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Elementary Principals' Perspectives on Opening New Schools in a Large Urban School District

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Elementary Principals' Perspectives on Opening New Schools in a
Large Urban School District

By
Tammie Taylor Sexton

Dissertation Submitted to the
Gardner-Webb University School of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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2010

This dissertation was submitted by Tammie Taylor Sexton under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

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Abstract

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Schools/School Scheduling/School Finance/School Personnel

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine in detail the experiences of four
elementary school principals who have gone through the process of opening new year-
round schools in the past 5 years in a large urban school district in North Carolina. In
particular, this study examined and documented the procedures that the principals used in
opening the new schools, as well as in making the schools operational. It examined the
principals' perceptions regarding the tasks and procedures involved in opening a new
public elementary school and how to go about this process successfully in a rapidly
growing school district in North Carolina. During the literature review, seven common
functions of leadership were also studied. They were instructional leadership, managerial
leadership, cultural leadership, human resources leadership, strategic leadership, external
development leadership and micro-political leadership. Each of these areas played an
important role in each of the principal participants' opening of their new schools. Other
areas researched were increasing enrollments in American schools, school finance,
effective school culture and leadership styles, school scheduling options, school
personnel patterns, and technology.

This qualitative study used case studies as the methodology. The data from this study was
collected by personal interviews with each of the four randomly selected principals. The
research was guided by the questions seeking information regarding the challenges,
pitfalls, and advice when opening new schools.

Emerging from the data were several findings that revealed important learning about
opening new schools. The findings revealed that principals opening new schools should
possess great communication skills, have knowledge of the school system in which the
new school is located, and delegate as many managerial tasks as possible in order to
focus on hiring the best staff for the school. It was also revealed that principals opening
new campuses should spend much time on teaching and reteaching norms to both the
students and the staff during the first year of operation.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

According to the United States Census Bureau, the southeastern United States have been experiencing explosive growth for the last 20 years. Such massive growth has impacted many school districts in aspects such as finance and school construction. The purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of four elementary principals who have recently opened new school facilities in a large urban school district in the southeastern United States. The documented procedures are also included in this study. The findings gleaned from this study will assist growing districts with information to better support the principals charged with opening new school facilities.

In a 1999 interview, Richard Riley, former United States Secretary of Education, stated:

> The principalship is a position that is absolutely critical to educational change and improvement. A good principal can create a climate that can foster a climate in teaching and learning, while an ineffective one can quickly thwart the progress of most dedicated reformers. In the coming years, we will be faced with a leadership crisis in our schools. We will need more principals than ever before. (Educational Research Service, 2000, p. 1)

Hussar and Geralds (1996) estimated that public school enrollment would rise from 46.3 million in 1997 to 48.1 million by the year 2010, an increase of 4%, but that these increases would vary by region. Enrollment would increase most rapidly in the west, where total enrollment was expected to rise 11%. Enrollment in the south was projected to increase by 5%. This growth would cause new schools to open and posed a challenge to principals regarding efficiency and effectiveness.

Demographics

The large urban school district in this study has experienced explosive growth over the last 24 years. From 1980 through 2000, the U. S. Census Bureau estimated that the county grew by more than 326,500. In only 21 years (1980 through 2000), the school system more than doubled its total population. This 21-year increase is more than the combined total of 246,701 people who were added to the county from 1900-1980. There are 16 schools currently in the system, with 102 elementary schools, 31 middle schools, 23 high schools, and 4 special/optional schools. This school district is the 18th largest in the nation, with 139,599 students on the 20th day of the 2009-2010 school year.

Nature of the Problem

The demand for effective principals has outpaced the supply of such principals opening new schools. More than half of North Carolina's school administrators are 50 years old or older and have at least 25 years of experience, according to the North Carolina Executive Program survey given in 2005. These statistics state that half of the school administrators can retire within the next 3 to 5 years (Wake County Public School System [WCPSS], 2006).

As Jackson and Davis reported (2000), "One of the most consistent findings in educational research is that high achieving schools have competent leaders" (p. 156). The responsibilities of the principal include the task of hiring all staff members and setting the framework for establishing a positive culture conducive to academic and emotional success for all.

The role of the principal requires decisions to be made in the following categories: budget, culture, curriculum, daily operations, external politics, internal politics, facilities, pupil personnel, safety, scheduling, staff, and technology. Combined,

all the components form a system, an interacting and interdependent group of practices that form a unified whole (Jackson & Davis, 2000, p. 27).

Most school principals, when assigned to a school, "inherit a preexisting organizational structure" (Danielson, 2002, p. 45). This is usually the case with most appointed principals in public schools. The educational leader who finds himself or herself in the role of opening a new school needs to consider that "certain aspects of the school's organization…will become part of that new school's identity" (Danielson, 2002, p. 45).

In the last 3 years, this large urban school district in the southeastern United States appointed 18 principals to open 18 new schools. Each principal brought a unique history in education to meet the task of opening a new school. Eighteen elementary schools, one alternative middle school, two middle schools, and seven high schools have opened since the 2005-2006 school year. Each of these schools required a principal who would nurture it into a successful school where children and staff are provided opportunities to grow and meet the demands of the 21st century.

Often principals have no experience opening newly constructed facilities; therefore, they do not know all the challenges that come with this task. Some of these challenges may include not having an adequate budget allotted, furniture not arriving on schedule, or not having occupancy for the cafeteria prior to the beginning of the school year. Having documented lived experiences for principals, which will include procedures for opening a new school successfully, will give principals a starting point toward what is expected.

Increasing Enrollments Projections

Unprecedented growth has affected the enrollment projections for the large urban

school system where this study took place. New subdivisions and apartment home communities are multiplying. Growth is occurring in every part of the county. No area has been immune to the rezoning of land where developers are vying to add to their list of properties.

Between 1990 and 2009, the large urban school district in this study experienced enrollment increases of more than 80,000 students. The rapid growth in school enrollments is expected to continue into 2020. In the fall of 2009, about 139,599 students were enrolled in the school district. There are currently about 18,000 employees working within the system. These numbers are increasing at high rates and resulting in challenges to meet the structural needs of this rapidly growing school district.

New enrollment projections show that this public school system will be gaining about 94,000 students by 2020. The county's planning department projects the school system's enrollment to increase to more than 234,000 by 2020. The increase for 2007-2008 was 6,000 students by the tenth day of school (WCPSS, 2006).

During the 2009-2010 academic year, the school district in this study had 160 schools in operation, including 102 elementary schools, 31 middle schools, 23 high schools, and 4 special/alternative schools. Many of the schools were older; however, 43% of schools were built since 1990 (WCPSS, 2006). During the 2009-2010 school year, 52 schools operated on a year-round calendar, 101 schools operated on a traditional calendar, 5 schools operated on a modified calendar, and 1 school operated on a calendar matching the community college calendar.

Impact on Other Areas of School Function

Schools over capacity create problems in planning student lunch schedules, bathroom usage, and utilization of classroom space. Lunch at several of the county's

schools begins shortly after students arrive at school and continues for approximately 3 hours. The school district is using several formats when it comes to finding or acquiring facilities to meet its growing needs:

1. "Early start" campuses (three modular campuses opened in 2005-2006, and one school opened in an empty wing of a new high school in 2006);

2. Renovating existing buildings to create space for schools (Winn Dixie, an office complex, and a sterilizer company building);

3. Mobile/modular classroom units (this district had more that 1,000 mobile/modular classrooms in 2005-2006 and added another 103 for 2006-2007);

4. Year-round schools (the district has added 10 new year-round elementary schools since 2006-2007, transitioning 19 traditional calendar elementary schools and three middle schools to year-round to gain 3,000 seats in 2007-2008); and

5. Ninth-grade centers (two were in place in 2004-2005, and another five or six opened from 2006-2008) (Wake County Government: Trends Analysis Report, 2006).

This school district also has early-start campuses that allow schools to open early while the permanent facilities are being constructed. The three modular schools are factory-built, and each has a multipurpose room, cafeteria, media center, office space, and play areas in addition to four eight-classroom complexes with hallways and bathrooms under one roof. The percentage of students in permanent seats in 2008-2009 was 72.7% in elementary schools, 85.3% in middle schools, and 85.5% in high schools. The school system's long-term goal was to have 92% of its students in permanent classrooms. There are 1,171 mobile classrooms in this district (Wake County Government: Trends Analysis Report, 2006).

The school district in this study has opened 54 new schools since the year 2000,

bringing the total number of schools in the district to 160. The Blueprint for Excellence 2006 outlined the district's needs for bonds, which will ease crowding in schools and will provide classrooms for thousands of students. The Blueprint outlined the need for 17 new schools, major renovations at 13 existing schools, maintenance and repair projects at nearly 100 campuses, five or six ninth-grade centers, the addition of seats through the transition of some schools to the year-round calendar, land and design start-up for 13 future schools, and a technology upgrade and replacement program. From 2000-2006, this school district grew by between 7,000 and 9,400 students each year (Wake County Government: Trends Analysis Report, 2006).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine in detail the experiences of four elementary school principals who recently went through the process of opening new elementary schools. In particular, this study examined and documented the procedures that the principals used in opening the schools, as well as making them operational. This study examined the principals' perceptions regarding the tasks and procedures required to successfully open a new school in a rapidly growing school district in North Carolina.

This researcher was granted permission by Marty Powers (Appendix A) to model this study after Powers's (2007) study, which examined the perspectives of principals opening new schools in California. Powers examined experiences of four elementary school principals who had recently gone through the process of opening a new facility in California. He looked at strategic planning and knowledge management. He focused on the elementary principals and their roles in creating a community of learners. Powers (2007) noted that the "principal's job in elementary schools is undergoing a dramatic transformation in the context of educational reform based on standards and standardized

testing" (p. 1). Powers also investigated how the climate for each school was developed.

His key findings for success included using a collaborative yet decisive leadership style

that brought stakeholders to the table in a meaningful way, utilizing experienced, skillful

principals, and maximizing the positive impact of the school's opening ceremony.

In Powers's (2007) study, one of the most important procedures for opening a

new school was the hiring of the staff. Different methods were used to hire staff for the

new schools, including predetermined selection based on union work rules and transfer

rights, as well as internal and external applications. The continuum of control in the

hiring process ranged from complete control to very limited authority (Powers, 2007, p.

97). All principals in the study made the final grade-level assignment within their school

and believed that finding the optimal match between teacher and grade level was crucial

to the initial culture created within the school (Powers, 2007, p. 97).

The principals in Powers's (2007) study focused on creating the ideal school

opening celebrations. Those principals noted that the planning process for the opening

ceremony must be given adequate time and energy. Those principals who communicated

effectively with all stakeholders were most successful in creating a sense of true

community from the initial days of the school's inception.

The principals in Powers's (2007) study also noted that human resource obstacles

and building problems were major pitfalls to be avoided when opening a new facility.

Each of the two areas took a lot of time from the principal's early management days.

However, attending to the details related to these areas was seen as vitally important to

keeping the building project and the hiring process on track (Powers, 2007, p. 98).

The four principals in Powers's (2007) study infused a collaborative hiring style

into their process, using teacher leadership teams as soon as they were established. Each

principal knew how their school system worked and what the people needed in order to get things done, as well as ways to work through the bureaucracy. Each of the principals interviewed looked back on the opening of the new school as a positive learning experience and as a career milestone.

Research Questions

Special emphasis was placed on providing answers to the following set of research questions:

1. What challenges/pitfalls does a principal face when opening a new school?

2. What information from research will enable a principal to succeed in the tasks of opening a new school facility?

3. What advice do principals give about successfully opening new schools?

4. What leadership style is most desirable in starting a new school?

Limitations

The study was limited to the population of principals opening new year-round schools in the last 5 years in the targeted school system. The study was limited to the extent that the principals' perceptions contributed valid information. All the schools in the study operated on a multi-tracked year-round calendar. The researcher knew the respondents as colleagues but did not have a stake in the findings. The researcher conducted the interviews, and no attempt at triangulation was made.

Delimitations

This study was limited to approximately 18 public schools opening for the first time in the targeted school district within the last 4 years. It was also limited to principals of four newly opened schools, chosen randomly, in the same school district. Such limitations meant that the study could not be generalized to schools in other districts.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of four elementary principals who recently opened new public school facilities in a large urban school district. Interviewing principals, who have opened new schools, and seeking qualitative input from them, will provide necessary information for school districts tasked with opening new schools. The information gleaned will also be a guide for administrators seeking the challenge of opening a new school. This study reinforced what was already known about the process, and what procedures a principal should avoid or use in successfully opening a new school.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

The purpose of this study was to examine perceptions of principals who had recently opened new public elementary schools in a rapidly growing school district in North Carolina. The findings and recommendations will help principals and school districts develop necessary support systems to meet the needs of principals assigned to open new facilities. This chapter will review the literature and studies pertaining to the areas that should be considered when opening new public school facilities, such as increasing enrollments, budget, culture, effective leadership, scheduling, staffing, and technology. The review of literature in each area will define and examine the factors contributing to each area.

Each day more than 53.6 million students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002) walk into more than 94,000 K-12 schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002) in the hopes that the 13 years of schooling they will experience will dramatically enhance their chances of success in the modern world (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). These students are entering the doors of the schools excited about growing academically and having fun. Marzano et al. (2005) believed that whether a school operates effectively or not decreases or increases a student's chance for success.

Leading schools is a complex task (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). It is essential that principals be given training and development in four key components: management of curriculum, management of organizational structures, management of financial and material resources, and management of educators (Mestry & Grobler, 2004). When opening new schools, principals have a multifaceted and enormous task of establishing an environment that could lead to effective schooling (Mestry & Grobler, 2004). Mestry and Grobler (2004) stated that today there are a wide range of demands and challenges

facing principals opening new schools. A principal's previous role of management and control has changed to that of an educational leader who can foster staff development, parent involvement, community support, learner growth, and success with major changes and expectations (Mestry & Grobler, 2004). Some of the demands facing principals are "establishing a culture of teaching and learning, promoting high standards of education, working closely with parents, coping with multicultural school populations, managing change and conflict, coping with limited resources and ensuring more accountability to the community they serve" (Mestry & Grobler, 2004, p. 3).

There are seven common functions of leadership in all types of schools: instructional leadership, cultural leadership, managerial leadership, human resources leadership, strategic leadership, external development leadership, and micro-political leadership (Sergiovanni, 2001, p. 17). In some schools, principals are key players in all seven areas. In other schools, other administrators or teachers play important roles (Portin, 2003). All seven leadership areas are important for schools to meet achievement goals. The principal does not have to provide direct leadership in each area but should know who is responsible for doing so (Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, & Gundlach, 2003). In some schools, all seven functions rest almost exclusively on the backs of the principals, especially in traditional public schools. Even in schools with distributive leadership, the principal needs to keep a finger on the pulse of each of the seven core leadership functions (Portin et al., 2003, p. 3). Table 1 below explains the seven common functions of leadership in schools.

Table 1

School Critical Leadership Functions and Actions

Critical Function	Action
Instructional leadership	Ensuring the quality of instruction, modeling teaching practice, supervising curriculum, and ensuring the quality of teaching resources
Cultural leadership	Tending to the symbolic resources of the school (e.g., its traditions, climate and history)
Managerial leadership	Tending to the operations of the school (e.g., its budget, schedule, facilities, safety and security, and transportation)
Human resource leadership	Recruiting, hiring, firing, inducting, and mentoring teachers and administrators; developing leadership capacity and professional development opportunities
Strategic leadership	Promoting a vision, mission, and goals, and developing a means to reach them
External development leadership	Representing the school in the community, developing capital, public relations, recruiting students, buffering and mediating external interests, and advocating for the school's interests
Micro-political leadership	Buffering and mediating internal interests, maximizing resources (financial and human)

The ability to share leadership is more prevalent in private and some entrepreneurial school settings than in the traditional public schools, for which the leadership structure is often determined outside the schools (Portin et al., 2003). Portin et al.'s (2003) study suggested that the differences in governance structures influence the degree to which adults in the school share leadership responsibilities. Portin et al. (2003)

also suggested that governance affects the level to which a school principal can act in each of the seven leadership areas.

