupton (2003) stated when the term instructional leader is used there is uncertainty by the educational community as to what the term actually means. Leaders are left wondering what instructional leadership is, and what makes it different from other forms of leadership. In the interest of clarity, the term instructional leader encompasses four dimensions “resource provider, instructional resource, communicator, and visible presence” (Smith & Andrews, 1989, p. 24).

Instructional leaders provide the leadership to ensure that student learning is taking place.

Lunenburg and Orenstein (2004) stated that there is disagreement within the literature about what skills to put into practice and whether the principal should be a manager or curriculum instructional leader. Principals tend to report that the area of

curriculum and instruction is one of the most important aspects of their job. However, Fullan, Bennett, and Rolheiser-Bennett (1990) stated that teachers don't view principals as instructional leaders and are less likely to solicit assistance from the principal. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) concurred by stating that time spent on instructional management by the principal amounts to a small portion of their time because of the uncertainty of how to achieve the desired results such as student achievement. Hallinger and Murphy (1985) conducted a study of principals and district office personnel to provide information regarding principals' instructional management behavior. They reported that principals spend more time on instructional leadership and are actively involved in supervising and evaluating instruction more than what has been stated in previous studies.

Kimbrough and Burkett (1990) explained that one of the principal's most important tasks is to provide leadership for the faculty and students in the achievement of student success through the use of high standards. It is imperative that the principal be directly involved with curricular activities to provide hands on support for the teachers. The principal must possess a strong understanding of the curriculum. Marzano et al. (2005) stated that there are 21 specific behaviors and characteristics that should be exhibited by the principal which were determined through a meta-analysis of school leadership in grades K–12. The authors affirmed the principal should have “extensive knowledge about curricular practices, instruction, and assessment practices” (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 54). They should also provide direction for effective classroom practices. The principal's involvement and depth of the curriculum is viewed as vital knowledge to encompass for effective school leadership.



Leithwood and Riehl (2003) stated that students learn best when the curriculum is focused and of high quality. The presence of strong leadership is second only to a deeply rigorous curriculum that denotes the principles of best practices for student achievement. According to Barnett (2004), today's principal is involved in many curriculum decisions, disaggregating of data, leading professional development, and facilitating the faculty's understanding of what effective school practices are and how they should be implemented. Johnson and Uline (2005) explained that in successful schools, principals spend most of their time visiting classrooms, observing instruction, discussing best practices with teachers, and providing examples of effective strategies. Sergiovanni (2006) stated that with the enactment of No Child Left Behind (2002) principals have become more focused on academic standards and the methods of obtaining student achievement. High stakes testing has raised the accountability level for educators. The results of the testing have a direct impact on a portion of the leader's evaluation as well as continued employment by the school district. As a result, this heightened accountability refocused the attention of principals towards being an instructional leader.

Williams-Boyd (2002) stated that the leader of the school must stay abreast of the best practices dealing with curricular issues, determine their effectiveness within the school's culture, assess whether the practice has been successfully implemented, and seek input from a variety of stakeholders at various times in the process. The instructional practices that are implemented often reflect the values, ethics, and belief system of the school. Williams-Boyd (2002) also stated that the principal must be ever mindful of the state and local standards as well as the in-house politics of departments. The leader is

charged with the responsibility of managing and providing a focal point of what is taught in the school, which is no small undertaking.

McEwan (2003) sent out a list of traits to 175 principals, superintendents, central office administrators, staff developers, university professors, teachers, parents, school board members, and education advocates. They were asked to select 10 traits from a list of 37 which they believed to be imperative to the success of a highly effective principal. One hundred eight of those solicited responded to the survey. By the authors own admission, those surveyed were considered a sample of convenience. However, of the 108 respondents to the survey, 71 reported instructional leader as the second most critical trait for a highly effective principal to have. In addition, those surveyed also reported knowledge about teaching and learning as the third highest trait, which received 60 votes. McEwan (2003) stated that the highly effective principal is a self-sufficient instructional leader with a great deal of intelligence. The principal possesses information pertaining to research based curriculum, instruction, and knowledge to ensure students are successful. The effective principal also inspires the teachers and staff and makes possible the academic development of ones self, students, teachers, and parents.

#### Knowledge of the Law

Sughrue and Alexander (2003) advise principals to develop a school environment which takes into account the needs of all students and staff while ensuring the rights of each individual is respected. It is difficult for the leader to balance the rights of all individuals within the school. By staying current with school law, principals are able to modify and follow policies to the maximum extent possible. Constitutional, statutory, and case law are critical areas of interest for the principal because these laws govern all

facets of public education (Sughrue & Alexander, 2003). It is paramount that school boards, superintendents, and principals stay abreast of the changes in school law or in the laws that impact school districts (Sughrue & Alexander, 2003). Principals would be negligent if they did not stay current with school law through their professional organizations or professional development provided by their school districts. The principal should not make decisions concerning legal matters in a bubble. They are encouraged to seek advice from those more astute on school law within the school district when the answer or solution to a problem is unclear. Finally, principals should rely on their past experiences and good sense of moral judgment to make legal decisions. In fact, the principal is the most important person to model respect to others and their rights as individuals, to safeguard each individual's rights, and promote good legal decision making (Sughrue & Alexander, 2003).

#### Important Skills of Successful Principal

The essential skill set needed for a successful principal can encompass a lengthy collection of competencies. In reviewing the literature, there was a plethora of information pertaining to the importance of the following skills: communication, leadership, management, and interpersonal skills. The possession of these skills can assist principals in experiencing success with the principalship. No one leadership style has been espoused as being the most effective model for successful leadership. Each leader is at liberty to identify, meld, and implement a variety of leadership styles as needed. What is critical is that the principal must provide clear, concise, laser-like leadership abilities to ensure that successful positive outcomes are achieved (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Through the use of effective communication, another important skill,

allows the leader to provide direction for the school (McEwan, 2003). By incorporating interpersonal and management skills, the leader is able to establish personal connection with the faculty and staff as well as manage the day to day affairs of the school in an effective and efficient manner (Sergiovanni, 1995; Kouses & Posner, 2002).

### Leadership Skills

Leadership is an essential skill that is necessary to be a successful school administrator. The literature has not identified a preferred type of leadership style nor designated the most successful model be it a theoretical or an empirical framework. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) reported that there is no exact formula that describes leadership behaviors though conclusions and assumptions can be made by reviewing the literature in the field. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) conducted a review of the literature to present research based knowledge about leadership. After reviewing a variety of definitions pertaining to leadership, they concluded that most definitions centered around two functions: giving direction and exercising influence. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) described six “strong claims” about school leadership that is necessary for effective school success. The claims are as follows:

- Successful school leadership enhances student achievement.
- The teachers and the principal play critical leadership roles in the advancement of school mission, vision, and goals.
- Leaders should engage in shared leadership with teachers, professionals within the school setting, and the community.

- A nucleus of “basic” leadership practices has been successful in an array of contexts such as providing vision, agreement of goals, setting high expectations; cultivating people, and intellectual stimulation.
- Leaders must conduct themselves in ways that acknowledge the accountability-oriented policy which all educators are bound.
- Successful leaders with highly diverse school populations implement effective school practices that encourage quality, equity, and social justice.

Collins (2001) provides a business perspective regarding leadership. The author developed the term “Level 5 leadership” after examining successful companies and their CEOs to exemplify the type of leadership that takes a company from “good to great.” This type of leadership looks at the big picture of the organization, while sacrificing the needs of one’s ego, to build a successful organization. Although Collins (2001) studied business organizations and their leaders, the same Level 5 leadership found true for the business industry can be applied to educational leaders as well. Gray and Streshly (2008) formed a link from the concepts presented by Collins (2001) and the concepts of leadership in the field of education. The authors conducted a study of principals using the same approach as Collins (2001) to gain information about actions and characteristics of principals (Gray & Streshly, 2008). By utilizing semi-structured qualitative interviews, Gray and Streshly (2008) used the questions from Collins (2001) as a template which were modified for educational leadership. The authors interviewed a group of successful school principals from California who took their schools from good to great and sustained student achievement over time. Gray and Streshly (2008) also used a comparison group of principals who were good but had not moved the school from

good to great and sustained their results over time. The purpose of the study was to examine the characteristics and behaviors exhibited by both the highly successful principal and the group of comparison principals (Gray & Streshly, 2008).

Gray and Streshly (2008) found that the highly successful principals exhibited many of the Level 5 Executives characteristics and behaviors. At the conclusion of the research, the authors were able to develop a framework for the highly successful principal which includes the following characteristics (Gray & Streshly, 2008):

- Duality of Professional Will and Personal Humility-Humble leader yet courageous; functions as a safeguard between the school and outside forces
- Ambition for the Success of the School-Selflessly puts school matters first, promotes collegiality and leadership among staff; holds staff development in high regard; shows concern for future leadership
- Compelling Modesty-School successes are contributed to the efforts of faculty and staff; takes responsibility for school failures
- Unwavering Resolve to Do What Must Be Done-Persistent, assertive, influential; regularly involved in the operation of school business

Leadership behaviors of the Level 5 Executives are as follows:

- “First Who...Then What”- getting the right people in place to be the most effective in the school
- Confront the Brutal Facts-Through adversity, the leader believes the school will come out on the winning end

- The Hedgehog Concept-determine the best teachers, and know the people that drive the education engine at school
- Culture of Discipline-Disciplined workers, with disciplined thoughts who have the freedom to take action for the good of the school
- Build Relationships-Key behavior which entails the leader building an environment of collaboration, trust, and professionalism

In the end, Gray and Streshly (2008) found there were many similarities between the star CEOs (Collins, 2001) in the business industry and the highly effective principals in the study. Building relationships was viewed as essential by the principals of the study and they were effective constructing lasting associations. Moreover, the business of education involves a great deal of human contact. So it is of no surprise that building relationships emerged as a key behavior for the principals. Gray and Streshly (2008) call for the principal preparation programs to revisit their curriculums to ensure that the focus is on awareness of the personal components of leadership.

Mullen (2005) conducted a study through survey research in which she solicited novice administrators for feedback on what perceived knowledge they must possess to be an effective leader. The novice leaders were identified from a list provided by the Florida Association of School Administrators (FASA). The survey was sent to 271 leaders in which 115 responded to the correspondence. It examined instructional supervision, school organization, student services, community relations, and school management. Mullen (2005) found that 50% of the novice administrators reported that they spend the majority of their time involved in instructional leadership activities which include

personnel issues, classroom management, effective classroom practices, and data analysis.

Engelking (2008) reported that over the last 20 years, the research on school leadership has specified that the effectiveness of a principal is due in part by the exhibition of a set of administrative skills. The skills have been enumerated by many authors (Marzano, 2003; Marzano et al., 2005; McEwan, 2003; Kouses & Posner, 2002; Bennis, 1997). The National Association of Secondary Principals (NASSP) and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) have identified the following 5 general skills areas: (1) leadership, (2) problem analysis, (3) judgment, (4) sensitivity, and (5) organizational. Specifically, for this review of the literature, the focus will be on leadership and organization as critical skills essential for successful school principalship.

Engelking (2008) provided a vivid description of what leadership looks like in practice. This practical approach allows principals to glean the necessary information and practical application of school leadership. In practice, leadership has been identified as the following:

- Working together to achieve goals either in a group or individually through the use of mentoring and modeling
- Providing a vision along with goal setting by defining the direction for the school
- Evaluating and monitoring individuals or groups in maintaining the focus
- Eliciting participation from all teachers and staff
- Providing accountability for outcomes
- Meeting goals and objectives set by the organization



Engelking (2008) stated that the school leader must keep the big picture in mind as they achieve incremental goals and objectives. Leaders with good leadership skills embrace diversity and appreciate the knowledge and skills of the individuals who participate in accomplishing the goals of the organization. It is only then that the leader is able to share responsibility and appreciation for obtaining the specified goals and outcomes of the organization. In the end, the principal must solicit participation over the long haul and foster relationships with others while remaining respectful of individuals to ensure the direction of the organization is maintained and achieved (Engelking, 2008) .

