

**PRINCIPAL VIEWS ON CHANGES IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP
POST PANDEMIC: THE NEW NORMAL**

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ABSTRACT

The COVID–19 pandemic revealed a critical gap: school principals were unprepared for prolonged, comprehensive crises due to outdated leadership development. This dissertation investigates the pandemic's impact on school leadership, examining principals' perceptions of role changes, the "new normal," and job satisfaction. This study analyzed survey data from 133 principals and interviews, focusing on gender and experience. RQ1 found a universal transformation of the principal's role, expanding to crisis management, social services, technology, and political navigation, regardless of tenure. RQ2 illuminated lasting shifts in time allocation towards student well–being, absenteeism, administrative burdens, and parent interactions. A key finding was the disproportionate, statistically significant increase in workload and responsibilities for female principals. RQ3 showed that despite perceiving their jobs as "much harder," principals maintained high overall satisfaction through resilience. However, a deeper analysis revealed a statistically significant rise in stress and fatigue, especially among female principals, leading to more frequent thoughts of exhaustion–induced absenteeism. This study offers an evidence–based understanding of school leadership's profound, often gender–differentiated transformation post–pandemic. Findings underscore the urgent need to re–align principal preparation and professional development to equip leaders with robust crisis management, holistic well–being support, and strategies for intensified demands.

This work is dedicated to my daughters, Audrey and Ava. You can do anything you want to in this world. Dream big, follow your heart, center yourselves in kindness and gratitude, cultivate your passions, and create your future. Your love and support have brought me joy and motivation throughout this journey.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

School principals bear the important responsibility of ensuring the safety and well-being of children and staff. This includes physical, emotional, and social dimensions, a foundational and most important part of the leader's role. This responsibility was profoundly tested in March, 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic prompted widespread school closures. Initially envisioned as a two-week measure, the shutdown turned into a years-long event and something that altered the way school leaders operate forever.

Before the pandemic, the school leader's role had become increasingly stressful amidst a climate of high stakes accountability, budget shortfalls, and teacher shortages. In urban school districts, principals grappled with demanding accountability measures, stringent curriculum and instruction mandates from central offices, diminishing autonomy over decision-making, volatile family dynamics, escalating school safety concerns, the pervasive issue of gun violence, environmentally hazardous building conditions, chronic staffing shortages, underfunded budgets, and an incessant demand for deliverables to the central office.

In the initial stages of the pandemic of 2020, little was known about COVID-19, and it was scary to even go outside. School leaders, while concerned for their own safety, had to quickly shift to simultaneously figuring out how to manage the shutdown, while simultaneously getting online instruction started. Districts experienced varying challenges specific to their context. For example, in the School District of Philadelphia principals were required to distribute Chromebooks and materials, provide teachers access to the building, and eventually report to the building themselves—often sitting

alone. This period was isolated, stressful, and dangerous. The principals encountered complaint after complaint, heard fear after fear from parents as if they could do anything about it. Meanwhile school principals had anxieties of their own: fears for their personal safety, for their own children, and for the hundreds of children entrusted to their care. However, this was also a time that principals needed to show up, portray strength, and demonstrate courageous leadership. Leadership during this time demanded extraordinary resilience. Many leaders found purpose in creating something steady in a time of upheaval and providing an essential service to their communities. They quickly learned Zoom, became competent in operating online instructional tools, and employed best practices in virtual learning, effectively supporting teachers, students, and families in the closing months of the school year (McLeod & Dulsky, 2021).

The start of the 2020–2021 school year was met with continued uncertainty. Principals across the United States were facing crises such as gun violence, school shootings, environmental hazards such as lead in the drinking water and asbestos, teacher strikes and natural weather disasters (Hayes & Derrington, 2023). This period necessitated intense strategic planning around family communication, the establishment of effective virtual classrooms, and balancing meeting both external requirements and internal student needs. For example, as a principal I set goals for online school readiness that included ensuring access to technology resources, fostering family engagement, and preserving student and staff well-being. I took the goal setting task on because I found from experience that it is an efficient and effective way to engage in change management. Simultaneously, strategic planning commenced for the eventual return to in-person learning, which had to include public health and safety requirements involving social

distancing measures, masking policy enforcement, COVID–19 testing, entrance and dismissal procedures, family communication, quarantine learning and meeting environmental requirements in old and unsafe buildings. Principals frequently took on additional responsibilities, such as personally delivering materials to students' homes, working late into the night to connect with families, and diligently managing the well-being of their staff.

As the school year progressed, schools across the state began to reopen with many on a hybrid schedule. Families entrusted school leaders with their children's safety, a responsibility taken seriously. However, the return to in-person work was met with many more unexpected challenges. Principals returned to staff members who were required to be retrained in even the most basic procedures that had been taken for granted prior to the school closures. Furthermore, individuals' personal issues and family circumstances interfered with work demands, further heightening complexities in staff management.

In my experience, the district I worked for implemented new initiatives from a new system of clocking in and out to new curriculum units. The day-to-day responsibilities of school staff were altered to meet health and safety guidelines. Children were required to eat in the auditorium, strict seating charts had to be maintained, teachers were prevented from pulling small groups, and there were frequent COVID–19 outbreaks. Team members were writing quarantine letters and tracking return dates about 80% of the time. It was very difficult to maintain one's own well-being.

The uncertainty of what each day would bring was a burden on school leaders. Staff members, children and their families looked to principals to provide stability and

predictability during a time when everyone was experiencing a shared trauma. School leaders' brains were in a constant state of hypervigilance, with little opportunity for rest, yet they had to keep showing up, lead, and reassure everyone that “it would all be okay.” Leading a school community through the COVID–19 pandemic was exhausting. The brain's constant response to stress caused leaders to operate in perpetual survival mode, leading to dysregulation of the parasympathetic nervous system and a reduction in overall resilience (consistent with findings such as Harvard Medical School, 2020).

Most school principals were unprepared to lead through the unprecedented challenges of the COVID–19 pandemic. While the school leader's role is evolving, existing pre– and in–service development programs have struggled to prepare individuals for the complexities of modern school leadership (Schmidt, 2010). Specifically, pre–service programs have not typically provided the preparation necessary for principals to effectively lead through a prolonged and multifaceted crisis. Research indicates that, for the most part, explicit crisis management leadership skills are not a core component of principal preparation program curricula (Hess & Kelly, 2007), which are often out–of–date and not aligned to current school leadership responsibilities (Mahfouz, 2017). Consequently, school leaders often report feeling unequipped to successfully lead through a crisis (Daughtry, 2015; Kitamura, 2019).

Similarly, district leadership also demonstrated a lack of preparedness for the COVID–19 crisis, with few districts possessing comprehensive distance learning plans prior to spring 2020 (Lake, 2020). This highlights a need for research to identify what strategies and supports proved effective for school leaders during this period, to better prepare them for future challenges.

This research was intended to better understand the impact of the COVID–19 pandemic on school leadership and school leaders within Pennsylvania. It was designed to gather empirical data to examine the principals’ perceptions of how the immediate shock of the pandemic altered school leadership in the short term, how these changes have manifested in lasting ways, and what is now the “new normal” for school leaders. This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. In what ways and to what extent has the role of the school leader changed in response to the COVID–19 pandemic?
2. What are principals’ perceptions of the lasting effect of the pandemic experience on school leadership?
3. How has the pandemic experience affected principals’ satisfaction with their position?

The overarching goal is to gain a deeper understanding of the longer–term effects of the pandemic on school leadership, and to provide actionable recommendations for enhancing the preparation and ongoing support provided to school principals. This chapter has laid out the foundational context for the study; subsequent chapters will detail the theoretical framework, methodology, findings, and the implications of this research.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses the roles and responsibilities of school principals and the relevant research pertaining to the responsibilities and challenges they faced prior to the COVID–19 pandemic. These studies will primarily relate to roles in addition to that of instructional leadership, including safety and crisis management, the impact of stress and trauma on principals, crisis management, pandemic leadership, the impact of stress and trauma on principals, leadership during the pandemic, its specific impact on principal well–being, and principal attrition.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Shapiro and Stefkovich’s (2016) ethical leadership framework, from their book, *Ethical Leadership and Decision Making in Education: Applying Theoretical Perspectives to Complex Dilemmas*. They describe four ethical lenses for school leaders to employ when problem solving in today’s educational landscape including the ethics of justice, care, critique, and profession. This study will focus on the ethics of care and the profession.

The ethic of care is centered on ensuring that the individuals in the school community are safe and nurtured before anything else can be effectively addressed, including academic matters. This framework questions how leaders are prepared for decision making and pushes against traditional hierarchical military and business models of leadership. It also uses current brain research to examine the significant role emotions play in decision making, helping leaders understand their own emotional responses and those of their community, particularly during stressful times (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016).

The ethic of the profession comes into play when trying to understand how school leaders can balance their own self-care and well-being while tending to the needs of their school community and abiding by the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016). Leading through the COVID-19 pandemic required leaders to understand themselves, their students, and their communities. This era demanded many judgement calls during uncertain times, all aimed at keeping everyone safe and cared for, directly aligning with the core tenants of both the ethic of care and the ethic of the profession.

Pre-Pandemic Principal Responsibilities and Challenges

School leadership is important. Research indicates a clear relationship between leadership and student achievement (Waters et al., 2003), with school leadership being the second most important school-related factor in its impact on student learning (Leithwood et al., 2004). At any given time, principals juggle many competing priorities. In more recent history there has been a shift from management to instructional leadership. Learning-centered leadership of the principal has been shown to enhance student outcomes (Reardon, 2011). The Wallace Foundation's Learning from Leadership Project issued *Review of Research; How Leadership Influences Student Learning*. In this study, they found that high-quality leaders impact student achievement outcomes by setting directions, developing people, and optimizing organizational functions (Leithwood et al., 2004). Beyond instructional leadership, principals also have the important responsibility of centering their work on equity. DeMatthews, et al. cited Khalifa et al. (2016) and Leithwood et al. (2008) when they wrote the following,

Principals contribute to student achievement and equity–related outcomes by fostering an inclusive environment centered on high–quality instruction and inquiry, building teacher capacity, monitoring, and supporting the implementation of effective and culturally responsive teaching practices, and collaboratively interrogating data with teachers and families to make important decisions. (DeMatthews et al., 2023 p. 1)

Pre–pandemic principal responsibilities commonly included creating a positive school climate, staffing their school, cultivating an effective teaching staff (Grissom et al., 2021), providing instructional leadership, managing budgets, creating a safe and welcoming school climate, and fostering positive family and community relationships (Grissom et al., 2017).

Robert Marzano, the co–founder and CEO of Marzano Research with expertise in school leadership, published the results of their meta–analysis in the book *School Leadership that Works* (Marzano et al., 2005). Analyzing 69 educational leadership studies from 1979–2001, their research identified 21 responsibilities of a school leader categorized into transformational leadership, instructional leadership, cultural leadership, and operational leadership. All 21 responsibilities are described in Appendix A. Situational awareness emerged as the responsibility with the highest correlation to achievement. Marzano et al. (2005) explain the behaviors associated with this responsibility:

- Accurately predicting what could go wrong from day to day
- Being aware of informal groups and relationships among staff
- Being aware of issues in the school that have not surfaced but could create discord. (p. 60)

Although this research was conducted well before the onset of COVID–19, several of Marzano's leadership responsibilities proved critical in navigating the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic, particularly those related to school closures, virtual learning,

and health crises. The following six responsibilities became especially prominent and reshaped the daily work of principals.

Communication is a cornerstone of effective school leadership, and principals have always needed to communicate with teachers, staff, students, and families. However, the school closures in March, 2020 demanded a new, urgent, and often remote form of communication. Leaders had to convey rapidly changing health guidelines, school operational procedures, and instructional expectations to a diverse audience, often lacking direct in-person contact. This extended to managing emotionally charged discussions and serving as a key liaison between the district, public health officials, and the school community. The need for clear, consistent, and empathetic communication became paramount to maintaining trust and direction during an uncertain time.

Establishing order in a school environment involves creating clear expectations and routines. Prior to the pandemic, this typically involved procedures like arrival/dismissal protocols and behavior guidelines. With COVID-19, this responsibility dramatically expanded to include crisis management at an unforeseen scale. Principals had to rapidly develop entirely new operational procedures for food distribution, technology access, virtual learning schedules, and, upon reopening, intricate health, and safety protocols (e.g., social distancing, contact tracing). This required an unprecedented ability to create and implement new systems in real time, often without prior training or clear guidance, fundamentally redefining the concept of an "orderly environment."

Providing adequate resources is vital for teachers to effectively do their jobs. The abrupt shift to remote learning highlighted and exacerbated existing disparities in access to essential resources. Principals were tasked with ensuring every student and staff

member had devices, internet access, and learning materials, often requiring innovative distribution methods. Beyond physical resources, they became crucial facilitators of professional development, rapidly equipping teachers with the skills and knowledge needed for effective online instruction, remote collaboration, and managing new digital learning platforms. This responsibility moved beyond traditional supplies to encompass critical technological infrastructure and immediate upskilling for the entire school community.

Involvement in curriculum, instruction, and assessment is a core duty for principals, guiding the academic direction of the school. While principals traditionally shape instructional practices, the pandemic forced direct, hands-on involvement in a complete overhaul. The sudden transition to remote and hybrid models required principals to lead the design of entirely new instructional strategies, adapt curriculum for online delivery, and rethink assessment methods for virtual environments. They often had to model new teaching techniques, provide immediate professional development, and ensure continuity of learning despite widespread disruptions and digital divides. Addressing learning loss and behavioral changes upon return to in-person learning further cemented their deep involvement in academic and instructional restructuring.

Fostering strong relationships involves demonstrating an awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and staff. The personal toll of the pandemic on students, staff, and families brought the ethic of care to the forefront. Principals' roles evolved to encompass significant social service provision, from ensuring food security for vulnerable families to addressing the heightened mental health needs and anxieties of their entire school community. This meant providing emotional support to staff, acting as

a "therapist" or "support" figure, and prioritizing well-being above traditional academic metrics, demonstrating a profound awareness and responsiveness to the personal struggles of those they served.

Monitoring and evaluating school practices and their impact on student learning is a continuous process for principals. With the shift to new learning modalities and unprecedented challenges, principals had to adapt how they monitored school effectiveness. This involved new ways of assessing student engagement in virtual settings, tracking daily attendance amidst chronic absenteeism, and analyzing student performance data to identify and address significant learning gaps. Beyond academics, monitoring extended to the overall well-being of the school community and the effectiveness of new health and safety protocols, requiring a broad and flexible approach to evaluation that integrated both academic and socio-emotional indicators.

The principalship is inherently demanding. A 2012 MetLife Survey of the American Teacher, which includes a survey of principals nationwide, found that 75% of principals agreed their jobs had become too complex. This view was shared by principals across all demographics (Markow et al., 2013). Expectations have steadily increased, and the work has become more intense (Wang et al., 2018). Increasingly demanding local and state legislation has led to shifts in school leader responsibilities, contributing to higher rates of stress and turnover (Mitani, 2018).

Many sources contribute to stress in the principal's role. Principals work approximately 60 hours a week on average (Taie et al., 2017), with workloads continuing to increase while resources decline (Conrad & Rosser, 2007; Wells, 2013). Declining student performance, poor working conditions and concerns about student and school

climate are major causes for principal concern (Darmody & Smyth, 2011, Conrad & Rosser, 2007; Levin & Bradley, 2019, Levin et al., 2020). Principals often need more professional development and central office support to address these challenges (Johnson, 2005; Levin & Bradley, 2019; Levin et al., 2020). These conditions can create elevated levels of intense and consistent stress, which can be emotionally draining and can lead to secondary trauma and mental strain (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005; Murphy, 2011; Sorenson, 2007; Wilson, 2021).

Safety and Crisis Management

Maintaining the safety of the school community manifests itself in daily routines, such as arrival and dismissal procedures, programming choices such as social–emotional curricula and school–wide positive behavior support programs, and protocol and responses for behavioral health interventions. It also includes occasional disruptions to normal routines caused by weather events.

Keeping the school community safe also extends to severe circumstances, also known as *crises*. The U.S. Agency for International Development (2018) categorizes crises into four types: political (social unrest and violent conflict), economic (severe poverty), health (epidemics such as HIV/AIDs) and environmental (natural disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes, droughts, and volcanic eruptions). When these crises occur, access to education is jeopardized (Benner & Mistry, 2020). A crisis typically necessitates four stages in a continuum: emergency, recovery, rehabilitation, and reconstruction. These events often result in the population’s inability to meet its basic needs, with education frequently being omitted from the response to the crisis. However,

chronic crises refer to the ongoing, prolonged periods of emergency and response, which can then include education within the response framework (USAID, 2018).

The U.S. Department of Education categorizes crises into two sections. The first is a *threat* which is human caused, such as a crime of violence. The second is a *hazard*, such as a natural disaster, disease outbreak or accident (U.S. Department of Education, 2019). The NEA's School Crisis Guide categorizes crises based on scale. Large scale crises include natural disasters, hostage situations, and violence. These require an emergency response (Mutch, 2014). This is compared to small scale crises that are individualized such as the death of a student. Either way, the crises can harm the mental and physical health of classrooms and safety of the stakeholders (NEA's School Crisis Guide). Smith and Riley (2012) use five categories for school-based crises including short-term crises, cathartic crisis, long-term crises, one-off crises, and infectious crises. Ultimately, threat, uncertainty, and urgency are common components across all crises (Boin, 2005).

This can be taken a step further to define COVID-19 as a compound crisis because it exposed and exacerbated pre-existing racial, economic, and political inequalities within the United States and globally. All these affected students and schools required a reconceptualization of school leadership. According to Reyes-Guterra et al. (2021), these complex crises have multiple causes and with unknown solutions. They require a comprehensive response that addresses each facet of the crisis. They explain, "It provides an opportunity to move to a new normal that allows for new beliefs and systems to emerge" (p. 2).