Christina Goennier (2006) studied important tasks when opening a new middle school. She also established a timeline for accomplishing tasks. Goennier noted that principals had to make decisions in the following key areas when opening a new facility: budget, culture, curriculum, daily operations, external politics, internal politics, facilities, pupil and personnel safety, scheduling, staffing, technology, and other areas as determined by experts. Goennier selected 12 principals who had opened new middle school facilities in the 5 years prior to her study. She also field-tested the survey instruments with two principals, one assistant principal, one deputy superintendent, one superintendent, and one outside reader to ensure reliability of the online instrument. A research team consisting of one doctoral student and one reader processed each item of the survey to extrapolate themes in each area. Goennier noted that the themes from the first survey helped develop the list of questions for the second survey and that themes from the second survey helped develop the questions for the third survey.

There were three rounds of surveys completed by the participants. The research team analyzed each round prior to the next round being completed. In round one, the panelists identified major categories. In round two, panelists ranked the level of importance of each task in the 13 categories. In round three, panelists determined the appropriate period for performing each task with relation to the first day of school (Goennier, 2006).

Goennier (2006) concluded her study with a list of key tasks to be implemented by principals assigned to open new middle schools. The list of key tasks to consider when opening new schools includes budget, culture, curriculum, daily operations,

external politics, internal politics, facilities, pupil and personnel safety, scheduling, staffing, and technology. The next six areas were included in Goennier's list of key tasks to consider when opening new schools.

Increasing Enrollments

Enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools rose 22% from 1985 through 2008. The fastest public school growth was in elementary grades (prekindergarten through Grade 8), where enrollment rose 24% over this period, from 27 million to 33.3 million (Snyder, Tan, & Hoffman, 2006). The National Center for Education Statistics forecasts record levels of growth of total elementary and secondary enrollments through 2014, as the school-age population continues to rise. Public elementary school enrollment should show an increase of 6% by the fall of 2014 (Snyder et al., 2006).

Hussar and Bailey (2007) stated that the number of all elementary schools beginning in Grade 6 or below rose by 10% to more than 65,000 elementary school facilities. The south is projected to increase by 17%. North Carolina is projected to increase by 18.3% in elementary and secondary school enrollment by 2014 (Hussar & Bailey, 2007). Increases during this time period are expected in more than 40 states. North Carolina's increase would place that state in the eighth spot in growth for public school elementary and secondary enrollment.

Budget

A school budget is a planning document that links programmatic decisions to financial information about the school's revenue and expenditures (Odden, 2004). Some of the areas that a building administrator is responsible for are personnel (certified and paraprofessionals), library books, textbooks, instructional materials, and technology. The

principal's decisions with regard to the budget determine the spending patterns and reflect the principal's priorities or vision, whether they have been clearly expressed or not (Thomas, 2005).

When opening a new school, principals have to manage budgets from the federal, state, and local governments. The three types of federal dollars given to school districts are categorical aid, block grants, and general aid. Odden (2004) defined categorical aid as grant provided to school districts for a specific reason or purpose, and often come with strict application, use, and reporting requirements. Block grants are sums of money granted to a district, which cover a multitude of categories for which the money can be expended. General federal aid is a sum of money granted to a school district for educational programs as determined by local authorities with established guidelines (Odden, 2004).

Principals as budget managers are responsible for the regulation of expenditures in each fund. The budget manager is also authorized to approve the expenditure of funds within their respective cost centers, provided that funds are expended in accordance with purchasing procedures and legal requirements (WCPSS, 2008).

Effective Cultures/Leaders

The principal of a new school is under scrutiny, especially if he or she is not from the community in which the school is being built. This is why establishing credibility is crucial.

Short and Greer (2002) asserted, "The shaping, enhancement, and maintenance of a school's culture are primary responsibilities of the school's leaders" (p. 35). As a leader, one must monitor and interact with different groups within the organization to promote a positive environment. The lines of communication must be open so that

different groups feel they are being kept informed. Keeping the stakeholders engaged in the organization will create a culturally diverse organization that empowers stakeholders (Short & Greer, 2002).

Marion (2002) reported, "Members of a culture have standardized ways of interacting with one another" (p. 228). Through the establishment of the mission statement, the group can set the foundation on which the culture of the given organization will be created. The establishment of the culture within the organization can define the means by which it will deal with the daily issues that arise, as well as the procedures that all stakeholders should follow. The organizational leaders will be responsible for the implementation of the procedures, as well as maintaining the constant application of those set procedures. The culture of the school may have to be explicitly taught, reviewed, and modeled by the leaders. Once a positive culture is established, the stakeholders will have the opportunity to be engaged in the learning process.

Deal and Peterson (1998) noted that culture is the underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals that build up over time as people work together, solve problems, and confront challenges. All of the beliefs and values help form the culture in schools across America each day, either formally or informally (Deal & Peterson, 1998).

Effective leaders know not only what to do, but how, when, and why to do it (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2004). Leaders can act like effective leaders, but if they fail to guide their schools toward making the correct changes, then changes are likely to have a diminished or negative impact on student achievement (Waters et al., 2004). The task of being a principal is demanding; it requires energy, drive, and many other personal qualities such as commitment, dedication, resilience, and skills (Mestry & Grobler,

2004). It is difficult to measure a principal's commitment. There are certain behaviors related to commitment, for example, regular attendance, punctuality, and concern for learners and educators (Mestry & Grobler, 2004). Most principals often are not well prepared for the tasks they must undertake and are not given sufficient training to perform those tasks (Mestry & Grobler, 2004).

Competence and competency are skills and characteristics that people bring to tasks and situations, and they may result in successful outcomes (Mestry & Grobler, 2004). A competency can also be described as a set of behavior patterns that the incompetent manager needs to bring to a position in order to perform tasks and functions with competencies (Mestry & Grobler, 2004). Principals should possess skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values to manage their schools effectively and efficiently (Mestry & Grobler, 2004).

Bergman (1998) declared that the principal's role is so diverse that a single description cannot fully capture the nature of the position (p. 1). Principals today are expected to create a team relationship among staff members, acquire and allocate resources, promote teacher development, improve student performance on standardized tests, and build effective community linkages (Drake & Roe, 2003). "Twenty-first century principals," just as Tirozzi (2001) predicted, "would have to shift their roles from a focus on management and administration to a focus on leadership and vision on facilitating the teaching and learning process" (p. 48).

Leadership Styles

Burns (1978) stated that there are two basic kinds of leadership, transformational and transactional, and he indicated that they are in contrast with each other. He viewed transformational leadership as being the more complex of the two. Burns also stated:

Leadership is leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations—the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations of both leaders and followers. The genius of leadership lies in the manner in which leaders see and act on their own and their followers' values and motivations. (p. 19)

Bernard Bass (1985) built on Burns's theory of transformational and transactional leadership. Bass's model discusses leadership in terms of charisma, inspirational leadership, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation.

- Charisma occurs when leaders provide leadership that generates creativity and productivity from subordinates. Subordinates idealize the leader, develop a strong need for leader approval, and refrain from criticism.

- Inspiration is the ability of the leader to motivate and inspire subordinates by providing meaningful and challenging work.

- Individualized consideration is shown when the leader acts as a coach or mentor to each follower, thus allowing the leader to focus on a subordinate's need for achievement and growth.

- Intellectual stimulation occurs when the leader encourages subordinates to be innovative and creative by questioning assumptions, attacking problems, and approaching old situations in new ways. (Bass, 1985, p. 11)

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership has appeared with increased frequency in writings about education since the late 1980s. Most recently, it has been invoked in the interest of productivity, responding to the centrally driven large-scale reform efforts that have

dominated education for the past decade in most developed countries throughout the

world (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005).

Transformational leadership is associated with motivating associates to do more

than they originally thought possible. Associates' perceptions of self-efficacy or

confidence, as well as their developmental potential, are enhanced by the transforming

process (Avolio & Bass, 2004, pp. 26-27). Avolio and Bass (2004) also noted that "the

process of transferring associates does not merely empower them or delegate to them the

responsibility for fulfilling a goal; rather, it develops their capacity to determine their

own course of action, if they lack the ability" (p. 27).

Transformational leaders alleviate stress from people. Bass and Steidlmeier

(1998) claimed, "Inspirational leaders create a positive, optimistic environment for

identifying the conflict and an expectation of its resolution" (p. 30). Wilmore and

Thomas (2001) noted that "it becomes the principal's responsibility to seek input from all

stakeholders, to help create the specifics of a collaboratively developed school action

plan, and to achieve a mutually developed mission" (p. 4). According to Bass and Riggio

(2006), "Transformational leaders help followers grow and develop into leaders by

responding to individual followers' needs by empowering them and by aligning the

objectives and goals of the individual followers, the leader, the group, and the larger

organization" (p. 3).

Bass and Avolio (1994) noted that

Transformational leaders behave in ways that motivate and inspire those around

them by providing meaning and challenge to their followers' work.… The

leaders create clearly communicated expectations that followers want to meet and

also demonstrate commitments to goals and shared visions. (p. 3)

Avolio and Bass (2004) stated that inspirational motivation has four key

characteristics: "First, talk optimistically about the future. Second, talk enthusiastically

about the needs to be accomplished. Third, articulate a compelling vision of the future.

Fourth, express confidence that goals will be achieved" (p. 97).

Bass and Avolio (1994) described individual consideration:

Transformational leaders pay special attention to each individual's needs for

achievement and growth by acting as a coach and mentor. Followers and

colleagues are developed to successively higher levels of potential…new learning

opportunities are created along with a supportive climate. Individual differences

in terms of needs and desires are recognized. The leader's behavior demonstrates

acceptance of individual differences. (p. 4)

Transformational leaders utilize individual consideration through coaching and

mentoring, treating others as individuals, considering each individual as having different

needs and abilities, and helping others to develop their strengths (Avolio & Bass, 2004, p.

28). According to Wilmore and Thomas (2001), transformational leaders care about

people and their innovative ideas.

A transformational leader supports innovation. When teachers or groups come up

with ideas they want to try, a transformational leader asks questions in a supportive,

reflective manner and works as a part of the team to assess and analyze the new ideas.

On the other hand, if an idea is not successful, it is still up to the transformational leader

to be supportive and, again, ask insightful questions designed to analyze what went

wrong and why. The goal is further innovation, not to nip ideas in the bud due to a bad

experience (Wilmore & Thomas, 2001, p. 5).

Razik and Swanson (2001) noted that teachers respond better to informal

traditions and norms than to management systems. They also stated that schools that are loosely structured and culturally tight respond better to transformational leadership for school improvement where order and direction help coordinate efforts and develop shared values (Razik & Swanson, 2001, p. 477). Razik and Swanson also believed that transformational leaders realize that autonomy in classrooms and schools is a prerequisite to fundamental change. In schools, transformative leadership is able to coordinate and order followers through shared beliefs, culture, and imitation—not management—to achieve shared goals (Razik & Swanson, 2001, p. 477).

There are some downsides to transformational leadership. This leadership style is also called pseudo-transformational. Leaders identified as pseudo-transformational have a potential immoral and unethical dimension that could be exploited by an unscrupulous leader inflicted on naïve and unsuspecting followers. Bass and Steidlmeier (1998), in *Ethics, Character and Authentic Transformational Leadership,* wrote: "Fundamentally, the authentic transformational leader must forge a path of congruence of values and interests among stakeholders, while avoiding the pseudo-transformational land mines of deceit, manipulation, self-aggrandizement and power abuse" (p. 12). Homrig (2001) stated that Adolf Hitler may be viewed as a transformational leader gone wrong. He was a powerfully charismatic leader who probably fit the definition of a pseudo-transformational leader, because Hitler ultimately did not lead to the betterment of his followers, but rather his own fulfillment through abuse of power.

Bass and Steidlmeier (1998) gave another warning: "Transformational leadership is seen as immoral in the manner that it moves members to sacrifice their own life plans for the sake of the organization's needs. Homrig (2001) stated that transformational leadership may be double-edged, but with high moral values as ethics espoused by both

leader and led, the dark side is mitigated, and the forces for good are championed.

Transactional Leadership

According to Bass and Avolio (1994), transformational leadership is an expansion of transactional leadership. Bass and Avolio also asserted that:

Transactional leadership emphasizes the transaction or exchange that takes place among leaders, colleagues, and followers. This exchange is based on the leader discussing with others what is required and specifying the conditions and rewards these others will receive if they fulfill those requirements. (p. 3)

Avolio and Bass (2004) believed the transactional leader works toward recognizing the roles and tasks required for associates to reach desired outcomes. They also clarify these requirements for associates, thus creating the confidence they need to exert the necessary effort (Avolio & Bass, 2004, p. 21). Bass (1985) stated that the transactional leader may be more equally bright as compared to the transformational leader, but that their focus is on how to best keep the system for which they are responsible running—reacting to problems generated by observed deviances and looking to modify conditions as needed (p. 105).

Transactional leadership occurs when the leader rewards or disciplines the follower, depending on the adequacy of the follower's performance. Transactional leadership depends on contingent reinforcements, either positive contingent rewards or the more negative active or passive forms of management by exception (Bass & Avolio, 1994, p. 4). Transactional contingent rewards leadership, clarifies expectations, and offers recognition when goals are achieved (Yukl, 2006, p. 263). Management by exception focuses on the subordinate's deviances, mistakes, and errors, and then corrective action is taken as quickly as possible. Avolio and Bass (2004) described

management by exception: active as "the leader specifies the standards for compliance, as well as what constitutes ineffective performance and may punish followers for being out of compliance" (p. 98). Conversely, "management by exception: passive is reactive and does not respond to situations and problems systematically" (Avolio & Bass, 2004, p. 98).

Although leaders possess various styles of leadership, McEwan (1998) asserted that leaders must be able to employ those leadership behaviors that will enable them to accomplish goals and conquer the challenges of opening new schools. Razik and Swanson (2001) stated that school-improvement programs that attempt to prescribe teacher actions and behaviors are based on transactional leadership premises that respond well to tightly structured, culturally loose environments. Transactional leaders attempt to affect improvement by tightly managing and controlling objective curriculum, teaching strategies, and evaluations (Razik & Swanson, 2001, p. 477)

While the transactional style may be the most prevalent, it produces results that may not be as high as with the transformational style. Sometimes transformational leaders use transactional methods to lead. This type of leader can understand the available options and act in the manner that is most appropriate to the situation (Homrig, 2001). Homrig (2001) also noted that transactional leadership style may not be the most appealing leadership strategy in terms of building relationships and developing a long-term motivating work environment but that it does work and is used in most organizations on a daily basis to get things done.

Scheduling

There are several school calendar options available to parents today. The most commonly used calendar options in districts are traditional and year-round. Then there

are schedules created to ensure a safe and caring environment for students and staff. A master calendar that should detail lunches and specials (art, music, media, physical education, and technology) is needed. There are transportation schedules as well as extra duty, early-release day, and late-day arrival schedules. Scheduling meetings to meet the new students and parents, as well as meeting with the project manager for the new facility are needed. There is also the scheduling of required staff development for certified staff who are new to the system.

Staffing

The largest single item of expenditure for a school district is personnel (Odden, 2004). Supply and demand often influence personnel selections. Also noteworthy is the adage that it is better to leave a position unfilled than to fill it with an improperly trained person with a poor or unrealistic attitude toward the job or the world of work in general (Ray, Candoli, & Hack, 2005).