### Management Skills

Sergiovanni (1995) speaks of leadership metaphorically using the term “technical force.” He discussed five leadership forces which are technical, human, educational, symbolic, and cultural. This research will focus on the technical force aspect of leadership. Sergiovanni (1995) reported that the use of sensible management skills can be a powerful tool in school leadership. Management techniques are related to the technical aspects of leadership. When demonstrating technical force, the principal can be viewed as demonstrating such concepts as being a planner, manager of time, scheduler, manager, and producer of optimum effectiveness for the school. Technical leadership is critical because it ensures that the school will be supervised effectively and efficiently. Williams-Boyd (2002) reported that the skills needed to be an efficient administrator are contingent upon the leader being an effective manager.

### Communication Skills

McEwan (2003) constructed a survey about the skills needed to be a principal. She solicited responses from various proponents of education. Seventy four of the 173

participants of the survey reported the ability to communicate effectively as the most important skill a school principal should possess. McEwan (2003) further expounded upon the topic of effective communication by stating successful principals spend the majority of their day communicating whether it be through listening, speaking, reading, or writing. The author proposes that during the course of a school year, a principal communicates with thousands to tens of thousands of people. McEwan (2003) stated that one of the main responsibilities of the principal is to communicate in a clear, effective, beneficial, useful manner with all of the stakeholders of the school i.e., parents, teachers, students, and community members. If the principal is unable to effectively communicate with people of various backgrounds, socioeconomic status, as well as varying levels of education, reporting to work would be a daily laborious and agonizing experience. McEwan (2003) concluded that the effective principal is a communicator who is sincere and willing to listen, able to sympathize, engage, and unite with students, parents, and teachers, in a constructive and valuable way in addition to having the capability to instruct, present, and inspire individuals in a group setting.

Ramsey (2006) stated, "Leadership and communication are synonymous. If you can't communicate adequately, you can't lead. It's that simple" (p.145). The author also believes communication to be the most important leadership skill by far. Effective communication is solid in nature and is the foundation of every successful organization. Communication is the very essence of schools. It is the responsibility of the principal to ensure communication flows throughout the school and reaches the intended audiences. Unfortunately, the principal is constantly communicating; as a result, any action can be misinterpreted, misconstrued, or misunderstood by others (Ramsey, 2006). Principals

must be cognizant of their surroundings at all times. For that reason, communication from the principal must be well planned, managed appropriately, monitored for results, and revised as needed. Communication is a two way street. Information is dispensed and received. The key to effective communication is to transfer ideas as they were intended, leaving no room for interpretation of the content (Ramsey 2006).

Ramsey (2006) shared several communication lessons which he received from various leaders:

- Plan to use multiple methods of delivery for information to be disseminated.
- Do not provide too much information.
- The use of technical terms should be avoided.
- Cultural sensitivity should be practiced when communicating.
- Acknowledge other view points when appropriate.
- The use of argumentative language is strongly prohibited.
- Remove emotional language so as not to heighten concern.
- Remove sarcasm.

Ramsey (2006) concluded by stating that the leader should never harbor secrets when communicating. Always be open. Communication is the responsibility of the school leader. The key to effective communication is to practice, practice, practice.

Successful school leaders have many roles that must be juggled on a day-to-day basis. For a school to run smoothly, efficiently, and successfully, there must be effective communication among the faculty. Marzano et al. (2005) formed a list of 21 responsibilities of the school principal that surfaced through a meta-analysis of all

available studies from 1970 to the present. One of the responsibilities on the list dealt with communication. Marzano et al. (2005) stated that an administrator should keep the lines of communication open by being accessible to teachers. Providing time for teachers to discuss school issues facilitates an open line of communication between faculty members as well.

### Interpersonal Skills

Gray and Streshly (2008), whose interest was piqued by Collins' (2001) *From Good to Great*, embarked upon a qualitative study in which they interviewed six highly effective principals to investigate why their schools were great. Employing the same methods as Collins, Gray and Streshly (2008) acquired insight pertaining to the characteristics of successful principals. While the authors concede that their research does not provide irrefutable truth about the characteristics of highly effective principals, they believe the research provides strong inference into the types of characteristics needed for success.

Gray and Streshly (2008) reported that a crucial component for principal leadership is the capacity to interact with individuals and develop relationships with students, teachers, parents, and community members. The principal must promote collegiality, teamwork, and dedication with all of the stakeholders that are involved in the educational process. Principals are often responsible for developing relationships with a diverse group of people. By focusing on relationship building, a strong base can be established for maintaining improvement over time. Investing time to motivate and inspire teachers who may be disengaged from the school's mission and goals can have a tremendous impact on the school's climate. The interpersonal relationships established

by the principal are important because they help form the school's culture in ways that promote scholarship, cooperation, and atmosphere where stakeholders are valued and appreciated (Gray & Streshly, 2008).

Daresh and Playko (1994) conducted a study which involved 420 aspiring principals from different states. Each of the participants completed the Beginning Principals' Critical Skills Survey. They were asked to assess the critical skills perceived to be necessary for beginning and aspiring principals, using a five point scale which ranged from extremely critical to irrelevant. This survey was adapted from the Delphi Technique which clustered the questions into three categories: technical skills, socialization skills, and self awareness skills. Experienced principals reported that the most critical skill needed by aspiring principals was to determine who is what in a school setting. By determining the roles and responsibilities of the personnel in the school, the principal can begin to conceptualize a vision for the school. They rated establishing a positive and cooperative relationship with other administrators in the district as the second most critical skill needed. This skill fell within the socialization category on the survey. The least important skill reported by experienced administrators was how to manage food service, custodial, and secretarial staff which were represented within the technical skills category (Daresh & Playko, 1994). The technical area was not rated as high as the other categories; however it was viewed as a skill needed as a principal. The study concluded that although aspiring and experienced principals differed in the skills thought to be most critical, two suggestions were recommended by the participants of the study: (1) improve the type of professional development at the pre-service and induction

level, (2) improving in-service once becoming a principal would have a significant impact on the performance of the administrator.

### Important Attributes of Successful Principals

The attributes of a school principal can be plentiful. By isolating key attributes, principals can begin to hone in the elements of leadership that can facilitate success with school affairs. One of the attributes associated with successful leadership is that of being a visionary. The principal provides the vision for the school (Sergiovanni, 1995). The vision bonds the faculty and staff together and provides the direction for the school. At the forefront of essential attributes is the need for the principal to lead in an ethical and moral manner. Each principal should encompass a moral scope in which to make decisions for the good of the school (Starrat, 2005). Although school officials are often times held to a higher ethical standard than leaders in various fields, the leader is responsible for maintaining and modeling professional ethics for the faculty, staff, and community (Ramsey, 2006). By sustaining a positive disposition, the leader controls the climate of the school in an encouraging fashion (Kimbrough & Burkett, 1990). The members of the school faculty will want to achieve the goals and objectives set by the leader. A positive attitude speaks volumes towards the leadership and the values that are held as important. The ability to organize the efforts of many individuals to produce a specific outcome is an attribute that leaders must possess in order to have an effective and efficient school. The organizational capacity of the leader will determine if the school stays focused on the big picture while incrementally accomplishing the specified short term goals and objectives of the school (Engelking, 2008).

### Visionary

Senge (1999) reported that for thousands of years organizations have focused on the ability to embrace a shared vision which is essential to the growth of the organization. By examining the past and present, the leader is able to provide a laser-like focus of what the school can become, as well as a clear picture of the future. It is impossible for a school to move forward until beliefs are established (Ramsey, 2006). Visionaries consistently identify and share the aspirations of the organization thereby allowing the leader to make the necessary adjustments to the mission and vision of the school. The leader listens to the hopes and dreams of the school and determines the cherished values and beliefs of the staff and community and puts a plan into action to consider, discuss, and incorporate the values into a mission statement (Deal & Peterson, 2007). It is because of the vision of the leader that members of the organization are able to excel and learn. There are very few organizations which have experienced success without the development of goals, a mission, and a vision that have been firmly established throughout the organization.

By the same token, Sergiovanni (2006) expressed the need for leaders to implement what he refers to as the heart, head, and hand of leadership. The *heart* of leadership centers around the personal vision of what the leader believes. The *head* of leadership revolves around theoretical applications put into practice. The *hand* of leadership involves the actions taken by the leader, the decisions that are made, and the strategies that are implemented to be an effective school leader.

Transformational leadership is another form of leadership that has been frequently discussed in the literature. Seyfarth (1999) explained that transformational leadership

entails the leader providing the vision, mission, and goals for the organization and then soliciting support from the members of the organization. One of the goals of the transformational leader is to change the values and beliefs of the members to one of support for the greater good of the organization. Barth (2006) reported that the relationships that exist between the administration and teachers define the type of school culture that is present in the school. A culture of collegiality must be promoted. Schools have many successful teachers who may work well independently. Getting the teachers to work together to produce a community of learning can be difficult. Barth (2006) suggested teachers share ideas, validate one another's accomplishments, and reward those who model collegiality to create a hospitable culture.

The instructional leader must provide, through the vision, an environment that is conducive to high student achievement and can be dictated by the school's culture. Every school has a culture. Culture involves the school's norms, beliefs, and customs (Barth, 2002). The author stated that one of the most difficult responsibilities of the leader is to change a school's existing culture. The culture is very powerful and can work for the good of the school or its detriment. The leader must continuously examine the school's culture to ensure that new innovations, goal setting, and high standards for student achievement are successfully implemented and are in line with the culture of the school. Barth (2002) stated that schools who constantly examine their culture and work to change it into a welcoming place that encourages learning will also find a place where students are successful academically.

The literature and ISLLC standards are specific as to what knowledge, dispositions, and performances are necessary to be an effective school administrator. The



first standard of the ISLLC states that a leader must possess a vision of learning (CCSSO, 1996). The leader of the school must have the attribute of being a visionary for success. The research clearly states that having the ability to effectively communicate the vision of the organization is paramount (Sergiovanni, 1995). Deal and Peterson (2007) stated that the school leader must be a visionary. They have to be able to effectively communicate the goals and aspirations of the school. The communication about the future has to be positive and clearly identified. As the school's purpose and mission is revisited and refined, it is of the utmost importance that the leader continues to communicate effectively and develop support for the vision. Deal and Peterson (2007) stated that by establishing a shared vision, it can serve as a motivator for the staff, community, and the students.

Sergiovanni (2006) speaks of a school leader as having a "thick vision" which is defined as public papers that state the school's vision, mission, goals, and a road map on how to achieve the objectives. The thick vision can be viewed as a contract that details the role and responsibilities of the school. It binds the community, the school leadership, and the school together to form a cohesive group working as a team to realize the vision. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) reported that identifying and stating the vision of the organization is critical. Developing support for the vision that encompasses the best practices for students and teachers will enable and stimulate others to actively pursue the goals set by the leader. According to Mullen (2005), the ISLLC standards support the school in its efforts to join with the community and form a shared "vision of learning" which encompasses student achievement and professional development for the professional staff. Kouzes and Posner (2002) vividly describe the leader as the one who

brings life to the vision, allowing the abstract to become concrete. This can often provide animation to still pictures.

McGrevin and Schmieder (1993) presented a paper at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) in April of 1993. The researchers conducted a study in which they were interested in determining the critical skills needed for novice principals as perceived by other principals and superintendents. Surveys were sent randomly to principals and superintendents in the state of California. Of the 1,125 surveys sent to novice principals, 450 responded. Of the 435 superintendents that were surveyed, 208 responded. The survey consisted of 45 items which asked respondents to determine the important skills associated with the role of principal using a 5 point Likert Scale. The items on the survey were rated from “Critical” to “Irrelevant” by each respondent.