School leaders and districts prepare and respond to crises in a straightforward crisis management strategy that includes stages such as prevention, response, and recovery (Mayer et al., 2008). School leaders are typically prepared to react to situations seen as temporary disruptions that have a clear starting point and an expectation for closure and the resumption of regular school operations. This approach should also include a cyclical component through two-way communication for decision making to minimize misinformation (Gainey, 2009). Despite existing safety plans and school and district preparation, a global pandemic was unanticipated and incredibly unpredictable. School leaders were ill-prepared for the challenges of the pandemic including school closures and virtual learning (DeMatthews et al., 2021).

Crisis management is an inherent part of the school leader's role (Smith & Riley, 2012). There are five categories of school-based crisis. They are short term crises, cathartic crises, long-term crises, one-off crises, and infectious crises. (Smith & Riley, 2012). These crises have four common characteristics including threat to a system, time pressure, ill-structured situation, and lack of adequate resources for response (Sutherland, 2017). There are also three components to a crisis: threat, uncertainty, and urgency (Boin, 2005). It is the school principal's role to lead the school community through crisis situations.

Literature offers a wealth of frameworks and theories on crisis leadership. Smith and Riley (2012) outline a crisis framework that includes gathering information, adapting, making rapid decisions, demonstrating concern, and communicating clearly and honestly. Their crisis management theory emphasizes communication skills, procedural intelligence, decisive decision making, creative and lateral thinking, synthesizing skills,

empathy and respect, intuition, flexibility and optimism, and tenacity. These components echoed in Boin et al.'s five critical tasks in crisis leadership. They are sensemaking to diagnose the situation, decision making for strategy, coordination of implementation, meaning making to motivate others to move beyond the situation, accounting giving to achieve closure by taking responsibility and learning from response efforts. Boin and Hart (2003) also point out that in crisis management the purpose of the process is to return operations to normal, as they were before the crisis. They argue that a true crisis response could lead to sustained transition and transformation.

There are other crisis leadership frameworks and theories in the literature. One of these is the Responsive Direction theory. This theory

...promotes a restless planning scheme that is constantly searching for new ideas and reassessing the intended direction. Leaders with this orientation would seem well placed to deal with the immediate and long-term impacts of unexpected events, like school closures and mass remote learning. (Gurr & Drysdale, 2020, p. 25)

Furthermore, leaders' reflections and learning can occur within the unique contexts of their specific school, as described by the Context-Responsive Leadership Theory:

...practical wisdom in action, which reveals a complex mix of knowledge, skills, and dispositions appropriately deployed by effective leaders as they engage in fluid conversations with dynamic situational variables. Context-responsive leadership is expressed through action, the way the leader behaves, not any one predisposed style consisting of decontextualized qualities or leader actions. (Bredeson et al., 2011, p. 20)

Any of these theories must also focus on values and ethics in responsiveness and decision making (Seeger & Ulmer, 2003).

Studies have investigated leadership styles and characteristics most effective in crisis management. Hayes and Derrington (2023), using the National Preparedness Leadership Initiative (NPLI) framework, determined that high emotional intelligence,

collaboration, care of others, and attention to the school community context are effective characteristics of school leadership during a crisis. Purnomo et al. (2021) found that transformational leadership has a strong positive effect on crisis management.

Charismatic leadership and transactional leadership have a positive, albeit weak, effect; entrepreneurial leadership has a negative but weak effect on crisis management. Servant leadership, compassionate leadership, and distributive leadership are also effective crisis leadership styles (Fernandez & Shaw, 2020; Kwatubana & Moladi, 2021).

Alongside managing the crisis itself, the school principal must consider the well-being of the stakeholders and community that the school serves. Dückers et al. (2017) outlines the characteristics of essential psychological supports, including:

- Assessing needs and problems
- Considering risk and protective factors
- Utilizing and strengthening existing capacities
- Providing information and basic aid
- Promoting a sense of safety, calm, efficacy, connectedness to others
- Hope, positive social acknowledgement of experiences
- Evaluation of supports
- Implementing lessons to improve continually

These supports can lead to community resilience, defined as the entire community's ability to overcome changes and crises (Cohen et al., 2017).

Harvard University's Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics published a white paper exploring community resilience entitled, "Schools During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Sites and Sources of Community Resilience" (Fay et al., 2020). They identified five ways

that schools normally support community resilience: social welfare (providing services, mandated reporting food), human development (academics, peer connections, relationship building) childcare (essential for working parents), stable employment (for school and district employees, jeopardized during COVID–19) and democratic solidarity (schools as integrated spaces that teaching children how to learn in a diverse setting). While community resilience is certainly an admirable goal for a school leader, the next section will explore the significant stress that crisis leadership can put on a principal.

The Impact of Trauma on School Leaders

The principal’s job, with its numerous competing demands, can have significant negative effects on the individual’s overall well–being. One study of novice principals highlighted several emotionally exhausting aspects of the job including problem solving, juggling multiple demands, limited time to accomplish tasks, and seeking out resources. A staggering 73% of principals reported school culture related issues as the most emotionally exhausting part of their job, encompassing critical conversations with teachers, interpersonal conflict among teachers, confronting teacher deficit perspectives and a lack of teacher motivation to change their practice. Contextual factors, such as resource scarcity, facilities in disrepair, and handling problematic teachers or parents, also contributed to their stress (DeMatthews et al., 2021).

These factors inherently lead to stress. The American Psychiatric Association (2013) defines stress as the, “...responses a person makes to stimulus events that disturb his or her equilibrium and tax or exceed his or her ability to cope” (p. 829). The demands of the job can lead to stress, and it can also lead to secondary traumatic stress, often called compassion fatigue. Principals often spend time supporting others at the expense

of their own health and well-being (Weber et al., 2005). The National Child Traumatic Stress Network NCTSN (2018) defines secondary traumatic stress as, "...the emotional duress that results when an individual hears about the first-hand trauma experiences of another" (p. 1). Compassion fatigue is defined as, "...stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person" (Figley, 1995, p. 7).

Stress and secondary traumatic stress can, in turn, lead to burnout. Burnout is a multidimensional concept defined as, "...psychological syndrome of exhaustion, cynicism, and efficacy, which is experienced in response to chronic job stress" (Leiter & Maslach, 2003, p. 93). Principals who experience cognitive dissonance between their own expectations or values regarding their role and those of district administrators, teachers, parents, or other stakeholders are more likely to experience burnout (Gmelch & Torelli, 1994). Leiter and Maslach (2003) identified six organizational domains that correlate to burnout: excessive or insufficient workload, an individual's perceived ability to influence decisions impacting their work (including autonomy and access to resources), monetary, social, and/or intrinsic rewards, social support, perceived fairness, respect and self-worth, and the values that initially drew them to the role.

While stress can lead to burnout, that is not always the case. There are strategies that leaders can use to try to manage stress and anxiety including planning, organizing, directing, controlling, communicating, and decision making (Tanneret et al., 1991). Principals can also engage in coping behaviors such as spending time with family, talking and networking with other principals, exercising, meditating, and engaging in practices related to spirituality (DeMatthews et al., 2021). These strategies and coping mechanisms can increase resilience, the trait that allows an individual to successfully adapt to

adversity or a disruptive life event (Connor & Davidson, 2003). While secondary trauma can lead to burnout, it can also lead to post traumatic growth, a positive psychological gain that results from experiencing and overcoming trauma (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). The sense of achievement and well-being derived from doing one's work effectively is called compassion satisfaction, another positive result of experiencing secondary trauma (Stamm, 2010).

Pandemic Related Crisis Management

Principals undoubtedly encounter crises that demand thoughtful and strategic leadership. Beginning in March 2020, school leaders confronted the unprecedented crisis of COVID-19 and the resulting widespread school closures. The COVID-19 pandemic is unique because of its ongoing and evolving nature (DeMatthews & Brown, 2019), causing an abrupt interruption, and shifting to the "new normal". Prior to the pandemic, research was already focused on the rising principal attrition rates due to burnout and increasingly demanding working conditions (Carpenter & Poershke, 2020; Darmody & Smyth, 2016; and Wang et al., 2018). The focus has now intensified to concerns over principals leaving the field specifically due to pandemic-related job demands and burnout (Kaufman et al., 2022).

Emerging research identifies strategies and best practices principals employed throughout the pandemic. A study from New Zealand found five effective leadership practices: detecting signals and responding appropriately, demonstrating empathy and prioritizing well-being, communicating frequently and effectively, leading collaboratively and taking a community leadership role, and taking opportunities to learn at all stages of the crisis (Thornton, 2021). Kwatubana and Molaodi (2021) indicate that

leaders should keep the team together, lead with compassion and support to teachers, distribute leadership and focus attention on teamwork in order to, “...maintain resilience and sustain coordinated performance, which, in turn, can alleviate the stress caused by a heavy workload and work–life imbalance” (p. 109). Dabrowski (2021) further stressed the importance of leadership supporting teacher well–being.

To effectively lead under these new and evolving circumstances, principals had to engage in the process of sensemaking. Sensemaking, defined by Weick (1995), is the ongoing process of creating reality based on experience and organizing new experiences to comprehend what has occurred. Sensemaking is a key component to a principal’s ability to cope with and adapt to school closures and the resulting stress, along with conducting and managing risk assessment, focusing attention on community well–being, and increasing their community leadership (Longmuir, 2023).

A review of COVID–19 pandemic leadership by Schechter et al. (2022) identified the following crucial guidelines for pandemic leadership:

Promoting care, collaboration, and resilience among school stakeholders

1. Providing support for and genuine interest in the inner world of the students, staff, and community
2. Fostering collaborations between students, teachers, parents, the community, and social bodies
3. Building resilience among students, teachers and principals

Managing organizational and information resources

4. Preserving and utilizing existing resources, while developing and creating new learning–working processes.
5. Developing effective information communication channels

Developing agile and holistic management

6. “We are all principals today” – Promoting diverse and distributed leadership
7. Developing systemic thinking leadership
8. Focusing on enabling and flexible bureaucracy (Schechter, et al., 2022, p. 3)

These guidelines are instrumental in guiding schools through constantly changing circumstances with novel challenges brought on by the COVID–19 pandemic.

School closures imposed new access and instructional responsibilities to schools including a shift to remote learning and teaching (Weiner et al., 2021), professional development, digital divides, access equity, continuity of learning, and digital literacy (Parveen et al., 2022). At the same time principals were faced with staffing shortages, establishing effective communication with families (Pollock, 2020; Wharton–Beck et al., 2022), motivating staff, establishing trust (Pollock, 2020), equity gaps, school financing challenges, and addressing the emotional and mental health of students, staff and the community (Pareveen et al., 2022). The Spring 2020 American educator Panels found that,

...principals in high–poverty schools were more likely to indicate that lack of student internet access, lack of devices for students, inability to reach all families, and financial constraints were limiting factors for the amount or type of distance learning they were able to offer. (Hamilton et al., 2020, p. 4)

The report also revealed that social and emotional well–being is a higher concern for leaders in urban and high–poverty schools (Hamilton et al., 2020).

Addressing these challenges required a rapid response to new challenges, including quick assessments, fast decision making, the development of new strategies, and making decisions that impact the whole community (Fernandez & Shaw, 2020). As schools started to reopen, principals were faced with ensuring safety measures, social distancing and other health concerns were addressed (Levin et al., 2020), all while planning for emergency preparation, academic disparities, and social–emotional health needs (Hamilton et al., 2020). Further stress was added by diminished principal

autonomy over decision-making, as central offices, public health agencies and state education agencies were implementing policies and regulations (Grooms & Childs, 2021). Every time a change was made concerning the health and safety of the school, the principal had to lead the community through that adjustment (Weiner et al., 2021). While these top-down communications contributed to stress, horizontal communication, and collaboration between school leaders and across communities often served as crucial support systems for leaders during this time (Fotheringham, 2022).

Pandemic Leadership: Impact on Principal Well-being

Emerging research has also begun to shed light on the profound impact that leading through the pandemic had on the principal's well-being. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected principals' mental health and well-being in ways not previously experienced (Harris & Jones, 2020). Principal stress and anxiety have increased since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic (Reid, 2022). Principals experienced high stress due to the tasks associated with closing schools, launching online-only instruction, monitoring sickness, delivering food and other school-provided services, and ensuring students could access the internet. One study found that 77% of principals had high or altered stress levels concerning the school community's ability to cope with the pandemic (Upadyaya et al., 2021). Principals also had difficulty separating their work from their home life (Anderson et al., 2020). Principals felt increased pressure to support various organizational stakeholders such as teachers, students, and parents, but also felt increased stress due to their lack of ability to provide concrete answers (Reid, 2022). This repeated and prolonged stress can have dramatic effects on the brain.

Severe stress causes the human brain to engage in fight or flight responses, primarily governed by the amygdala and the right hemisphere of the brain, activating the Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS) (Harvard Medical School, 2020). Physical reactions to stress include an elevated heart rate, increased respiration, dilated pupils, slowing or stopping digestion, and conflicting blood vessels (Cozolino, 2017). Chronic overstimulation of the amygdala and SNS can lead to chronic exhaustion, anxiety, and a decline in overall health (DeMatthews et al., 2023). This constant stress causes the SNS to perpetually respond to a “perceived threat” rather than actual, immediate danger (Benish et al., 2008).

Current studies also explore how principals were able to cope with the demanding stress of this compound crisis. One study found that they coped, in part, by suppressing their emotions in the presence of students, parents and colleagues (Reid, 2022). Principals drew upon their individual reservoirs of shared leadership qualities, including being a personalized and pragmatic communicator, leading with flexibility, creativity, and care, bending rules, and shifting priorities, and demonstrating resilience under pressure. They also leveraged their schools’ internal strengths and cultivated inter-school connections (Reyes-Guerra et al., 2021).

Beyond role-related strategies and coping mechanisms, principals had to rely on self-care to cope. The goals of self-care are to “guard against, cope with, or reduce stress and related adverse experiences...to maintain or enhance well-being and overall functioning” (Butler et al., 2019, p. 107). Healthy coping can lead to the ability to differentiate between actual and perceived threats and assist with self-regulation (Benish et al., 2008). Reid (2022) found that principals,

...exercising and engaging in other various forms of self-care are generally less stressed and can better manage the stress and anxiety associated with leading a school, although principals often find it challenging to engage in other various forms of self-care. (p. 64)

Principal Retention & Attrition

Unfortunately, principal turnover is a persistent reality in education. Before the pandemic, approximately 18% of principals across the United States left their schools each year. This was due to retirement, dismissal, or leaving for another position outside of education. In the 2015–16 school year of the 18% of principals that left their current school, 6% of them moved to a different school and 10% left the principalship all together (Goldring & Taie, 2018). This is higher for principals serving low-income students. The attrition rate in 2016 for principals leaving schools that serve low-income students was 20% (Goldring & Taie, 2018). While principals leave at all stages of their careers, there is a particular focus on retaining novice principals. Novice principals improve significantly as they gain experience at their schools, requiring time to learn about the school, build capacity, foster relationships, and improve climate and working conditions (Bartanen, 2019). When novice principals leave, they are often replaced by other novice or less experienced principals (DeMatthews et al., 2023). This creates a cycle of attrition that actively undermines school effectiveness and student outcomes (Grissom et al., 2015).

Effective and stable leadership supports teacher retention (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Surveys, including one from the Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, indicate that strong school leadership is a critical working condition influencing whether teachers choose to stay or leave a school (Hirsch et al., 2008, Hirsch

et al, 2010; Marvel et al., 2007). Principal turnover is consistently associated with higher rates of teacher turnover and lower student achievement gains, particularly for low-income and low-achieving students (Beteille et al., 2012; Miller, 2013; Wills, 2016). The higher rates of teacher turnover are found more in high-poverty and urban schools where there is chronic principal turnover (DeMatthews et al., 2022). Principal turnover can have negative effects on achievement and school climate (Snodgrass Rangel, 2018).

Leading through COVID-19 led school leaders to leave their position and schools saw the departure of many school leaders in both 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 academic terms (Grissom, 2021). There were similar principal attrition rates to the previous years in 2020-2021 according to a national survey of district superintendents (Diliberti & Schwartz, 2021). The 2021-22 Principal Follow-up Survey of the National Teacher and Principal Survey found that among all public-school principals in 2020-21, 20% left their current school. Of that 20%, 6% moved to different schools, 11% left the principalship and 3% were from schools that reported the principal had left but were unable to report the current occupational status of the principal (Taie & Lewis, 2023).

Pennsylvania saw a 4.2 percentage point increase rate in principal attrition from 2021 to 2023. The 2022-2023 attrition rate is the highest it has been since the data have been available at 15.4%. A total of 463 educators left the principalship in 2022-2023. Of them, 54% (250) became employed in another position within the PA public education system (Fuller, 2023).

Conclusion

This chapter affirms the vital role played by school principals and affirms that school leaders are important in times of crisis and uncertainty. Prior to the COVID-19

pandemic the school leader's role focused on instruction and equity as well as Marzano's 21 leadership responsibilities that can be categorized as transformational leadership, instructional leadership, cultural leadership, and operational leadership. Principal stressors included increasing workloads with declining resources, increased local and state policy demands, sub-par working conditions, and facilities in disrepair. They juggled these varied demands while focusing on the school climate, student well-being, and student performance.

Principal's roles are complex, which can lead to stress, and the COVID-19 pandemic introduced new challenges and stressors that leaders were unprepared for. They had to pivot to remote learning and teaching which included professional development, addressing access, digital divides, and digital literacy. They also had to work hard to establish communication with families and reestablish trust in the community. They continued to do this with school and district financial insecurities and staffing shortages. They were also constantly addressing the emotional and mental health of the students, staff, and community.

As schools began to reopen and students returned, there were additional stressors including ensuring that enhanced safety measures were implemented, social distancing and mask wearing guidelines were followed, and health concerns were addressed quickly and safely. They had to rethink preparing for emergencies, address academic disparities, all while tending to the social-emotional health needs of the students and staff. All of this was done while having less autonomy over decision making at the local level.