In developing human resources for education, care should be taken to meet needs that are emerging from the new approach to educational management, including an increased emphasis on relationship- and task-building skills. Participative management and decentralized decision making require educators at all levels to interact with many different people and organizations in making joint decisions and cooperating in a range of tasks. They need new interpersonal, facilitation, leadership, and conflict-resolution skills. In addition, skills in analysis, communication, and use of information need to be developed as essential prerequisites for transparent and democratic management (Mestry & Grobler, 2004, p. 23).

Some of the most important duties of the principal include setting the tone, or climate, of the school and hiring highly qualified teachers. Some principals use

committees at their schools to help select teacher candidates, but ultimately the principal is held accountable for the decisions made. According to Heller (2004), "the principal is going to be held accountable for the success or failure of those he or she hires" (p. 47). Heller noted that although he hired with the help of a committee, he also held a rigorous pre-interview with prospective candidates, in which he focused on the philosophy of the school, many challenges that the school faced, attitudes regarding students and teachers, and responsibilities toward parents (Heller, 2004). Those who were still interested after the initial interview with the principal were asked to come to a second interview with the committee.

Staffing a new facility is one of the most important responsibilities for a principal opening a new school. Hiring competent educators has a greater affect on children than any other administrative decision (Pillsbury, 2005). Pillsbury (2005) also believed that to have a major focus in any area other than teacher quality and selection is to miss the power behind the most important decision an educational leader makes—the hiring of a teacher (p. 38). Principals will need to hire certified teachers, custodial staff, cafeteria staff, clerical staff, and teacher assistants. Ray et al. (2005) shared, "If personnel selection is a local function directed by the building principal, then the role of the school building administrator may be one of advertising, initial screening, contract interpreting, and so forth, in addition to selection and placement of personnel" (p. 181). Once teachers are placed, the principal has to ensure that he or she manages them competently. An induction program should ensure that newly appointed educators adjust in a reasonable period of time, and assist them in attaining the school's objectives (Mestry & Grobler, 2004).

Pillsbury (2005) noted that the importance and complexity of teacher quality is

currently being "too narrowly" represented by our federal education officials and the No Child Left Behind legislation (p. 36). The focus appears to be on a singular idea that teacher quality is measured by a credential. But credentialed teachers range from poor to great, since their teaching quality is not represented by a credential, but in their beliefs and behaviors as facilitators of children's teaching (Pillsbury, 2005).

Pillsbury (2005) also believed there are three common themes that distinguish outstanding teachers: purpose, relationships and approaches to teaching. As detailed in Pillsbury's article, purpose is the reason why excellent teachers choose to teach, and relationships are the means by which great teachers show support and care in personal ways regarding communicating with children. These great teachers listen to children, act warmly and friendly toward them, and show empathy toward them. Pillsbury also mentioned that great teachers are seen as having high expectations, being demanding, making learning interesting by connecting it to things the learner has interest in and tapping into the intrinsic motivators, getting actively engaged in learning, structuring lessons in order to maximize learning for all students, and being personally accountable for student achievement.

Also noted by Mestry and Grobler (2004) is the notion that principals should possess the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will create a harmonious and effective interpersonal relationship among all educators in the building.

Technology

The face of the classroom is changing rapidly with the integration of technology. Some of the most frequently discussed and most expensive items facing schools are the purchase, maintenance, repair, and updating of tools for instructional technology, particularly computers (Odden, 2004). Once the hardware is purchased, the software

must be bought as well. It is challenging to keep the software and personal computer (PC) current with the cost of the PC and the teacher support needed for professional growth opportunities.

Many new schools are purchasing Smart boards, Promethean boards and document cameras to use as tools for teaching the curriculum. Goennier (2006) also stated that streaming video, videotapes, and digital versatile discs (DVDs) provide teachers with access to a variety of viewpoints for one topic. The demand for technology is increasing at an alarming rate.

There have been several studies written in the last 9 years regarding the opening of new schools in the United States. These studies are assisting principals tasked with starting new schools with recommendations on what should be considered in the complex process.

Marty Powers (2007) studied the perspective of four principals opening new schools in California. Powers also wanted to know how best to create a community of learners during the process of opening and starting up the new schools. He noted that hiring the staff was one of the procedures the four principals cited as most important. Although the principals had different methods of hiring, each principal was selective to the extent possible given the rules and policies in place that governed the hiring when opening a new school. Powers noted that the continuum on control with regard to hiring ranged from "complete control to very limited authority" (p. 96). One principal hired every staff member, and another principal had half the teaching staff assigned by the district. Regardless of how the teachers were assigned to the buildings, the building administrator had complete control over assigning the grade level within his or her school.

The opening ceremony was very important for each of the principals Powers (2007) studied. It was critical in bringing together all facets of the learning communities. The principals in the study advised others tasked with opening new schools to give adequate time and effort in order to create a special experience for everyone involved.

Powers (2007) noted that the pitfalls the principals encountered when opening the new schools were related to the opening ceremony, and the importance with communicating clearly with the district, superintendent's office, and board of education. The principals who communicated most effectively with the key stakeholders were the most successful in creating a true sense of community during the opening ceremony.

Powers (2007) also noted that each principal identified either a building problem or human resources obstacles that could have been avoided. These challenges took a great deal of time from the early months of planning because attending to them was very important in the opening process.

Powers (2007) noted that principals opening new schools must know how to navigate the system in which the new school will operate. They need to know what needs to be done and whom to call to ensure that everything happens in a timely fashion. He stated that principals opening new schools should be veteran principals with a strong background in instructional leadership and managerial leadership as the principals will spend a great deal of time on both during the opening process. Also noted is a recommendation of 6 months of planning prior to the school opening. This length of time will ensure that the principals are ready for the beginning of the school year.

Kathy Dykes Sims (2005) studied the roles and challenges of opening new schools in Tennessee. Three elementary principals who opened new school facilities from 2001 to 2003 were studied. Sims collected data from personal interviews using a

semi-structured interview guide that consisted of 20 questions. Sims noted that findings

from the data revealed several observations:

> (1) the planning and design phase of the new school was developed before the
>
> new principal was appointed; (2) the latitude of the new principal during the
>
> construction phase was varied, depending on when the principal was appointed;
>
> (3) there was a diverse list of duties and responsibilities consisting of processes,
>
> procedures, and functions for which no assistance was provided, or formal
>
> guidelines established; (4) the principal spent incredible amounts of time and
>
> energy in confronting unexpected and unavoidable challenges and concerns; (5)
>
> there was a need to involve and consult all stakeholders in the process of
>
> establishing a new learning community; (6) a sufficient amount of time by
>
> principals opening new schools is needed solely to focus on the task of organizing
>
> and implementing a new school setting; (7) specific skills and attributes are
>
> needed by those who open new schools; (8) there is a rewarding personal and
>
> professional feeling that accompanies the challenges of opening new schools. (pp.
>
> 107-108)

Sims (2005) also mentioned that the principal opening a new school needs to have

effective communication skills. This attribute will assist with getting to know the new

community and will help create and establish an effective learning environment for the

students to be served. Sims noted that poor communication skills could lead to

confusion, misunderstandings, and missed opportunities.

Larry Johnson (2000) studied four principals opening new schools in northeast

Georgia. The population in this area of the state is increasing at an alarming rate;

therefore, new facilities are being constructed annually to meet the growing student

population. Johnson (2000) reported, "Presently, the availability of educational literature on effective school openings is just a scant more than twenty years prior" (p. 2). Johnson (2000) noted, "Principals had to make definitive and justifiable decisions about a wide array of issues and to deal simultaneously with problems and ideologies that sometimes coexisted and conflicted with each other while trying to create a teaming community of stakeholders" (p. 20).

Johnson (2000) wanted to identify and understand the challenges principals faced as they opened news schools. He also wanted to gather a better understanding of the work necessary to accomplish prior to the opening of the school doors and throughout the first year of operation. None of the principals in the study had opened a new school previously. Each principal stated that opening a new facility was a personal and a professional goal. The principals also noted that there were no support systems in place to assist with the task of opening a new school or to answer questions related to the opening (Johnson, 2000, p. 113).

Johnson's (2000) implications for school districts, following the study, were the following list of needs when supporting principals opening new schools:

- The school systems lacked policies and procedures for opening the new schools.
- The school system also lacked input from principals in the design of the new facility.
- The principal was not named before the design of the building was finalized.
- The principal was not offered any orientation, coaching, mentoring, or induction before he or she was given the keys to the new building.

- The principals did not have a built-in support system to turn to for assistance.

(pp. 174-175)

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine in detail the experiences of four elementary school principals who had recently gone through the process of opening a new elementary school. Chapter 2 presented information that new principals need regarding (1) increasing enrollments in American schools, (2) the budget process, (3) effective school culture and leadership styles, (4) scheduling options, (5) staffing patterns, and (6) technology. Chapter 2 also reviewed other relevant literature from studies completed in the last 8 years on opening new schools. This information has set the stage for the qualitative research methodology to be used in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine in detail the perspectives of four elementary principals who had recently gone through the process of opening new year-round elementary school facilities in a large urban school district in the southeastern United States. In particular, the study examined and documented the procedures that the principals used in opening each school, as well as making the school itself operational. The study examined what procedures the principal had to undertake in order to open up the building as a physical plant, how he or she conducted the hiring of the faculty, how the school climate for the new school was created, and how the principal was able to get the school operating smoothly over the course of the first year. From this study, the researcher aimed to document the principals' experiences involved in opening new elementary schools.

Research Questions

1. What challenges/pitfalls does a principal face when opening a new school?

2.   What information from research will enable a principal to succeed in the tasks of opening a new school facility?

3. What advice do principals give about successfully opening new schools?

4. What leadership style is most desirable when opening a new school?

Methodology

This qualitative replication study was conducted as a bounded case study based on one completed by Dr. Marty Powers. The qualitative research methodology was selected as the most appropriate one due to its descriptive nature, which was needed in order to capture effectively the phenomena, issues, and processes that need to be explored, and the direct experiences of those who lived through them (Creswell, 2002, p. 146). Creswell

(1998) defined the bounded system in this way: The "case" selected for study has boundaries, often bounded by time and place. It also has interrelated parts that form a whole. Hence, the proper case to be studied is both "bounded" and a "system" (p. 249).

The case study for this research was a descriptive study using a qualitative approach. Principals were interviewed (Appendix B). The interview questions (Appendix C) were those used by Dr. Powers. The interview focused on skills and knowledge required for the job of opening a new elementary public school facility. The interviews were conducted by the researcher at the interviewee's school site. Each of the four interviews were audio taped by the researcher at the interviewee's school site and later transcribed. The researcher ensured that the principal of each site verified each transcription before those data were used. The study summarized the results in the form of a case summary of the optimal procedures and leadership requirements necessary to assist any principal in the start-up of a new school in the next few years.

Creswell (1998) defined the qualitative method:

An inquiry process of understanding is based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. (p. 15)

How the researcher participates in the research process is a key part of the study. In the quantitative studies, the investigator seeks to remain separate so as not to inflict bias, while in the qualitative study the investigator is involved in sharing thoughts and ideas (Creswell, 2003). In the qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument that leads the data, as opposed to the more formal instruments, such as surveys and questionnaires, used by the quantitative researcher.

Population and Sample

The interviews were limited to four randomly selected principals, at schools in the large southeastern urban school district, all of whom have been involved in the process of opening and starting up a new elementary school within the last 5 years. A new elementary school is defined as a newly formed school, grades prekindergarten through fifth, which opened as a result of growth in student population. The study was limited by the fact that only a few principals were interviewed. The study excluded alternative and charter schools in order to gain a more consistent sample of elementary schools.

Data Collection

After completing the research study application (Appendix D) for the school district and being granted approval, the interview questions were provided to the interviewees, followed by a personal interview conducted by the researcher. The interview focused on an inventory of issues describing what a principal should know and do in order to open a new school facility successfully. The interview questions examined such pertinent issues as staffing, curriculum, facilities, school climate and culture, school demographics, and the demographics of the principals of the schools. The impact of all the mentioned issues on the schools' openings was explored.

Data Analysis

As recommended by Seidman (1998), the data analysis was not conducted until all interviews were completed. The researcher read each transcript of the interviewees, and then reread and labeled key ideas and themes. The researcher organized the transcripts into case studies and searched for connecting threads and patterns that could be represented in the form of themes and patterns. Key ideas and themes are displayed in tables in Chapter 4.

Confidentiality of Participants and Data

The identity of each participant in this research study was kept confidential in the published work. Consent forms were distributed to each participant and returned signed. Any reference to individual schools, locations of schools, or individual persons was modified to maintain confidentiality.

Summary

The purpose of this case study-based research was a subjective interpretation of data derived from the interviewees' experiences. The study examined the perceived practices of principals opening new schools in a large urban school district and compared those practices with Powers's (2007) study of principals opening new schools in California. This study sought the four principals' perspectives on what procedures, practices, and leadership skills helped them most in the process of starting up new schools. The results of this study were added to the existing body of literature, which looks at principals opening new facilities.

Chapter 3 described the methodology that was used in this study, including a restatement of the research purpose and research questions. It also examined the qualitative method research design and described the research population and plans for maintaining confidentiality. Limitations were discussed, and the process for data analysis is discussed further in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Presentation and Analysis of Data

This chapter provides the presentation and review of data. The first section

provides background and conceptual information through case studies. The second part

of the chapter presents cross analysis of research questions.

Case Studies

A case study is constructed below for each interviewee. For the remainder of the

text, the principals interviewed are referred to by the order in which they were

interviewed; for example, the first principal participant interviewed is referred to as PP1,

and his elementary school is referred as ES1. The researcher recorded the principals'

responses to the interview questions and observed leadership traits on their school

campuses.

Case One

Principal 1 (PP1) became the principal of elementary school 1 (ES1) in 2009. He

has earned a doctoral degree. PP1 has worked in education for 14 years, serving as a

teacher for 3 years in a high school, an assistant principal for 4 years, and a principal for

7 years in elementary schools. PP1 also worked in the private sector before becoming an

educator.

PP1 typically arrives at school by 7:30 a.m., eats lunch between 11:30 a.m. and

1:00 p.m. and tries to leave school by 5:00 p.m. each afternoon. PP1 interviewed with his

area superintendent in late November 2008, interviewed with the superintendent in

December 2008, and received school board approval the middle of January 2009. He

"officially" began his duties on February 9, 2009, giving him 6 months to plan and

prepare before the students and staff were slated to begin the new school year. PP1 did

not receive any orientation to the school community from any source; however, he was

familiar with the community because he had worked there for the past several years.

PP1 began staffing by hiring his lead secretary because there were limitations on who he could hire first. Then he began hiring the Instruction Resource Teacher (IRT) and teachers who would fill leadership positions at the different grade levels. From this core group, they interviewed over 100 different applicants for teachers. PP1 stated that due to a budget shortfall and hiring freezes during the 2009-2010 school year, he was restricted to only interviewing teachers and support personnel who were on continuing contracts in the county. Human resources did grant special permission for PP1 to hire special education teachers and his ESL teachers prior to existing schools receiving that privilege. PP1 was allowed to interview candidates who had terminating contracts as well as those who were outside the school district before the ban was lifted for existing school principals that year. PP1 posted the available jobs on the district's website, gathered resumes, reviewed applications, and called people in for interviews. Teachers were hired from 27 different schools within the district. The first year, PP1 only hired a few beginning teachers. The teacher grade-level assignments were assigned by the principal with the help of the core team. Usually, the team went into the interviews with a particular grade level in mind.

The staff in July consisted of 42 teachers, of whom 18 had earned their master's degrees, and none had a doctoral degree. The demographics for this group of teachers were as follows: 18 teachers were in the 21-29 age group; 14 teachers were in the 30-39 age group; six were in the 40-49 age group; and four were in the group over 50 years of age.