The McGrevin and Schmieder study (1993) revealed that there was strong agreement between principals and superintendents as to the critical skills needed by novice principals. The principals and superintendents identified 10 skills that were perceived as critical. The first seven skills were identical for both principals and superintendents.

1. Having a vision along with understanding of the steps needed to achieve relevant goals.
2. Demonstrating a desire to make a significant difference in the lives of staff and students.
3. Knowing how to evaluate staff, procedures for the task: (What do standards really mean?)
4. Understanding that change is ongoing, and that it results in a continually changing vision of the principalship.

5. Being aware of one's own biases, strengths, and weaknesses.
6. Knowing how to facilitate/conduct group meetings (large and small).
7. Portraying a sense of self confidence on the job.

Although McGrevin and Schmieder (1993) reported the superintendent and principals agreed on the critical skills listed, they deviated when it came to the importance of technical skills. Principals felt that proficiencies in technical skills such as budgeting, scheduling, and working with staff were seen as critical skills. Superintendents recognized that technical skills were needed but rated them in the lower third of the rankings.

8. Knowing how to assess job responsibilities in terms of "real role" of the principalship.
9. Knowing how to encourage involvement by all parties in the educational community.
10. Knowing where the ethical limits exist within the district or building balancing that knowledge with one's own professional values.

The McGrevin and Schmieder (1993) concluded that a collaborative effort has to be made between the university and schools. Universities have to bridge the gap between practice and research that is tied to practical issues in education to ensure that school leaders develop the skills and knowledge base to be successful administrators.

While providing a perspective from the business industry, Bennis (1997) is in agreement with the findings of researchers in the field of education when discussing vision. Bennis (1997) assessed that leadership provides the organization with the vision and the capability to transform the vision into reality. Bennis (1997) further assesses that vision brings life, inspires, and converts purpose into action. The vision may begin as a simple image of what is possible. The vital component to vision is that it must be viewed

as a sensible, plausible, desirable outlook for the organization. Bennis (1997) reported that the leader provides the linkage from the here and now to the future of the organization. The leader, regardless of the field, must assemble the organization and secure acceptance and support of the vision.

### Ethic and Values

In reviewing the literature regarding attributes of successful leaders, the possession of ethical values is often mentioned as a positive attribute for leaders to have. Starrat (2005) explained the leader's values and ethics is a critical component to successful leadership. Badaracco and Ellsworth (1989) affirmed that the values and ethics of an authentic leader are outlined by three attributes: personal ethics, vision, and the belief in others. Strong values equal organizational vision. When the leader is considered trustworthy and of high moral standards, their actions model the commitment to the organization. Ramsey (2006) summarized his thoughts on ethical leadership by stating that leadership is pointless without ethics. He further espouses the following definition of ethical behavior as "doing the right thing at the right time for the right reasons" (Ramsey, 2006, p.159). In the complex nature of today's leadership, that may be simply said. Ramsey (2006) has assessed that those organizations which have a high moral compass experience the most success. He also finds that same statement to be true when dealing with the field of education. Effective school leaders rely on their ethical values when making decisions because they believe in their values. Ethic are apart of the school's culture, and the people of the organization expect the leader to act ethically.

A strong ethical leadership can draw potential employees to the school. People want to work in an environment in which they become peak performers at their jobs

because they are pleased with where they work. When things do not go as planned, it is always recommended that the leader does the right thing (Ramsey, 2006). The ethics of the school leader lets those inside and outside the organization know what is important, how people are cared for, and how the school functions daily. Simply put, “Ethical integrity and moral courage remain the trademarks of effective school leaders” (Ramsey, 2006, p.160).

Kouzes and Posners (2002) developed a questionnaire which surveyed over 75,000 business professionals and executives from all over the world asking them to describe the seven qualities they most look for and admire in a leader. The characteristics of admired leaders were listed in the following order: honest, forward looking, competent, inspiring, and intelligent. These five characteristics have consistently been ranked in the top five since 1987. Honesty was selected more frequently than any of the other leadership characteristics on each questionnaire administered. Trust can be the crux of a leader’s success within the organization. If people trust the leader they will be more likely to follow the leader’s direction (Byrk & Schneider, 2003). Kouzes and Posner (2002) stated that the values and ethics that are displayed by the leader are tied to the leader’s honesty. In addition, Seyfarth (1999) explained that leaders communicate the values that are of significance to others by exemplifying the values through their actions on a daily basis.

Trust is the cornerstone of developing a successful school (Tschannen-Moran, 2007). Without trust, the school ceases to grow and obstructs effectiveness. It is virtually impossible to exist as a leader where there is a lack of trust. This type of environment fosters resentment and impedes academic achievement as well as disruption of the

instructional leader's tenure. Therefore, trust must be developed between the teachers, students, and parents to foster a relationship that is conducive to learning at high levels. By soliciting teachers and parents to participate in school governance, trusting relationship is formed in which all who participate are motivated to work for the common good of the school (Tschannen-Moran, 2007). The principal is very influential in setting the climate for the school. The culture is also significantly impacted by the behavior of the principal. As a result, if the school is to become a place that is trustworthy, the principal is responsible for producing and maintaining trusting relationships (Tschannen-Moran, 2007).

Maxcy (2002) used the ISLLC Standards for School Leadership (1996) as a reference to help administrators make sensible moral and ethical decisions. One of the ISLLC Standards pertains to the ethics of the school administrator. Maxcy (2002) reported that due to the intricate nature of educational leadership, along with the complex moral and ethical decisions which must be made, experts have determined more knowledge and comprehension is needed pertaining to ethics. Ethical behavior involves more than just acquiring factual knowledge about ethics. It requires the administrator to know how to be ethical and moral and determine a leadership model to guide decision making. When the administrator fully understands the origin of moral and ethical dilemmas, then the administrator is able to make practical and ethical decisions (Maxcy, 2002).

Ethical leadership requires the principal to exude morals and ethics in their leadership which requires a deep understanding of humanity. Although educational leadership is a multisided notion, it is important to note that no single model of ethical

practice will answer all ethical and moral questions. As situations arise, it is necessary for the leader to assess what is going on which may require changing their leadership style in accordance to the situation (Maxcy, 2002). The administrator must have the knowledge and skills to think and act ethically and morally.

Maxcy (2002) speaks about the ISLLC Standards being very significant in providing the field of education with standards upon which to function. The standards delineated the knowledge, dispositions, and performances required of a school administrator. More specifically, ISLLC Standard 5, which pertains to the ethics of educational leadership, is considered of the utmost importance for administrators in the pursuit of becoming ethical leaders (Maxcy, 2002). The ethics standards provide the measurement tool for which to measure the other standards (see Appendix B).

A detailed examination of ISLLC Standard 5 reveals a host of assumptions required of the school principal under the auspice of ethical leadership (Maxcy, 2002). The school leader must be knowledgeable about ethics, which includes the comprehension of the framework and perspectives of ethics, ethical codes; the role leadership plays in today's society, and the history of education which supplies such knowledge. Maxcy (2002) explained that administrators must also be knowledgeable about the rights of others and the common good for all citizens.

The Bill of Rights is a piece of legislation which serves as a cornerstone for justice for all people. The ethical school administrator is charged with upholding the principles of the Bill of Rights when making ethical decisions concerning the school. According to Maxcy (2002), ISLLC Standard 5 also holds the school administrator responsible for decisions that are made. No longer is the school board, trustees, or other

agencies responsible for the ethical decisions made by the principal. The ethical standards also stress the need for the school leader to be caring and compassionate towards embracing their rights in addition to justice and fairness (Maxcy, 2002).

The leaders must develop and display an ethical code to be used in work situations. School leaders are held to a higher standard when it comes to ethics. The criterion used to evaluate a school leader is much more stringent than leaders in other fields. There appears to be a zero tolerance mentality for school personnel who violate the public's trust (Ramsey, 2006). Maxcy (2002) encourages school leaders to begin to formulate their own personal set of ethics. The school leader serves as a role model for ethics within the school community. The leader must motivate others to reach the goals and objectives set by the organization. The administrator should be of high moral fiber inside and outside of the school and exemplify an image which has a positive outcome on the school.

Starrat (2005) discussed five levels of ethical enactment which exists within an organization. The first level of enactment deals with that of being a human being and the humanity of others. Ethical leadership requires the leader of the organization to take into account the humanity of other people. People are delicate individuals who must be treated with respect and sacredness. The lack of respect shown to another person is an ethical violation. One which should be strongly avoided (Starrat, 2005).

The second level of ethical enactment for the educational leader is a "citizen-public servant" (Starrat, 2005). The educational leader is a citizen who is required to respect the rights of others. The citizen-public servant acts in such away that one's actions are for the good of others and looks for the overall common good, as opposed to



benefiting one's self or benefiting one individual at the cost of others. The citizen- public servant is entrusted with acting responsibly on behalf of the public. They are charged with ensuring that the democratic process works. By violating the rights of others, the citizen-public servant is acting in a negligible manner of which is unethical (Starrat, 2005).

The third level of ethical enactment pertains to the ethical leader acting as an educator (Starrat, 2005). The leader is required to be well versed in curriculum matters at a deep and rigorous level. In addition, the leader must stay abreast of the most recent advances in the profession. The leader must be able to translate educational jargon into terminology that can be understood by a lay person. It can then be concluded that the act of educating is in and of itself an ethical activity which requires the school leader to act in a moral and ethical manner at all times (Starrat, 2005).

The fourth level of ethical enactment has to do with being an educational administrator (Starrat, 2005). As the administrator, the leader has control of the processes which affect the core work of the school in imparting knowledge to students. These processes are biased and can either advance or derail the honor of teaching and learning. In some cases they do both. At times, they work for the good of the student or to the dismay of the other student. The educational administrator must challenge the system and take risks to avoid being accused of "ethical laziness" in regard to allowing some to benefit from the educational process at the expense of others (Starrat, 2005).

The fifth level of ethical enactment revolves around the educational administrator as a leader. At this level, the leader is practical and gets down to business (Starrat, 2005). The leader seeks out ideas and looks to a brighter future for the common good of the

school. The leader also provides opportunities for teacher and student gratification. All aspects of ethical enactment, humanity, citizen, educator, and administrator are at a heightened, deeper level of understanding towards the commitment to educating students. All levels of ethical enactment are dependent upon and absorb the prior level of enactment (Starrat, 2005). In accordance with the levels, educational administrators must act responsibly for the citizenry in which they serve. It would be difficult to be a good citizen and not take into account the rights of another. The work of educating students is human work, in addition to the work of being a public servant working for the good of the people (Starrat, 2005).

The ethical administrator must ensure that all within the school are being treated humanely which is for the common good of the school. At each level, it is imperative to see how the levels absorb the prior level which leads to leadership (Starrat, 2005). In any case, the leader must be humane when dealing with the school and the community. The leader has to validate each individual by exhibiting respect and dignity to all. Starrat (2005) concluded that the leader has to consider the ethics of the organization, which at times imposes on the rights and creativity of individuals within the school. The educational leader encourages others to reach beyond set norms to embrace learning at higher levels. The end result is mutual respect of leaders, teachers, and community working together to create a harmonious ethical working relationship and environment (Starrat, 2005).

#### Positive Disposition

A positive disposition has also been viewed as an attribute that is considered to be of importance for people in leadership positions (Kouzes & Posners, 2002). The leader

sets the tone for the organization whether it is a positive or negative one. As a result, it is necessary for the leader to remain positive and project optimism about the future.

Kimbrough and Burkett (1990) are very clear when they stated that a principal must have a positive attitude. Negative attitudes do not prevail over the long run and are counterproductive to the overall mission of the school.