While there are many ways in which leaders coped and thrived, this repeated stress from a compound crisis can lead to long-lasting physical responses to the body.

Before the COVID–19 pandemic, the school leader's role was becoming more complex with a focus on instructional leadership. They had to shift quickly during and throughout the pandemic to face school closures, school reopening, and health and safety guidelines. This required losing autonomy and implementing district, state and federal policies and guidelines. Once schools reopened, they had new stressors including student and staff mental health and well–being needs and learning loss. Principals had to do all of this while attempting to maintain their own health and well–being. There were school leaders that thrived and experienced burnout due to leading through the COVID–19 pandemic. The goal is to support leaders in preparation and in job–embedded wellness measures to retain principals in their roles.

This chapter highlighted the critical importance of school leadership and the significant stressors principals face, burdens undeniably heightened by the COVID–19 pandemic. This elevated stress can lead to health concerns and burnout, unfortunately contributing to undesirable principal attrition, as leadership consistency at the school level has well–documented positive effects on school climate and student outcomes. Building upon this context, the overarching goal of this study was to investigate how school leadership has evolved in the longer term since the COVID–19 pandemic. The findings aim to inform principal preparation programs, district leadership, and individual leaders of these changes, enabling the development and implementation of effective supports to foster principal retention and enhance their well–being. The following chapter outlines the research questions that guided this study and details the methodology used for data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

A crucial gap in the existing literature concerns a comprehensive understanding of *how* the school leadership role has changed post–pandemic and *what* specific strategies principals have employed to manage and cope during this unprecedented period. This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. In what ways and to what extent has the role of the school leader changed in response to the COVID–19 pandemic
2. What are principals’ perceptions of the lasting effect of the pandemic experience on school leadership?
3. How has the pandemic experience affected principals’ satisfaction with their position?

To comprehensively address these research questions, this study investigated several key areas, including:

- The roles school leaders held prior to the pandemic were important.
- The immediate demands placed on principals at the start of school closures.
- The responsibilities principals managed during the active phases of the pandemic.
- How school districts facilitated school reopening and the ongoing challenges this presented.

Please note, this study has received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from Temple University.

Population and Sample

The target population for this research consisted of public–school principals in Pennsylvania. Participants were recruited via email invitation to participate in the survey (see Appendix B). This email clearly outlined the research study’s purpose and solicited their voluntary participation. A direct link to the survey was embedded in the email. At the survey's completion, participants were asked if they would be willing to participate in a follow–up interview. The explanation of the anonymity of participation and the process for obtaining informed consent was included in the recruitment email.

While the aim was to distribute the survey to all public–school principals in Pennsylvania (a census approach), participation was voluntary, making the final quantitative sample a convenience or volunteer sample. It is acknowledged that this non–probability sampling method may introduce selection bias, which was discussed as a limitation in Chapter 5. Efforts were made to achieve a high response rate and a diverse sample to maximize generalizability.

Demographic information was collected for each participant, including:

- Number of years served as a principal
- First year as a principal
- First year as a teacher
- Gender
- Race/ethnicity
- Age

Principals invited to participate in this research study were explicitly informed that the purpose of the research was to understand how the role of the principal had changed since

March 2020 and how their leadership had evolved, as well as how they had managed and coped through the process. When they chose to participate, informed consent was obtained from each participant digitally prior to accessing the survey (see Appendix C).

Data Collection

The data were collected using two techniques to gain both broad understanding and specific insights into principals' experiences. This approach involves collecting and analyzing quantitative data, followed by collecting and analyzing interview data. The interview findings help to explain and elaborate on the initial quantitative results. Data collection for this study proceeded in three distinct phases.

The first phase involved the implementation of an electronic survey. The survey was sent via email in June 2024 and again in July 2024. The survey was sent to 2,588 public school principals in Pennsylvania. A total of 154 emails were undeliverable, indicating that the principal was no longer with that school district. Of the remaining 2,434 surveys sent, 133 principals responded, which is a 5% participation rate.

The survey primarily used predetermined questions from the Principal Questionnaire portion of the NCES National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) from the 2020–2021 school year. Utilizing items from the NTPS was a strategic choice, as it allowed for direct comparison of this study's results to a national sample and enhanced the potential for generalization beyond the specific parameters of this sample. These NTPS items had undergone rigorous testing for validity and reliability, ensuring the robustness of the quantitative data. The NTPS itself is a redesign of the former Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics

(NCES). Data collected through the NTPS are widely used by federal, state, and local education agencies, as well as research organizations, to:

- Evaluate the effects of school workplace conditions, salaries, and training opportunities on the educational workforce.
- Assess school staffing practices and personnel policies.
- Aid in the Department of Education’s program planning related to teacher shortages, teaching policies, and teacher education (United States Census Bureau, 2023).

Additionally, one question was adapted from Rand’s American Educator Panels Spring 2020 COVID–19 Surveys (Hamilton et al., 2020). This original question asked participants to predict how various goals would change in priority upon returning to school. For this study, the question was augmented to ask how the prioritization of these goals had already changed since March 2020. Additional questions were crafted to specifically probe principals' perceptions of district support during the pandemic, their personal coping mechanisms, and their perceived current level of work–life balance. The complete survey instrument can be found in Appendix D.

The second phase of this project involved analyzing quantitative survey data. These results then informed the development of semi–structured interview questions for the third phase. At the end of the survey, principals were asked if they would be willing to participate in a follow–up interview to provide a richer context for the quantitative findings. Nine principals volunteered to be interviewed and provided their contact information. They were emailed to schedule their interviews (see Appendix E). Seven

principals ended up being interviewed due to scheduling conflicts and last-minute emergencies.

The third phase consisted of individual interviews with a subset of principals to gain richer insights into their lived experiences of school leadership during and after the pandemic. The interviews were conducted in April 2025. They were asked about their perceptions of school leadership prior to COVID-19, during COVID-19, and since COVID-19. Seven interviews with principals from various school districts in Pennsylvania were conducted.

Recruitment

I obtained an email distribution list of all public-school principals in Pennsylvania from the Temple University network. Principals who did not respond within a week's time received a reminder email. The process continued for three weeks. Principals who responded received a thank you email that stated that I would be in contact within the next month if they indicated an interest in an interview.

The data from the interviews contributed context and supplemented the data collected from the survey. The third phase of data collection utilized a semi-structured interview approach of survey participants who indicated interest in an interview. The interviews were held via Zoom. I employed open-ended questions to encourage participants to discuss subjects they deemed most relevant and to reflect deeply on their experiences (see Appendix F). I conducted the interviews in a conversational style with the participants and utilized Zoom's transcription feature. The length of the interviews varied from 20 minutes to 45 minutes. During the interviews, I also took notes on non-verbal behavior and interactions with the participants.

Data Analysis

The second phase of this study involved a quantitative analysis of survey results. I analyzed the results to identify trends, patterns, and significant differences related to the research questions. The survey data underwent a thorough cleaning process. For those situations where there was less than 10% missing, the data were cleaned using the mode for missing values and mean for interval values. For certain variables, imputation was used to replace missing values with estimated values based on the meaning of the data set. Some entries with substantial missing data were deleted from the dataset. The remaining data were standardized to ensure an appropriate format for statistical analysis.

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 29.0.2.0 (20). Descriptive statistics (e.g., means, standard deviations, frequencies, percentages) were computed to characterize the sample and key variables. Inferential statistics, including crosstabs, ANOVAs, chi-square tests, and Pearson correlations, were conducted to examine relationships and differences between variables related to the research questions.

The findings from this quantitative analysis then informed the selection of participants and the specific focus of the follow-up interviews. This process ensured that this phase was built upon and sought to further explain the quantitative findings. The interviews were conducted with survey participants who were previously self-selected to be contacted for an interview. The interviews conducted via Zoom were transcribed. Peer debriefing with a fellow researcher was conducted to provide an external check on the interpretation of themes and minimize researcher bias.

Profile of the Principal Survey Respondents

This profile summarizes the demographic characteristics of the 133 public school principals in Pennsylvania who participated in the survey. A slight majority of the respondents were male, with 74 respondents (55.6%) identifying as male, while 59 respondents (44.4%) identified as female. The largest age group among the respondents was 50–59 years old, accounting for 62 principals (46.6%). Principals aged 40–49 were also a substantial group, with 54 respondents (40.6%). Younger principals (30–39 years old) constituted 12 respondents (9%), and the smallest group was those aged 60 and above, with five respondents (3.8%). The survey sample was overwhelmingly White, with 127 respondents (95.5%) identifying as such. A small percentage identified as African American or Black (four respondents, 3%), and even fewer as Hispanic or Latinx (two respondents, 1.5%). In terms of experience, the largest group of principals had 15 or more years of experience, totaling 45 respondents (33.8%). Those with 5–9 years of experience made up 32 respondents (24.1%), followed closely by those with 1–4 years of experience (27 respondents, 20.3%) and 10–14 years of experience (29 respondents, 21.8%). See Appendix G for additional profile information.

Table 3.1 provides a crosstabulation of respondents by gender and age. Both male and female respondents were most concentrated in the 40–49 and 50–59 age brackets. Among males, 33 (44.6%) were 40–49 and 33 (44.6%) were 50–59. For females, 21 (35.6%) were 40–49 and 29 (49.2%) were 50–59, indicating a slightly older distribution for females within the older categories.

Table 3.1*Crosstabulation of Gender and Age*

Gender	Age				Total
	30 –39	40 – 49	50 – 59	60+	
Male	6 (8.1%)	33 (44.6%)	33 (44.6%)	2 (2.7%)	74 (100%)
Female	6 (10.2%)	21 (35.6%)	29 (49.2%)	3 (5.1%)	59 (100%)
Total	12 (9%)	54 (40.6%)	62 (46.6%)	5 (3.8%)	133 (100%)

$\chi^2= 1.451, \rho = .694$

Table 3.2 provides a crosstabulation of respondents by gender and race/ethnicity. The racial distribution was largely consistent across genders, with White principals making up the vast majority for both male (95.9%) and female (94.9%) respondents. This indicates a significant lack of racial and ethnic diversity within the sample of Pennsylvania public school principals who responded to the survey.

Table 3.2*Crosstabulation of Gender and Race/Ethnicity*

Gender	Race/Ethnicity			Total
	African American or Black	Hispanic or Latinx	White	
Male	1 (1.4%)	2 (2.7%)	71 (95.9%)	74 (100%)
Female	3 (5.1%)	0 (0%)	56 (94.9%)	59 (100%)
Total	4 (3%)	2 (1.5%)	127 (95.5%)	133 (100%)

$\chi^2= 3.120, \rho = .210$

Table 3.3 provides a crosstabulation of respondents by gender and number of years as a principal. The distribution of years of experience was quite similar between genders, with both male and female principals having the highest proportion in the "15+" years category (33.8% for males, 33.9% for females). However, females showed a higher percentage in the 1–4 years category (27.1% vs. 14.9% for males), suggesting a slightly newer entry into the principalship for a segment of female respondents.

Table 3.3

Crosstabulation of Gender and Number of Years as a Principal

Gender	Number of Years as a Principal				Total
	1–4	5–9	10–14	15+	
Male	11 (14.9%)	19 (25.7%)	19 (25.7%)	25 (33.8%)	74 (100.0%)
Female	16 (27.1%)	13 (22.0%)	10 (16.9%)	20 (33.9%)	59 (100.0%)
Total	27 (20.3%)	32 (24.1%)	29 (21.8%)	45 (33.8%)	113 (100.0%)

$$\chi^2 = 3.756, \rho = 0.289$$

Table 3.4 provides a crosstabulation of respondents by age and number of years as a principal. As expected, age strongly correlated with years of experience. Younger principals (30–39) predominantly had fewer years of experience (58.3% had 1–4 years; 41.7% had 5–9 years). Conversely, older principals (50–59 and 60+) comprised those with 15+ years of experience (51.6% of 50–59-year-olds, and 80% of 60+ year olds). The data suggest that a higher percentage of female respondents (27.1%) are in the 1–4 years of experience category compared to males (14.9%), which could indicate a trend of more recent entry into the principalship for female leaders in this sample.

Table 3.4*Crosstabulation of Age and Number of Years as a Principal*

Age	Number of Years as a Principal				Total
	1–4	5–9	10–14	15+	
30 – 39	7 (58.3%)	5 (41.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	12 (100%)
40 – 49	11 (20.4%)	17 (31.5%)	17 (31.5%)	9 (16.7%)	54 (100%)
50 – 59	9 (14.5%)	9 (14.5%)	12 (19.4%)	32 (51.6%)	62 (100%)
60+	0 (0%)	1 (20.00%)	0 (0%)	4 (80%)	5 (100%)
Total	27 (20.3%)	32 (24.1%)	29 (21.8%)	45 (33.8%)	133 (100%)

 $\chi^2 = 39.653, p = <.001$

Table 3.5 provides a crosstabulation of respondents by age and race/ethnicity. The sample's predominant White demographic was consistent across most age groups. Notably, all respondents in the 40–49 age bracket were White (100%). African American or Black respondents were present in the 30–39 (8.3%), 50–59 (3.2%), and 60+ (20%) age groups. Hispanic or Latinx respondents were only found in the 50–59 age group (3.2%).

Table 3.5*Crosstabulation of Age and Race/Ethnicity*

Age	Race/Ethnicity			
	African American or Black	Hispanic or Latinx	White	Total
30 – 39	1 (8.3%)	0 (0%)	11 (91.7%)	12 (100%)
40 – 49	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	54 (100%)	54 (100%)
50 – 59	2 (3.2%)	2 (3.2%)	58 (93.5%)	62 (100%)
60+	1 (20%)	0 (0%)	4 (80%)	5 (100%)
Total	4 (3%)	2 (1.5%)	127 (95.5%)	133 (100%)

$\chi^2 = 10.140, p = .119$

This demographic profile gives a detailed overview of the principal survey respondents, highlighting their gender, age, race/ethnicity, and professional experience, and the interrelationships between them.

Profile of the Principal Interviewees

The demographic data collected from the seven interviewees provide a clear overview of the group. In terms of age, the interviewees were fairly distributed across different age brackets. Two interviewees (28.6%) were in the 30–39 age range, another two (28.6%) were between 40 and 49, and the largest group, comprising three interviewees (42.9%), were aged 50–59. Regarding gender, the group was male, with five male interviewees (71.4%) compared to two female interviewees (28.6%). All seven interviewees (100%) identified as White, indicating a lack of racial diversity within this specific sample.

When looking at the type of school where the interviewees worked, suburban schools were the most represented, with four interviewees (57.1%). Urban schools accounted for two interviewees (28.6%), while only one interviewee (14.3%) worked in a rural school. The number of students in the schools varied. Two interviewees (28.6%) came from schools with 0–499 students, and another two (28.6%) were from schools with 500–999 students. The largest proportion, three interviewees (42.9%), were associated with larger schools hosting 1000 or more students. The grades served by the interviewees' schools also showed diversity. Elementary schools were the most common, represented by four interviewees (57.1%). High schools followed with three interviewees (42.9%), and middle schools were represented by two interviewees (28.6%).

Finally, a sizable portion of the interviewees had moved out of the specific principalship that they were in during the pandemic. Four interviewees (57.1%) indicated that they had moved, while three interviewees (42.9%) had not. One interviewee retired and three are currently serving as principals in different schools. Further demographic information can be found in Appendix H.

Table 3.6*Profile of Interview Respondents*

	Age	Gender	Race	Type of School	Number of Students	Grades Served	Moved Since COVID
Interviewee A	50–59	Male	White	Urban	900	6–8	No
Interviewee B	40–49	Male	White	Urban	800	K–8	Yes
Interviewee C	40–49	Male	White	Suburban	489	K–5	No
Interviewee D	50–59	Male	White	Rural	1100	8–12	Yes
Interviewee E	50–59	Female	White	Suburban	475	K–4	Yes
Interviewee F	30–39	Male	White	Suburban	1600	9–12	No
Interviewee G	30–39	Female	White	Suburban	900	K–6	Yes

Conclusion

This chapter detailed the methodology for investigating school leadership since the COVID–19 pandemic, focusing on changes in the principal's role, longer–term effects, and job satisfaction. An electronic survey was distributed to 2,434 Pennsylvania public school principals, yielding 133 responses (a 5% rate). Quantitative data were cleaned and analyzed using SPSS 29.0.2.0 (20) with descriptive and inferential statistics. The quantitative findings informed the interview phase, involving semi–structured interviews with seven volunteer principals to gather context perspectives on their pandemic experiences, with analysis incorporating peer debriefing for trustworthiness.

Demographic profiles were presented for both samples. The survey respondents (N=133) were White (95.5%), with a balanced gender distribution (55.6% male, 44.4% female), and mostly aged 40–59 (87.2%). The seven interviewees were also 100% White and male (71.4%).

In summary, this chapter provided a methodological framework, including design choices, ethical considerations (IRB approval), and systematic procedures. This rigorous approach ensures the study's findings will offer valuable insights into post–pandemic school leadership, informing principal preparation, district support, and well–being initiatives.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings of this research, addressing the research questions that guided this study on the impact of the COVID–19 pandemic on school leadership. Drawing upon both quantitative survey data and insights from principal interviews, this chapter will reveal how the role of the school leader has shifted, what lasting effects the pandemic has had on their position, and how these experiences have influenced their job satisfaction. Each research question will be explored in detail, integrating survey data with the lived experiences and perceptions of principals, often analyzed through the lenses of gender and years of experience. The aim is to provide an understanding of the "new normal" for school leadership and to lay the groundwork for informed recommendations on preparing and supporting principals for future challenges.