The school has prekindergarten through fifth grade students, of whom 33% qualified for free/reduced breakfast and lunch. The demographics for the student

population were as follows: White 63%, Hispanic 19%, Black 13%, Multi 4%, Asian and American Indian less than 1% each. Eighty-seven to ninety percent of the students came from one of the seven feeder schools that were affected by the redistricting. The additional 10% were new enrollees to the school district. The price range of the homes in the area was from $150,000 to $500,000. PP1 stated that a few of the student families lived in subsidized homes or were homeless, with the majority of students classified as middle class. The school was built in a rural to suburban area of the county on 28 acres of land. Some of the school's land is for joint use with the town for soccer fields. There is also a horse farm adjacent to the school property.

During the spring of 2009, parents were invited to an organizational meeting for the PTA. PP1 worked with the county and the state to charter a PTA for the school. There were 100 parents at the first organizational meeting. A process was developed to ensure that each parent was given the opportunity to participate in the election process. The officers were elected based on the by-laws of the county and state organization. The elected PTA president was the PTA president from one of the feeder schools. The other elected officers came from some of the other feeder schools.

The opening of the school was challenging because the building was operating as a "swing" space for another elementary school whose site was being renovated. The building was already being used, so there were very few "punch list" items for PP1 to handle before the school year began. PP1 had to coordinate with that school, which was operating on a traditional calendar, to get them moved out and the ES1 moved in within a 2-week time frame. Furniture and instructional supplies had to be moved in, and touch-up painting and stripping and waxing the floors were needed in a short period of time. PP1 felt fortunate that the school had been open the previous year, and he did not have to

wait for a certificate of occupancy. There was a Meet the Teacher/Open House held in the middle of June for the families to view the building before the year-round school opened on July 7, 2009.

PP1 said the unique situation with the huge budget deficit last year was a definite roadblock. Nearly $60,000 of his staff development budget for new schools was pulled from his start-up funds. They went from having a nice plan for continuous development around core principles to having to schedule only trainers who were working within the school system. Due to the limitations of hiring, three schools that opened last also received a reduced allotment for hiring staff. Initially, PP1 was only permitted to hire 80% of his staff members; then he was able to hire up to 95% of his staff. PP1 was also limited to only interviewing transfer candidates within the district. He feels that this ended up being a bonus because the new schools opening were allowed the first selection of the employees on the transfer list. This meant he had a great pool of candidates to work with before the existing schools could begin interviewing. PP1 also noted that another roadblock in opening last year was in not being able to hire the assistant principal until the week before school started, due to the budget cuts and hiring freezes.

In opening the new school, PP1 feels that there were some staffing decisions that he would change. Since school has started, and he has had a chance to see people actually working together, he perhaps would have placed a few people in different grade levels. There are a couple of personnel decisions that he would not have made or would do differently if he could do it again.

PP1 noted that one individual in particular provided the most assistance during the opening of ES1. This person worked with the Curriculum and Instruction division, but she assisted with every aspect of the opening, especially monitoring the spending of the

bond money, and ordering textbooks and other instructional materials. This support person also organized monthly meetings with the different departments that would help inform his decisions. Those departments, like media services, curriculum/instruction, and the arts, helped him select appropriate books, instructional materials, and instruments. This person was also instrumental in coordinating the move between the two schools and the delivery of the furniture and instructional supplies to each school. PP1 noted that the school's personnel were responsible for arranging the classrooms and stocking the supply room once all materials were delivered and placed in the appropriate areas of the school building. PP1 also noted that the lead secretary and the instructional resource teacher (IRT) were instrumental in planning and opening the new school once they were released from their previous schools.

The support from Central Services was good, but PP1 did not have to interact with the facilities services as much as most principals do when opening a new school. He did have a project manager, and they completed the 1-year warranty walk-throughs together. The instructional departments also provided necessary support for making recommendations in regard to K–5 instructional materials and supplies. Central Services provided the support needed and replied quickly to e-mails when received.

The most successful implementation was the establishment of the system of beliefs for the school in which everyone would operate. These core guiding principles and the establishment of the Positive Behavior Support (PBS) system provided high expectations for all staff, students, and parents. These tenets provided the thread that is carried through in the Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) to the data collection. The new reading program and the math program are also successful because everyone agreed to support both programs of instruction.

The grand opening was a Meet the Teacher and Open House floating event for all the families who would be attending ES1. They did not have a ribbon-cutting ceremony, because another school had been in the building for 1 year, and they were so pushed for time with the short turnaround for the opening of the school year. A vision parade involving the core values and beliefs was held at the beginning of school. Each classroom defined its vision for this year, made a banner, and marched down the halls into the multipurpose room with lots of music and cheering. Each class walked across the stage and shared its banner and beliefs. The area superintendent was invited. This event helped people take ownership of the beliefs that were pervasive in the school. The vision parade took place on an early-release day planned for staff development. Every member of the staff walked around the school and read each classroom banner, which assisted in the process of writing the school improvement plan for ES1.

PP1 noted that one pitfall principals opening new schools should try to avoid is to attempt to control everything on their own. He stated that principals embarking on opening a new school facility should delegate as many tasks as possible to other staff members. PP1 also shared that the delegation of tasks is very important in order for everything to be ready for the opening of school. PP1 asserted that the principal should be focused on hiring the best people for the school. Rushing to get a new school fully staffed is also a pitfall. It is better to keep looking for the right person for a position than to settle for just any person. PP1 noted that it will take a lot of work later to terminate the person hired at the last minute due to time constraints.

The thing that caused PP1 the most concern was the ability to open the school with all the teachers needed, due to the limitations placed on hiring. In opening the new school, PP1 learned more about the operations side of planning, like reviewing the

building plans with the architects. Also, those first couple of weeks when it is just you, the principal, there, you can take time to form your own vision for the school. Sometimes when you go into existing schools, you may have a vision, but you are always trying to weave that into the existing culture and trying to change that culture a little at a time. When you open a new school, you are establishing a new culture, and that is the most exciting part.

Case Two

Principal 2 (PP2) was a veteran principal who had served as an elementary principal for 16 years. She began her educational career by serving for 12 years as an elementary school teacher. PP2 received her master's degree in Education Administration. She received a phone call in November 2007 from her area superintendent asking her to come to her office. She did not know why she was being summoned and had a very stressful drive because she could not think of anything she had done wrong to get her in trouble. Once she arrived, she was asked to open the new school. The school board approved the recommendation in December 2007. PP2 started working at ES2 in February 2008 (the day after it was announced in the newspaper); she began getting phone calls from the effected parents. School began on July 7, 2008 for the students, and the first official day for staff was July 1, 2008. The hired teachers started coming to all the meetings and planning sessions prior to the official July 1 start date.

PP2 did not receive orientation to the community, but the school she left was not very different from the one she was opening; however, it was not a feeder school to the new one. PP2 was allowed to take 10% of her staff with her, and she did. She took the people she thought would be most open to working hard and going in a new direction. PP2 was not required to take any transfers, so she had no limitations on hiring her staff.

Applicants applied by sending e-mails and phone calls. PP2 stated there were so many that it was hard going through all the e-mails in her first month without a secretary. PP2 made the teacher grade-level assignments. She worked with a core group of teachers and staff who moved with her from her previous school. PP2 did not want to create the same school that she left and was, therefore, very cautious of teachers hiring. PP2 believed that when teachers are involved in the hiring process, they tend to recommend teachers with similar personalities as those on the interviewing committee. All the teacher assistants and other support personnel for the school were hired by a team of teachers. Most of the teacher positions were hired by the principal. PP2 noted that she had so many teachers to hire that she could not schedule all the interviews in the evening to accommodate a team's schedule.

There were 64 teachers on staff, of whom 28 had a master's degree, and none had a doctoral degree. The age demographics of the teachers were as follows: The 21-29 year-old group had 22 teachers; the 30-39 year-old group had 23 teachers; the 40-49 year-old group had 12 teachers; and the group over 50 years of age had 7 teachers.

The school consisted of prekindergarten through fifth grade. In the first year, PP2 had more than 600 children, and the second year, more than 900, of whom 12-14% qualified for free or reduced breakfast and lunch. The demographic student population breakout was as follows: White 60%; Asian 13%; Latino 10%; Black 8%; Other 8%; and one Native American student. There were very few students, maybe 1 or 2%, who were new to the school district.

The school site was a former industrial plant. The inside was gutted and retrofitted. The outside was not very attractive, but the inside was very spacious and unique. There was a small footprint that posed a challenge for carpools. Although there

was a long carpool line, there was a short drop-off area that caused quite a backup during arrival and dismissal.

This school is between two suburbs, and there are always questions as far as whom to call with questions about traffic control or water. Both suburbs claim authority, or neither does, depending on what needs to be done. This was especially true when they were trying to get a sidewalk installed across the railroad tracks, which are just in front of the school. The school site consists of 15.63 acres. The neighborhood where the school is housed is very annoyed with the traffic, especially the parents who are not particularly respectful of each other. The neighborhood right around the school has homes with values of $300,000 and up. The population is considered upper middle class.

The state PTA facilitated the first meeting to establish a new charter. The parents strongly disagreed with each other about the nominating committee procedures. They did eventually elect the officers at that meeting, but only after a lot of yelling and arguing. The principal said she had wondered what she had gotten herself into during and after this meeting.

Children came from eight different schools, of which their families had been attending for many years, and had established their footholds. Most of the families were excited about coming to the new school, but some families came kicking and screaming, partly because their previous school calendars were traditional, and the new school calendar would be on a multi-tracked, year-round schedule.

The principal, the project manager, and the person in charge of spending the bond money managed a great deal of the planning and opening of the school. As staff was hired, they made decisions collectively. PP2 stated that she felt quite lonely at first because she was used to having many people around her at all times, but then, all of a

sudden, she was all alone with her thoughts.

When the ES2 was scheduled to open, everything within the school walls was ready for the children. The staff moved in the week before the school year began. The playground and the bike racks were not ready, and there was an issue with a retaining pond that was later resolved. The biggest setback was that the retaining pond almost caused the school to not open on time because it was not fenced on all sides appropriately. Overall, the biggest surprise was the level of some of the parents' contentiousness.

Another concern that PP2 had was that she did not know which children or how many children would actually be enrolling in the school. Parents could opt for the "grandfather" clause, which allowed some students transfers back to their prior schools. PP2 also noted that fielding questions regarding the PTA took a considerable amount of time. She said she had waited too long before calling the state PTA. The representatives from that organization could have assisted with responding to parents who were vying for positions on the PTA before the charter was officially in place.

The source from whom PP2 received the most help was the curriculum and instruction person at the central office who knew the answer to every question and worked with the principal on ordering for the school. The IRT, the lead secretary, and the assistant principal were of great help to the principal. PP2 noted that the communications department was very instrumental in getting information out to the public. PP2 believed that she got the assistance she requested, but she thought some of the departments could have been a little more helpful and proactive to a school that was opening for the first time.

PP2 stated that her outreach to her students and parents was most successful. She

went to the feeder schools several times to speak to the students. She also allowed the children to vote on the school colors and mascot, even the rising kindergarteners. PP2 called parents who had e-mailed her, and she earned a reputation for being assessable prior to the school opening.

The grand opening was held on July 7, 2007, which was also the first day of school. The press was there. The superintendent conducted a press conference at 5:00 a.m. from the school. The dedication was held 3 months later. This gave the staff time to decorate and put together slide shows. Students practiced for performances, and public officials were invited to give speeches.

PP2 reiterated that the biggest pitfall to avoid is to overlook the first parents who contact a principal. Usually the first parents who contact a principal are the ones looking for power and not necessarily to be the principal's teammate. PP2 also found that the parents who contacted her within days of being named in the paper are the ones she continues to have the most difficult time with and are the most demanding. They seem to think that it is all about them and their agendas. PP2 would also get the state PTA involved much sooner to help answer the many questions related to this organization.

The year-round consent process and not knowing which or how many children would be coming caused the greatest concern for PP2. Those families coming from existing year-round schools wanted the same tracks they had at the previous schools, and the children coming from traditional schools all wanted track 4, which mostly follows the traditional calendar. Some parents got school board members involved in track assignments. There were also times when parents yelled and screamed at the principal regarding their child's track assignment.

PP2 recognized that opening a new school was great fun but physically

exhausting. They worked 21 days straight, through weekends and holidays at the end, moving things into the building. PP2 said that she doesn't know whether she would open a school again. She said the best part was hiring her own staff who shared her vision. This was the third school where she had been principal, but it was the only one that did not have any inherited staff, which was a great thing.

PP2 also noted that sometimes one makes mistakes in hiring, but they are one's own mistakes. She also shared that principals should plan wisely when spending monies initially, and plan for growth. Next, she cautioned against principals sending e-mails, because what is sent will be shared with the whole world and may be taken out of context. This could set a negative tone for new families who do not know the principal or his or her leadership style. PP2 said she would possibly have had another 5 to 6 years to serve as a principal if she had not been the principal of two multi-tracked, year-round calendared schools the last 5 years. She stated that the nonstop pace of a multi-tracked, year-round school is taxing on 12-month employees, especially the principal.

Case Three

PP3 became the principal of ES3 4 years ago. She has received her master's degree and been in education for a total of 28 years. PP3 served 16 years as an elementary teacher and 2 years as a middle school teacher. She has served as an IRT, a Title 1 reading teacher, and a math resource teacher in addition to being a classroom instructor. PP3 was an assistant principal for one and a half years before becoming an elementary principal 10 years ago.

PP3 normally arrives to work at 7:15 a.m. and eats lunch whenever she can, depending on what is happening in the building. She leaves the campus around 5:45 p.m. most days. PP3 had a year-round calendar 101 training session as an orientation to the

year-round school and all that was involved in being a principal of a multi-track, year-round school. She interviewed in December 2005 and received the school board's approval in January 2006. PP3 officially began her position on February 18, 2006. The school year began for the teachers on July 1, 2006, and for the students on July 7, 2006.

PP3 received orientation to the community by meeting with the mayor of the town where the school was. The mayor talked about the population of the town and shared information regarding the community. He also discussed the future plans for the town including expansion. The mayor said high quality schools would encourage growth and businesses to the area.

The staff were selected by an interviewing process. There was a core group of staff members who moved with the principal from her previous school and assisted with the interviews. Applicants sent resumes based on job postings. PP3 made grade-level placements the first year. Parents were allowed to select track preferences, and staff members were placed based on that information. There were 23 teachers the first year of operation. Eighty to ninety percent had their master's degrees, and one had a doctoral degree. The age demographic of the teaching staff was as follows: The 21-29 year-old age group had 83% of the teachers; the 30-39 year-old age group had 15% of the teachers; the 40-49 year-old group had 2% of the teachers; and there was none in the group over 50 years old.

There are 496 students from prekindergarten through fifth grade at the school. The demographics of the school were as follows: White 75%; Black 11%; Latino 5%; Asian 1.5%; Multi-racial 7.4%; and Native American less than 1%. Ninety percent of the students attending ES3 the first year were current students in the school district. The students came from five feeder schools in the district.

ES3 opened its first year in a wing of the new high school, which sits on the same campus. The high school was opening the same year with only freshmen and sophomore students. ES3 occupied three levels in the high school. It was made elementary-friendly by lowering the commodes and water fountains. The school had a makeshift office that had partitions; there was a media center, a computer lab, and a cafeteria separate from the high school. ES3 had its own playground and playground equipment. The third level was shared with a few high school classes, but the first and second floors were not.

The school is located in a suburban area. ES3 will share a parking lot and bus loop with the middle school, and the elementary school children will probably ride the school bus with the middle school children once that building is complete. Also unique about the site is that the elementary and middle school students will be able to walk to the high school to see theater productions. The high school students also are able to walk to the elementary school to support the teachers with physical fitness activities.