### Organization

Engelking (2008) speaks about organizational skills revolving around time and task management. The author is informative in that he provides a practical application as to what organization looks like in the work environment. Engelking (2008) reported that, in a practical situation, organizational skills look like the following:

- Be cognizant of when to plan
- Allocate resources in such a way as to maximize the funding
- Take immediate steps when a crisis arises
- Practice time and task management
- Develop process maps to determine procedures as well as construct schedules to ensure work is done efficiently and effectively
- Sort out short term problems while being ever mindful of long term goals
- Assesses programs constantly to determine their feasibility
- Know when to delegate and to whom
- Examine small issues to determine its effect on the big picture

Effective school leaders should be proactive catalysts while at the same time monitoring progress and providing the focus without feeling the need to be in control of every situation (Engelking, 2008). They reward others for a job well done, remain

positive, provide suggestions when needed, remove barriers, and give constructive feedback when warranted. Possessing organizational skills ensures the organization runs effectively and efficiently in meeting the long and short term goals and objectives of the organization (Engelking, 2008).

### Women in School Administration

It is important to discuss the role women play in school administration. Their leadership abilities greatly impact the way schools are lead in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Though men and women are required to perform the same administrative tasks, it is the way the tasks are completed that spurs on the discussion of the differences experienced between the two sexes in school administration. Women and men alike agree the differences in leadership are rooted in one's personal experiences, background, knowledge acquisition, and gender. The following discussion reviews the literature to describe women's participation in school administration.

In the history of education, the role of women in educational administration has evolved over time. In the three decades prior to 1930, women in administration seemed to flourish. According to Shakeshaft (1987), women predominately held 55 % of elementary principalships and almost 8% of the secondary principalships. By the close of the 1930s, the presence of women in school administration began to decline. Shakeshaft (1987) reported negative attitudes towards women and their ability to lead began to surface, resulting in women's limited access to school administration. These negative perceptions were generally accepted by men and women alike. Women were believed to be constitutionally unable to provide discipline and order, due in part to their smaller

stature and lack of physical strength. Over the next few decades, women began to resurface in school administration.

Thompson-Witmer (2006) reported that starting in the 1960s, women moved up the corporate ladder by being aggressive and assertive mirroring the actions of their male counterparts. Women took pride in such assertiveness and rarely sought the assistance of other women in the field. Young and Skrla (2003) reported that as the 1970s approached, women in education were met with a positivistic and purposeful period in history. By the 1980s and 1990s, the work of women in education had evolved into a very sophisticated function which was due in part to the feminist advocacy regarding women in education. According to Thompson-Witmer (2006), today's female leaders have pulled away from being assertive to a more subtle approach which is viewed as more natural for women. Though women are no longer relegated to the position of teacher, there are many opportunities in educational administration in which women are able to attain positions at mid-management levels. Women have revamped their career direction and developed leadership styles, models, and practices which meet their gender needs. The tide has turned in favor of women in leadership positions as research is showing that the qualities women bring to the workplace are those that are most sought after by schools and universities (Thompson-Witmer, 2006).

Helgesen (1990) stated that women have a slight advantage over men when it comes to the area of administrative responsibility; due in part to their ability to simply relate to assignments and transactions with ease. Helgesen (1990) reported that most women have mastered the administrative skills of men and moved on to provide a model of leadership which was guided by their "feminine principles." Although these feminine

principles are not exclusive to women, they were named such because research has identified them as principles associated with the way women do certain tasks.

Fundamentally, the job of being a school administrator is not predisposed to either gender. The tasks to be completed by a school administrator remain gender neutral. It is the way the tasks are to be performed which gives light to a gender point of view.

Although the tasks performed by women and men remain very similar, it is the emphasis and importance in which each places on the tasks to be accomplished which indicates differences among the sexes (Shakeshaft, 1987). Thompson-Witmer (2006) argues that even though this point should be self-evident, women should remind themselves that they are as competent and capable as men and no administrative task should be viewed as unachievable. Interestingly, Shakeshaft (1987) reported that in examining the literature on the experiences of men and women in education administration, one might surmise the two work at dissimilar professions because of the contrast in leadership styles and the activities each participates in on a day-to-day basis. Admittedly, Shakeshaft (1987) focused primarily on the literature which documented the differences between men and women in administration. It is her belief that the “no difference” between genders in school administration literature only examined white males and as an afterthought asked women if they did the same tasks as males. Shakeshaft (1987) stated that the women of the no difference literature were viewed based on a male framework which leads to the finding of no differences.

Smulyan (2000) conducted a case study of 3 female principals. Two of the principals worked in public schools while the third was the head of an elite private school. Each had been a principal for at least 5 years. Smulyan spent one day a week

with each principal for the period of one year. The author concluded that gender is a very powerful component in the experiences of each of the principals in the study. As Smulyan (2000) analyzed the data, she discovered the principals in the study did not appear to include gender as a theoretical or political lens. When the principals were met with gender issues, they preferred not to give gender much influence and did not view gender as a means of explaining their behavior or experiences. The principals appeared to view gender with little acknowledgement and suggested the focus on gender seemed to insinuate their lack of ability to perform the functions as principals in their schools as well as in their personal lives.

In conclusion, Smulyan (2000) reported that gender provides important and insightful views in the role of the principal. Gender is one factor that principals find that must be juggled everyday and in varying situations. Each principal in the study experienced gender concerns differently as determined by her personal experiences. Although female principals must be mindful of school structures, as well as male influenced norms, they can impact education and facilitate change within the system by responding to their convictions about the best practices in education (Smulyan, 2000).

Shakeshaft (1987) reported the literature supports the notion that women spend a significant amount of their time focusing on curricular issues, interacting with the student body and faculty on a frequent and consistent basis. They employ the faculty to participate in a democratic process of decision making and ensure that the school is concentrating on producing a people-centered community which is contrary to male administrators (Shakeshaft, 1987). Smulyan (2000) surmised that since most female administrators spend more time in the classroom as teachers and in situations which

require a laser-like focus on curriculum and instruction, women tend to view their job as that of a master teacher or instructional leader as opposed to a manager. In contrast, men receive a greater amount of satisfaction from participating in administrative duties (Gross & Trask, 1976). Female principals place a great deal of importance on teaching and student learning, organizing curricular programs, becoming familiar with teachers and students as individuals, and assisting in their personal development (Shakeshaft, 1987). Women administrators have reported, in research and face-to-face interviews, their feelings of being different from male administrators. Women stated that they pay attention more, are patient, dedicated, approachable, honest, considerate, vulnerable, talkative, and form relationships with students, teachers, and community members (Ozga, 1993). Shakeshaft (1987) concluded the same findings:

Although the activities that men and women undertake to fulfill their job responsibilities are primarily the same, there are some differences in the ways they spend their time, in their day to day interactions, in their priorities that guide their actions, in the perceptions of them by others, and in the satisfaction they derive from work. (p. 170)

Shakeshaft (1987) conceptualized the following female work behaviors to describe a woman's experiences in education. First, relationships with other people are essential to every act of the female administrator. Women tend to spend their time meeting with people. They communicate, care, and motivate to create a more productive staff. In addition, parents are more pleased when women are in charge of the school or school district, thus soliciting more parental involvement (Shakeshaft, 1987). Second, teaching and learning are the primary focus of women administrators. Instructional



leadership is a central theme for the female administrator. Her wealth of knowledge concerning teaching techniques and strategies are more instrumental than men. She is aware of individual student progress while emphasizing student achievement. The school climate in schools run by female principals is conducive to learning as well as quiet, calm, and clean, which supports high student achievement (Shakeshaft, 1987).

Gender is a single factor in establishing a person's leadership style. Even though gender does affect the female administrators' global view, school, personal experience, and methods of interacting with others, it is one of many variables that impact her way of behaving and effectiveness (Schmuck, 1981). Though the tasks to be completed are achieved by men and women administrators, the degree of importance differs, thus some tasks receive more attention, depending on the gender of the administration (Shakeshaft, 1987). Women and men differ in the way they lead as school administrators. As a result, women have a differing administrative style which has been found to be conducive to good schooling (Shakeshaft, 1987).

### Summary of Literature

In summary, the literature has revealed that The National Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008 (Wallace Foundation, 2010) is research based and serves as a framework to prepare administrators for leadership. The standards detail the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to be a leader. Several studies have been conducted and support the notion that practicing administrators report having knowledge of and performing the ISLLC standards (Barnett, 2004). Though the standards are implemented at varying levels from state to state, they are considered a blueprint for preparing administrators for the critical role of being school leaders. The literature is rich with

examples of the importance of certain knowledge, skills, and attributes associated with successful school leadership. In the knowledge category, Marzano et al. (2005) stated that the principal must have extensive knowledge of the curriculum. The essential skills needed to be a successful principal include leadership ability and the art of effective communication (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Vision and good communication skills are reported as important attributes of successful principals (Seyfarth, 1999). The literature needs to be expanded on the specific types of knowledge, skills, and attributes required by a principal. This study will enhance the current research by providing information on what principals perceive as the necessary knowledge, skills, and attributes needed to be a successful school leader. This information should be directly linked to principal preparation programs to ensure that practical coursework is being taught to aspiring principals. By supplying this information, principals can begin to conceptualize some of the essential knowledge required for a principal of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

The main purpose of this study is to examine the knowledge, skills, and attributes perceived as essential in being a successful school principal (as stated in Chapter 1). The methods used to answer the research questions are detailed in this chapter. The chapter is arranged into four components (a) selection of the participants, (b) instrumentation, (c) data collection, and (d) data analysis.

The current study is a section of a larger, multi-phase study of principals in the Gulf Coast Region of Southeast Texas which was employed by a large research university located in the region. The Principal as a Successful Leader Project (Waxman, 2008) was designed to understand some of the multiple issues that principals perceive as crucial factors in defining administrative success. Such topics include student discipline, teacher supervision, obstacles and frustrations, and leadership. The findings from this study will be used to inform principal preparation programs within the university as well as the practice of acting school administrators. The Successful Leader Project was designed to incorporate three stages which are as follows:

1. Phase 1 - quantitative survey research of principals' attitudes and perceptions.
2. Phase 2 -longitudinal study of how those attitudes and perceptions change over time.
3. Phase 3 - development, implementation, and evaluation of a new principal development program based on research from the two phases.

Although the larger study focuses on many important issues facing the principal such as parental involvement, student discipline, teacher supervision, as well as obstacles and frustration, the current study will focus exclusively on the knowledge, skills and attributes (KSAs) that are perceived as critical to be a successful school administrator. The responses ascertained from the Successful Principals Project pertaining to the KSAs were quantitative.

### Participants

The participants for this study are current campus principals from a large metropolitan area located in the south central region of the U.S. There were 310 existing school principals who responded to the survey. Table 1 represents the varied characteristics of the practicing principals who responded to the survey. The respondents were categorized by gender with 59% identified as female and 41% identified as male. The ethnicity of the respondents included multiple ethnic backgrounds, 66% Caucasian, 22% African American, 12% Hispanic, and a very small percentage of Asian and other mixed ethnicities.

The principals in this study work in a variety of school settings which include both elementary and secondary schools. The schools represented a mixture of suburban (149), urban (140), and rural (21) schools. There were 70 high school principals, 67 middle level school principals, 151 elementary school principals, and 22 mixed-grade level principals. For the purposes of this study, high school is defined as grades 9-12 or 10-12; middle school is defined as grades 6-9, and elementary school is defined as grades pre-kindergarten – 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Even though 5<sup>th</sup> grade has traditionally been found at the elementary level, several schools in the study have 5<sup>th</sup> grade students represented in the

middle school category. The 22 mixed-grade level schools have incorporated a variety of grade levels which do not adhere to the traditional grade classifications of most public schools in Texas. Of the 310 respondents, 149 were suburban schools, 140 were urban schools, and 21 were from rural schools.