Respondents were asked about the importance of several leadership priorities and their leadership acts in addition to their satisfaction with their job. Two forms of summative scales were constructed from these items. One scale was a count of how many of those items the respondent identified as a priority or an act or an element in their job satisfaction (breadth scales). The other captured the number of items and their intensity (depth scales). Cronbach's α was calculated for all the scales. The items and the statistical characteristics of the scales are included in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1

Items and Statistical Characteristics of Scales

	Pre COVID						Post COVID					
	Breadth			Depth			Breadth			Depth		
	Alpha	Mean	St Dev	Alpha	Mean	St Dev	Alpha	Mean	St Dev	Alpha	Mean	St Dev
Leadership Priorities	Recognize achievements											
	Establish good communication lines between students and teachers											
	Monitor school practices effectiveness											
	Have strong ideals and beliefs about schooling and communicate these	0.823	3.08	2.696	0.818	37.80	3.751	0.791	7.19	2.681	45.46	3.656
	Inspire and lead new and challenging innovations											
	Have direct involvement in curriculum design											
	Acknowledge and reward individual achievement											

Table 4.1

Continued

	Pre COVID						Post COVID					
	Breadth			Depth			Breadth			Depth		
	Alpha	Mean	St Dev	Alpha	Mean	St Dev	Alpha	Mean	St Dev	Alpha	Mean	St Dev
Leadership Acts	Have knowledge about current curriculum and assessments											
	Demonstrate an awareness of personal aspects of faculty and staff											
	Establish clear goals and maintain focus on them.											
	Involve teachers in decision making and implementation of policies	0.92	3.88	4.01	0.913	50.1	5.604	0.876	6.80	3.781	0.861	53.96
Ensure faculty and staff are aware of current pedagogy and policies												
Limit distractions and influences among teachers												

Table 4.1

Continued

	Pre COVID						Post COVID					
	Breadth			Depth			Breadth			Depth		
	Alpha	Mean	St Dev	Alpha	Mean	St Dev	Alpha	Mean	St Dev	Alpha	Mean	St Dev
Willingly change the status quo												
Provide materials, resources, and professional development opportunities												
Foster a sense of community												
Adapt leadership behaviors to current needs												
Establish a set of operating procedures and policies												
Advocate and speak for the school to all stakeholders												
Be aware of system undercurrents and use this information to address school issues												

Table 4.1

Continued

	Pre COVID						Post COVID					
	Breadth			Depth			Breadth			Depth		
	Alpha	Mean	St Dev	Alpha	Mean	St Dev	Alpha	Mean	St Dev	Alpha	Mean	St Dev
Job Satisfaction	I am not generally satisfied with being the principal at this school.											
	I am not generally satisfied with being a principal.											
	If I could get a higher paying job, I'd still stay.											
	I do not think about transferring to another school.						0.713	2.37	2.002	0.849	32.07	7.438
	I do not have as much enthusiasm now as I did when I began this job.											
	I do not think about just staying home from school because I am just too tired to go.											

Table 4.1

Continued

	Pre COVID						Post COVID					
	Breadth			Depth			Breadth			Depth		
	Alpha	Mean	St Dev	Alpha	Mean	St Dev	Alpha	Mean	St Dev	Alpha	Mean	St Dev
I do not think about transferring out of this school district.												
The COVID pandemic did not affect this job.												
The stress and disappointments involved with being a principal at this school aren't an issue.												

For every scale and for every respondent, a change score was calculated where their pre covid score was subtracted from their post covid score. These scores were then collapsed into 4 categories (below 0, 0, 1–3 points, 4–15 points). A score of below 0 indicates a higher pre score than a post score. A score of 0 indicates no change. Positive scores indicate a higher post score than a pre score. These change scores were used in the analyses below.

Research Question 1: In what ways and to what extent has the role of the school leader changed in response to the COVID pandemic?

Research question one had layered findings, revealing multifaceted changes in the school leader's role. Respondents discussed the rapid timeline of changes in their responsibilities and a dramatic shift in priorities, moving from being primarily instructional leaders to adopting new, critical roles such as crisis managers, social service providers, technology experts, and even politicians. These expanded duties were often in addition to the responsibilities regularly expected of a principal, highlighting a significant broadening and deepening of their professional obligations.

Depth of Changes in Leadership Priorities

The data on the depth of changes in leadership priorities reveal a substantial overhaul for school leaders. Overall, nearly 60% (59.4%) reported experiencing shifts in their leadership priorities, with 32.3% noting 1–3 changes and 27.1% indicating 4–15 more extensive alterations. Only 28.6% reported no change, while a small segment (12.0%) even saw a decrease in priority areas. This aligns with the qualitative findings that principals fundamentally re-evaluated their focus; for instance, Interviewee A

explicitly stated that their daily tasks shifted from education to "handling the responsibilities of crisis management."

When examined by gender, female leaders underwent a greater re-evaluation of their priorities, with 42.4% reporting 1–3 changes compared to 24.3% of male leaders. Correspondingly, a smaller proportion of female leaders (20.3%) reported no changes compared to male leaders (35.1%). While numerical differences suggested female leaders might have experienced more profound shifts in leadership priorities (42.4% reporting 1–3 changes compared to 24.3% of male leaders), the statistical analysis ($\chi^2=5.931$, $\rho=0.115$) indicated these differences were not statistically significant. Therefore, despite an observable trend, we cannot definitively conclude that gender played a statistically significant role in determining the *depth* of changes in leadership priorities based solely on this data.

Table 4.2

Crosstabulation Gender and Depth of Changes in Leadership Priorities

Depth of Changes in Leadership Priorities	Gender		
	Female	Male	Total
Below 0	7 (11.9%)	9 (12.2%)	16 (12.0%)
0	12 (20.3%)	26 (35.1%)	38 (28.6%)
1 – 3	25 (42.4%)	18 (24.3%)	43 (32.3%)
4 – 15	15 (25.4%)	21 (28.4%)	36 (27.1%)
Total	59 (100.0%)	74 (100.0%)	133 (100.0%)

$\chi^2= 5.931, \rho = 0.115$

The relationship between a principal's number of years in the role and the depth of changes in their leadership priorities also had a pervasive impact. Across all experience levels, the consistent overall finding of 59.4% experiencing priority shifts holds true. While there were minor variations in percentages across experience categories (e.g., 1–4 years had 40.7% reporting no change, while 5–9 years had 18.8% reporting a decrease), the statistical analysis ($\chi^2=0.229$, $p=0.642$) demonstrates that these observed differences are not statistically significant. This robustly supports the qualitative theme that the "immediate shift in role responsibilities led to a need for strategy, innovation, and the ability to lead without clear guidance or expectations" for all, regardless of tenure. Interviewee G explicitly noted that this applied to "both novice and experienced school leaders," reinforcing that the need to adapt priorities was a universal challenge.

Table 4.3*Crosstabulation Years as Principal and the Depth of Changes in Leadership Priorities*

Depth of Changes in Leadership Priorities	Number of Years as a Principal Category				Total
	1–4	5–9	10–14	15+	
	Below 0	2 (7.4%)	6 (18.8%)	3 (10.3%)	
0	11 (40.7%)	6 (18.8%)	11 (37.9%)	10 (22.2%)	38 (28.6%)
1 – 3	7 (25.9%)	11 (34.4%)	8 (27.6%)	17 (37.8%)	43 (32.3%)
4 – 15	7 (25.9%)	9 (28.1%)	7 (24.1%)	13 (28.9%)	36 (27.1%)
Total	27 (100.0%)	32 (100.0%)	29 (100.0%)	45 (100.0%)	133 (100.0%)

$\chi^2 = .229, p = .642$

Depth of Changes in Leadership Acts

The data on the depth of changes in leadership acts further illustrate the profound operational transformation principals underwent. Overall, a substantial majority of school leaders (62.4%) reported changes in their day-to-day actions, with 21.8% experiencing 1–3 changes and a considerable 40.6% undergoing 4–15 more extensive modifications. Only 29.3% reported no changes. These widespread changes are vividly supported by interview data describing the rapid creation of new operational systems. Interviewee B detailed how principals had to "quickly figure out how to operationalize the delivery of food, Chromebooks, hot spots, and textbooks" and create "schedules for families to pick up materials outside of the school."

When examining gender differences in the depth of these acts, a pattern emerges—female leaders appear to have experienced a greater depth of changes compared to their

male counterparts. A striking 50.8% of female leaders reported 4–15 changes in their acts, significantly higher than the 32.4% of male leaders in this category. Conversely, a smaller proportion of female leaders (18.6%) reported no changes compared to male leaders (37.8%). The chi-square test result ($\chi^2=7.433$, $p=.059$) indicates that while the p -value is just above the conventional significance threshold of 0.05, it approaches statistical significance. This suggests that female school leaders were more likely to implement a wider and deeper array of new or modified actions in their roles during the pandemic.

Table 4.4

Crosstabulation Gender and Depth of Changes in Leadership Acts

Depth of Changes in Leadership Acts	Gender		
	Female	Male	Total
Below 0	6 (10.2%)	5 (6.8%)	11 (8.3%)
0	11 (18.6%)	28 (37.8%)	39 (29.3%)
1 – 3	12 (20.3%)	17 (23.0%)	29 (21.8%)
4 – 15	30 (50.8%)	24 (32.4%)	54 (40.6%)
Total	59 (100.0%)	74 (100.0%)	133 (100.0%)

$\chi^2= 7.433$, $p = .059$

Similarly, the analysis of years as principal and the depth of changes in leadership acts shows that the need for practical adaptation was pervasive across all experience levels. While 62.4% of all leaders reported changes in their acts, and some variations exist (e.g., principals with 1–4 years and 15+ years showed higher percentages in the 4–15 changes category at 51.9% and 51.1% respectively), the statistical analysis ($\chi^2=0.248$,

$p=0.513$) indicates that these differences are not statistically significant. This reinforces the qualitative finding that the intensity of adapting to new operational demands affected everyone. As Interviewee B memorably articulated, principals were "not only build[ing] the plane as we're flying it, but really invent[ing] the plane in midair," a challenge that was universal and not alleviated by years of experience.

Table 4.5

Crosstabulation Years as Principal and Depth of Changes in Leadership Acts

Depth of Changes in Leadership Acts	Number of Years as a Principal Category				
	1–4	5–9	10–14	15+	Total
Below 0	2 (7.4%)	3 (9.4%)	4 (13.8%)	6 (13.3%)	15 (11.3%)
0	9 (33.3%)	7 (21.9%)	9 (31.0%)	6 (13.3%)	31 (23.3%)
1 – 3	2 (7.4%)	6 (18.8%)	6 (20.7%)	10 (22.2%)	24 (18.0%)
4 – 15	14 (51.9%)	16 (50.0%)	10 (34.5%)	23 (51.1%)	63 (47.4%)
Total	27 (100.0%)	32 (100.0%)	29 (100.0%)	45 (100.0%)	133 (100.0%)

$\chi^2 = .248, p = .513$

Breadth of Changes in Leadership Acts

The data on the breadth of changes in leadership acts highlight the extensive expansion of the school leader's role into entirely new domains. Overall, a substantial majority of school leaders (65.4%) reported changes in the breadth of their acts, indicating a significant redefinition of their responsibilities. This includes 18.0% who experienced 1–3 changes and a large 47.4% who underwent 4–15 extensive modifications. Only 23.3% reported no change. This quantitative expansion is strongly

supported by interview data detailing new roles. Principals explicitly became social service providers, ensuring food security (Interviewee C) and maintaining "safety nets... for the kids that are at risk academically, socially, emotionally" (Interviewee B). Upon reopening, they rapidly became health and safety enforcers, with Interviewee G stating, "My whole focus was based on health and politics," including tasks like contact tracing and reporting to the Department of Health. The role also expanded into providing emotional support to staff, with Interviewee G noting, "I became almost like a therapist and a support to them."

When analyzing the data by gender, a marginally statistically significant pattern emerges; female leaders experienced a greater breadth of changes in their leadership acts compared to their male counterparts ($\chi^2=8.013$, $p=.046$). A 59.3% of female leaders reported 4–15 changes in the breadth of their acts, higher than the 37.8% of male leaders in this category. This marginally statistically significant expansion for female leaders aligns with their qualitative descriptions of taking on the multifaceted challenges. Furthermore, principals transformed into technology experts and virtual instructional leaders. This involved securing access to devices for all students and staff, distributing them (Interviewee F), ensuring adequate internet access (Interviewee D), and developing teachers in online learning platforms (Interviewee D). Interviewee B described how principals had to create and share virtual schedules and teach everyone how to log in. The role even expanded into a political dimension, with Interviewee G detailing how they were "bumped up to a much higher role and responsibility... managing intense debates and differing public opinions."

Table 4.6*Crosstabulation Gender and Breadth of Changes in Leadership Acts*

Breadth of Changes in Leadership Acts	Gender		
	Female	Male	Total
Below 0	7 (11.9%)	8 (10.8%)	15 (11.3%)
0	8 (13.6%)	23 (31.1%)	31 (23.3%)
1 – 3	9 (15.3%)	15 (20.3%)	24 (18.0%)
4 – 15	35 (59.3%)	28 (37.8%)	63 (47.4%)
Total	59 (100.0%)	74 (100.0%)	133 (100.0%)

 $\chi^2= 8.013, \rho = .046$

Finally, the analysis of years as principal and the breadth of changes in leadership acts again reveals a widespread impact regardless of experience. While 62.4% of all leaders reported an expansion in the range of their leadership responsibilities, and some variations exist across experience groups (e.g., 1–4 years showed the highest percentage in the 4–15 changes category at 51.9%), the statistical analysis ($\chi^2=0.249, \rho=0.507$) indicates that these differences are not statistically significant. This confirms that the demand for broadening responsibilities into uncharted territories, whether for experienced leaders or those newer to the role, was a universal consequence of the pandemic.

Table 4.7*Crosstabulation Years as Principal and Breadth of Changes in Leadership Acts*

Breadth of Changes in Leadership Acts	Number of Years as a Principal Category				
	1–4	5–9	10–14	15+	Total
Below 0	2 (7.4%)	2 (6.3%)	3 (10.3%)	4 (8.9%)	11 (8.3%)
0	9 (33.3%)	9 (28.1%)	11 (37.9%)	10 (22.2%)	39 (29.3%)
1 – 3	2 (7.4%)	8 (25.0%)	8 (27.6%)	11 (24.4%)	29 (21.8%)
4 – 15	14 (51.9%)	13 (40.6%)	7 (24.1%)	20 (44.4%)	54 (40.6%)
Total	27 (100.0%)	32 (100.0%)	29 (100.0%)	45 (100.0%)	133 (100.0%)

 $\chi^2=.249, p=.50$

In conclusion, the COVID–19 pandemic reshaped the role of the school leader, demanding widespread and profound transformations across their priorities, and the depth and breadth of their daily operational acts. The quantitative data consistently show a significant overhaul, with most leaders reporting shifts in their priorities and extensive changes in how and what they managed. While the imperative to adapt was universal, a nuanced and statistically significant finding emerged regarding gender: female school leaders were more likely to expand the overall scope of their responsibilities and implement a wider array of new actions compared to their male counterparts. Conversely, the analysis consistently showed that a principal's years of experience did not statistically predict the extent of change they faced, highlighting that the pandemic's disruptive force impacted leaders across all career stages similarly. These quantitative shifts are explained

by qualitative insights, which described principals rapidly transitioning from instructional leaders to multi-faceted crisis managers, social service providers, technology experts, and even politicians, all while navigating unprecedented workloads and blurred professional boundaries. The role of the school leader transformed into a more expansive, dynamic, and intensely demanding position, with implications for female leaders.

Research Question 2: What are principals' perceptions of the lasting effect of the pandemic experience on school leadership?

This section presents findings related to principals' perceptions of the lasting effect of the pandemic experience on school leadership. Principals perceive these longer-term effects as multifaceted, impacting areas from student attendance and well-being to the very nature of schooling and the preparedness required of leaders. The results of a survey asking respondents to identify the current percentage of time spent on various tasks, alongside follow-up interview responses, offer insights into leadership after the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis for Research Question 2 will be framed by gender and years of experience as a principal.

Other categories, such as responses analyzed by race/ethnicity and the age of the principal, are not included in this detailed analysis. The race/ethnicity demographic information revealed that 95.5% of respondents were White, precluding a robust analysis with fidelity due to insufficient diversity in other racial/ethnic groups. Age was also excluded from this analysis because its results mirrored those of "number of years as a principal," but no statistically significant associations were revealed when analyzed by age.

Student Issues Including Discipline and Academic Guidance

Table 4.8 indicates differences in how men and women currently allocate their time to student issues. For example, 54.1% of men spend 1–25% of their time on student issues, while only 32.2% of women fall into this lower time commitment bracket. Conversely, as the time commitment increases, the trend shifts: women are more represented in the higher categories, with 44.1% spending 26–50% of their time and 6.8% spending 76% or more of their time, compared to 29.7% and 1.4% for men, respectively. Even without pre-pandemic figures, these disparities in *perceived* time allocation indicate that women are currently dedicating a higher proportion of their time to student issues, particularly in more intensive capacities, compared to men. While the chi-squared value ($\chi^2=9.324$, $p=0.056$) does not reach conventional statistical significance, the percentage differences suggests that men and women may differ in how they allocate their time to student matters.

Table 4.8

Crosstabulation of Gender and Current Percentage of Time Spent on Student Issues Including Discipline and Academic Guidance

Gender	Current Percentage of Time Spent on Student Issues Including Discipline and Academic Guidance					Total
	0%	1–25%	26–50%	51–75%	76%+	
Male	0 (0%)	40 (54.1%)	22 (29.7%)	11 (14.9%)	1 (1.4%)	74 (100%)
Female	1 (1.7%)	19 (32.2%)	26 (44.1%)	9 (15.3%)	4 (6.8%)	59 (100%)
Total	1 (0.8%)	59 (44.4%)	48 (36.1%)	20 (15%)	5 (3.8%)	133 (100%)

$\chi^2= 9.324$, $p = 0.056$

The data also indicate variations in time allocation for student issues based on a principal's experience. Newer principals (1–4 years) show the highest concentration in the 26–50% time bracket (51.9%), suggesting a significant early focus on student matters. As experience increases, principals with 5–9 and 10–14 years tend to spend more time in the 1–25% range (50% and 62.1% respectively), while still having a notable presence in the 26–50% bracket. Principals with 15+ years of experience are fairly balanced between 1–25% (40%) and 26–50% (42.2%), but notably, none spend 76% or higher. The chi-squared values of $\chi^2=15.838$ and $p=0.199$ indicate no statistically significant association between the number of years as a principal and the percentage of time spent on student issues.