During the spring of 2006, the PTA was chartered. The state PTA organization did all the work for the charter process. The officers were selected through a voting process. There is also a women's organization that supports the school.

The lead secretary, IRT, media specialist, assistant principal, and data manager were all crucial to opening the school. Not everything was ready when the school opened. On the meet-and-greet day, the school still did not have the certificate of occupancy. There were 300 parents waiting outside to get into the building. The mayor assisted by going to get the final certificate. The principal talked to the parents for about 15 minutes on a bullhorn. PP3 had the staff meet with the parents on the lawn, and after about 20 minutes of conversations, everyone was allowed to enter the building.

PP3 said they had a Cinderella story the first year because there was a false sense

of what it would really be like once they were in their building. Everyone was in a state of honeymoon the entire year. There were only three or four classrooms per grade level. The staff were contained in a small area of the high school, and there was a real sense of community.

The surprises came when the school moved into its permanent building after the school doubled in size with students and staff. The first year, a lot of effort was put into building relationships, but when 20 new staff members were added after the permanent building was ready, the principal saw personalities emerge that she did not see the first year. Hiring the best and the brightest is only the beginning of the work, because then one must get them to the point where they accept that this is not their previous school and that things would operate differently at the new school. A principal must work even harder to get these gifted teachers to learn that doing business at the new school would not be like their old school and that the norms at the new school would supersede any of those from previous schools. One must keep in mind that he or she needs to teach and reteach the new systems in order for everyone on the staff to understand them.

PP3 said that she would not have done anything differently in terms of opening the school. However, she is not sure she would take a position where she had to move 2 years in a row. It was like opening two different schools. They had to finish out 1 year and be out of the building with students by 4:00 p.m. on the last day. PP3 chose some staff members because it was getting late in the process. If she had had more time, she would have made some different hiring decisions. There were more leaders than followers, and that was problematic.

PP3 received a great deal of help from a person who was very knowledgeable about ways in which multi-track, year-round schools operate. Students come to school

for 9 weeks then they "track out" for 3 weeks. There are always three tracks in session

and one track is always tracked out or on vacation. This method allows for each building

to have maximum usage throughout the year and increases the number of students that

are served in each school. PP3 thought there were four tracks, but there were actually

seven. She was concerned with how they work together as far as scheduling when one

track of students is always on vacation. There are always staff and students coming from

vacation or heading out for vacation during the year. Scheduling the specials, lunches,

and recess times was very challenging until she figured out that adding the names of the

teachers was the problem. Once she took the names out and realized that the schedule

was like a train with people always coming and going, it became much easier to see the

full picture.

     The seven tracks consisted of the four teacher tracks for homeroom teachers, and

these teachers track out when their students track out. Track five is for teachers who

work for 10 months but track out at different times. Track six is for 11-month

employees, such as a speech therapist or specialists (e.g., art, music, and physical

education). Track seven is for 12-month employees, such as the office staff and

administrators.

     PP3 also was very complimentary of the person who supported new schools with

spending the bond money and purchasing items for the school. She also gave

considerable credit to the support provided by fellow year-round principals. PP3

received much information from finance and media services, and central office provided

support as needed. A notebook was given that provided crucial information about

opening new schools as well as when certain events should take place. PP3 feels that the

school district has a very comprehensive method for providing information to principals

opening new schools.

The academy program was the most successful program the first year. This is an opportunity for students to receive 15 additional days of instruction during their track-out time. The students receive support in reading and math during these sessions, which are offered 4 days per week.

PP3 regrets that ES3 did not have a ribbon-cutting ceremony. She stated that the reason for not having a grand opening was that their first year was in the high school and the second year they did not have enough time. The staff could not get into the permanent elementary building until July 3 and the school opened on July 7. PP3 said it did not make sense to hold a ribbon-cutting ceremony the second year of operation. She stated that that was something she would have changed if she could have. The school did have Read Across America as a community event the first year. The community readers were invited to take a tour of the building, and the school staff shared brochures and information about the different programs at the school.

PP3 noted that the biggest pitfall for her was being naïve in thinking that although she was opening a new school with all new staff, the reality was that it was not a new school for very long. Some of the same issues and concerns that arise in existing schools will occur in a new school. PP3 said that recognizing and addressing those concerns head-on would help to eliminate those valleys that a new school goes through. PP3 did take advantage of the time she had to prepare for opening the new school, and she thought that time was crucial to her thought processes for opening the building.

Initially, the cause for the greatest concerns came from parents who struggled with having their elementary children in the building with high school students. The high school principal and PP3 met and discussed ways to address those concerns. One idea

was that any high school student that needed to take one of the few classes in the wing where the elementary students were housed would always turn right while, and all elementary school students would always turn left in that section of the building, and if this was done, the different groups would not cross paths. PP3 shared that the method worked well for the year they shared the high school building.

PP3 also had to help allay the fears of parents coming to the high school building at all. What everyone discovered was that the high school students really liked their own peers and wanted nothing to do with the elementary school children. They admired the little children and loved to see them walk by, but they did not want to interact with them. Adults were stationed along the corridors, especially in the cafeteria. That was the only time the children crossed paths. There was much supervision in the high school to help guide the students so the elementary school children would not get lost in the huge building.

Finally, PP3 had to ask the parents whether they felt safe when they were walking down the street or at the mall. She noted that, at those times, their children were also mixed in with all kinds of people. While PP3 could not promise that their children would be 100% safe, she did guarantee that the schools would take every measure possible to try and ensure this. The parents wondered whether someone would be waiting for the children in the bathrooms or around corners. Teachers only took children to the bathrooms in groups and did not send children alone. The high school children primarily did not go in the elementary school area, and if they did, the high school principal was very responsive to those situations. The principals of each school coordinated all fire drills and lock-downs as well as evening events. The elementary school did have a separate intercom system from that of the high school.

When opening a new school, principals need to know that it is a lot of work and that they really need to be committed to the work. They are really building an organization from the ground up, and they go in with a blank slate. Everything from the school-improvement plan to discipline, to how they will walk down the hall, to dress code has to be thoroughly discussed. A group of people go into an organization with their own ideas of how it should work. One must work hard to ensure that everyone comes to a common belief system that will work for the new school. The principals should accept some ideas to use, but not all of them. PP3 recognized that opening a new school is a major undertaking but well worth the effort.

Case Four

PP4 currently holds a master's degree in school administration. The principal's prior position was that of a Title 1 principal at a traditional school in the district. PP4 was a high school teacher for 6 years in two states. He was an assistant principal for 4 years, of which one was a year-long internship. PP4 has been a principal for 8 years in elementary schools in the district. PP4 generally arrives at work around 7:30 a.m. He has lunch between 1:30 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. PP4 usually leaves school around 5:30 p.m. PP4 interviewed for the job in January 2007 with an area superintendent. He was approved by the board of education in early February 2007. He officially began his duties for ES4 at the end of February 2007.

The school year began for the teachers on July 2, 2007, and for the students on July 6, 2007. PP4 did not receive an orientation to the community the school serves, as he had been a principal in the community prior to the new position. PP4's first hires were his IRT, secretary, and assistant principal. PP4 had a core team that interviewed candidates. This process took a lot of time to organize and coordinate schedules to

accommodate everyone. Some candidates applied for positions through the transfer

process in the school district, while others sent resumes or placed telephone calls to the

school. PP4 made teacher grade-level assignments and consulted with the team as

needed. The staff in July 2007 consisted of 53 teachers, of whom 21 had master's

degrees and none had a doctoral degree. The age demographic of the teaching staff was

as follows: the 21-29 year-old age group had 15 members; the 30-39 year-old age group

had 20 members; the 40-49 year-old age group had 15 members; and those above age 50

had 3 members.

The student body consisted of 65% of students qualified for either free or reduced

breakfast or lunch. There were 730 students in grades prekindergarten through fifth. The

demographic of the student population breakout was Black 56%, Latino 25%, White

12%, Multi-racial 5%, and Asian less than 1%. The school was built on 27 acres in a

suburb of a large city, with the students coming from both rural and suburban

neighborhoods. Ninety to ninety-five percent of the students came from feeder schools in

the area. The school backs up to a pond. One unique feature of the school site is that one

homeowner refused to sell his land to the school system, so his house remains at the

corner of the school grounds.

The PTA was established with the support of the state PTA organization. A

representative helped the school set up and vote on officers to begin the PTA's charter.

The principal, secretary, and IRT came on board first to support the planning process.

Central office was involved as far as curriculum and facilities. Most things were ready

for the opening, but there were a few small items that were adjusted quickly. Some

instructional materials were delayed in arriving. PP4 was able to occupy the building

about a week before the school opened.

The biggest surprise to PP4 was that, even though ES4 was a brand-new school, he had to expect things to still go wrong. The air conditioner did not operate appropriately for about six months. Being a year-round school, this was very difficult due to the heat in the summer months. The building designers would send contractors out, and the contractors were able to get the system working for about two to three hours, which would help people get through a good part of the day. Staff members were sent home as soon as the students left campus, due to the heat. Another big surprise was in terms of hiring. The team hired a lot of teacher leaders, which made it more difficult to get them settled into the new system, as opposed to the way they had operated in their previous school. PP4 had hoped to get everyone on the same page more quickly, but it did not work that way.

If PP4 could have done things differently, he would have spent more time with the people appointed as grade-level chairpersons. He would have prepared them better for leadership roles and for getting everyone on the same page. It was strange for him because some of the staff members he brought with him from his previous school were the ones who had the hardest time adjusting. They still wanted to fall back into ways in which they did things previously. PP4 received the most help from the person in central office who helped with spending the bond monies. She made sure that he stayed on schedule with ordering and getting everything in place and on time. The budget department also was very supportive in terms of allotting positions and informing the principal about the monies he could spend and what he could purchase with the bond money. Human resources also assisted with providing lists of strong candidates for the principal to interview. The support received from central services was satisfactory. PP4 had to ask for assistance, as other departments did not offer it in advance.

The Positive Behavior Support system was the most successful program in the first year. The staff worked to give the students structure and expectations at the beginning of the school year. They did not have as many discipline problems initially and were able to tighten loopholes as needed. There was no ribbon-cutting ceremony due to the short turnaround period the staff had to enter the building. The staff were not able to get into the building until July 2, and the school opened for students on July 6. Parents were invited in for an open house on the Sunday prior to the first day of school. Almost every parent showed up and had the opportunity to meet teachers and tour the building.

Opening a new school is far more work than it seems on paper, or than anyone will admit. It starts from scratch. One takes for granted all the things that are in place at an existing school, such as policies for carpooling, buses, discipline, and copying. PP4 said he was going as fast as he could and was pushing his staff as fast as he could, but then realized that he needed to slow down and let things take their natural place. He also realized that one can never assume that the leaders in the school are on the same page as the principal. A principal can convey and discuss a message, but it still takes a while to get everyone used to the new way of doing things at the new school. Developing the mission and vision statements was crucial in deciding who they were as a school.

PP4 considers himself a perfectionist and wants things done perfectly every time. He had to adjust and delegate duties and jobs to other staff members and trust that they would do the job correctly. PP4 was also concerned with the fact that it was so hard for people to let go and develop a new way to do things. He was very concerned because these were the people who knew him and had agreed to the terms of going to the new building but initially found the change to be very challenging. PP4 has learned that opening a new school takes considerable work but is well worth the effort. Now in the

third year, he can see that people no longer talk about how things used to be done at previous schools. Now, the staff only talk about how things are done at ES4. This has been most helpful when acclimating new staff members to the way things are done at ES4. Everyone is now on the same page regarding expectations.

The following tables provide demographic and personnel summaries of the four principals and the four schools.

Table 2 displays demographic information about each of the four principals interviewed.

Table 2

Demographic Data of Each Principal Opening a New School

	Principal 1	Principal 2	Principal 3	Principal 4
Degree	Ed.D.	M.A.	M.A.	M.A.
Gender	Male	Female	Female	Male
First new school	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Teaching Experience	3 years	12 years	18 years	6 years
Administrative Experience	A.P. 4 years	A.P. 2 years	A.P. 1.5 years	A.P. 4 years
	Principal 7 years	Principal 10 years	Principal 10 years	Principal 8 years
Appointment	Feb. 2009	Feb. 2008	Feb. 2006	Feb. 2007
Months to plan	6	6	6	6
Arrival time	7:30 a.m.	7:30 a.m.	7:30 a.m.	7:30 a.m.
Departure time	5:00 p.m.	6:00 p.m.	5:45 p.m.	5:30 p.m.

Table 3 shows the education and administrative experience of the four principals in this study. As seen, each was a seasoned administrator with at least 7 years as a principal prior to opening the new school. Each had exactly 6 months to plan prior to the opening of their campus.

Table 3

Demographic Data of Each New School Housing Kindergarten through Fifth Grade

	School 1	School 2	School 3	School 4
Year opened	July 2009	July 2008	July 2006	July 2007
Enrollment	585	933	730	730
Grade levels	Pre-K–5	Pre-K–5	Pre-K–5	Pre-K–5
Student body	63% W	68% W	75% W	56% AA
Ethnicity	19% H	13% A	11% AA	25% H
	13% AA	10% H	5% H	12% W
	4% M	8% AA	1.5% A	5% M
Qualify for free or Reduced meals	33%	12%	12%	65%
Staff size	42	64	50	53
Assistant principal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Note. Ethnicity Code: A = Asian, AA = African-American, H = Hispanic, W = White.

Table 4 displays the size of the student body, student demographics, staff size, and presence of an assistant principal.

Common themes from the case studies were color-coded, and frequencies were hand-counted. As shown in Table 4 below, themes mentioned once by respondents were considered to have a low frequency. Themes mentioned twice by respondents were

considered to have a moderate frequency. Themes mentioned three or more times by

respondents were considered to have a high frequency.

Table 4

Identification of Common Themes from Case Studies

Theme (N)	Level of Frequency
1	Low
2	Moderate
3 or more	High

Question 1 asked respondents what challenges, pitfalls, or concerns they faced

when opening a new school. Six themes emerged: budget deficits/hiring, facility issues,

parent concerns, the year-round consent process, adjusting for change, and scheduling

issues. Figure 1 below illustrates the frequencies of common themes described by

respondents as the biggest concerns, challenges, or pitfalls when opening a new school.

There were no common themes that generated a high frequency from the respondents for

the biggest concern, challenges, or pitfalls when opening a new school. This signifies

that each principal's challenging experiences in opening a new school were somewhat

unique. Two responses generated moderate frequencies: budget deficits/hiring and parent

concerns.
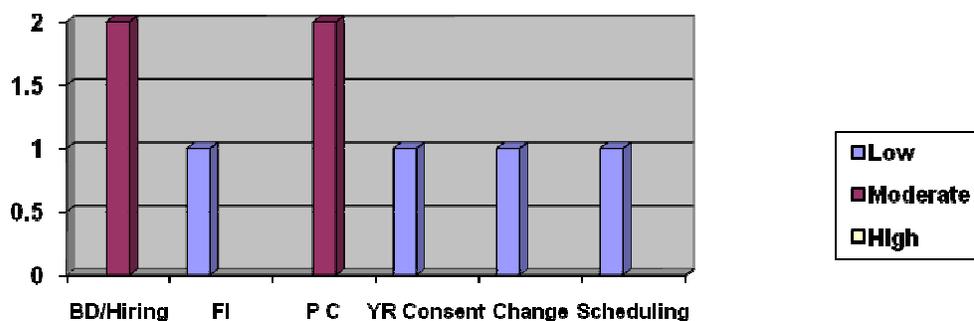
Figure 1. Frequencies of common themes for biggest concerns, challenges, or pitfalls when opening a new school. BD/Hiring=budget deficits and hiring, FI=facilities issues, PC=parent concerns, YR Consent, Change, and Scheduling.