The principals in this study were asked to self-report their school's accountability rating. The accountability rating in the state of Texas is based on the following criteria: academic performance on the TAKS test by various subgroup populations (i.e., socio-economics, limited English proficiency, and the ethnicity of student groups), drop-out rate, and student attendance. There were 27 Exemplary, 94 Recognized, 145 Acceptable, and 7 Low-Performing schools according to the principal's self reporting of their school's rating. Of the 310 respondents, 33 did not report a school rating. Twenty of the principals were from private schools, 12 were from out of state schools which are not regulated by the Texas accountability system, 2 were new schools and had not received a state rating, and 3 were from schools that served a special needs population which is exempt from the Texas accountability system. Finally, there were 5 principals who did not report an accountability rating. We were able to determine this information, however, since school ratings are a part of the public record.

In examining the principals' varying levels of experience as a school principal, it was determined that a wide range of experience existed amongst the principals. The principals' experience as a school principal ranged from 1 to 30 years of experience. Fifty-two percent of the principals had 1-5 years of experience as an administrator and 47% had from 6-30 years worth of experience. Overall, the principals reported their amount of experience in the field of education as spanning from 5 years to 40 years of

experience. Nearly 40% of the principals had 11 to 20 years of experience in education (see Table 1).

Table 1

Attributes of Schools and Principals Represented in the Survey

**Principals' Characteristics:**

<b>Gender</b>	<u>Female</u> 83	<u>Male</u> 127					
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<u>White</u> 203	African- <u>American</u> 66	<u>Hispanic</u> 36	<u>Other</u> 5			
<b>Age Range</b>	<u>≤30</u> 2	<u>31-37</u> 19	<u>38-45</u> 29	<u>46-55</u> 45	<u>56-62</u> 22	<u>≥63</u> 4	<u>Unreported</u> 2
<b>School Characteristics</b>	<u>All Schools</u> 310	<u>High School</u> 70	<u>Middle Level</u> 67	<u>Elem-entary</u> 151	<u>Mixed Grades</u> 22		
<b>School Setting Urbanicity</b>	<u>Rural</u> 21	<u>Suburban</u> 149	<u>Urban</u> 140				
<b>Years of Exp. Principal</b>	<u>0-5years</u> 157	<u>≥5</u> 140					
<b>School Type</b>	<u>Public</u> 282	<u>Private</u> 20	<u>Charter</u> 8				
<b>Texas Accountability Rating</b>	<u>Exem- plary</u> 27	<u>Recog- nized</u> 94	<u>Accept- able</u> 145	<u>Low- Performing</u> 7	<u>Exempt</u> *37		

\* Note: The 37 schools exempt from TEA reporting are comprised of: 20 private and 12 out-of-state schools that are not subject to the Texas accountability system, 2 new Texas public schools that were not rated in their first year of operation, and 3 schools serving special student populations that are exempt from accountability ratings.

### Instrument

The survey was administered by graduate students in the Educational Leadership program at a major university located in a large urban city in the south central region of the U.S. The students were trained on how to administer the survey and limited the survey to practicing principals. It included a large range of questions pertaining to the principals' perceptions of successful school leadership. In its entirety, the survey instrument included 115 items. Of the 115 items, 22 gathered information pertaining to the principals' background and school demographics as well as experiential data. The information can be categorized into three levels of measurement: nominal (e.g., gender), ordinal (e.g., 5 or less years as a principal), and ratio (the number of years as a principal). There were 62 Likert-type questions, as well as 31 open-ended questions, which required descriptive responses from the principals.

The Principal as a Successful Leader Project was originally conceived to give clinical experience to the Master's of Education students. The survey questions were open-ended, which provided a standardized framework for the Master's students to participate in engaging interactions with the principals they surveyed. The topics selected for the survey were developed by principals who allowed them to hone in on topics which they felt were critical areas to the field of education. After a semester's time, the survey questions were revisited to narrow the focus of the survey.

The current study focuses on Section H of the Successful School Leadership Project. The survey asked each of the 310 principals to rate on a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being the most and 1 being the least, which of following represents the important knowledge, skills, and attributes a principal should have to be a successful principal. The

survey included three quantitative questions about the knowledge, skills, and attributes that are needed to be a successful principal. The survey asked principals to rate on a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being the most and 1 being the least, which of following represents the important *knowledge* a principal should have to be a successful principal? (see Appendix A)

- Knowledge of people
- Curriculum
- Law
- Fiscal

Which of following represents important *skills* a principal should have to be a successful principal?

- Interpersonal
- Communication
- Leadership
- Management
- Technical

Which of following represents important *attributes* a principal should have to be a successful principal?

- Positive disposition
- Visionary
- Ethics and Values
- Good Communicator
- Organize



### Data Collection

The Principal as a Successful Leader Project is a detailed survey which requires skilled interviewers to accurately record the information imparted by the 310 participating principals. This study is strictly based on archival data. The interviewers of this study were Master's students from the University of Houston's Educational Leadership program. The survey was administered over an 18 month period as a part of core course requirements.

During the course of the study, several principals inadvertently completed the survey more than once causing the survey information to be duplicated. At the completion of the survey, it was found that 178 principals were administered the survey more than one time. As a result, the duplicate responses were deleted from the current research. Although the duplicate information was deleted from the final database, the information proved to be of great value for it provided invaluable knowledge about the test-retest reliability. In addition, the duplicate surveys helped to establish instrument reliability in accurately capturing the beliefs of the respondents irregardless of the interviewer. In instances involving a principal being interviewed more than once, the first response was used in the final database. The final sample included 310 practicing principals.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) will be used for all data analyses. Descriptive statistics will be reported on all variables. Analyses of variance (ANOVA) will be used to determine if there are statistically significant differences on the survey items by principal and school demographics. A three-way ANOVA will be utilized to analyze the data. There are three dependent variables which will be analyzed.

The variables are communication, leadership, and fiscal and legal. Three independent variables exist as well. The independent variables are sex, experience, and TAKS rating. The ANOVA will look at interactions which are present between groups.

### Summary

The current research is a part of a larger study entitled the Principal as a Success Leader Project. Section H pertains to the knowledge, skills, and attributes principals perceive as important in being a successful principal. Three hundred ten practicing principals participated in the survey. The participants were selected by graduate students in the Educational Leadership program at the University of Houston. The survey was conducted over an 18 month period. The data collection procedures were discussed as well as the methods of data analysis.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

This study examined the perceptions of principals about the knowledge, skills, and attributes perceived as important to be a successful school principal. Three specific factors were examined Communication, Leadership, and Fiscal and Legal. In investigating these factors, the researcher wanted to determine if there were differences by Gender, Years of Experience (YP), and TAKS rating on the Communication and Leadership construct. In addition, the researcher wanted to determine if there were differences by Gender, Years of Experience (YP), and TAKS rating on the Fiscal and Legal construct. This chapter presents the results of the data analysis.

#### Demographics

The participants for this study are principals from a large metropolitan area located in the south central region of the U.S. There were 309 school principals who responded to the survey. The respondents were categorized by gender with 59% identified as female and 41% identified as male. The principals represented the following ethnicity groups: 66% Caucasian, 22% African American, and 12% Hispanic. The principals in this study include both elementary and secondary schools as well as a mixture of suburban, urban, and rural schools. There were 70 high school principals, 67 junior high school principals, 151 elementary school principals, and 22 mixed-grade level principals.

For the purposes of this study, high school is defined as grades 9-12 or 10-12; junior high school is defined as grades 6-9, and elementary school is defined as grades pre kindergarten – 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Even though 5<sup>th</sup> grade has traditionally been found at the elementary level, several schools in the study have 5<sup>th</sup> grade students represented in the

junior high school category. The 22 mixed-grade level schools have incorporated a variety of grade levels which do not adhere to the traditional grade classifications of most public schools in Texas. Of the 309 respondents, 149 were suburban schools, 140 were urban schools, while 21 were from rural schools. Age groups of respondents were  $< 30 = 42.39\%$ ,  $31-37 = 55.14\%$ , with six principals not responding to the question (see Table 1).

### Data Collection Procedures

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to draw conclusions from the sample population tested. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to code and tabulate scores collected from the survey and provide summarized values where applicable including the median, mean, variance, and standard deviation. In addition, demographic data was processed using frequency statistics. Finally, a three-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to detect mean differences between levels of the independent variables.

### Results

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the principals' perception of the importance of knowledge, skills, and attributes. Table 2 describes the means and standard deviations in rank order for each of the factors. The principals ranked each factor as being an important knowledge, skill, and attribute to possess. As a result, further analysis was conducted to extract correlations in accordance with the three hypotheses of the study. Like factors were combined to form a Communication construct which consists of Interpersonal, Communication, Positive Disposition, Ethical, and Good Communicator. The Leadership construct was formed based on the following factors:

Leadership, Management, Curriculum, Technical, Visionary, and Organizer. The Fiscal and Legal construct consists of the Fiscal and Legal factors. These constructs will allow three-way between-group analysis of variance to be conducted to gather detailed information involving the impact the Communication, Leadership, and Fiscal and Legal constructs has on gender, years of experience (YP), and TAKS rating. Knowledge of People was considered as a separate factor as it did not load properly with the other constructs.

Table 2

## Rank Order Mean Scores of Perceived KSAs of Principals

	KSAs	Mean	Standard Deviation
Communication	Knowledge	4.90	.350
Ethics	Attribute	4.89	.367
Knowledge of People	Knowledge	4.87	.446
Good Communicator	Attribute	4.86	.381
Interpersonal	Skill	4.84	.414
Leadership	Skill	4.83	.447
Positive Disposition	Attribute	4.81	.489
Visionary	Attribute	4.74	.513
Management	Skill	4.50	.689
Organizer	Attribute	4.46	.697
Curriculum	Knowledge	4.44	.722
Law	Knowledge	4.11	.867
Fiscal	Knowledge	4.03	.895
Technical	Skill	3.68	.925

N=307

A principal component factor analysis was conducted on the 14-item survey to explore and possibly extract salient discrete measures. From the analysis, three constructs surfaced with Eigenvalues greater than 1.0. The Eigenvalues for Factors 1, 2, and 3 were 4.768, 1.854, and 1.108 respectively. The three factors accounted for 55% of the variance and the three factors were named: Communication, Leadership, and Fiscal and Legal. The factor loadings for the 12 items are reported in Table 3.

Table 3

Rotated Component Matrix

Factor	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3
Knowledge	.799		
Curriculum		.558	
Law			.829
Fiscal			.806
Interpersonal	.766		
Communication	.631		
Leadership		.656	
Management		.677	
Technical		.536	.392
Positive Disposition	.556	.455	
Visionary		.684	
Ethical	.612		
Good Communicator	.647		
Organizer		.560	
Variance	34%	13%	8%

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Table 4 reflects Cronbach's Alpha reliability analysis which was run on the three extracted constructs and the results were encouraging. Cronbach's Alpha was used to test each of the constructs for internal consistency. Specifically, for Communication, alpha (6) = .796, Leadership (6) = .751, and Fiscal and Legal = (6) = .730. These results suggest that the three extracted constructs are reliable and valid.

Table 4

Reliability for Communication, Leadership, and Fiscal and Legal

	Number	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean	Standard Deviation
Communication	298	6	.796	4.86	.291
Leadership	301	6	.751	4.44	.457
Fiscal and Legal	308	2	.730	4.07	.781

Table 5 presents a zero-order correlation table indicating a significant relationship between Communication and Leadership ( $r = .458$ ,  $p < .01$ ), Communication and Fiscal and Legal ( $r = .258$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and Leadership and Fiscal and Legal ( $r = .523$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

Table 5

Zero-Order Correlation of Extracted Dependent Variables

Variable	Leadership	Fiscal/Legal
Communication	.458**	.258**
Leadership		.523**

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Three constructs serve as the dependent variable for all hypotheses which are Communication, Leadership, and Fiscal and Legal. A composite score was created from each group of questions to represent the related construct. The composite score was derived by adding up responses from questions associated with that construct and then divided by the number of questions, producing a composite coefficient. The composite score ranged from 1 to 5.