Table 4.9

Crosstabulation of Number of Years as Principal and Current Percentage of Time Spent on Student Issues Including Discipline and Academic Guidance

Number of Years as Principal	Current Percentage of Time Spent on Student Issues					Total
	0%	1–25%	26–50%	51–75%	76% +	
1–4	0 (0%)	7 (25.9%)	14 (51.9%)	5 (18.5%)	1 (3.7%)	27 (100%)
5–9	0 (0%)	16 (50%)	8 (25%)	6 (18.8%)	2 (6.3%)	32 (100%)
10–14	0 (0%)	18 (62.1%)	7 (24.1%)	2 (6.9%)	2 (6.9%)	29 (100%)
15+	1 (2.2%)	18 (40%)	19 (42.2%)	7 (15.6%)	0 (0%)	45 (100%)
Total	1 (0.8%)	59 (44.4%)	48 (36.1%)	20 (15%)	5 (3.8%)	133 (100%)

$\chi^2= 15.838, p = 0.199$

The interviews allow speculation into what some of the student issues could be. One of the most common responses that interviewees shared about the longer-term effects of the pandemic was its impact on student attendance issues. There has been a significant increase in chronic absenteeism (Interviewee A). Interviewee B echoed this, emphasizing the erosion of a societal norm, stating "Attendance...There was a norm... There was a value, like an American ideal, compulsory education...COVID ate away at that value" (Interviewee B). This has led to a lower average daily attendance. What once was on average 95% attendance; it is now around 85%" (Interviewee B).

Interview responses provided additional insight into another area of student issues. The pandemic brought the need for developing the whole child to a sharper focus, both academically and emotionally. There was a greater emphasis placed on well-being. The social-emotional impact was particularly evident on younger learners (Interviewee E, C). But it was not just the younger students. There are still long-term effects on the mental health of both students and staff (Interviewee F).

School Administrative Tasks

The difference between men and women regarding current amount of time spent on school administrative tasks is particularly stark and statistically significant, allowing a rejection of the null hypothesis. Most men (52.7%) spend a low amount of time (1–25%) on administrative tasks, whereas a significantly smaller proportion of women (28.8%) are in this same low-commitment category. As we move to higher percentages, the pattern reverses: women are much more likely to be found in the 51–75% bracket (32.2% of women vs. 10.8% of men), and women are the only ones reporting time in the 76%+ category (3.4%). This strongly indicates that, at present, women are bearing a

disproportionately higher burden of administrative tasks, especially those requiring more considerable time commitment, compared to men.

Table 4.10

Crosstabulation of Gender and Current Percentage of Time Spent on School

Administrative Tasks (e.g., HR/Personnel Issues, Regulations, Reports, Budgets)

Gender	Current Percentage of Time Spent on School Administrative Tasks				
	1–25%	26–50%	51–75%	76%+	Total
Male	39 (52.7%)	27 (36.5%)	8 (10.8%)	0 (0%)	74 (100%)
Female	17 (28.8%)	21 (35.6%)	19 (32.2%)	2 (3.4%)	59 (100%)
Total	56 (42.1%)	48 (36.1%)	27 (20.3%)	2 (1.5%)	133 (100%)

$\chi^2= 14.365, \rho = 0.002$

Principals generally allocate a substantial portion of their time to administrative tasks, with the majority falling into the 1–25% and 26–50% categories across all experience levels. Those with 10–14 years of experience show the highest percentage (55.2%) in the 1–25% range, suggesting they might be more efficient or have more delegated responsibilities. Principals with 5–9 years of experience show the highest concentration (43.8%) in the 26–50% bracket. While most principals spend up to 75% of their time on administrative tasks, only those with 15+ years of experience show any allocation in the 76% and higher category (4.4%). The chi-squared value of $\chi^2=7.864$ and $\rho=0.548$ suggest no statistically significant association between the number of years as a principal and the percentage of time spent on administrative tasks.

Table 4.11

Crosstabulation of Number of Years as Principal and Current Percentage of Time Spent on School Administrative Tasks (e.g., HR/Personnel Issues, Regulations, Reports, Budgets)

Number of Years as Principal Category	Current Percentage of Time Spent on School Administrative Tasks				
	1–25%	26–50%	51–75%	76% +	Total
1–4	11 (40.7%)	11 (40.7%)	5 (18.5%)	0 (0%)	27 (100%)
5–9	11 (34.4%)	14 (43.8%)	7 (21.9%)	0 (0%)	32 (100%)
10–14	16 (55.2%)	9 (31%)	4 (13.8%)	0 (0%)	29 (100%)
15+	18 (40%)	14 (31.1%)	11 (24.4%)	2 (4.4%)	45 (100%)
Total	56 (42.1%)	48 (36.1%)	27 (20.3%)	2 (1.5%)	133 (100%)

$\chi^2 = 7.864, \rho = 0.548$

One area of administrative tasks that came up during the interviews is the critical need for better preparedness for various crises. Preparation includes the creation of multiple contingency plans (Interviewee D, E), ensuring technology is current and staff are properly trained to use that technology (Interviewee F), the integration of pandemic-related scenarios into crisis management protocols (Interviewee G), and improved principal preparation in communication, instruction, and systemic readiness (Interviewee A). Interviewee A specifically called for improved principal preparation in areas like "how to really effectively communicate," "how to really recognize effective instruction," and having "virtual schedules ready." Interviewee B strongly advocated for preparation programs to teach principals "how to create enduring systems... So, it doesn't matter what

the crisis is or what the situation is" (Interviewee B). And Interviewee C described a need for broader preparation addressing diverse student and family challenges (Interviewee C).

Another area of administrative tasks that arose in the interviews had to do with staffing. Staffing has now become even more difficult, as teachers left the profession or left the school during and after COVID (Interviewee E, F). For those that stayed, there were concerns about attendance. Interviewee F pointed to ongoing issues with "...staff not attending or coming late" (Interviewee F).

Curriculum and Instruction–Related Tasks

As indicated in Table 4.12 while there was no statistical significance between men and women, the percentage differences still highlight perceptions of time allocation. However, considering percentage differences within the table, a majority of men (77.0%) spend 1–25% of their time on curriculum and instruction, while a smaller proportion of women (59.3%) are in this lowest category. Conversely, in the higher time commitment brackets, women show a greater presence (28.8% for 26–50%, 6.8% for 51–75%, and 3.4% for 76%+) than men (20.3% for 26–50%, 2.7% for 51–75%, and 0% for 76%+). This suggests that women are currently more likely to dedicate a larger percentage of their time to direct instructional and curriculum–related activities than men.

Table 4.12

Crosstabulation of Gender and Current Percentage of Time Spent on Curriculum and Instruction–Related Tasks (e.g., Teaching, Lesson Prep, Classroom Observations, Mentoring)

Gender	Current Percentage of Time Spent on Curriculum and Instruction–Related Tasks					
	0%	1–25%	26–50%	51–75%	76%+	Total
Male	0 (0%)	57 (77.0%)	15 (20.3%)	2 (2.7%)	0 (0%)	74 (100%)
Female	1 (1.7%)	35 (59.3%)	17 (28.8%)	4 (6.8%)	2 (3.4%)	59 (100%)
Total	1 (0.8%)	92 (69.2%)	32 (24.1%)	6 (4.5%)	2 (1.5%)	133 (100%)

$\chi^2=7.46, \rho=0.114$

As shown in Table 4.13, most principals across all experience levels spend 1–25% of their time on curriculum and instruction–related tasks. This is most prominent for principals with 1–4 years and 10–14 years of experience, with 74.1% and 75.9% respectively in this category. Principals with 5–9 years of experience show a slightly lower percentage in the 1–25% range (59.4%) but a higher percentage (31.3%) in the 26–50% range compared to other groups. A small fraction of principals, regardless of experience, dedicate more than 50% of their time to these tasks. The chi–squared values of $\chi^2=8.053$ and $\rho=0.781$ indicate no statistically significant association between the number of years as a principal and the percentage of time spent on curriculum and instruction–related tasks.

Table 4.13

Crosstabulation of Number of Years as Principal and Current Percentage of Time Spent on Curriculum and Instruction–Related Tasks (e.g., Teaching, Lesson Prep, Classroom Observations, Mentoring)

Number of Years as Principal	Current Percentage of Time Spent on Curriculum and Instruction–Related Tasks					Total
	0%	1–25%	26–50%	51–75%	76%+	
1–4	0 (0%)	20 (74.1%)	6 (22.2%)	1 (3.7%)	0 (0%)	27 (100%)
5–9	0 (0%)	19 (59.4%)	10 (31.3%)	3 (9.4%)	0 (0%)	32 (100%)
10–14	0 (0%)	22 (75.9%)	5 (17.2%)	1 (3.4%)	1 (3.4%)	29 (100%)
15+	1 (2.2%)	31 (68.9%)	11 (24.4%)	1 (2.2%)	1 (2.2%)	45 (100%)
Total	1 (0.8%)	92 (69.2%)	32 (24.1%)	6 (4.5%)	2 (1.5%)	133 (100%)

$\chi^2 = 8.053, p = 0.781$

Interviews provided greater insight into how leaders have shifted their perceptions too, citing a need for greater flexibility in educational practices (Interviewee F) and increased collaboration and teamwork (Interviewee C). Interviewee C also suggested a potential positive shift in "rethinking standardized measures," hoping for a greater realization that schools are responsible for "all the other things that go on in life." There is also concern about "learning deficits in formative years" due to the pandemic (Interviewee D).

District Activities

When examining the current percentage of time spent on district activities, the p-value does not allow for the rejection of the null hypothesis. However, there are

percentages of note in Table 4.14. A higher percentage of men (83.8%) spend 1–25% of their time on district activities compared to women (71.2%). Although not statistically significant, this disparity suggests that men are currently more likely to have a lower time commitment to district–level activities. Conversely, women are observed in the higher categories where men are absent or less represented, such as the 51–75% bracket (11.9% for women vs. 0% for men). This indicates that there could be a behavioral difference where women are currently more engaged in or assigned to district activities that demand more time.

Table 4.14

Crosstabulation of Gender and Current Percentage of Time Spent on District Activities (e.g., Meetings, Reports, etc.)

Gender	Current Percentage of Time Spent on District Activities				Total
	1–25%	26–50%	51–75%	76%+	
Male	62 (83.8%)	11 (14.9%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.4%)	74 (100%)
Female	42 (71.2%)	9 (15.3%)	7 (11.9%)	1 (1.7%)	59 (100%)
Total	104 (78.2%)	20 (15%)	7 (5.3%)	2 (1.5%)	133 (100%)

$\chi^2=9.475, \rho=0.24$

As shown in Table 4.15, principals, regardless of their years of experience, consistently spend the largest proportion of their time (primarily 75% to 80%) on district activities within the 1–25% range. This indicates that district–level responsibilities are a universal, yet generally contained, aspect of the principal's role. A smaller, consistent percentage (around 12–20%) across all experience levels dedicates 26–50% of their time to these activities. Very few principals, across any experience category, spend more than 50% of their time on district activities. The chi–squared value ($\chi^2=4.213$) and p–value

($p=0.897$) suggests no statistically significant association between the number of years as a principal and the percentage of time spent on district activities.

Table 4.15

Crosstabulation of Number of Years as Principal and Current Percentage of Time Spent on District Activities (e.g., Meetings, Reports, etc.)

Number of Years as Principal Category	Current Percentage of Time Spent on District Activities				Total
	1–25%	26–50%	51–75%	76%+	
1–4	21 (77.8%)	4 (14.8%)	1 (3.7%)	1 (3.7%)	27 (100%)
5–9	25 (78.1%)	4 (12.5%)	3 (9.4%)	0 (0%)	32 (100%)
10–14	22 (75.9%)	6 (20.7%)	1 (3.4%)	0 (0%)	29 (100%)
15+	36 (80%)	6 (13.3%)	2 (4.4%)	1 (2.2%)	45 (100%)
Total	104 (78.2%)	20 (15%)	7 (5.3%)	2 (1.5%)	133 (100%)

$\chi^2= 4.213, \rho = 0.897$

The interview results allow for speculation about changes in district expectations. The pandemic has blurred the boundaries of a principal's availability and amplified their workload. These increased expectations have led to a feeling that there needs to be around-the-clock availability. "The thing that stressed me out the most is I feel like COVID opened the door to principals being available 24 hours a day... Even if I went seven to five within the hours. The amount of expectation around principals because we did everything during COVID, they expected that we could come back and still do everything" (Interviewee A).

Parent Programming and Interactions

Table 4.16 shows a perceptions of time allocation difference even without pre-pandemic data. While a large majority of both genders spend 1–25% of their time here, men are slightly more concentrated in this lowest category (85.1%) than women (78.0%). More strikingly, women are present in the 51–75% category (5.1%) while men are not (0%). This indicates that currently, a segment of women is dedicating a significantly higher percentage of their time to parent programming and interactions than any men in the sample.

Table 4.16

Crosstabulation of Gender and Current Percentage of Time Spent on Parent

Programming and Interactions

Gender	Current Percentage of Time Spent on Parent Programming and Interactions				
	0%	1–25%	26–50%	51–75%	Total
Male	1 (1.4%)	63 (85.1%)	10 (13.5%)	0 (0%)	74 (100%)
Female	1 (1.7%)	46 (78%)	9 (15.3%)	3 (5.1%)	59 (100%)
Total	2 (1.5%)	109 (82%)	19 (14.3%)	3 (2.3%)	133 (100%)

$\chi^2= 4.064, \rho = 0.255$

While not statistically significant, percentage differences merit consideration, as shown in Table 4.17, principals spend 1–25% of their time on parent programming and interactions. Principals with 10–14 years of experience stand out with the highest percentage (93.1%) in this category, suggesting a highly efficient or focused approach to parent interactions. Newer principals (1–4 years) show a higher proportion (33.3%) in the 26–50% range, indicating a potentially more hands-on involvement with parent programming early in their career. While most categories show a small or zero

percentage for 0% and 51–75% time spent, principals with 15+ years show a notable 6.7% in the 51–75% range. The chi-squared value of $\chi^2=17.610$ and $\rho=0.04$ indicates a statistically significant association between the number of years as a principal and the percentage of time spent on parent programming and interactions, suggesting that experience might influence this time allocation.

Table 4.17

Crosstabulation of Number of Years as Principal and Current Percentage of Time Spent on Parent Programming and Interactions

Number of Years as Principal Category	Current Percentage of Time Spent on Parent Programming and Interactions				
	0%	1–25%	26–50%	51–75%	Total
1–4	0 (0%)	18 (66.7%)	9 (33.3%)	0 (0%)	27 (100%)
5–9	1 (3.1%)	27 (84.4%)	4 (12.5%)	0 (0%)	32 (100%)
10–14	0 (0%)	27 (93.1%)	2 (6.9%)	0 (0%)	29 (100%)
15+	1 (2.2%)	37 (82.2%)	4 (8.9%)	3 (6.7%)	45 (100%)
Total	2 (1.5%)	109 (82%)	19 (14.3%)	3 (2.3%)	133 (100%)

$\chi^2= 17.610, \rho = 0.04$

One of the speculated longer-term impacts has been a shift in how some parents view the role of school. Interviewee A stated, "One of the negatives of COVID is of I think parents feel like school is a correspondence school and they don't recognize that being in front of a teacher is the most important thing." Interviewee C suggested the pandemic raised "questions kind of that are a little bit bigger than was it really the pandemic or is this a cultural shift or did it have a cultural shift because of the pandemic").

The shift is also seen in general awareness about health and safety among parents (Interviewee E). This includes a change in how parents respond when their children are ill. For example, asking about return-to-school protocols for common illnesses like the flu in a way that suggests lingering anxieties from the pandemic (Interviewee D). This shift has also revealed parental reluctance and anxiety related to school policies and increased community distrust of the school system (Interviewee D, G). Interviewee G highlighted "some distrust of the school system from community" that was brought to the surface by differing political views during the pandemic (Interviewee G).

Technology Issues

Table 4.18 shows the least difference between genders. The percentages for men and women are quite similar across all time commitment categories (e.g., 73.0% of men vs. 74.6% of women spend 1–25% of their time). This indicates that, currently, men and women are behaving quite similarly in terms of the time they dedicate to technology issues.

Table 4.18

Crosstabulation of Gender and Current Percentage of Time Spent on Technology (Hardware and Software) Issues

Gender	Current Percentage of Time Spent on Technology Issues				
	0%	1–25%	26–50%	51–75%	Total
Male	18 (24.3%)	54 (73%)	2 (2.7%)	0 (0%)	74 (100%)
Female	11 (18.6%)	44 (74.6%)	3 (5.1%)	1 (1.7%)	59 (100%)
Total	29 (21.8%)	98 (73.7%)	5 (3.8%)	1 (0.8%)	133 (100%)

$\chi^2 = 2.247, p = 0.523$

As shown in Table 4.19, the majority of principals across all experience levels spend 1–25% of their time on tech issues, highlighting that this is a common, but low–percentage, aspect of their role. Principals with 15+ years of experience show the highest concentration in this category (82.2%). Conversely, principals in the 1–4–, 5–9–, and 10–14–year categories show higher percentages (ranging from 24.1% to 28.1%) for spending 0% of their time on tech issues, potentially indicating delegation or less direct involvement. Very few principals spend more than 25% of their time on tech issues, with only a single principal in the 10–14–year category spending 51–75%. The chi–squared value of $\chi^2=8.615$ and $\rho=0.474$ suggests no statistically significant association between the number of years as a principal and the percentage of time spent on tech issues.