Question 3 asked respondents what advice they would give to principals who are opening a new school. Five themes emerged: delegate, hire the best people, plan wisely, teach and reteach norms, and work hard. There were no low frequencies generated for this question. One theme, teach and reteach norms, was mentioned three times by respondents and generated a high frequency. Figure 2 below illustrates the frequencies of common themes for advice when opening a new school.

Figure 2. Frequencies of common themes for advice for principals when opening a new school. Plan W=plan wisely, T/RT Norms=teach and reteach norms

Respondents in this study shared successful implementations during the opening

year of a new school. Figure 3 below illustrates the frequencies of common themes for

the most successful implementation during the opening year of a new school. Three
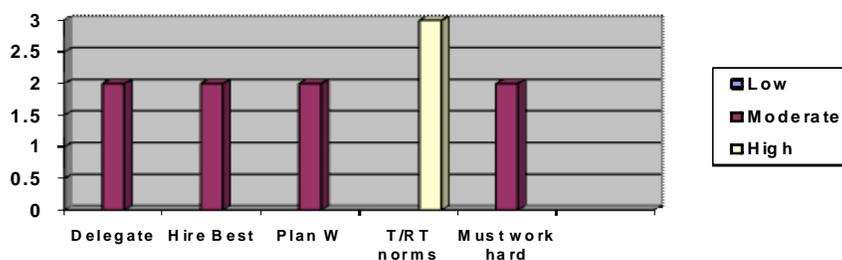
themes emerged: beliefs and guiding principles, outreach to parents and students, and an

academy program. There were no common themes that generated a high frequency from

the respondents for their successful implementations during year 1. This finding signifies

that each principal found something unique to bring the school community together. One

response generated a moderate response, which was beliefs and guiding principles. Two

principals mentioned that the implementation of Positive Behavior Support (PBS) was

successful in that it was a basis for high expectations for students and staff. It established

the core beliefs for the school in which everyone would operate.
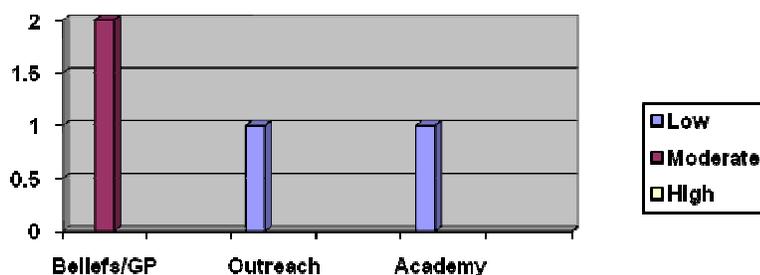
Figure 3. Frequencies of common themes for the most successful implementation when
opening a new school. Beliefs/GP=beliefs and guiding principles.

Respondents in this study shared lessons learned when opening a new school.

Several themes emerged: facility operations, create time to form a vision, listen to

parents, make better hiring decisions, and know that things will go wrong. Figure 4

below illustrates the frequencies of common themes for lessons learned from principals

when opening new schools. There were no responses that generated either a moderate or

high frequency of common themes. This signifies that each principal in the case study

learned something different from the experience of opening a new school.
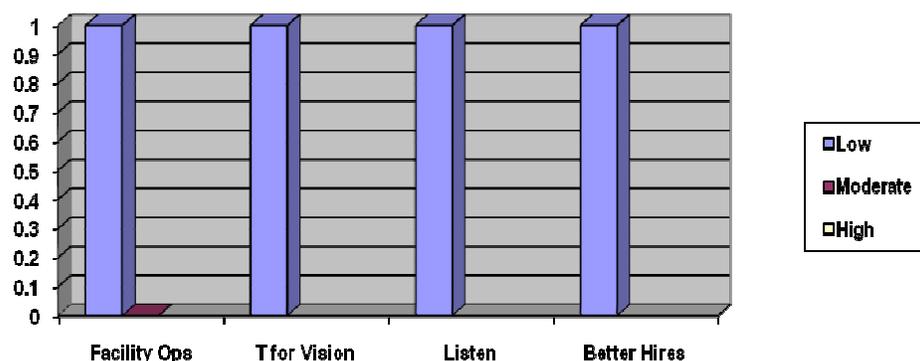
Figure 4. Frequencies of lessons learned from principals when opening new schools. T
for Vision=create time to form vision, TWGW=things will go wrong.

Research Question 1

Results also related to Research Question 1: What challenges or pitfalls does a

principal face when opening a new school?

PP1, PP3, and PP4 were very positive about the school openings, but all

encountered obstacles while working to open the schools. The unique situation

experienced by PP2 will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter. The major

pitfalls identified by the four principals fell into the following categories: human

resources leadership, managerial leadership, external development leadership, and

strategic leadership.

Human Resources Leadership

Human resources leadership consists of hiring, mentoring, developing leadership,

and the induction of personnel in new roles. PP1 opened ES1 when there was a budget

shortfall across the state due to decreased revenues being generated. This major event caused a huge budget shortfall for the state, which resulted in hiring freezes in the district. PP1 was restricted to interviewing transfer candidates within the district. He was also not allowed to hire an assistant principal until the week before school opened, due to the hiring freeze. PP1 was limited to hiring only 80% of his staff initially; that later increased to 95% just before the school year opened in July. These limitations caused him to rush to the hiring process in order to get his school fully staffed prior to the students arriving. PP1 stated that since school has started this year, and he has had a chance to see people actually working together, he might have placed a few people differently. He also commented that there were a couple of personnel decisions that he would not make if he could do it again.

PP2 noted that one pitfall for her was the difficulty of getting through all the resumes the first month without a secretary. She also commented that she had to do most of the interviewing and hiring of the staff alone because there were so many teachers to hire that she could not schedule all the interviews after school. Having interviews earlier in the day prevented most of the teachers hired already from supporting this effort, because they were working during the day.

PP3 stated that her biggest pitfall was that she hired more leaders than followers, and that became problematic once everyone was in the building working together. She also discussed that she settled for some staff members because it was getting late in the hiring process, and school was about to start. PP3 said if she had more time, she would have made some different hiring decisions. Even though PP3 opened a new school with new staff members, she stated that she had been naïve in thinking that the same issues and concerns in existing/older schools would not come into play on the new campus.

PP4 noted that he had been allowed to bring 10% of the staff from his previous school to the new campus with him. Although he had individual conversations about his expectations with each staff member from his previous school prior to agreeing to hire them, these were the staff members who struggled the most with embracing change. Those staff members kept trying to fall back into what they had done at the previous school. PP4 offered that another pitfall was in hiring too many leaders and not enough followers. He does not feel as if he prepared the grade-level chairpersons well for the leadership positions they held. PP4 was greatly concerned that the leaders of the different teams could not get their teams in sync with the principal's vision for the school.

Managerial Leadership

The second noted pitfall by the four interviewed principals was managerial leadership. This area consists of the budget, schedule, facilities, and safety, which all relate to "tending to the operations of the school." PP1 noted that the budget shortfall the year he opened ES1 was quite a challenge for him. This financial deficit affected the hiring process as well as staff development. PP1 had to return $60,000 in staff development dollars designated for new school openings' start-up funds due to the budget shortfalls. PP1 also had a support person from central services assisting and monitoring the spending of the bond referendum dollars.

ES1 was used as a "swing" space the year before PP1 was to open it as a new elementary school. The building was being used to "house" another elementary school for 1 year while that school's campus was being renovated. PP1 had to coordinate the transition of possession of the building. The existing school operated on a traditional calendar, which did not end until June; however, PP1's school opened in July for students the same year. Furniture and instructional supplies had to be moved in for one school,

and out for another. All of this had to occur within a 2-week time frame. Even though the building was only 1 year old, the floors had to be stripped and waxed prior to ES1 beginning the school year. Unlike PP2, PP3, and PP4, PP1 was fortunate that his new building was functioning well and that he had very few punch list items to address before opening for the new school year.

PP2 was the only principal to open a new school in a retrofitted building. This caused a great deal of anxiety due to the many carpool concerns she received from parents and the community the traffic affects. The other three schools were new constructions; therefore, they have ample planned spaces for carpools, and this does not affect the neighbors as directly. PP2 also opened the same year a parent group filed a lawsuit to force the school district to obtain consent from parents prior to assigning students to year-round schools. PP2 had to wait until the school system collected all the consent forms to see which children would actually attend her campus, versus opting to attend a nearby school with a traditional calendar.

PP3 opened the first year in a wing of a newly opened high school, because the existing schools in the community needed relief from crowding the year before the new elementary school was scheduled to open. This was quite a challenge for the facility workers as well as the two principals. While PP1 and PP4 each had their certificate of occupancy in a timely fashion, PP3 did not receive hers until 30 minutes after her meet-the-teacher event began. She would not have received it that day if it had not been for the mayor of the town assisting with the dilemma. Similar to PP1, PP3 had to work in tandem with another school administrator in order for her school's opening to be successful. PP3 and the high school principal on the campus in which her school was housed worked very closely to ensure that the elementary school students were as safe as

possible. PP3 also had to work out the logistics with facilities management to lower the

desks, commodes, and water fountains to accommodate the needs of the elementary-aged

children. The facilities department also had to establish a separate public address system

and cafeteria on the high school campus for the new elementary school.

PP3 and the high school principal had to work out a schedule that would meet the

needs of both campuses. Since PP3 had only worked at traditionally-calendared schools,

she had to learn how to develop a schedule that would accommodate staff and students

constantly coming and going. She also had to get used to having her personnel on seven

different tracks during the school year. All the principals opening the new schools had to

work closely with the central services person overseeing the spending of the bond money.

However, PP3 did so especially because she had to always keep in mind that she would

be opening her new building the next year with 20 more teachers and hundreds more

students and would need the additional dollars for that process.

PP4 noted that his managerial concerns were due to the air conditioner not

working appropriately for about six months. Since his school operates on a year-round

calendar, he was especially concerned for the students' and staff's safety. Staff were sent

home immediately after the students left campus each day, due to the heat in the building.

External Development Leadership

This area of leadership involves the practices that principals used to represent the

schools in the community through public relations, recruiting students, and buffering and

mediating external interests. Neither of the two male principals had any challenges with

this area in regard to opening their schools. Both of the females noted that a great deal of

time and effort went toward this function. PP2 noted that one of her challenges was the

location of the school between two upper middle-class neighborhoods, because neither

municipality would claim the school, or they both would, depending on the concerns that needed to be addressed. PP2 had to work with both municipalities in order to meet the needs of her students, school, and parents. The concerns were often related to the water, traffic control, or the building of a sidewalk across the railroad tracks in front of the school.

PP2 also had to adjust to the fact that ES2 was a retrofitted industrial building that had not been designed to accommodate a long carpool drop-off section in front of the school. Since the footprint of the site was so small, the carpool line stretched into the adjacent neighborhood, causing additional challenges. PP2 had to field plenty of calls from concerned homeowners regarding the lack of respect from the carpooling parents toward their property. She involved the local police as much as she could.

Next, PP3 had to deal with parents who did not want to come to the new school because they liked their previous school, or those who did not like the multi-tracked, year-round calendar. She also had to work with parents who wanted to have a larger voice in the operations of the school. PP3 was particularly pleased that the state's PTA organization facilitated the highly charged PTA charter meeting with the parents. PP2 wondered what she had gotten herself into during and after this meeting in which parents were yelling at each other. The officers for the school's PTA were eventually voted on before this meeting ended.

PP3's challenge with location was that ES3 would be housed in a wing of the local high school during the first year of operation. The parents at ES3 struggled with the idea of having their children so close to high school students. PP3 also could not promise the parents 100% safety for their children but did guarantee that she would take every possible measure within her power to try to ensure that all students would be in a safe and

caring learning environment. PP3 had to work very closely with the mayor of the municipality in which her school was located to acquire the certificate of occupancy while 300 parents waited on the lawn to enter the school for a meet-the-teacher event that was being held prior to the students' first day.

In each of the pitfalls noted, the principals were able to address the areas at least to some extent. While a few of the areas causing pitfalls are still challenges for the leaders, they are at least manageable for the most part.

Research Question 3

What advice do principals give about successfully opening new schools? The primary advice shared by the four veteran principals to principals tasked with opening new schools for the first time includes: delegating tasks to other staff members, hiring the best person for the job the first time, taking time to establish a vision and mission, effectively communicating with staff and parents, and having support from central services.

Delegating Tasks to Other Staff Members

At least three of the four principals commented regarding trying to do too much and not allowing others to assist as much as they could have. PP1 stated that principals only have a short window of time to prepare for opening a new school and that they should "avoid trying to control everything on their own" as he did. PP2 could not manage the huge influx of daily e-mails without the help of her secretary. She also worked with a core group of staff members she had brought with her from her previous school. PP4 considers himself a perfectionist and wanted things done perfectly, but he soon realized that he had to adjust and delegate some duties and jobs to other staff members in order to be ready in time for the students' arrival.

Hiring the Best Person for the Job the First Time

All the principals advised principals opening new schools to focus on hiring the best candidate for the open position. PP1 stated that the principal should be focused on hiring the best people for the school and should learn to delegate other nonessential duties to other staff members. He also noted, "It is better to keep looking for the right person, as opposed to settling and then having to do a lot of work to get rid of the wrong person later." PP2 commented that she was very involved in interviewing and hiring candidates for her new school and was very cautious about allowing teachers from her previous school to assist with the interviews. This principal noted that she was not looking to create the same school she had left and that she was concerned that teachers interviewing other teachers would hire candidates like themselves.

PP3 offered that hiring the best and the brightest is only the beginning of the work. It takes a good deal of work to assist the teachers with learning to do business differently at the new school. She noted that she had to teach and reteach the new systems to the staff before everyone understood and abided by them. PP3 shared that she chose some staff members because it was getting late in the hiring process, and that she would have made some different decisions if she had had more time. She was aware after the fact that she had more leaders than followers and of the problems that presents. PP4 said if he could do things differently he would spend more time preparing the people appointed to leadership roles in the new schools. He noted that it was a challenge to get everyone on the same page.

Taking Time to Establish a Vision and a Mission

Additional advice given by the interviewed principals related to establishing a vision and a mission for the school. PP1 shared that the first few weeks after a principal

has been appointed to open a new school, he or she should take time to form their own

vision for the new school campus. PP1 also noted that since his school did not have a

formal ribbon-cutting ceremony due to the short turnaround time for opening the school,

they had a vision parade. The parade involved the core values and principles that would

be embedded in the school's culture. Each classroom developed a vision for the year,

which began the process for the school-improvement planning. PP4 stated that

developing the mission and vision statements was crucial in deciding who they were as a

school.

Effectively Communicating with Staff and Parents

The female interviewees gave information related to communicating within the

educational and community environments. Neither of the male principals noted any

concerns regarding communication with parents during the opening of their schools. To

begin forming open communication with stakeholders, PP2 deliberately included the

students in a voting process for the new school's colors and mascot. She went to each of

the eight feeder schools several times in order to meet with the students she would serve.

The students and parents were pleased that PP2 involved their children early in the

process. PP2 also sent postcards home to the rising kindergartners so they could

participate in the mascot and color selections as well.

PP2 received many e-mails from parents after she was named principal of the new

facility. She did not reply by e-mail to the many questions asked of her; instead, she

telephoned those individuals. PP2 knew that whatever she e-mailed would be shared

with other parents and could be read or taken out of context. This could set a negative

tone for new families who did not know her or her leadership style. Moreover, by

responding with a telephone call, PP2 developed a reputation of being accessible prior to

the school opening.