### Research Question 1

Research Question 1: Are there differences by principal gender, years of experience (YP), and TAKS rating on principals' perceptions of Communication (Interpersonal, Communication, Positive Disposition, Ethical, and Good Communicator) needed to be a successful school leader? To answer the first research question, a three-way ANOVA of Communication was performed to determine between-group relationships. Prior to running the formal ANOVA test, evaluation of the independent variable found 44 rows with missing data. These participants were removed,  $N = 265$ .

Table 6 represents a three-way between-groups analysis of variance that was conducted to explore the impact of Gender, Years of Experience (YP), and TAKS rating had on Communication, as measured by the extracted communication construct from the Perceptions of Successful School Leadership Questionnaire. Participants were grouped by Gender (male, female), Number of Years of Experience (YP: 0 to 5 years and greater than 5 years) and TAKS rating (1.00, Exemplary, 2 = Recognized, and 3 = Acceptable). Principals were grouped according to their reported years of experience as a school principal. Groups were further divided based on the literature (Fuller & Young, 2009). The 0-5 year category represents the novice principals while the remaining group



represents principals with more experience. Results from the test were; for Gender  $F(1,233) = 1.084, p = .299$ , YP  $F(1,233) = 2.289, p = .132$ , TAKS rating  $F(1,233) = .172, p = .842$ , Gender \* YP  $F(2,233) = .012, p = .914$ , Gender \* TAKS rating  $F(2,233) = .305, p = .737$ , YP \* TAKS rating  $F(2,233) = 1.10, p = .335$ , and Gender \* YP \* TAKS rating  $F(2,233) = 2.125, p = .122$ .

Table 6

Between-Subjects Effects Indicating No Significant Difference between Gender, YP, TAKS rating, and Communication

Test of Between-Subjects Effects					
Type III					
Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	.822 <sup>a</sup>	11	0.075	0.992	0.455
Intercept	3561.481	1	3561.481	47252.476	0.000
Gender	0.082	1	0.082	1.084	0.299
YP	0.173	1	0.173	2.289	0.132
TAKS rating	0.026	2	0.013	0.172	0.842
Gender * YP	0.001	1	0.001	0.012	0.914
Gender * TAKS rating	0.046	2	0.023	0.305	0.737
YP * TAKS rating	0.166	2	0.083	1.1	0.335
Gender * YP * TAKS rating	0.32	2	0.16	2.125	0.122
Error	17.562	233	0.075		
Total	5840.556	245			
Corrected Total	18.384	244			

a. R Squared = .045 (Adjusted R Squared = .000)

There was no significant difference found between Gender and the Communication construct  $p > .01$ . There was no significant difference found between Years of Experience (YP) and the Communication construct  $p > .01$ . There was no

significant difference found between TAKS rating and the Communication construct  $p > .01$ . A significant difference was not found to exist as it relates to the Communication construct between Gender and Years of Experience  $p > .01$ . A significant difference was not found to exist between Gender and TAKS rating  $p > .01$ . Nor was there a significant difference between Years of Experience (YP) and TAKS rating  $p > .01$ . Finally, a between-groups analysis was done between Gender, Years of Experience (YP), and TAKS rating. It was determined that no significant between-groups differences were present in the Communication construct  $p > .01$ .

## Research Question 2

Research Question 2: Are there difference by principal Gender, Years of Experience (YP), and TAKS rating on principals' perceptions of Leadership (Leadership, Management, Curriculum, Technical, Visionary, and Organizer) needed to be a successful school principal? To answer research question two, a quantitative approach was taken using a three-way ANOVA analysis on Leadership. The three-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of Gender, Years of Experience (YP), and TAKS rating had on Leadership, as measured by the extracted Leadership construct from the Perceptions of Successful School Leadership Questionnaire. Participants were grouped by Gender (male, female), number of Years of Experience (YP: 0 to 5 years and greater than 5 years) and TAKS rating (1.00, Exemplary, 2 = Recognized, and 3 = Acceptable) results from the test were; for Gender  $F(1,233) = .522$ ,  $p = .471$ , YP  $F(1,233) = 4.152$ ,  $p = .043$ , TAKS Rating  $F(1,233) = .400$ ,  $p = .671$ , Gender \* YP  $F(2,233) = .020$ ,  $p = .888$ , Gender \* TAKS Rating  $F(2,233) = 1.642$ ,  $p = .196$ , YP \* TAKS Rating  $F(2,233) = 5.252$ ,  $p = .006$ , and Gender \* YP \*

TAKS Rating  $F(2,233) = .824$ ,  $p = .440$ . Thus, there was a main effect of condition of Years of Experience and a significant interaction of Years of Experience (YP) and TAKS rating. Refer to Table 7 for details.

Table 7

Between-Subjects Effects Indicating No Significant Difference between Gender, YP, TAKS rating, and Leadership

Test of Between-Subjects Effects					
Type III					
Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	3.408 <sup>a</sup>	11	0.310	1.755	0.063
Intercept	3019.059	1	3019.059	17103.165	0.000
Gender	0.092	1	0.092	.522	0.471
YP	0.733	1	0.733	4.152	0.043
TAKS rating	0.141	2	0.071	0.400	0.671
Gender * YP	0.004	1	0.004	0.020	0.888
Gender * TAKS rating	0.580	2	0.290	1.642	0.196
YP * TAKS rating	1.854	2	0.927	5.252	0.006
Gender * YP * TAKS rating	0.291	2	0.145	2.824	0.440
Error	41.482	235	0.177		
Total	4994.278	247			
Corrected Total	44.890	246			

a. R Squared = .076 (Adjusted R Squared = .033)

As presented in Figure 1, mean scores for TAKS rating groups were Exemplary ( $M = 4.75$ ,  $SD = 0.602$ ), Recognized ( $M = 4.52$ ,  $SD = 0.696$ ), and Acceptable ( $M = 4.51$ ,  $SD = 0.696$ ). Based on these results, there is, a significant difference in the Leadership construct (Leadership, Management, Curriculum, Technical, Visionary, and Organize) between number of Years of Experience (YP), but the effect is dependent on TAKS rating.

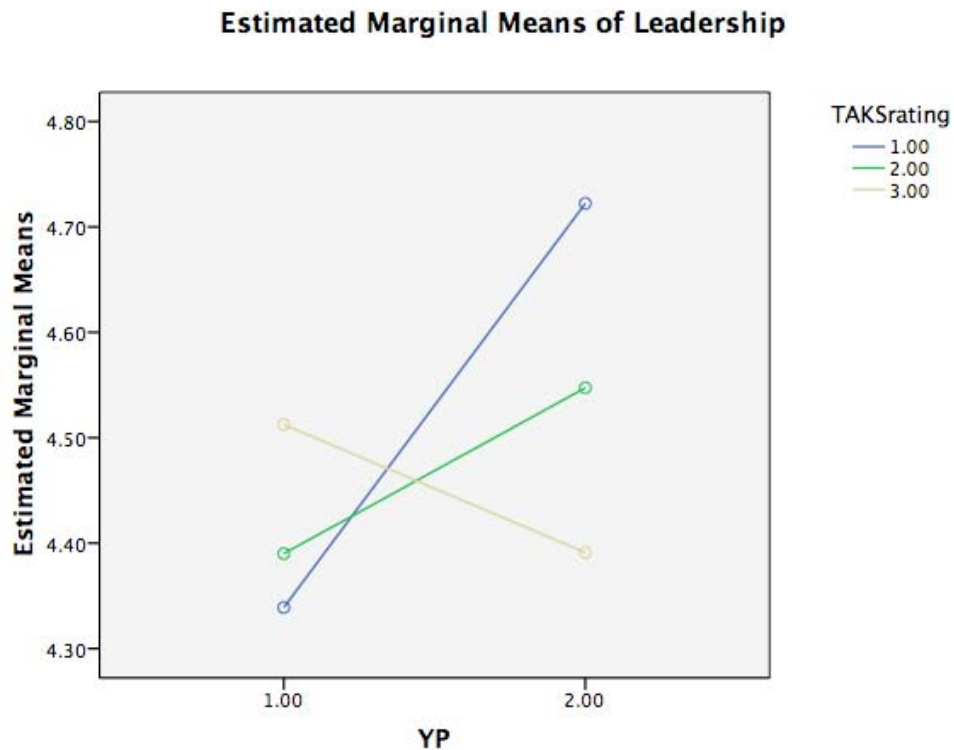


Figure 1. Estimated Marginal Means plot indicating a significant difference in TAKS rating across YP groups on Leadership

There was no significant difference found between Gender and the Leadership construct  $p > .01$ . There was no significant difference found between Years of Experience (YP) and the Leadership construct  $p > .01$ . There was no significant difference found between TAKS rating and the Leadership construct  $p > .01$ . A significant interaction was

not found to exist as it relates to the Leadership construct between Gender and Years of Experience (YP)  $p > .01$ . A significant difference was not found to exist between Gender and TAKS rating  $p > .01$ . However, a significant interaction between Years of Experience (YP) and the school's TAKS rating was found for the leadership scale. Principals with 0-5 years of experience were in schools that had higher TAKS rating. Conversely, principals who had more than 5 years of experience were found to be in schools where the TAKS rating for the school was lower. Finally, a between-groups analysis was done between Gender, Years of Experience (YP), and TAKS rating. It was determined that no significant between-groups differences were present in the Leadership construct  $p > .01$ .

### Research Question 3

Research Question 3: Are there differences between principals' Gender, Years of Experience (YP), and TAKS rating on principals' perception on Fiscal and Legal (Fiscal and Law) needed to be a successful school leader? A three-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of Gender, Years of Experience (YP), and TAKS rating had on the Fiscal and Legal construct, as measured by the extracted Fiscal and Legal construct from the Perceptions of Successful School Leadership Questionnaire. Participants were grouped by Gender (male, female), number of Years of Experience (YP: 0 to 5 years and greater than 5 years), and TAKS rating (1.00, Exemplary, 2 = Recognized, and 3 = Acceptable). Results from the test were; for Gender  $F(1,233) = .025, p = .875$ , YP  $F(1,233) = .114, p = .736$ , TAKS Rating  $F(1,233) = 1.663, p = .192$ , Gender \* YP  $F(2,233) = .320, p = .572$ , Gender\* TAKS Rating  $F(2,233) =$

1.364,  $p = .258$ , YP \* TAKS Rating  $F(2,233) = .058$ ,  $p = .944$ , and Gender \* YP \* TAKS Rating  $F(2,233) = .374$ ,  $p = .688$ . Refer to Table 8 for details.

Table 8

Between-Subjects Effects Analysis Indicating No Significant Difference between Gender, YP, TAKS rating, and Fiscal and Legal

Test of Between-Subjects Effects					
Type III					
Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	5.698 <sup>a</sup>	11	0.518	0.891	0.550
Intercept	2520.024	1	2520.024	4330.201	0.000
Gender	0.014	1	0.014	0.025	0.875
YP	0.066	1	0.066	0.114	0.736
TAKS rating	1.934	2	0.967	1.663	0.192
Gender * YP	0.186	1	0.186	0.320	0.572
Gender * TAKS rating	1.586	2	0.793	1.364	0.258
YP * TAKS rating	0.067	2	0.034	0.058	0.944
Gender * YP * TAKS rating	0.436	2	0.218	0.374	0.688
Error	140.770	242	0.582		
Total	4470.500	254			
Corrected Total	146.469	253			

a. R Squared = .039 (Adjusted R Squared = -.005)

There was no significant difference found between Gender and the Fiscal and Legal construct  $p > .01$ . There was no significant difference found between Years of Experience (YP) and the Fiscal and Legal construct  $p > .01$ . There was no significant difference found between TAKS rating and the Fiscal and Legal construct  $p > .01$ . No significant differences were found to exist as it relates to the Fiscal and Legal variable between Gender and Years of Experience (YP)  $p > .01$ . A significant difference was not found to exist between Gender and TAKS rating  $p > .01$ . Nor was there a significant difference between Years of Experience (YP) and TAKS rating  $p > .01$ . Finally, a between-groups analysis was done between Gender, Years of Experience (YP), and TAKS rating. It was determined that no significant between-groups differences were present in the Fiscal and Legal construct  $p > .01$ .