Table 4.19

Crosstabulation of Number of Years as Principal and Current Percentage of Time Spent on Tech (Hardware and Software) Issues

Number of Years as Principal Category	Current Percentage of Time Spent on Tech Issues				
	0%	1–25%	26–50%	51–75%	Total
1–4	7 (25.9%)	20 (74.1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	27 (100%)
5–9	9 (28.1%)	22 (68.8%)	1 (3.1%)	0 (0%)	32 (100%)
10–14	7 (24.1%)	19 (65.5%)	2 (6.9%)	1 (3.4%)	29 (100%)
15+	6 (13.3%)	37 (82.2%)	2 (4.4%)	0 (0%)	45 (100%)
Total	29 (21.8%)	98 (73.7%)	5 (3.8%)	1 (0.8%)	133 (100%)

$\chi^2= 8.615, \rho = 0.474$

There is no question that COVID–19 and the shift to virtual schooling has had a long–lasting impact on how the educational system embraces technology. Most of the

interviewees cited positive longer-term effects like the ability to hold virtual meetings, virtual snow days, the implementation of learning management systems, and a general recognition of the importance of technology (Interviewee A, D). Of course, this comes with a fear that there could be, or already is, an overuse of or reliance on technology, which does not replace quality teaching (Interviewee A). Interviewee G echoed this concern and stated that there is an ongoing need to balance "...where the technology comes in and where we revert back to previous practices of in-person teaching and learning" (Interviewee G).

Other Tasks

Due to the small sample size for this category (total 18 respondents), it is difficult to draw strong conclusions, but even here, we can observe differences in behavior. While 61.5% of men and 80% of women spend 0% on "other tasks," men show a slightly higher presence in the 1–25% and 26–50% categories. However, the limited data make it hard to assert a strong perceptions of time allocation difference. Write in "other" tasks included communication (newsletters, social media), IEP meetings, school development, specific student support due to behavior, stakeholder involvement and communication (speculated to mean community partnerships) and supervision in cafe or playground.

Conclusion

Principals' perceptions reveal that the COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped school leadership in profound and lasting ways, influencing everything from daily time allocation to systemic preparedness and community engagement. While the data primarily illustrates current time commitments rather than direct pre- and post-pandemic comparisons, it highlights significant shifts and ongoing challenges. The analysis, framed

by gender and years of experience as a principal, uncovers notable differences in how leaders navigate these new demands.

A striking finding is the disparate burden on women principals. Women dedicate a significantly higher proportion of their time to both student issues (e.g., 44.1% spending 26–50% vs. 29.7% for men) and, particularly, administrative tasks, where a statistically significant difference emerged. For instance, 32.2% of women spend 51–75% of their time on administrative duties, compared to just 10.8% of men, with women being the sole group reporting over 76%–time commitment. While not statistically significant, women also spend more time on curriculum and instruction–related tasks and district activities in higher time commitment brackets than their male counterparts. This suggests that the multifaceted demands amplified by the pandemic may be disproportionately falling on women leaders.

Experience also plays a role, though less consistently significant across all categories. Newer principals (1–4 years) show a higher initial focus on student issues, spending 51.9% of their time in the 26–50% bracket. However, the most compelling finding regarding experience is the statistically significant association between the number of years as a principal and time spent on parent programming and interactions ($p=0.04$). Principals with 10–14 years of experience are notably concentrated (93.1%) in the 1–25% range for parent interactions, while those with 15+ years show a small but distinct presence (6.7%) in the 51–75% category, implying evolving engagement strategies with parental involvement over time.

Insights from interviews further illuminate these quantitative trends. Principals perceive a lasting impact on student attendance and well–being, with chronic absenteeism

and mental health concerns becoming persistent challenges. The administrative landscape has been redefined by a heightened need for crisis preparedness and coping with staffing difficulties, including teacher attrition and ongoing attendance issues. The pandemic also spurred a significant technological acceleration in schools, broadly viewed as positive for virtual meetings and learning management systems, yet tempered by concerns about over-reliance on technology. Lastly, the school-parent dynamic has undergone a fundamental shift, with some parents now viewing school differently and exhibiting increased anxiety and distrust regarding school policies.

Overall, principals' post-pandemic leadership is characterized by an intensified, complex, and often gender-differentiated workload. The experience has underscored the critical need for systemic adaptability, robust communication, and a holistic approach to student and community needs, altering the landscape of school leadership.

Research Question 3: How has the pandemic experience affected principals' satisfaction with their position?

Principals expressed varying responses to research question three about how the pandemic affected their satisfaction with the position. While all interview respondents experienced increased stress, workload, and frustration, it was to varying degrees. Some were able to describe silver-linings that came out of the pandemic, and some found satisfaction in real time in being able to provide a service during a crisis.

The Pandemic's Direct Impact and Perceived Difficulty

The most direct insight into the pandemic's influence comes from the statement, "The COVID pandemic made this job much harder." The quantitative data unequivocally shows that a significant majority of principals (60.1%, with 30.8% somewhat agreeing

and 29.3% strongly agreeing) affirmed that the COVID pandemic made their job much harder. Principals with 1–4 years (33.3% strongly agree) and 15+ years (35.6% strongly agree) show the highest strong agreement that COVID made the job harder, while principals with 5–9 years have the highest "somewhat agree" (40.6%). Only a small percentage across all groups strongly or somewhat disagreed. However, the $\chi^2=15.366$ with $\rho=0.222$ indicates no statistically significant association between years of experience and this perception.

Table 4.20

Crosstabulation of Number of Years as Principal and the COVID Pandemic Made this Job Much Harder

The COVID pandemic made this job much harder	Number of Years as Principal				Total
	1–4	5–9	10–14	15+	
Strongly disagree	2 (7.4%)	4 (12.5%)	2 (6.9%)	2 (4.4%)	10 (7.5%)
Somewhat disagree	0 (0%)	2 (6.3%)	6 (20.7%)	4 (8.9%)	12 (9%)
Indifferent	10 (37%)	5 (15.6%)	7 (24.1%)	9 (20%)	31 (23.3%)
Somewhat agree	6 (22.2%)	13 (40.6%)	8 (27.6%)	14 (31.1%)	41 (30.8%)
Strongly agree	9 (33.3%)	8 (25%)	6 (20.7%)	16 (35.6%)	39 (29.3%)
Total	27 (100.0%)	32 (100.0%)	29 (100.0%)	45 (100.0%)	133 (100.0%)

$\chi^2= 15.366, \rho = 0.222$

A substantial 60.1% of all principals agree that the COVID pandemic made their jobs much harder. The perception of increased difficulty due to the pandemic is shared fairly equally between female and male principals, with similar percentages across both

genders for strong agreement (27.1% for females, 31.1% for males) and somewhat agreement (32.2% for females, 29.7% for males), suggesting a universal impact of the pandemic on the principal's role. The $\chi^2=5.258$ with $\rho=0.262$ indicates no statistically significant association with gender.

Table 4.21

Crosstabulation of Gender and the COVID Pandemic Made this Job Much Harder

The COVID pandemic made this job much harder	Gender		
	Female	Male	Total
Strongly disagree	3 (5.1%)	7 (9.5%)	10 (7.5%)
Somewhat disagree	3 (5.1%)	9 (12.2%)	12 (9%)
Indifferent	18 (30.5%)	13 (17.6%)	31 (23.3%)
Somewhat agree	19 (32.2%)	22 (29.7%)	41 (30.8%)
Strongly agree	16 (27.1%)	23 (31.1%)	39 (29.3%)
Total	59 (100.0%)	74 (100.0%)	133 (100.0%)

$\chi^2= 5.258, \rho = 0.262$

This quantitative finding is strongly corroborated by the interview data, detailing the multifaceted challenges faced. Interviewees consistently described increased stress and workload as the top negative impact, blurring the lines between work and home. Interviewee A's lament, "I can't go home and feel like I'm at home," powerfully illustrates this loss of work–life balance. Other qualitative accounts highlighted specific burdens, such as the frustration with procedural work and contact tracing (Interviewee A), the emotional toll of distance learning (Interviewee B, C), and being caught in political crossfire (Interviewee G). The sentiment that the job became "too all–encompassing" and

even led to principals choosing to leave the profession (Interviewee A, B) directly supports the quantitative finding of increased job difficulty.

Overall Job Satisfaction

Despite the acknowledged immense increase in job difficulty, the quantitative survey data indicate that principals maintained a high level of overall job satisfaction. A large majority (38.3% somewhat agree; 45.9% strongly agree = 84.2%) are generally satisfied with being principal at *this school*. Satisfaction tends to increase with experience, with 15+ years showing the highest strong agreement (57.8%) and 10–14 years also very high (51.7%). Newer principals (1–4 years) are still highly satisfied (63% somewhat agree, 25.9% strongly agree), but the "strongly agree" percentage is lower than for more experienced groups. The $\chi^2=15.936$ with $p=0.194$ indicates no statistically significant association.

Table 4.22

Crosstabulation of Number of Years as Principal and I am Generally Satisfied with Being the Principal at this School

I am generally satisfied with being the principal at this school	Number of Years as Principal				Total
	1-4	5-9	10-14	15+	
Strongly disagree	0 (0%)	1 (3.1%)	1 (3.4%)	1 (2.2%)	3 (2.3%)
Somewhat disagree	1 (3.7%)	4 (12.5%)	1 (3.4%)	2 (4.4%)	8 (6%)
Indifferent	2 (7.4%)	2 (6.3%)	4 (13.8%)	2 (4.4%)	10 (7.5%)
Somewhat agree	17 (63%)	12 (37.5%)	8 (27.6%)	14 (31.1%)	51 (38.3%)
Strongly agree	7 (25.9%)	13 (40.6%)	15 (51.7%)	26 (57.8%)	61 (45.9%)
Total	27 (100.0%)	32 (100.0%)	29 (100.0%)	45 (100.0%)	133 (100.0%)

$\chi^2 = 15.936, p = 0.194$

A high overall satisfaction rate of 84.2% is observed. Female principals report slightly higher strong agreement with this satisfaction (52.5%) compared to male principals (40.5%). However, male principals are more likely to "somewhat agree" (45.9%) than female principals (28.8%), suggesting that while both genders are largely satisfied, female principals may express a more definitive strong satisfaction with their current school environment. The $\chi^2 = 4.786$ with $p = 0.31$ indicates no statistically significant association.

Table 4.23*Crosstabulation of Gender and I am Generally Satisfied with Being a Principal*

I am generally satisfied with being a principal	Gender		
	Female	Male	Total
Strongly disagree	3 (5.1%)	2 (2.7%)	5 (3.8%)
Somewhat disagree	2 (3.4%)	4 (5.4%)	6 (4.5%)
Indifferent	7 (11.9%)	7 (9.5%)	14 (10.5%)
Somewhat agree	21 (35.6%)	31 (41.9%)	52 (39.1%)
Strongly agree	26 (44.1%)	30 (40.5%)	56 (42.1%)
Total	59 (100.0%)	74 (100.0%)	133 (100.0%)

 $\chi^2 = 1.402, \rho = 0.844$

A significant majority (39.1% somewhat agree; 42.1% strongly agree = 81.2%) are generally satisfied with being a principal *overall*. Satisfaction, particularly "strongly agree," increases with years of experience (55.2% for 10–14 years, 48.9% for 15+ years). Newer principals (1–4 years) show high "somewhat agree" (59.3%) but lower "strongly agree" (22.2%) compared to more experienced peers. The $\chi^2 = 19.920$ with $\rho = 0.069$ indicates no statistically significant association.

Table 4.24

Crosstabulation of Number of Years as Principal and I am Generally Satisfied with Being a Principal

I am generally satisfied with being a Principal	Number of Years as Principal				Total
	1-4	5-9	10-14	15+	
Strongly disagree	0 (0%)	3 (9.4%)	1 (3.4%)	1 (2.2%)	5 (3.8%)
Somewhat disagree	2 (7.4%)	1 (3.1%)	1 (3.4%)	2 (4.4%)	6 (4.5%)
Indifferent	3 (11.1%)	3 (9.4%)	6 (20.7%)	2 (4.4%)	14 (10.5%)
Somewhat agree	16 (59.3%)	13 (40.6%)	5 (17.2%)	18 (40%)	52 (39.1%)
Strongly agree	6 (22.2%)	12 (37.5%)	16 (55.2%)	22 (48.9%)	56 (42.1%)
Total	27 (100.0%)	32 (100.0%)	29 (100.0%)	45 (100.0%)	133 (100.0%)

$\chi^2 = 19.920, p = 0.069$

Like the previous table, 81.2% of all principals express satisfaction. Female principals again show a slightly higher percentage of strong agreement (44.1%) compared to male principals (40.5%), while male principals are somewhat more inclined to "somewhat agree" (41.9% vs. 35.6% for females). The general trend indicates high satisfaction for both genders with the principalship as a profession. The $\chi^2 = 1.402$ with $p = 0.844$ indicates no statistically significant association.

Table 4.25

Crosstabulation of Gender and I am Generally Satisfied with Being the Principal at this School

I am generally satisfied with being the principal at this school	Gender		
	Female	Male	Total
Strongly disagree	1 (1.7%)	2 (2.7%)	3 (2.3%)
Somewhat disagree	4 (6.8%)	4 (5.4%)	8 (6%)
Indifferent	6 (10.2%)	4 (5.4%)	10 (7.5%)
Somewhat agree	17 (28.8%)	34 (45.9%)	51 (38.3%)
Strongly agree	31 (52.5%)	30 (40.5%)	61 (45.9%)
Total	59 (100.0%)	74 (100.0%)	133 (100.0%)

$\chi^2 = 4.786, \rho = 0.31$

This quantitative finding of largely maintained high satisfaction is strongly supported by the interview data, particularly the theme of "No Fundamental Change in Overall Satisfaction." Several principals explicitly stated their satisfaction remained steadfast despite the "nightmare" of the pandemic. Interviewee D remarked, "I don't think it's really changed my satisfaction. The pandemic, to be honest with you, was just like it was a nightmare for everybody involved in schools." Similarly, Interviewee B affirmed, "I love being a school leader. I've always been satisfied with the position. I was then. I was before COVID-19. I was during COVID-19. I am now." This sustained satisfaction was often attributed to personal resilience, perseverance, and strong coping mechanisms,

such as collaborating with teams (Interviewee C) or engaging in personal self-care (Interviewee D).

Stress, Enthusiasm, and Fatigue

The data provide a more nuanced picture when examining specific indicators of well-being, where the pandemic's impact, particularly on gender, becomes more apparent. A majority (61.7%) disagree that the stress is not worth it, suggesting they find the position worthwhile despite challenges. Newer principals (1–4 years) show a higher "somewhat agree" (33.3%), indicating earlier career principals might feel the stress is not worth it, while experienced principals tend to strongly disagree more. However, the $\chi^2=13.418$ with $p=0.339$ indicates no statistically significant association with years of experience.

Table 4.26*Crosstabulation of Number of Years as Principal and the Stress and Disappointments**Involved with Being a Principal at this School Aren't Really Worth It*

The stress and disappointments involved with being a principal at this school aren't really worth it	Number of Years as Principal				Total
	1-4	5-9	10-14	15+	
Strongly disagree	7 (25.9%)	12 (37.5%)	13 (44.8%)	16 (35.6%)	48 (36.1%)
Somewhat disagree	7 (25.9%)	7 (21.9%)	6 (20.7%)	14 (31.1%)	34 (25.6%)
Indifferent	3 (11.1%)	5 (15.6%)	6 (20.7%)	8 (17.8%)	22 (16.5%)
Somewhat agree	9 (33.3%)	7 (21.9%)	3 (10.3%)	3 (6.7%)	22 (16.5%)
Strongly agree	1 (3.7%)	1 (3.1%)	1 (3.4%)	4 (8.9%)	7 (5.3%)
Total	27 (100.0%)	32 (100.0%)	29 (100.0%)	45 (100.0%)	133 (100.0%)

 $\chi^2 = 13.418, \rho = 0.339$

The data reveal a notable difference between genders. While 40.7% of female principals strongly disagree with this statement, suggesting they find the role worthwhile despite stress, only 32.4% of male principals strongly disagree. Conversely, male principals are more likely to somewhat disagree (36.5% versus 11.9% of females), and female principals show a higher percentage of strong agreement (10.2% vs. 1.4% for males), indicating that a segment of female principals feels the stress is not worth it more

acutely than their male counterparts. This difference is statistically significant ($\chi^2=14.189$, $p=0.007$).

Table 4.27

Crosstabulation of Gender and the Stress and Disappointments Involved with Being a Principal at this School Aren't Really Worth It

The stress and disappointments involved with being a principal at this school aren't really worth it	Gender		
	Female	Male	Total
Strongly disagree	24 (40.7%)	24 (32.4%)	48 (36.1%)
Somewhat disagree	7 (11.9%)	27 (36.5%)	34 (25.6%)
Indifferent	10 (16.9%)	12 (16.2%)	22 (16.5%)
Somewhat agree	12 (20.3%)	10 (13.5%)	22 (16.5%)
Strongly agree	6 (10.2%)	1 (1.4%)	7 (5.3%)
Total	59 (100.0%)	74 (100.0%)	133 (100.0%)

$\chi^2= 14.189$, $p = 0.007$

A significant portion (33.9% somewhat agree; 11.8% strongly agree = 45.7%) report decreased enthusiasm. Principals with 1–4 years (34.6% somewhat agree) and 15+ years (40.9% somewhat agree) show higher rates of decreased enthusiasm, indicating early career disillusionment or long-term burnout. However, the $\chi^2=9.640$ with $p=0.648$ indicates no statistically significant association with years of experience.