PP3 noted that quickly addressing the concerns that parents had about their elementary-aged children being in a high school setting helped to build positive relationships. She also stated that attending to the staff's concerns early helped to eliminate many problems before they affected the morale of the staff or the education of the students. PP3 was also in communication with the mayor of the town on a regular basis. This ability to communicate with the leaders of the town possibly assisted PP3 with getting the certificate of occupancy on the day the parents were present to meet their children's teachers and to visit the school.

Central Services Support

Principals have to work collaboratively with others and use all available resources to meet the needs of a new school's population. The principals noted that the district's communications department was also supportive in addressing questions related to the concerns that parents had at each of the schools. This department assisted regardless of whether the concerns pertained to informing the parents that the air conditioning was not working properly, students being forced to move from a traditional-calendar school to a year-round schedule, or elementary-aged children being educated in a wing of a new high school. This department was invaluable when it came to drafting letters to parents or addressing the media to calm or inform the public of these concerns.

The support person from the curriculum and instruction department was greatly appreciated. Each of the principals mentioned the same person and how invaluable her expertise with ordering supplies and materials was to them. They also noted that this person was instrumental in keeping the principals on schedule with ordering and getting the purchases on time. This person monitored every aspect of spending the bond money

and ensured that is was used as intended. This person also helped coordinate meetings with different departments or company representatives. She organized the moves into the schools, including the delivery of all the furniture and instructional materials.

Conclusion

The challenges faced by principals opening new schools are numerous and cover a wide spectrum. Each of the principals noted that they did not know of all the challenges they would face during this opportunity for growth. They did state that this was a personal and a professional accomplishment, and each was glad to have had the honor of building a school culture from the beginning. The next chapter will discuss the findings, results, implications for further research, and the conclusions.

Chapter 5: Findings and Conclusions

The purpose of this replication study was to examine in detail the perspectives of four elementary school principals who have recently gone through the process of opening new year-round elementary school facilities in a large urban school district in the southeastern United States. In particular, the study examined and documented the procedures that each principal used in opening the school, as well as in making the school itself operational. The study examined what procedures each principal had to undertake in order to open up the building as a physical plant, how he or she conducted the hiring of the faculty, how the school climate for the new school was created, and how the principal was able to get the school operating smoothly over the course of the first year. This study also examined whether principals opening new schools used the seven critical school functions while planning for the arrival of staff and students.

From this study, the researcher aims to document the principals' experiences involved in opening new elementary schools. The principals in this study shared pitfalls and challenges and offered advice for principals aspiring to open new schools.

The research questions guiding the study were:

1. What challenges/pitfalls does a principal face when opening a new school?

2. What information from research will enable a principal to succeed in the tasks of opening a new school facility?

3. What advice do principals give about successfully opening new schools?

4. What leadership style is most desirable when opening a new school?

This section summarizes the key findings from this research study and organizes them into conclusions and recommendations.

Research Question 1

What challenges and pitfalls does a principal face when opening a new school?

The data aligned with the first research question indicated that all of the principals interviewed had challenges and pitfalls in the planning and opening of the new schools to which they were assigned. Two of the principals noted challenges and pitfalls that pertained to the hiring of staff at their schools. One major concern was due to the economic decline which resulted in hiring freezes. Another challenge was in effectively communicating with the external forces in the new school. The people who needed constant nurturing in two of the schools were the parents. The principals at both of these schools took extra care to meet with parents to hear their concerns. The next concern was related to not knowing how many teachers to hire, because parents had to sign consent forms in order for their children to attend the new year-round school.

The challenges faced by the principals in this study were similar to those faced by the principals in Powers's (2007) study. Powers noted in his study of four principals who had opened new schools in California that the continuum of control in the hiring process ranged from complete control to very limited authority. While all principals in this study had complete control regarding who they would hire, two of the principals were not sure of the number of staff to hire due to current economic conditions or student numbers changing daily. PP2, PP3, and PP4 had complete control of the staffing of their schools, while PP1 opened his school in 2009 during a weakened economic climate with many budget shortfalls. PP1 is the only principal in the study who had limitations placed on the staffing of ES1. Each of the principals, with the support of a core group of teachers, made the grade-level placements of the hired staff.

Each of the principals also had building challenges. PP1 had to coordinate setting

up a new school in a building where a traditional school had been housed for 1 year, while that school's building was under construction. PP2 had a school building that was a retrofitted industrial building with a small footprint. PP3 had minimal air conditioning when his building opened in July on a year-round calendar. PP4 was housed in a wing of a high school for the first year of operation.

Principals who are assigned to open new schools should have great interpersonal skills, which will be needed to navigate the many concerns regarding opening the new schools. Effective communication is also a great asset to have during this unique experience. Principals opening new schools have to work with architects, construction workers, vendors, parents, students, colleagues, movers, staff members, and system administrators, so being an effective communicator is an essential quality to possess. Articulating well is a great asset when speaking to the media about the new school or arranging the grand opening with community leaders and stakeholders. Ferris, Treadway, Brouer, Perrewe, Douglas, & Lux (2007) noted that the ability to effectively understand others at work, and to use this knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one's own personal objectives, is an important skill.

The principals in this study cited many meetings they had to attend while preparing for and opening the new schools. They had meetings about transitioning the new students from the feeder schools to the new school as well as meetings to assist with establishing new PTA organizations at the schools and to help parents adjust to new calendars.

Significant flexibility was needed to overcome the unexpected pitfalls and challenges the principals were facing. Regardless of how organized or knowledgeable each principal was, each encountered unforeseen challenges along the way. Almost

every task the principals had required some amount of flexibility. Some notable incidents of flexibility occurred when PP3 had minimum air conditioning for the first 3 months of a year-round school opening in July, or the hiring freeze and budget shortfall that PP1 encountered. PP3 had to be very flexible when she had to use a megaphone to speak to her parents on the lawn when the certificate of occupancy was not received in time for the parents to visit the building at the meet-the-teacher event.

The pitfalls and challenges noted were only stumbling blocks for the four well-seasoned principals in this study. Prior experiences as principals, and past successes provided the four principals with the confidence they needed to open their buildings successfully in spite of the many challenges.

Research Question 2

What information from research will enable a principal to succeed at the tasks of opening a new school facility? This question could not be answered using the data gathered from the four principals; however, the researcher noted that the seven critical functions by Sergiovanni in 2001 addressed these important areas and the actions required by all principals in any school (see Table 1).

Research Question 3

What advice do principals give about successfully opening new schools? The first piece of advice given to any principal assigned to open a new school was to take time during the first months of planning to form one's own vision and beliefs around what one would like for the school to represent. The most important advice given by the principals opening new schools was to delegate tasks to other staff members. Razik and Swanson (2001) noted that attaining the empowerment of transformative leadership requires the leader to delegate and surrender power over people and events in order to achieve power

over accomplishments and goal achievement. Two of the principals noted that delegating tasks to others would have afforded them more time to focus on hiring the best people for the jobs available. Three of the principals noted that if they could do it all over, they would not hire some of the last staff members, but time was running out, and they needed to staff their buildings. Also offered as advice by the principals was the need to be careful when hiring only leaders. There must be some followers in the building; otherwise, there will be problems with getting everyone in the building working towards a common goal.

The four principals noted that effective communication with all stakeholders is important in establishing a common ground of trust early in the process of opening a new school. Responding to parents' e-mails with telephone calls and arranging meetings to share expectations are great ways to encourage parent participation and promote trust in the schools. Visiting the feeder schools to meet the students and actively seeking their input on the school's colors and mascot was a great idea to be shared with other principals aspiring to open a new school facility. PP2 also sent postcards home to the rising kindergartners to garner their input into the color- and mascot-selection process.

The principals also noted that the commitment to opening a new school is often underestimated. This assignment is more work and commitment than anyone will ever admit. A principal must remember that he or she is building an organization from the ground up. When a principal is assigned to an existing school, rules and routines are in place but may need tweaking. When a principal opens a new school, every aspect of the school day must be thoroughly discussed, from arrival to dismissal. The things one took for granted in an existing school will not be in place, but this will be a great opportunity to establish rules and routines that will best meet the needs of the new students and the

structure of the new building.

Research Question 4

What leadership style is most desirable when opening a new school? There was

not enough specific data gathered during the interviews to address this question properly.

New Themes

Two additional themes emerged after analyzing the data transcribed from the

interviews. The new themes from the analyzed transcribed data are below:

What was your school's most successful implementation during the first year?

There were three subthemes derived from the question above. The three themes were the

belief and guiding principles, outreach to parents and students, and an academy program

that assisted students needing additional academic support during the track-out periods.

Two principals mentioned the Positive Behavior Program (PBS) as having been a

successful program initiated the first year.

What lessons did you learn from opening new schools? Each of the principals in

the study noted something different they learned with regard to opening a new school.

One principal noted that he had learned a great deal about the facility-operations side of

the new school. Another mentioned the importance of creating time for developing and

forming the vision for the school. One principal noted that active listening was a skill she

had to perfect during the opening as each stakeholder wanted to know that the principal

was listening and truly heard their questions and concerns. The last principal noted that

he learned that it is better to wait and make a great hiring decision than to rush and regret

that you hired the wrong person for the job.

Comparison to Dr. Powers's (2007) Study

The researcher compared the two studies and noted that Dr. Powers's principals'

continuum of control varied from principals hiring all their staff to staff members being placed in the particular school. In Sexton's study, all of the principals had complete control of the hiring of their staff. The principal participants in this study were limited only to the number of staff members they could take from the school where they had been the principal prior to the new appointment. These principals were only allowed to take 10% of those staff members as to not deplete the campus they were leaving.

The principals in Dr. Powers's (2007) study were very concerned about the impact of the schools' opening ceremonies. It appears as if a lot of planning went into coordinating this event. The principals in this study who did not have a grand opening ceremony regretted not having one, but did not feel that it was mandatory to place much emphasis on this event. There were no ribbon-cutting ceremonies in which the public could attend. The principals in this study were more focused on getting the schools opened in spite of the multitude of challenges they encountered.

The principal participants in Dr. Powers's (2007) study were selected by the superintendent of the school district where the study was conducted. The principals in Sexton's study were randomly selected. The 18 principals who had opened a school in the last 4 years were listed according to the year their school opened. Then race and gender subheadings were used to further separate the group to ensure there was appropriate representation. Lastly, a number was randomly selected and each person listed beside that number was selected to participate.

Conclusion

The results of this replication study were compared to the study completed by Marty Powers in 2007 on principals opening new schools in California. The findings from this study confirmed that for both studies, all the principals noted the challenges of

hiring the best staff for their schools given the parameters and constraints during the planning year for that particular school. Both studies also confirmed the importance of effective communication with all stakeholders. Each principal stated that being given the opportunity to open a new school was a rewarding experience that allowed them to fulfill both personal and professional goals.

Implications

The findings of this study hold implications for several areas, school districts, and principals opening new schools. The insights gained from the research of this study and the researcher's notes (Appendix E) will add to the growing body of knowledge surrounding the optimal plans for opening new schools.

Implications for School Districts

School districts facing growing populations had to prepare several areas in order to be successful. Those districts have to build new facilities more quickly and support the personnel selected to open those schools from the beginning phase, which ranges from securing the "start-up" funding needed to the opening of the school doors for staff and students. School district leaders should also consider hiring principals before the design phase is complete so that relevant suggestions can be made in regard to creating optimal learning environments within the school. The study revealed that 6 months is the minimum amount of time needed to plan and open a new school facility effectively. Each school district also needs to have a manual to assist principals with the natural sequence of events that should occur when opening a new school facility. School districts should also provide the funding for a person who can support the principals when they are ordering and purchasing for the school. This person could be there to ensure that principals are spending the monies allotted appropriately as well as to arrange

meetings with the various departments within the districts and outside vendors.

Implications for Principals Opening New Schools

Principals opening new schools should be knowledgeable of the school district and whom to call for support. They also should have great communication skills. Principals who find themselves in this situation will have to speak to the parents, students, and staff to promote the new schools. The stakeholders want to be assured that their questions are answered and their concerns are heard.

These principals should also have patience when searching for the right person to fill a vacant position in a school. These principals should really weigh how much time they have, and then begin delegating tasks to competent staff members as soon as possible. This effort will free time for the principals to focus more on really trying to get the right instructional staff in place for the students. If necessary, the researcher feels that it would greatly benefit a principal to hire a substitute to open the school year if a qualified candidate cannot be found prior to the school year opening. To hire someone because time is running out is a mistake that could cost students an academic year of progressing at the level they should. The rush to hire could also cost the principal a great deal of time fielding complaints from parents regarding the teacher's poor performance.

Principals tasked with opening a new school should also be willing to learn more aspects of the building operational side because they will need a working knowledge of the new building. These principals should be able to guide their staff in the process of developing a shared vision, core values, and beliefs. They also should empower teachers and parents to become involved in developing the school's identity.

Recommendations for Future Research

The educational literature regarding opening new schools has improved over the

last 10 to 15 years. Based on this study, it is recommended that future research strive to capture the roles, responsibilities, and challenges of opening new schools from teachers', students', parents' and other stakeholders' perspectives. It is also recommended that a study on opening new schools include more administrators, possibly with a quantitative or mixed-method approach.

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Appendix A

Permission to Replicate Letter

From: Tammie Sexton
Sent: Monday, April 27, 2009 8:43 PM
To: Marty Powers at West
Subject: Replication Study: Principals Opening New Schools

April 27, 2009

Dear Dr. Marty Powers,

My name is Tammie Sexton and I am enrolled in a doctoral program (Educational Leadership) at Gardner-Webb University in Boiling Springs, NC. We spoke last summer; actually you were on your way to meet your new assistant principal at a school in which you were newly appointed.

I have completed my last year of course work, and I will submit a proposal for my dissertation in the near future. I am in the process of reading articles and books about my dissertation topic and have become quite interested in possibly replicating your study in North Carolina. In my area, new schools are being built due to an increase in the student population. The study that I am interested in replicating is Perspectives of Principals on Opening a New Elementary Schools in California: Creating a Community of Learners.

I just wanted to let you know that I applaud you for your research and the contributions you have made to the body of knowledge regarding principals opening new schools. My goal is to add to the body of knowledge by conducting research in my region of the U.S.

At this time, I would like to officially ask your permission to replicate your study. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Tammie Sexton,
Principal

From: Marty Powers at West
Sent: Wednesday, April 29, 2009 2:59 PM
To: 'Tammie Taylor Sexton'
Subject: RE: Replication Study: Principals Opening New Schools
Importance: High

Hello Tammie,

I was off on vacation for a few days thus my tardiness.

Congrats on finishing your coursework!

Yes, (thanks for asking) you may replicate any thing that will assist you in completing your dissertation... yet I do ask you send a copy of your online dissertation upon completion to map1702@gmail.com as I would like to see what you discover in your dissertation. I learned a lot completing mine and I have several things I would do differently.

Someday in late May or June I will call ya as I enjoy your area of the country.

This has been a terrific experience on this multi-track year-round schedule...killer schedule for administrators...great for kids and teachers...I am looking to do a principal thing on a traditional schedule next year...most likely k-8 unless I score a K-6 Supt. job...

Later,

Marty Powers

Appendix B

Cover Letter

Informed Consent Letter

Date:

       Principal's Name

       Name of School

       Street Address

       City, State, Zip code

       Dear Principal _____,

My name is Tammie Sexton and I am a doctoral student in Educational Leadership at Gardner-Webb University in Boiling Springs, NC. Under the guidance and direction of Professor John A. Kaufhold, I am conducting a research study regarding the perceived (lived) experiences of principals opening new schools.

I am inviting your participating in this study because of your recent involvement and experiences in the area of planning and opening a new school. Your participation will be to describe the process you went through in opening a new school. Questioning will be done at your site or an appropriate location. Open-ended interview questions will be followed up with more specific questions dealing with staffing, finance, support and school community relations. Participants' responses will be written and audio taped.