### Summary

This chapter began with an introduction detailing the statistical analysis which was used to analyze the data and provide information for discussion. This information was followed by demographic information for the participants of the study, and presentation of the results from a factor analysis of the three constructs, Communication, Leadership, and Fiscal and Legal. The results of a three-way ANOVA were used to determine overall differences between-groups, specifically, Gender, Years of Experience (YP), and TAKS rating had on Communication. The relationship Gender, Years of Experience (YP), and TAKS rating had on the Leadership construct, and Gender, Years of Experience (YP), and TAKS rating had on the Fiscal and Legal construct.

The results examined the impact of a three-way between-group analysis of variance of Gender, Years of Experience (YP), and TAKS rating in relationship to

Communication and found that there was no significant difference found between-groups. The next ANOVA which examined the three-way between-groups analysis of Gender, Years of Experience (YP), and TAKS rating on Leadership found that based on the results, there is, a significant difference in Leadership between number of years of experience (YP), but the effect is dependent on TAKS rating. The final ANOVA was conducted to explore the impact of Gender, Years of Experience (YP), and TAKS rating on Fiscal and Legal which found there was no significant difference found between-groups. The next chapter will present the findings, conclusions, and the implications of the Perceptions of Successful School Leadership Questionnaire, specifically focusing on the knowledge, skills and attributes perceived as important by practicing principals.



## CHAPTER 5

### FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

In the previous chapter, a detailed analysis of the data was reported. Chapter 5 includes five sections: the discussion, the findings, the implications for the field of education, the recommendations for future research, and the conclusions. This chapter will present and discuss how this study is applicable to practicing and future school principals. The discussion section gives insight into the independent variables that were chosen for the current study. The discussion section uses research to corroborate the selection of each variable. The next section presents the findings of the study. In the findings section, I discuss, analyze, and explain the results of the three research questions. The implications for practice section allow me to suggest how the results of my study can be applied to practice. The implications for future research section provide valuable information to future researchers and generate ideas for researchable topics. The last section, the conclusion, is a critical component of the final chapter. The conclusion section is a summation of my research study. It provides closure to the entire study.

#### Discussion

In the present study, it was important to explore the factors that have been examined during the study. I investigated the potential impact gender, years of experience (YP), and TAKS rating had on the constructs of Communication, Leadership, and Fiscal and Legal. The review of the literature is replete with studies where women are participants in the studies. As a result, the current research sought to include the responses from women principals about the constructs of Communication, Leadership,

and Fiscal and Legal. In addition, it was important to examine the effects years of experience (YP), which was viewed by examining tenure and retention rates of principals in Texas from 1996-2008, and their impact on the constructs Communication, Leadership, and Fiscal and Legal as it was reported by Fuller and Young (2009). I also wanted to explore the effects the TAKS test rating had on principals regarding Communication, Leadership, and Fiscal and Legal. The TAKS test results provide a principal with a litmus test in which to gauge the academic achievement of the school he or she presently leads.

The independent variables of gender, years of experience (YP), and TAKS rating were investigated in this research to further the knowledge base about each variable. Exploring the impact women have in leadership, such as the position of principal, is an under developed topic where empirical data is needed. As a result, I wanted to provide quantifiable evidence as it pertains to gender and the school principalship. Also, I wanted to determine if years of experience (YP) were related to the success of a principal. By using Fuller and Young's (2009) research on tenure and retention rates, I was able to define the amount of years for a beginning principal and an experienced principal. Based on the Fuller and Young (2009) research, principals with 0-5 years of experience were considered beginning principals. Principals with greater than 5 years of experience were considered veteran principals. The following holds true for the present research. In addition, an examination of TAKS ratings was incorporated into the study to determine if TAKS ratings were related to principals' perceptions of the knowledge, skills, and attributes needed to be a successful school principal. TAKS ratings, in the state of Texas, define the academic success of the students who attend the school. As a result,

examining the association the TAKS rating may have on the constructs Leadership, Communication, and Fiscal and Legal is an important focus because of the significance the state of Texas places on the individual school ratings.

The study of women in educational administration has been reviewed with varying degrees of interest over the past two decades (Smulyan, 2000). A great deal of the earlier research involving women focused on their numbers and their under representation at all levels of school administration while exploring the reasons for their absence. Early on in the research, there was a void in reporting issues involving women in school administration relating to power or ideology. Women in leadership provide opportunities for others to evolve as leaders and to make society a better place for all (Shakeshaft, 1987).

Fuller and Young (2009) reported that although much research has been done on teacher retention, little evidence exists about the retention of school principals. Fuller and Young (2009) conducted a study to determine the retention rates and tenure of recently appointed principals in the Texas public school system from 1996-2008. They followed a cohort of newly hired principals for 13 years. The researchers wanted to ascertain the length of tenure and retention rates of recently hired principals. Fuller and Young (2009) discovered that the average tenure for elementary principals was about 5 years. The average tenure for high school principals was slightly lower and averaged approximately 3.8 years.

The need for school accountability started several years ago with the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation which significantly altered the role of the federal government in education. The primary purpose of NCLB was to ensure that all students received an

appropriate education in which they achieved important learning goals while attending schools that were safe and taught by teachers that were deemed highly-qualified.

President Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) bill in January of 2002 (Yell & Drasgow, 2005).

According to the Office of Governor Rick Perry (n.d.), in 1993, the Texas State Legislature established the accountability system which would be used by all public schools in Texas. The accountability system was responsible for forming the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS test) from 1991 to 2003. The state of Texas wanted to increase the accountability of the schools in Texas to ensure students were receiving an adequate education so they adopted the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills test (TAKS) in 2003. Perry supported a more rigorous test than the TAAS test that assessed whether students were meeting the standards of the state curriculum. The current school ratings of Exemplary, Recognized, Acceptable, and Unacceptable were spawned to give the public and school officials an indication of the success of the school in meeting the minimum requirements of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (Office of Governor Rick Perry, n.d.).

### Findings

This study addressed three research questions:

- (a) Are there differences by principal gender, years of experience (YP), and TAKS rating on principals' perceptions of Communication (Interpersonal, Communication, Positive Disposition, Ethical, and Good Communicator) needed to be a successful school leader?

(b) Are there differences by principal gender, years as a principal (YP), and TAKS rating on principals' perceptions of Leadership (Leadership, Management, Curriculum, Technical, Visionary, and Organizer) needed to be a successful school principal?

(c) Are there differences by principal gender, years of experience (YP), and TAKS rating on principals' perceptions of Fiscal and Legal (Law and Fiscal) needed to be a successful school leader?

Each question was answered using quantitative data which was obtained from the participants' responses from the Principal as Successful Leader Project questionnaire.

The results of a three-way ANOVA were used to determine overall differences between groups. Three specific interactions were analyzed. The first analysis wanted to determine the relationship between the variables of Gender, Years of Experience (YP), and TAKS rating had on the construct of Communication. Next, an analysis was completed to determine the relationship between the variables of Gender, Years of Experience (YP), and TAKS rating had on the construct of Leadership. Finally, an analysis was completed to determine the relationship between the variables of Gender, Years of Experience (YP), and TAKS rating had on the construct of Fiscal and Legal.

#### Research Question 1

This question solicited the responses from practicing principals in regards to their perceptions about the relationship of the construct Communication (Interpersonal, Communication, Positive Disposition, Ethical, and Good Communicator) has on being a successful school principal. The initial analysis of the responses, which focused on means and standard deviations, indicated that each principal rated the individual factors

of Interpersonal, Communication, Positive Disposition, Ethical, and Good Communicator as being an important knowledge, skills, and attribute to have to be a successful school principal. However, when the construct of Communication was developed and further analysis was conducted, the data indicated there were no significant differences on the Communication construct by Gender, Years of Experience (YP), or the school's TAKS rating. There also were no significant interactions found between the Communication construct and Gender, Years of Experience (YP), and TAKS rating.

Although there was no significant difference found between the Communication construct and Gender, Years of Experience (YP), and TAKS rating, the research is clear that communication and leadership is a very important skill to possess. McEwan (2003) discovered, through the use of a survey she constructed which solicited responses from various proponents of education, that 74 of the 175 participants of the survey reported the ability to communicate effectively as the most important skill a school principal should possess. Successful school leaders have many roles that must be juggled on a day-to-day basis. For a school to run smoothly, efficiently, and successfully, there must be effective communication among the faculty. Marzano et al. (2005) formed a list of 21 responsibilities of the school principal that surfaced through a meta-analysis of all available studies from 1970 to the present. One of the responsibilities on the list dealt with communication. Marzano et al. (2005) stated that an administrator should keep the lines of communication open by being accessible to teachers.

#### Research Question 2

The Leadership construct was formed based on the following factors: Leadership, Management, Curriculum, Technical, Visionary, and Organizer. The initial analysis of

the responses, which focused on means and standard deviations, indicated that each principal rated the individual factors of Leadership, Management, Curriculum, Technical, Visionary, and Organizer as being an important knowledge, skills, and attributes to have to be a successful school principal. Upon further analysis and with the development of the Leadership construct, the researcher wanted to determine if there was a relationship between Gender, Years of Experience (YP), and TAKS rating. However, when the construct of Leadership was developed, the data indicated there were no significant gender differences on the Leadership construct.

There was, however, a significant interaction with the construct of Leadership (Leadership, Management, Curriculum, Technical, Visionary, and Organize) between number of years of experience (YP) and the school's TAKS rating. Principals with 0-5 years of experience were in schools that had higher TAKS rating. Conversely, principals who had more than 5 years of experience were found to be in schools where the TAKS rating for the school was lower.

### Research Question 3

The Fiscal and Legal construct was formed based on the Fiscal and Legal factors. The question solicited responses from the principals indicating their perceptions regarding Fiscal and Legal construct and the relationship between Gender, Years of Experience (YP), and TAKS rating. The construct of Fiscal and Legal was not found to significantly differ by Gender, Years of Experience (YP), and school TAKS rating. There also were no significant interactions among the factors of Gender, Years of Experience (YP), and TAKS rating.

Even though no significant differences were determined upon the formation of the Fiscal and Legal construct, the literature supports the notion that the factors, when considered individually, are important knowledge to have. In review of the literature, several common themes began to arise as to what knowledge is believed to be essential for a principal to be successful. Knowledge of the law surfaced as important to ascertain and be well versed. Legal matters occur in schools daily (Sughrue & Alexander, 2003). The principal has to be aware of the laws and regulations which guide their decisions. There are resources available that can assist principals when making decisions about legal matters when the answer is unclear. Constitutional, statutory, and case law are critical areas of interest for the principal because these laws govern all facets of public education (Sughrue & Alexander, 2003).

In addition, being knowledgeable about school finance is a must for principals. In today's economic times, school finance has become a very important topic. Principals are charged with allocating funds properly to meet the needs of the students in which they serve. Budget cuts and constraints make it imperative that principals are astute about school finance. Hoyle, Bjork, Collier, and Glass (2005) stated that it is essential for the school administrator to be supplied with the necessary financial information to convey both to the staff and community members. In short, the administrator must "make the most of every dollar available" (Hoyle et al., 2005, p. 99).

In summary, while there were no significant differences found among the factors, this could be attributed to the need that all principals should be well-informed about the knowledge, skills, and attributes of the current study. The knowledge base for today's principals is enormous. Keeping up with the demands of the job have proven to be quite



challenging. Training is critical to ensure all principals regardless of tenure are well prepared and possess the necessary skills to successfully lead their campus.