Table 4.28

Crosstabulation of Number of Years as Principal and I Don't Seem to Have as Much Enthusiasm Now as I Did When I Began this Job

I don't seem to have as much enthusiasm now as I did when I began this job	Number of Years as Principal				Total
	1-4	5-9	10-14	15+	
Strongly disagree	5 (19.2%)	7 (21.9%)	5 (20%)	9 (20.5%)	26 (20.5%)
Somewhat disagree	5 (19.2%)	5 (15.6%)	5 (20%)	4 (9.1%)	19 (15%)
Indifferent	5 (19.2%)	3 (9.4%)	7 (28%)	9 (20.5%)	24 (18.9%)
Somewhat agree	9 (34.6%)	10 (31.3%)	6 (24%)	18 (40.9%)	43 (33.9%)
Strongly agree	2 (7.7%)	7 (21.9%)	2 (8%)	4 (9.1%)	15 (11.8%)
Total	26 (100.0%)	32 (100.0%)	25 (100.0%)	44 (100.0%)	127 (100.0%)

$\chi^2 = 9.640$, $p = 0.648$

Similar percentages are observed for 'somewhat agree' (around 33–34%) and 'strong disagree' (around 17–22%) between genders. The $\chi^2 = 1.599$ with $p = 0.809$ indicates no statistically significant association with gender.

Table 4.29

Crosstabulation of Gender and I Don't Seem to Have as Much Enthusiasm Now as I Did When I Began this Job

I don't seem to have as much enthusiasm now as I did when I began this job	Gender		
	Female	Male	Total
Strongly disagree	10 (17.9%)	16 (22.5%)	26 (20.5%)
Somewhat disagree	7 (12.5%)	12 (16.9%)	19 (15%)
Indifferent	12 (21.4%)	12 (16.9%)	24 (18.9%)
Somewhat agree	19 (33.9%)	24 (33.8%)	43 (33.9%)
Strongly agree	8 (14.3%)	7 (9.9%)	15 (11.8%)
Total	56 (100.0%)	71 (100.0%)	127 (100.0%)

$\chi^2 = 1.599, \rho = 0.809$

A large majority (49.6% strongly disagree; 20.3% somewhat disagree = 69.9%) do not think about staying home due to tiredness. The responses are consistent across all experience levels, with a strong majority across all groups disagreeing with the statement. The $\chi^2 = 7.329$ with $\rho = 0.835$ indicates no statistically significant association with years of experience.

Table 4.30

Crosstabulation of Number of Years as Principal and I Think About Just Staying Home from School Because I Am Just Too Tired to Go

I think about just staying home from school because I am just too tired to go	Number of Years as Principal				Total
	1-4	5-9	10-14	15+	
Strongly disagree	14 (51.9%)	15 (46.9%)	15 (51.7%)	22 (48.9%)	66 (49.6%)
Somewhat disagree	8 (29.6%)	6 (18.8%)	4 (13.8%)	9 (20%)	27 (20.3%)
Indifferent	3 (11.1%)	5 (15.6%)	6 (20.7%)	6 (13.3%)	20 (15%)
Somewhat agree	2 (7.4%)	4 (12.5%)	4 (13.8%)	7 (15.6%)	17 (12.8%)
Strongly agree	0 (0%)	2 (6.3%)	0 (0%)	1 (2.2%)	3 (2.3%)
Total	27 (100.0%)	32 (100.0%)	29 (100.0%)	45 (100.0%)	133 (100.0%)

$\chi^2 = 7.329, \rho = 0.835$

A significant 69.9% of principals do not entertain thoughts of staying home due to tiredness. However, male principals are much more likely to *strongly disagree* (60.8%) than female principals (35.6%). Conversely, female principals are much more likely to *somewhat disagree* (28.8%) and *somewhat agree* (16.9%) compared to male principals (13.5% and 9.5%), and female principals are the only ones to *strongly agree* (5.1%). This difference is statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 13.350, \rho = 0.010$).

Table 4.31

Crosstabulation of Gender and I Think About Just Staying Home from School Because I Am Just Too Tired to Go

I think about just staying home from school because I am just too tired to go	Gender		
	Female	Male	Total
Strongly disagree	21 (35.6%)	45 (60.8%)	66 (49.6%)
Somewhat disagree	17 (28.8%)	10 (13.5%)	27 (20.3%)
Indifferent	8 (13.6%)	12 (16.2%)	20 (15%)
Somewhat agree	10 (16.9%)	7 (9.5%)	17 (12.8%)
Strongly agree	3 (5.1%)	0 (0%)	3 (2.3%)
Total	59 (100.0%)	74 (100.0%)	133 (100.0%)

$\chi^2 = 13.350, \rho = 0.01$

The interview data on "Negative Impacts" corroborates the presence of heightened stress and fatigue. Interviewee G described physical symptoms like neck pain, while Interviewee A spoke of the job being "too all-encompassing," preventing them from feeling at home even when they are. These qualitative accounts provide a deeper understanding of the general increase in the mental and physical toll, aligning with the quantitative findings on decreased enthusiasm and thoughts of staying home due to tiredness.

Thoughts of Leaving or Transferring

The data explore principals' inclinations towards leaving their current school or district, and whether these inclinations changed post-pandemic. Despite the increased job difficulty, a larger proportion of principals (46.6% combined strongly/somewhat

disagree) indicated they would *not* leave their job solely for higher pay, though a notable 36.8% would consider it. Newer principals (1–4 years) show the highest combined agreement (51.8%) to leave for higher pay. The $\chi^2=17.126$ with $p=0.145$ indicates no statistically significant association with years of experience.

Table 4.32

Crosstabulation of Number of Years as Principal and If I Could Get a Higher Paying Job I'd Leave this Job as Soon as Possible

If I could get a higher paying job I'd leave this job as soon as possible	Number of Years as Principal				Total
	1–4	5–9	10–14	15+	
Strongly disagree	4 (14.8%)	11 (34.4%)	5 (17.2%)	9 (20%)	29 (21.8%)
Somewhat disagree	5 (18.5%)	3 (9.4%)	11 (37.9%)	14 (31.1%)	33 (24.8%)
Indifferent	4 (14.8%)	6 (18.8%)	6 (20.7%)	6 (13.3%)	22 (16.5%)
Somewhat agree	7 (25.9%)	9 (28.1%)	3 (10.3%)	12 (26.7%)	31 (23.3%)
Strongly agree	7 (25.9%)	3 (9.4%)	4 (13.8%)	4 (8.9%)	18 (13.5%)
Total	27 (100.0%)	32 (100.0%)	29 (100.0%)	45 (100.0%)	133 (100.0%)

$\chi^2= 17.126, p = 0.145$

While not statistically significant, female principals were generally more resistant to leaving for higher pay (55.9% combined disagree vs. 39.2% for males). Conversely, male principals were more inclined to consider leaving for higher pay (29.7% somewhat agree vs. 15.3% for females), though a higher percentage of females strongly agreed they

would leave for higher pay (16.9% vs. 10.8%). The $\chi^2=7.884$ with $\rho=0.096$ indicates no statistically significant association with gender.

Table 4.33

Crosstabulation of Gender and If I Could Get a Higher Paying Job I'd Leave this Job as Soon as Possible

If I could get a higher paying job I'd leave this job as soon as possible	Gender		
	Female	Male	Total
Strongly disagree	17 (28.8%)	12 (16.2%)	29 (21.8%)
Somewhat disagree	16 (27.1%)	17 (23%)	33 (24.8%)
Indifferent	7 (11.9%)	15 (20.3%)	22 (16.5%)
Somewhat agree	9 (15.3%)	22 (29.7%)	31 (23.3%)
Strongly agree	10 (16.9%)	8 (10.8%)	18 (13.5%)
Total	59 (100.0%)	74 (100.0%)	133 (100.0%)

$\chi^2= 7.884, \rho = 0.096$

A majority (45.1% strongly disagree; 18% somewhat disagree = 63.1%) do not think about transferring to another school. More experienced principals (10–14 years: 48.3% strongly disagree; 15+ years: 57.8% strongly disagree) are less likely to consider transferring. Newer principals (1–4 years) have a higher percentage considering transferring (22.2% somewhat agree; 3.7% strongly agree). The $\chi^2=11.107$ with $\rho=0.52$ indicates no statistically significant association with years of experience.

Table 4.34

Crosstabulation of Number of Years as Principal and I Think About Transferring to Another School

I think about transferring to another school	Number of Years as Principal				Total
	1-4	5-10	10-14	15+	
Strongly disagree	8 (29.6%)	12 (37.5%)	14 (48.3%)	26 (57.8%)	60 (45.1%)
Somewhat disagree	7 (25.9%)	5 (15.6%)	4 (13.8%)	8 (17.8%)	24 (18%)
Indifferent	5 (18.5%)	4 (12.5%)	5 (17.2%)	6 (13.3%)	20 (15%)
Somewhat agree	6 (22.2%)	9 (28.1%)	4 (13.8%)	4 (8.9%)	23 (17.3%)
Strongly agree	1 (3.7%)	2 (6.3%)	2 (6.9%)	1 (2.2%)	6 (4.5%)
Total	27 (100.0%)	32 (100.0%)	29 (100.0%)	45 (100.0%)	133 (100.0%)

$\chi^2 = 11.107, p = 0.52$

There is a fairly similar distribution between genders for all categories, with a majority for both not thinking about transferring. The $\chi^2 = 1.451$ with $p = 0.835$ indicates no statistically significant association with gender.

Table 4.35*Crosstabulation of Gender I Think About Transferring to Another School*

I think about transferring to another school	Gender		
	Female	Male	Total
Strongly disagree	28 (47.5%)	32 (43.2%)	60 (45.1%)
Somewhat disagree	12 (20.3%)	12 (16.2%)	24 (18%)
Indifferent	7 (11.9%)	13 (17.6%)	20 (15%)
Somewhat agree	10 (16.9%)	13 (17.6%)	23 (17.3%)
Strongly agree	2 (3.4%)	4 (5.4%)	6 (4.5%)
Total	59 (100.0%)	74 (100.0%)	133 (100.0%)

 $\chi^2 = 1.451, \rho = 0.835$

A majority (43.6% strongly disagree; 16.5% somewhat disagree = 60.1%) do not think about transferring out of the district. More experienced principals (10–14 years: 48.3% strongly disagree; 15+ years: 51.1% strongly disagree) are less likely to consider leaving the district. Newer principals (1–4 years) have the highest percentage considering leaving the district (37% somewhat agree). The $\chi^2 = 12.995$ with $\rho = 0.369$ indicates no statistically significant association with years of experience.

Table 4.36

Crosstabulation of Number of Years as Principal and I Think About Transferring Out of this School District

I think about transferring out of this school district	Number of Years as Principal				Total
	1-4	5-0	10-14	15+	
Strongly disagree	9 (33.3%)	12 (37.5%)	14 (48.3%)	23 (51.1%)	58 (43.6%)
Somewhat disagree	6 (22.2%)	5 (15.6%)	4 (13.8%)	7 (15.6%)	22 (16.5%)
Indifferent	2 (7.4%)	4 (12.5%)	4 (13.8%)	7 (15.6%)	17 (12.8%)
Somewhat agree	10 (37%)	7 (21.9%)	4 (13.8%)	6 (13.3%)	27 (20.3%)
Strongly agree	0 (0%)	4 (12.5%)	3 (10.3%)	2 (4.4%)	9 (6.8%)
Total	27 (100.0%)	32 (100.0%)	29 (100.0%)	45 (100.0%)	133 (100.0%)

$\chi^2 = 12.995, \rho = 0.369$

There is a similar distribution across genders for all categories relevant to transferring out of the district. The $\chi^2 = 0.413$ with $\rho = 0.981$ indicates no statistically significant association with gender.

Table 4.37*Crosstabulation of Gender and I Think About Transferring Out of this School District*

I think about transferring out of this school district	Gender		
	Female	Male	Total
Strongly disagree	27 (45.8%)	31 (41.9%)	58 (43.6%)
Somewhat disagree	9 (15.3%)	13 (17.6%)	22 (16.5%)
Indifferent	8 (13.6%)	9 (12.2%)	17 (12.8%)
Somewhat agree	11 (18.6%)	16 (21.6%)	27 (20.3%)
Strongly agree	4 (6.8%)	5 (6.8%)	9 (6.8%)
Total	59 (100.0%)	74 (100.0%)	133 (100.0%)

 $\chi^2 = .413, p = 0.981$

While the quantitative data show no *statistically significant* demographic patterns in thoughts of leaving, Interviewee B's qualitative account explicitly mentioned an "overall impact on decision to leave the profession," providing anecdotal evidence that such considerations did emerge for some individuals during the pandemic.

Positive Aspects and Adaptability

The interview data also unveiled unexpected positive aspects that might have contributed to maintaining overall satisfaction for some principals. These included increased creativity and innovation in school scheduling (Interviewee A), temporarily improved work–life balance and more free time during periods of remote work (Interviewee A), stating, "There are times I felt like I was living my best life. No one expected me to be anywhere. I did not have to be anywhere at night. I could do what I wanted. Nobody was bothering me." Increased flexibility allowing for more family time

(Interviewee F), the adoption of new communication channels like Class Dojo (Interviewee C), and the appreciation for the return to in-person schooling (Interviewee F) also offered moments of gratitude and satisfaction. These positive coping mechanisms and unforeseen benefits could have served as protective factors against a more significant decline in satisfaction for some individuals, even amidst the general challenges.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the data demonstrate that the COVID-19 pandemic made the principal's job much harder, a challenge universally acknowledged across all experience levels and genders. However, this increased difficulty did not translate into a statistically significant decline in overall reported job satisfaction or increased widespread intentions to leave or transfer across demographic groups. This resilience in overall satisfaction is supported by interview accounts of principals maintaining their commitment and love for the job despite the "nightmare" of the pandemic, often through personal resilience and effective coping mechanisms.

Nevertheless, the combined analysis reveals a more nuanced impact on specific dimensions of well-being. Increased stress, workload, and, critically, a statistically higher prevalence of fatigue and exhaustion leading to thoughts of staying home, particularly among female principals, highlight areas where the pandemic's burden was felt more acutely. While not leading to a universal exodus or overall satisfaction plummet, the pandemic has added layers of stress, requiring immense personal and professional coping, with certain aspects of this strain disproportionately affecting female leaders in the profession.

Addressing the Research Gap

The gap in the literature is how school leadership has changed and what the principal has done to manage and cope during the COVID–19 pandemic.

Research Question 1, exploring how the role of the school leader changed, directly tackles the "unprepared" aspect by illustrating rapid shifts. Findings revealed principals quickly pivoted from instructional leaders to crisis managers, social service providers, technology experts, and even politicians. This broadening of responsibilities, often in addition to existing duties, demonstrates the unforeseen demands that existing preparation programs couldn't have anticipated. The data also showed that the extent of these changes was universal, impacting leaders regardless of their years of experience, underscoring a systemic lack of preparedness across the board.

Research Question 2, investigating principals' perceptions of the lasting effects of the pandemic, examines the "new normal" for school leadership. The analysis of current time allocation highlighted longer–term challenges such as increased focus on student attendance (chronic absenteeism), well–being (mental health), heightened administrative tasks (crisis preparedness, staffing difficulties), and altered parent interactions (increased anxiety and distrust). Furthermore, the pandemic forced a significant and lasting embrace of educational technology. By detailing these ongoing responsibilities, the research provides insights into the specific areas where future principal preparation programs must evolve to better align curricula with these persistent post–pandemic realities.

Finally, Research Question 3, examining principals' satisfaction with their position, offers context for understanding the human element of leading through such a crisis and the need for support. While the quantitative data showed principals found their

jobs "much harder," a surprising paradox emerged: overall job satisfaction largely remained high. This points to the remarkable resilience of school leaders but also the immense coping required. However, a more nuanced finding revealed a statistically significant increase in stress and fatigue, particularly among female principals, leading to more thoughts of staying home due to tiredness. These insights are invaluable for "surfacing recommendations for ways to better prepare and support school principals," pinpointing specific areas where support and preparation for the emotional and physical toll of the role are needed.

Collectively, these findings directly address the identified research gap: principals were indeed unprepared for a crisis of this magnitude, and the pandemic has fundamentally reshaped their responsibilities in lasting ways. This research provides a critical understanding of the "new normal," highlighting not only the expanded and intensified demands on school leaders but also the gendered nuances of this challenge and the resilience that has sustained many within the profession. The insights revealed from this chapter are crucial for informing future principal preparation programs, professional development initiatives, and systemic support structures designed to better equip and sustain school leaders in an ever-evolving educational landscape.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This chapter synthesizes the findings of this study, which investigated the longer-term changes in school leadership since the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, this research identified strategies that principal preparation programs, district leadership and individual school leaders can implement to support principal retention and well-being. This chapter will also address the limitations encountered during the study's methodology, data collection, and analysis, as well as the influence of external factors. Finally, it will outline avenues for future research and discuss the implications for policy, principals, and superintendents.

This study was designed to address a critical gap in the existing literature by exploring how school leadership evolved and how principals coped during the unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. To achieve this overarching aim, the research was guided by three central questions:

1. How has the role of the school leader changed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What are principals' perceptions of the lasting effects of the pandemic on school leadership?
3. How has the pandemic experience affected principals' satisfaction with their position?

To answer these questions and provide an understanding of the principal experience during and after the pandemic, the study specifically investigated: the roles school leaders held prior to the pandemic, the demands placed on principals when schools initially

closed, the responsibilities principals managed throughout the pandemic, and how school districts facilitated school reopening.

Interpretation and Synthesis of Findings

This section offers an interpretation and synthesis of the study's findings, drawing connections across the research questions and situating the results within broader academic literature. The findings reveal a transformation of the principal's role, driven by the immediate demands of the pandemic and leading to significant, longer-term shifts in expectations. While the experience increased stress and workload for many, it also highlighted the resilience of school leaders and, for some, reinforced their commitment to the profession.

This study's findings are primarily consistent with the existing literature on school leadership and crisis management. They also enhance it by providing detailed evidence of how specific leadership responsibilities were reshaped during the COVID-19 pandemic. By applying Marzano's framework, the study translates broad theoretical concepts into concrete actions, highlighting the unprecedented demands placed on principals and offering valuable insights into the adaptability, resilience, and often gendered experiences of school leaders during a prolonged global crisis.

Findings Consistent with Existing Literature

The findings in this study are aligned to several overarching themes from the existing literature, as described in chapter 2. One of the similarities is the finding that crisis management is an evolving role. Chapter 2 established crisis management as an inherent part of the principal's role, outlining types of crises (U.S. Department of Education, 2019) and stages of response (Mayer et al., 2008). Chapter 4 identifies

principals as "crisis managers," which directly aligns with this, offering concrete examples of the rapid operational shifts required, such as organizing food and device distribution, which falls under the broader crisis response framework.