The results of the research study may be published, but your name will not be divulged at any time. You have the right to not answer any question, and to stop the interview at any time.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You will receive no cash payment for participating in this study. The interview may last up to two hours.

Although there may be no direct benefit to you, the possible benefit of your participation may be a greater understanding of the lived experiences of planning and opening a new school. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

The information you provide will be handled confidentially. Your information will assign a code number. The list connecting your name to this number will be kept in a locked file. When the study is completed and the data has been analyzed, this list will be destroyed. Your name or any identifying factor will not be used in any report. Both audiotape and interview transcript will be kept for one year by the interviewer, after which both will be properly destroyed.

If you have additional questions regarding your participation in this study, please feel free to contact me or my dissertation chairperson, Dr. John Kaufhold (email jkaufhold@garder-webb.edu). I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Tammie Sexton, Researcher

Appendix C

Principals' Questionnaire

PRINCIPAL'S PERSPECTIVE ON OPENING NEW SCHOOLS INTERVIEW

QUESTIONS

School _____ Date _____

Name _____

SUGGESTED INTRODUCION: Hello, I am working on a dissertation at Gardner-Webb University in Boiling Springs, North Carolina on the subject of opening a new elementary school. Your answers will help me compile a list of ways principals attempt to meet the challenges of this enormous task and maybe make it easier in some aspects for others who will follow in your footsteps.

---

1.   First, I would like to know a little about your preparation before obtaining this position.

a.   What is the highest degree you hold?

____Bachelors   ____Masters   ____Ed.D   ____Ph.D   ____other

b.   What level position did you hold before becoming the principal of this school?

____Teacher   ____Elem   ____Middle   ____High

____Guidance Counselor   ____Elem   ____Middle   ____High

____Assistant Principal   ____Elem   ____Middle   ____High

____Principal   ____Elem   ____Middle   ____High

____Central Office

____Professor

____Other

c.   Number of years you have as the following

____Teacher   ____Elem   ____Middle   ____High

____Guidance Counselor   ____Elem   ____Middle   ____High

____Assistant Principal   ____Elem   ____Middle   ____High

____Principal   ____Elem   ____Middle   ____High

____Central Office

d.   What time do you do the following:

      ____ Arrive in the morning

      ____Eat Lunch

      ____Leave in the Afternoon

2.   How would you describe your orientation to this job?

      Specific questions

a. When did you interview for this job? _____

b. When did you know you had received this position? _____

c. On which date did you officially begin work in this position? _____

d. When did school begin for the students the first year the school opened? _____

e. When did school begin for the teachers during the first year? _____

f. Did you receive orientation on School Board Policy?

_____

g. Did you receive orientation on the community the school serves?

_____

3.   How were staff and faculty selected? _____

    a. How did faculty and staff apply for positions?

    b. Who made teacher grade level assignments?

4.   Characteristics of the Student Body

    a. What grade levels are housed at the school?

Pre-K   K   1   2   3   4   5

    b. What is the ethnic percentage of your student population?

____White   ____Black   ____Latino   ____Asian

____Native American   ____Other

    c. What percentage of the student population attended another school in this district and due to redistricting were reassigned to this school? _____%

    d. How many different schools were affected during redistricting? _____

5.   Characteristics of Teachers

    a. How many teachers are on staff? _____

    b. How many teachers have the following?

       1.   Bachelor's Degree _____

       2.   Master's Degree _____

       3.   Doctorate Degree _____

   c. List how many teachers you have in each age group as follows:

     1.   21-29 _____

     2.   30-39 _____

     3.   40-49 _____

     4.   50 & Up _____

6.   Characteristics of School Plant

      a.   Describe the school site

      b.   Is the school location: rural   suburban   urban

      c.   How large are school grounds?

         10   15   20   25   30   35   40+ acres

      d.   Is there anything unusual about this school site?

7. Characteristics of the Parent Group

   a. What parent groups are associated at the school and how were they established?

   b. How were officers selected for the parent group?

8. Describe the school opening. (First year)

   a. Who was involved in planning and opening the school?

   b. Was everything ready when the school opened?

   c. What was your biggest surprise and roadblocks?

   d. Would you have done anything differently?

  e. Was there a source from which you received the most help?

  f. Who provided the most assistance to you as you opened the school?

  g. How was the support you received from Central Services?

  h. What was the one thing/program that was successful?

  i. Describe the grand opening.

  j. What are the pitfalls a principal should avoid when opening a new school?

  k. What caused you the most concern?

  l. What have you learned from the opening of a new school?

9. Prioritize from high (5) to low (1) the quality of:

  1. Transportation 1 2 3 4 5

  2. Food Service 1 2 3 4 5

  3. Discipline 1 2 3 4 5

  4. Instruction 1 2 3 4 5

10. What percentage of your day do you spend doing the following:

  a. Administration

  b. Personnel

  c. Instruction

  d. Discipline

  e. Student Achievement

11. School Finance

  a. Who keeps the books?

b. Is a computer bookkeeping program used? (if yes, please name the software used)

c. How many fundraising activities are scheduled during the school year?

d. Were there any other funding sources?

e. What percentage of the fundraising money was placed in the school budget?

Appendix D

Research Study Application

RESEARCH STUDY

"Save As" in your hard drive. Use the Tab Key to move around

Date of Submission: 1-31-10

Proposal Number: _____ (E&R use only)

Title of Proposal: Principals' Perspectives on Opening New Elementary Schools

Proposed Project Starting Date: 2-1-10

Ending Date: 4-30-10

Research Applicant's Name: Tammie Sexton

Address:

City:

State:

Zip:

Home Telephone Number: Area Code/No.

Work Telephone Number: Area Code/No.   Ext:

E-mail Address: tammiesexton@gardner-webb

Fax: Area Code/No. /

Sponsor of Research Project Dr. John Kaufhold

Facility, Staff or Agency: Gardner-Webb University

Address: PO Box 7226

City: Boiling Springs

State: NC

Zip: 28017

Home Telephone Number: Area Code/No. /

Work Telephone Number: Area Code/No.   Ext:

E-mail Address: Jkaufhold@gardner-webb.edu

Fax: Area Code/No.   /

RESEARCH OVERVIEW

Participants	Sample Size	Description (Schools, Grades, Demographics)	Time Required	Data Required (From Participants Records)
Students	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Staff from the School System	4 Public School System Principals	Elementary Schools	2 hours	Qualitative Interviews
Parents	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Others	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

COMMENTS:

1. Ultimate Purpose of Study (Thesis, Publication in Journal):

    Dissertation Study

2. Describe how this study will contribute to the Public School System

    This study will provide optimal procedures and leadership requirements necessary

    to assist any principal tasked with opening a new school in the district

3. Description of anticipated contribution to theory or field:

    This replication study will examine the principals' perspectives regarding the tasks

    and procedures required to successfully open a new public elementary school in the

    system.

4. Hypotheses of the study:

    The research questions to be used are:

    1. What challenges/pitfalls does a principal face when opening a new elementary

    school?

    2. What information from research will enable a principal to succeed in the tasks of

    opening a new school facility?

    3. What advice do principals give about successfully opening new schools?

    4. What leadership style is most desirable in opening a new school?

5. Brief summary of research design including statistical analysis procedures:

    1. This research will be conducted as a qualitative case study because of its

    descriptive nature.

    2. The four randomly selected participants in this study will all be elementary

    principals in the selected school district who have opened new schools in the last

    four years.

3. The interviews will be conducted at the site of each of the four principals in the study. The interviews will be audio taped, transcribed and formed into case studies.

6. State whether this is a single study, or one of a series planned or contemplated.

This is a single study.

7. Describe how the equipment or procedures to be used might constitute a potential emotional or physical hazard to subjects.

There are no known risks to the participating subjects.

8. List at least three prominent research studies, articles, or books most pertinent to the field of this research:

Leithwood, K. (2004) What we know about successful school leadership.

Mestry, R., Grobler, B. (2004, October) The training and development of Principals to manage schools effectively using the competence approach.

Powers, Marty. (2007) Perspectives of principals on opening new elementary schools in California.

9. List equipment and names of tests to be used. (Attach descriptions or copies of test instruments.)

The title of the questionnaire is: Principals' Perspectives on Opening New Schools Interview Questions. This instrument was developed by Dr. Marty Powers and will be used with his permission.

10. Facilities needed:

The interviews will be conducted at the school site of each participant.

11. Source of research funds:

Personal funds

Assurances:

As the applicant of the research project, I understand that I am requesting assistance

in a research project and that I am not requesting information pursuant to Open

Records legislation. If my request for research assistance is granted, I agree to

abide by all policies, rules, and regulations of the district INCLUDING THE

SECURING OF WRITTEN PARENT PERMISSION PRIOR TO

IMPLEMENTATION OF MY PROJECT.

As the sponsor for the research project, I have read the procedures for External

Research in the County Public School System (CPSS) and understand that

supervision of this project and responsibility for a report on its outcome rests with

me. The privilege of conducting future studies in County Public School System is

conditioned upon the fulfillment of such obligations.

Applicant Signature: _____Tammie Sexton_____ Date: _1-31-

10____

(Required)

Sponsor Signature: _____ Date:

_____

(When applicable)

Submit an electronic copy of this form to Evaluation and Research Department at:

Appendix E

Researcher's Notes

Researcher's Notes

<u>Research Question One</u>

What challenges and pitfalls does a principal face when opening a new school?

- Budget deficit affects on hiring
- Facility concerns
- Parent concerns
- Change
- Scheduling

After reading the data, there was only one common theme that generated a high frequency which would mean 3 or more principals noted that particular theme during the interview.

All the principals faced challenges when opening the new schools.

<u>Hiring challenges</u>

1. Two noted challenges regarding hiring of staffs at their schools. One major concern was the principal who opened a school this past year in the midst of federal, state and local budget cuts. He had to operate around hiring freezes that were challenging because he was opening a year-round school which started in July.

•The other principal was not sure of how many staff to hire due to the a court case filed by parents which stated that the school district must ask parents to sign a consent form agreeing to allow their children to attend a year-round school. Most of these parents at this school were coming from a traditional school so this process took a considerable amount of time.

<u>Facility Concerns</u>

2. PP1 had to coordinate setting up a new school in a building where a traditional school had operated the prior year

•PP2 had a school building that was a retrofitted industrial plant with a small footprint

•PP3 opened the first year in a wing of a high school

•PP4 had minimal air conditioning when his building opened in July

<u>Parent Concerns</u>

ES2 and ES3 had parental concerns. Both schools were lead by seasoned female principals. Both schools had low free/reduced lunch ratios of about 12% each.

ES2's parents were very contentious and were very competitive regarding who would be the officers for the PTA. Most of the parents were not excited about coming to the new school. They were very vocal about their concerns even going to the districts Board of Education Members to help champion their causes. PP2 wondered during the opening of the school what she had gotten herself into with all the parent behaviors.

ES3 parents were very concerned about the safety of sending their children to a high school for the first year. PP2 had the assistance of the district media department to help calm the fears of parents and the public regarding this venture.

Change

Two the principals noted how difficult is to get their staffs to embrace change in the new schools. Although all staff stated they were excited about the newness of the schools and could handle doing things differently in the new setting, Most of them had challenges with not reverting back to the way they "used" to things at their previous campuses. PP4 stated that one of his biggest challenges was getting the personnel who had come with him from his previous school to change and want to do things differently at the new school.

Scheduling

Three of the four principals had to adjust to operating on a year-round versus a traditional calendar. Year-round calendars allow for a building to have maximum usage throughout the year and increase the number of students that is served each year. Every school had 7 tracks that consisted of the four tracks for students and homeroom teachers. These teachers tracked out when their students tracked out or went on "vacation". Track five is for teachers who work for ten months but track out or take vacation at different times during the year. Track six is for 11-month employees such as the speech therapist or specialists (art, music, physical education, and media). Track seven is for 12-month employees such as the office staff and administrators.

These were the noted challenges and pitfalls from the 4 interviewed principals. Most of these concerns are also typical issues for principal in this district whether or not the school is new with the exception of elementary students being taught in a high school setting.

Research Question Number Two

What information from research will enable a principal to succeed in the task of opening a new school?

The seven common functions of leadership:

- Instructional Leadership
- Cultural Leadership
- Managerial Leadership
- Human Resource Leadership
- Strategic Leadership
- External Development Leadership
- Micro-political Leadership

(Sergiovanni, 2001, p. 3)

This data could not be answered using the data gathered from the four principals, however the seven functions of leadership by Sergiovanni, 2001 notes the important areas and the actions required that principals in all schools need to address.

Instructional Leadership   Assuring the quality of instruction, modeling teaching practice, supervising curriculum, and assuring the quality of teaching resources

Cultural Leadership   Tending to the symbolic resources of the school (e.g., its traditions, climate and history)

Managerial Leadership   Tending to the operations of the school (e.g., its budget, schedule, facilities, safety and security, and transportation

Human Resource Leadership Recruiting, hiring, firing, inducting, and mentoring teachers and administrators; developing leadership capacity and professional development opportunities

Strategic Leadership   Promoting a vision, mission, goals, and developing a means to reach them

External Development Leadership   Representing the school in the community, developing capital, public relations, recruiting students, buffering and mediating external interests, and advocating for the school's interests

Micro-political Leadership   Buffering and mediating internal interests, maximizing resources (financial and human)

Research Question Three

What advice do principals give about opening new schools?

- Delegate
- Hire the best staff available
- Plan wisely
- Teach and reteach norms

- Must work harder at opening new school than accepting a position at an existing school

When a principal opens a new school, they feel very vested in the success of that campus. This sometimes leads them to the assumption that they have to be involved in every aspect of the planning.

Razik and Swanson (2001) noted that attaining the empowerment of transformative leadership requires the leader to delegate and surrender power over people and events in order to achieve power over accomplishments and goal achievement.

Hire the best staff for the available jobs

•Two of the principals noted that delegating tasks to others would have afforded them more time to focus on hiring the best people for the jobs available.

•Three of the principals noted that if they had to do over they would not hire some of the last staff members, but time was running out and they needed to staff their buildings.

•The principals also shared that hiring all leaders was problematic. They wanted to select the best teachers for their campuses in doing so forgot that leaders do not like to follow very well therefore this lead to problems with getting everyone on the same page.

Plan Wisely

Principals opening new schools should be mindful of future growth. One principal doubled the student population the second year and was glad she had set aside some of the start up monies for the increase in staff and student. Purchasing instructional supplies and technology equipment was accounted for in the budget for growth.

Teach and Reteach Norms

Several principals noted that it took quite a while to establish the routines and norms by which they would all operate in the new school. Two principals noted that it was more difficult for the leaders of the school (grade chairs and department chairs) to adopt the new systems. This was problematic since they were supposed to assist their grade levels or departments with adjusting to the way things would occur in the new school

Must Work Hard

Another mentioned advice given was for principals embarking on this task are to know that opening a new school is a lot of hard work. They will spend many days and nights interviewing, meeting with contractors and vendors, selecting color pallet for the school and ordering instructional materials, supplies, technology equipment and copiers. The

schools had around $900,000 to order these items excluding the furniture, which was purchased from another department. It also takes a great deal of physical energy to place all the purchased items in the appropriate classrooms, closets and offices.

Question Number Four

What leadership style is most desirable when opening a new school facility?

This question could not be answered using the data gathered from the four principals.

The principals were not asked this question during the interview; however, based on their responses and during my observations while visiting the schools, I would say most were transactional. Each of them stated that they did not delegate as many duties as they could have during this process. One principal stated that he was a self-proclaimed perfectionist and wanted everything done to his satisfaction. This hampered his ability to focus on hiring the best teachers for the school, because he did not have the time needed to devote to what is arguable the most important aspect of opening a new school.