### Implications for Practice

This study highlights the need for a paradigm shift in the manner in which educators, universities, and law makers view the way future principals are to be trained to lead successful schools. Principal preparation programs must meld with the growing concerns that are present in ensuring the training for principals is comprehensive and effective. Now more than ever, it is a must that upon the completion of their training, principals feel confident that they can effectively lead a school based on the high-quality training they received. By incorporating the knowledge, skills, and attributes needed to be a successful principal into the curriculum of preparation programs, future leaders can have the confidence required to make immediate school improvement.

Peterson and Kelley (2002) stated that across the country there has been a shortfall of highly-qualified principal applicants. It has been projected that as many as 60% of principals intend to retire, resign, or vacate their position within the next 5 years. Darling-Hammond et al. (2005) stated that despite the principal shortage, principal preparation programs are graduating a growing amount of certified administrators. Regrettably, the methods and standards in which numerous principal preparation programs usually screen, choose, and graduate candidates are often times undefined, haphazardly applied, and fall short in rigor. Consequently, newly certified school leaders are given credentials to become administrators based solely on their performance on coursework as opposed to their all-inclusive assessment of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to be a successful school leader (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005).

Engelking (2008) reported that although there is no magic formula for determining the most important knowledge to possess, the belief is that effective leadership comes from individuals that are able utilize a variety of skills and attributes.

Principal preparation programs are responsible for providing an academic curriculum that is rigorous and adequately prepares future administrators for a role in leadership. Levine (2005) questioned whether or not principal certification programs are realistically preparing administrators to lead. The preparation programs are critical in bridging the gap between theory and practice. These programs must be aligned with the current demands of being in school leadership.

Indeed, Peterson and Kelley (2002) similarly reported that the principal is important to the success of the school. It is imperative to study their role more critically to enhance the preparation process. With so much emphasis placed on the significance of an effective principal, it would behoove principal preparation programs to reevaluate their programs in order to ensure that they are preparing aspiring educational leaders to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century schools.

Principal preparation programs are a very important component in determining the effectiveness of newly hired principals. However, not all principal preparation programs are of the same caliber or as effective in preparing principals. Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, and Orr (2003) studied how excellent principal preparation programs and professional development programs yield effective school leaders. Darling-Hammond et al. (2003) studied eight exceptional pre- and in-service principal development programs. The programs were selected because of the array of methods used in the preparation programs and because of their results in producing

prepared leaders. Darling-Hammond et al. (2003) provided insight into the components of principal preparation programs that produce promising results. The eight exceptional pre- and in-service principal development programs had the following in common:

- A curriculum that is thorough which encompasses the state and professional standards, with particular interest to the ISLLC standards.
- The curriculum focuses on instructional leadership.
- The instruction for students is action oriented that bridges the gap between theory and practice.
- The university professors and practitioners are knowledgeable about instructional leadership.
- Provide support for participants through the form of mentorship and cohorts.
- Active recruitment of exceptional teachers with leadership possibilities.
- Internships are well managed and supervised for a prolonged period under the guise of experienced veteran principals.

By understanding the common threads which exemplify exceptional preparation programs, school districts, universities, and state officials can begin to make the necessary changes through legislation to ensure preparation programs are comprehensive and effective programs.

The Wallace Foundation (2010) has also done extensive research on the principal and their preparation. During the Wallace Foundation's National Conference, which focused on the education of leadership, DeVita (2009) reported several lessons have been learned over the last decade in the field of education. Among her findings, she stated that

exemplary principals are a must for school reform to take place and excellent training results in excellent principals. DeVita (2009) stated that through the study of the Wallace Foundation, training is an important factor in preparing successful principals. To that point, DeVita highlighted the accomplishments of the New York City Leadership Academy because it exemplified the characteristics of an exemplary training program for principals. Corcoran, Schwartz, and Weinstein (2009) stated that the graduates of the New York City Leadership Academy outperformed new principals who did not participate in the leadership academy in language arts and mathematics after a three year period. The leadership academy believes better preparation of school principals leads to academic success for students.

The literature delineates the components that are necessary for successful principal preparation programs. The Wallace Foundation (2010) along with Darling-Hammond et al. (2005) are calling for visible evidence that the practices of the preparation programs impact the knowledge, skills, and practices of newly hired principals and are successful in their demanding jobs. This visible proof is essential to ensure principal preparation is comprehensive and effective.

The Fuller and Young (2009) study is important to consider with regards to principals and retention rates. Given that the retention rate of elementary principals is about 5 years and high school principal's retention rates are about 3 years, it is imperative that the training provided by principal preparation programs is highly effective. Principals within the first 5 years, according to the present study, receive higher TAKS ratings than those principals with 5 or greater years of experience. It is essential that upon the completion of the principal preparation program the principal is fully equipped with

the essential knowledge, skills, and attributes to be a successful school leader. Based on the Fuller and Young (2009) study, the tenure of the principal is likely to end after 5 years of employment and during that time according to the present research, that is when the principal is able to obtain the higher TAKS ratings. In short, the first 5 years of the principal's tenure is critical to the success of the school and the students it serves.

On the contrary, the current study found that principals with greater than 5 years of experience were in schools that had lower TAKS ratings than those principals with 5 or less years of experience. Further research would allow the question of why this finding is true. The current research adds to the knowledge base regarding the knowledge, skills, and attributes that are perceived as important to be a successful school principal. Practicing principals have a significant amount of knowledge about what is required to be an effective school administrator. Their perceptions should be considered when determining what is taught in principal preparation courses.

#### Implications for Further Research

The following suggestions are presented for further research regarding the knowledge, skills, and attributes that are perceived as important to be a successful school principal. The present study was limited by the geographic area of those solicited to participate in the study which was the Gulf Coast Region of Southwest Texas. By broadening the geographic location of the participants, the study could be generalizable to other locations.

Next, the present study looked at qualitative data to determine the perceptions of school principals about the knowledge, skills, and attributes needed to be a successful school principal. A qualitative component could be added consisting of open-ended

questions to solicit responses from the principals to elaborate why they perceived the knowledge, skills, and attribute as being important. At the conclusion, each principal could place the knowledge, skills and attributes in rank order to determine which the most important factor in each category was.

In addition, further analyses could be done to examine principal placements in schools. Are principals with greater than 5 years of experience placed in schools that are more challenging to lead? Do principals with greater than 5 years of experience lack consistent and effective training? DeVita (2009) reported that once principals are selected and placed at their schools, on-going, highly effective, comprehensive training needs to take place on a regular basis to ensure principals continue to receive expert professional development throughout their careers.

It is clear, however, that principals experience their greatest success during the first 5 years as the instructional leader, according to the present study. Given the opportunity to probe further, it might be revealed that the quality of training received by future principals is paramount to their success. As it relates to the success principals with greater than 5 years of experience, further research could reveal why this group of leaders don't experience the same type of success as novice principals. The difference in the success experienced could be due to the types of schools veteran principals are asked to lead. Veteran principals are often asked to assist in turning around schools at risk of failure or to serve in areas of high poverty which could attribute to the lower TAKS ratings. These placements often take time to reveal student success. As the veteran principal makes important and necessary change, time must be afforded to allow positive

change to take place, thus lower test scores may occur until the paradigm shift transpires and is fully implemented.

Lastly, principal preparation program play a key role in the success of the principals. The programs' effectiveness in preparing the principal is a critical component in determining the principal's ability to lead and transform their schools. Soliciting responses from principal preparation participants and the instructor to determine if there is agreement about the knowledge, skills, and attributes they perceive to be important for the success of a school principal would provide essential information for the field of education.

### Conclusions

In all, this study provides insight into the factors principals perceive as the important knowledge, skills, and attributes needed to be a successful school principal. More specifically, this study revealed that principals with 0-5 years of experience were leaders of schools that had higher TAKS ratings. Conversely, it was determined that principals with more than 5 years of experience were leaders of schools that had lower TAKS ratings. Although there have been other studies which have examined the knowledge, skills, and attributes needed to be a successful school principal, this study is distinctive in that it solicits responses from practicing principals and the data received was quantifiable. In addition, the study also shows that irrespective to gender, years of experience, or TAKS rating, principals agree with the literature about the important knowledge, skills, and attributes needed to be a successful school principal. With the ever evolving role of the principal, much insight is needed to ensure the principal is properly trained for the many facets of the job. Given the complexity of the

principalship, researchers will continue to explore the knowledge, skills, and attributes of needed by school principals.

The training received by the principals will also continue to be a factor into the successfulness of school leaders. By bridging the gap between practice and theory, future leaders will possess the confidence to make immediate and effective change in their schools. Principal preparation programs have the ability to lead the charge in making the necessary changes to their curriculum to ensure future principals are equipped to lead their school. By developing a full understanding of the knowledge, skills, and attributes needed to be a successful school principal, future leaders can graduate from principal preparation programs with the assurance that they are better prepared and ready to participate in effective practices that lead to school success. In addition, school districts may want to examine the professional development offered to veteran principals to ensure the information provided is effective and relevant training. School district must provide continuing education which helps veteran principals navigate the many facets of school leadership to ensure academic success for the students.



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## APPENDIX A

## Appendix A

### Principal's Survey – Section H

The survey asked principals to rate on a scale from 1 to 5 with 5 being the most and 1 being the least which of following represents the important *knowledge* a principal should have to be a successful principal?

- Knowledge of people
- Curriculum
- Law
- Fiscal

Which of following represents important *skills* a principal should have to be a successful principal?

- Interpersonal
- Communication
- Leadership
- Management
- Technical

Which of following represents important *attributes* a principal should have to be a successful principal?

- Positive disposition
- Visionary
- Ethics and Values
- Good Communicator
- Organize

## APPENDIX B

Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008  
as adopted by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA)  
**December 12, 2007**

**Standard 1:** *An education leader promotes the success of every student by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders*

Functions:

- A. Collaboratively develop and implement a shared vision and mission.
- B. Collect and use data to identify goals, assess organizational effectiveness, and promote organizational learning
- C. Create and implement plans to achieve goals
- D. Promote continuous and sustainable improvement
- E. Monitor and evaluate progress and revise plans

**Standard 2:** *An education leader promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.*

Functions:

- A. Nurture and sustain a culture of collaboration, trust, learning, and high expectations
- B. Create a comprehensive, rigorous, and coherent curricular program
- C. Create a personalized and motivating learning environment for students
- D. Supervise instruction
- E. Develop assessment and accountability systems to monitor student progress.
- F. Develop the instructional and leadership capacity of staff
- G. Maximize time spent on quality instruction

- H. Promote the use of the most effective and appropriate technologies to support teaching and learning
- I. Monitor and evaluate the impact of the instructional program

**Standard 3:** *An education leader promotes the success of every student by ensuring management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.*

Functions

- A. Monitor and evaluate the management and operational systems
- B. Obtain, allocate, align, and efficiently utilize human, fiscal, and technological resources
- C. Promote and protect the welfare and safety of students and staff
- D. Develop the capacity for distributed leadership
- E. Ensure teacher and organizational time is focused to support quality instruction and student learning

**Standard 4:** *An education leader promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.*

Functions

- A. Collect and analyze data and information pertinent to the educational environment
- B. Promote understanding, appreciation, and use of the community's diverse cultural, social, and intellectual resources
- C. Build and sustain positive relationships with families and caregivers
- D. Build and sustain productive relationships with community partners

**Standard 5:** *An education leader promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.*

Functions

- A. Ensure a system of accountability for every student's academic and social success

- B. Model principles of self-awareness, reflective practice, transparency, and ethical behavior
- C. Safeguard the values of democracy, equity, and diversity
- D. Consider and evaluate the potential moral and legal consequences of decision-making
- E. Promote social justice and ensure that individual student needs inform all aspects of schooling

**Standard 6:** *An education leader promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.*

#### Functions

- A. Advocate for children, families, and caregivers
- B. Act to influence local, district, state, and national decisions affecting student learning
- C. Assess, analyze, and anticipate emerging trends and initiatives in order to adapt leadership strategies