Another area of alignment is the increase in the principal workload. Consistent with pre-pandemic literature highlighting the demanding nature of the principalship, long hours, increasing expectations, stress, and burnout (Markow et al., 2013; Taie et al., 2017). Principals reported working "harder and longer... than ever in my life" with "blurred work-life boundaries" and "expectations of constant availability," illustrating how the pandemic exacerbated these existing stressors to an unprecedented degree.

The findings in this study also validate Marzano's leadership responsibilities. This study provides rich, on-the-ground validation for emerging research on pandemic leadership, detailing how key responsibilities transformed as framed by Marzano's framework. The first is Communication. Consistent with calls for "communicating frequently and effectively" (Thornton, 2021) and "developing effective information communication channels" (Schechter et al., 2022), principals became "communicator and cheerleader," utilizing "new platforms" and navigating "politically charged environments."

The next Marzano responsibility is an overhaul of order and operations. While Chapter 2 discussed returning operations to "normal" (Boin and 't Hart, 2003) in crisis, Chapter 4 illustrates that "normal" redefined, including new operational systems, increased principal availability, and new communication systems, which provides evidence of radical, often untrained, procedural changes demanded.

This leads to resources, aligned with guidelines for "preserving and utilizing existing resources, while developing and creating new learning–working processes" (Schechter et al., 2022), Chapter 4 describes principals' hands–on roles in "securing access to devices," "distributing those devices," and "driving around to deliver hotspots," validating the "digital divides" (Parveen et al., 2022).

There are also common themes regarding Marzano's leadership responsibility for instructional leadership (Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment). Extending Chapter 2's insights on shifting instructional responsibilities (Reardon, 2011; Weiner et al., 2021), this study offers concrete examples of principals "developing teachers in using online learning platforms," "developing best practices for virtual instruction," and directly addressing "learning gaps."

Corroborating the "ethic of care" (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016) and the need for "promoting care, collaboration, and resilience" (Schechter et al., 2022), evidence shows principals acting as "social service providers" ensuring "food security" and "safety nets," and crucially, serving "almost like a therapist and a support" for staff facing anxiety. This highlights Marzano's leadership responsibility for prioritizing relationships and well–being.

And finally, while Chapter 2 mentioned evaluating supports (Dückers et al., 2017), Chapter 4 demonstrates a more adaptive, real–time approach, with principals "ensuring that teachers and children were logged on" for virtual learning and engaging in "more data conversations with teachers" post–COVID to address learning gaps. This exemplifies Marzano's responsibility for monitoring and evaluation.

New Findings and Divergences from Existing Literature

This study introduces several crucial nuances and novel findings: deeper empirical insights into 'ill preparedness,' a quantified gendered impact on workload, the universality of impact across experience levels, and the empirical grounding of new leadership archetypes. It also offers a granular application of Marzano's framework within a crisis context.

While existing literature acknowledged that principals were "ill-prepared" for the pandemic, this study provides a more empirically deep understanding of that "ill-preparedness" by offering explicit and repeated qualitative evidence that "all of this was done without previous training or preparation." Interviewee B's "inventing the plane in midair" analogy vividly captures the unprecedented nature of the crisis, highlighting principals' reliance on improvisation and rapid, untrained adaptation.

A significant new contribution of this study is its demonstration of a quantified gendered impact on workload. It found a statistically significant trend where female principals bore a disproportionately higher burden in "School Administrative Tasks" ($\chi^2=14.365$, $p=0.002$) and dedicated more time to "Curriculum and Instruction-Related Tasks." This suggests that the pandemic's added workload was not uniformly distributed across genders, providing novel empirical insight into gendered leadership experiences during a crisis—a nuance underexplored in prior literature.

Contrary to any implicit assumption that more experienced principals would be better equipped for crises, this study reveals the universality of impact across experience levels. Quantitative data showed no statistically significant difference in the depth or breadth of changes in leadership priorities or actions based on the "Number of Years as

Principal" (e.g., $\chi^2=0.229$, $p=0.642$ for priorities; $\chi^2=0.248$, $p=0.513$ for depth of acts). This crucial finding suggests that the unprecedented nature of the pandemic demands effectively leveled the playing field, requiring similar levels of adaptation from both veteran and novice principals.

This research also provides empirical grounding for "new" leadership archetypes that emerged during the pandemic. While theoretical frameworks suggested shifts beyond traditional instructional leadership, this study empirically grounds the "rapid transition from instructional leaders to 'crisis managers, social service providers, technology experts, and politicians.'" The detailed examples from qualitative data—such as "driving around to deliver hotspots," "acting like a therapist," and navigating "politically charged environments"—are concrete manifestations of these distinct new roles, with a level of empirical specificity not typically found in pre-pandemic literature.

Finally, this study offers a granular application of Marzano's framework in a crisis context. It takes Marzano's general framework and applies it with specific, empirical detail to the pandemic, demonstrating how responsibilities like Communication became "frequent and clear" via "new platforms." Order involved inventing new "operational systems," and Resources meant distributing Chromebooks. Involvement in Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment entailed developing "virtual best practices," Relationships extended to providing emotional support, and Monitoring/Evaluating shifted to ensuring "teachers and children were logged on." This provides an evidence-based application of the framework to an unprecedented crisis, demonstrating its adaptability and usefulness in analyzing leadership during disruption.

Beyond corroborating existing knowledge, this study offers empirical validation and granular detail regarding how school leadership profoundly transformed during the COVID–19 pandemic. It highlights specific challenges and adaptations, particularly in the areas of preparedness gaps, gendered workload impacts, and universal demands across experience levels, which are new and significant contributions to the existing body of knowledge on school leadership in crisis.

Limitations

This study encountered several limitations inherent in its design and context. Understanding these limitations is crucial for interpreting the findings and for guiding future research. These limitations underscore the need for caution in generalizing findings and highlight opportunities for future, more expansive research designs.

Sample

This study was a quantitative study with follow–up interviews conducted to provide additional context to the survey questions. There are several limitations to this design. The first set of limitations is the sample. The survey was sent to 2,588 public school principals in Pennsylvania. 154 emails were returned, indicating that the principal was no longer with that school district. Of the remaining 2434 surveys sent, 133 principals responded, which is a 5% participation rate. This small response rate may not accurately represent the entire population, and the findings cannot be reliably generalized. There is a high potential for selection bias since participation is voluntary. There is a likelihood that principals who are more engaged or have strong opinions might have been more likely to participate.

Similarly, there is a non-response bias. This could be for many reasons including extremes in firsthand experiences during COVID-19, available time for principals to take the survey or participate in an interview, or a lack of technological access or proficiency. And finally, this is compounded by the interview participants. The selection was completely voluntary and conducted to provide additional insight into the survey responses, rather than fully representing the full range of experiences.

Methodology

While there were open-ended questions on the survey and follow-up interviews, there is still a limitation in the research design that relies heavily on quantitative data. By nature, it focuses on numbers, frequencies and statistical relationships and misses context and nuance. This could lead to oversimplification of the results.

Another limitation is based on the reliance on self-reported data since the principals are asked about their perceptions and experiences during and after COVID-19. This covers a wide range of time, since the survey was first sent in June 2024 and the follow-up interview was conducted in April 2025, both several years after the initial closing of schools in March 2020. This period could lead to a recall bias, where respondents may not have accurately recalled past events or feelings, leading to an unconscious restructuring of events. Participants could also have a social desirability bias, answering survey questions in a way they believe is socially acceptable or desirable, wanting to present a positive image of their leadership and well-being and downplaying difficulties. This could also lead to central tendency bias, avoiding extreme responses. These biases could be compounded when face-to-face in an interview setting, despite the

assurance of confidentiality. Participants may feel less anonymous, affecting their willingness to share information honestly, especially when asking about their well-being.

Another limitation is researcher bias. Individual experiences, perspectives, and interpretations may have unconsciously influenced data collection and analysis. Attempts to mitigate this include member checking and peer debriefing. The researcher may have unintentionally influenced interviews with facial expressions, responses, and gestures, despite intentionally trying to remain objective.

External Factors

Finally, there are external factors that could affect the results. One of them being the general dynamic nature of the educational world. The survey provides a snapshot in time, but since then the data may have already shifted, or changes in school leadership may be attributed to other trends and policy changes not related to COVID-19. Another external factor is the diversity of school communities across the state of Pennsylvania. Different funding, community support, local governance, policy responses, socioeconomic conditions and demographics can certainly impact a principal's experience, which is not accounted for in this study. The severity and duration of the pandemic's impact on the school community also varied across the state. Since, as already mentioned, there have been many concurrent changes since March of 2020, there are other societal and educational challenges that have impacted the principal's experience including political polarization, economic shifts, and student and staff mental health crisis, making it difficult to isolate the effects of COVID-19.

Further Research

This study has shed light on critical aspects of school leadership post-pandemic, but it also opens many avenues for future research that would add both breadth and depth to this important topic. This continued research would lead to conditions that further support principals, which is crucial for policymakers, system leaders, and principal preparation programs to understand how to impact their decision-making.

Principal Well-Being

A deeper understanding of the principal experience related to COVID-19, particularly concerning their well-being, would be incredibly impactful in how school leaders are supported in their roles. Future research could study the long-term impact and effectiveness of various coping strategies employed by principals, potentially through longitudinal, mixed-methods studies. Future research could also investigate specific interventions or programs aimed at supporting principal mental health. It would be helpful to conduct longitudinal studies on principal retention and well-being as more time passes since the pandemic to understand evolving trends. And studies could be conducted on the pandemic's impact and coping strategies based on demographics (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, school context) to understand any disproportionate effects and inform differentiated support appropriately, potentially employing comparative case studies or stratified sampling.

Preparation, Support, and Retention

Another branch of future research lies in school leader preparation programs and district-level support mechanisms. It is important to uncover how effective principal preparation programs are, or have become, regarding crisis management and leading in a

post-COVID environment. Research could include investigating if and how preparation programs have adapted their curricula and training to address post-pandemic realities such as technology integration and social-emotional learning. Research could also be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of these adapted programs on observable school outcomes or principal preparedness. Another worthwhile study could be exploring what district-level support structures (e.g., robust mentorship programs, coaching, professional learning communities, targeted professional development) are most effective in retaining school leaders in challenging times. And finally, research could identify principals who have left their role since the pandemic, tracking where they transitioned, and understanding their motivations for leaving, to inform principal retention strategies.

Broader Impact and Emerging Trends

The final branch of further research involves identifying broader emerging trends in the larger educational community that stem from the pandemic. For example, research could look at how principals are redefining instructional leadership in an environment with persistent learning gaps and evolving pedagogical needs. Now principals are leading in increasingly digitized environments, balancing technology use with in-person learning. Studies could also examine how principals engage with families and community members post-pandemic, particularly due to shifts in parental perceptions and community distrust. How principals engage with families and community members post-pandemic, particularly due to shifts in parental perceptions and community distrust. Now districts are shifting their crisis preparedness and response protocols in schools, moving from reactive to more proactive models. These are just some of the many ways this

research could continue, especially over time as we continue to recover and establish the "new normal."

Implications

The findings of this study carry significant implications for various stakeholders within the educational system, offering concrete guidance for improving support, preparation, and practice in a post-pandemic landscape.

Implications for Principal Preparation Programs

Given the unprecedented need for crisis management and rapid innovation, principal preparation programs must integrate scenario-based crisis simulation training into their curricula, focusing on prolonged, multifaceted crises rather than isolated events. The emphasis on principals as technology experts and the lasting importance of technology integration necessitate coursework on educational technology leadership, including strategies for device distribution, internet access equity, and effective virtual instructional oversight. To address the profound impact on principal well-being and the increased expectation of social service provision, preparation programs should include modules on principal mental health, stress management, building resilience, and navigating community social service partnerships, incorporating the ethical frameworks of care and profession.

Implications for District Leaders

The findings of this study underscore a critical imperative for district leaders and superintendents to move beyond reactive crisis management and implement long-term, systemic changes. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed a number of pre-existing vulnerabilities in school leadership, but it also created an opportunity for fundamental

transformation. The reactive strategies that emerged during the crisis are not a sustainable solution for the new demands placed on principals. To support school leaders and ensure the resilience of the education system, superintendents must embrace a proactive leadership model that re-engineers operational systems, invests in the well-being of their leaders, and reshapes the very culture of school leadership and accountability.

The pandemic revealed that traditional district operations are insufficient for the demands of modern schooling. Superintendents must lead the charge in re-engineering these systems for long-term efficiency and equity. This starts with an overhaul of data management. Instead of requiring principals to navigate a patchwork of disparate spreadsheets and data programs, superintendents should champion the adoption of a unified data system that automates reporting and provides real-time, actionable insights. This change frees principals from administrative burdens, allowing them to focus on using data to guide their school's strategy.

A further step is to revisit traditional staffing models. The principal's role has expanded significantly, and superintendents must acknowledge this new reality by funding flexible, district-based roles to absorb these demands. For instance, creating a team of student support specialists can manage complex behavioral and mental health needs, while instructional coaches can lead teacher development. At the same time, superintendents must ensure that resources are distributed with a focus on equity. This means moving beyond an equal distribution model to one that is proportional, providing a greater share of funding, staffing, and support to schools that serve high-need populations.

The sustained increase in workload and the blurring of work-life boundaries reported by principals point to a crisis of retention and well-being. Superintendents have a responsibility to address this directly, as a leader's well-being is intrinsically linked to their effectiveness. This begins with comprehensive well-being initiatives that are more than just symbolic gestures. This could include providing access to confidential mental health services, offering stipends for personal wellness, and establishing a clear policy on after-hours communication to protect a principal's personal time. Additionally, superintendents should champion the creation of formal mentorship or peer coaching networks. Such networks provide a structured environment for principals to share challenges, solve problems collaboratively, and build professional camaraderie, which directly combats the profound sense of isolation many feel.

The professional development provided must also evolve. District leaders must ensure that professional learning is targeted, relevant, and responsive to the new realities of the job. This includes training on new skill sets that emerged during the pandemic, such as managing complex technology integration and leading virtual or hybrid instructional models. More importantly, professional development must directly address the persistent post-pandemic challenges, including effective strategies for managing chronic absenteeism, closing widening achievement gaps, and supporting the growing mental health needs of both students and staff. By making these opportunities readily available, superintendents can ensure that principals are equipped with the tools they need to succeed in this more complex environment.

Finally, district superintendents are the chief architects of their district's culture. They must lead a shift from a top-down leadership model to a more collaborative and

empowering environment. This starts with redesigning accountability systems. Superintendents should advocate for and implement a more holistic accountability framework that validates the full scope of a principal's work. This means defining success beyond narrow measures of student achievement to include metrics on school climate, staff retention, family engagement, and the promotion of whole-child development.

At a deeper cultural level, superintendents must foster a climate that normalizes distributed leadership and collaboration. The traditional model of a solitary principal is no longer sustainable. Instead, superintendents should empower principals to delegate and share leadership with teacher leaders, students, and family partners. Furthermore, superintendents should take a proactive stance on strengthening school-community partnerships. By formalizing relationships with local health providers, food banks, and non-profits, districts can create an ecosystem of support that addresses the non-academic barriers to learning, thereby reducing the immense pressure on principals to be a one-stop-shop for all community needs. Ultimately, superintendents must also be the lead advocates for their principals at the state and federal levels, and they must create formal mechanisms for principal voice within the district itself, ensuring that all policies are shaped by the realities of those living the work of school leadership.

The implications for district leaders extend beyond operational fixes to a fundamental reimagining of how districts structure, support, and value school leadership. The challenges brought on by the pandemic revealed that the well-being and effectiveness of a principal are intrinsically linked to the systems and culture of their district. By aligning resources, culture, accountability, and advocacy, superintendents can create conditions in which principals not only survive the demands of modern leadership

but thrive as instructional leaders, community builders, and agents of systemic change.

This proactive, holistic approach is essential for building a resilient, equitable, and sustainable educational system for the future.

Implications for Individual Principals

Recognizing the increased stress and job-related demands, individual principals should prioritize proactive self-care strategies, including setting clear boundaries for work-life balance and engaging in personal coping mechanisms like those identified by resilient principals in this study (e.g., exercise, hobbies). The study underscores the value of adaptability and continuous learning. Principals should actively seek professional development in emerging areas like technology integration, advanced crisis management, and strategies for supporting student and staff mental health. Building strong, collaborative relationships within the school and district community proved crucial during the pandemic. Principals should continue to foster formidable team cohesion among staff, engage actively with district leadership for support, and leverage community partnerships to address student and family needs.

Implications for State Policy

Given the identified gaps in principal preparation for comprehensive crises, state education departments should review and update principal certification requirements to mandate coursework or practical experience in crisis leadership, public health emergency response, and technology integration. To address the persistent challenges of staffing shortages and the impact on principals, policymakers should consider increased funding for competitive salaries, teacher and principal pipeline programs, and initiatives to reduce administrative burdens on principals, freeing them to focus on core instructional

leadership. The rise in chronic absenteeism and profound social–emotional needs necessitate increased state funding for school–based mental health services, attendance intervention programs, and community–based social support initiatives, recognizing that schools cannot bear this burden alone.

Conclusion

This study offers a timely and critical exploration into the enduring impacts of the COVID–19 pandemic on school leadership in Pennsylvania. It fills a significant gap in the literature by detailing the nuanced evolution of the principal's role, the longer–term effects on the educational landscape, and the complex intersection with principal satisfaction. The findings demonstrate that the pandemic did not merely present temporary challenges but fundamentally reshaped the expectations and demands of school leaders. The application of Marzano's (2005) framework provided a lens through which to understand the amplification and redefinition of leadership responsibilities during this unprecedented period.

The research reveals implications for various stakeholders, suggesting a need for a re–evaluation of current practices in principal preparation, training, and support, as well as broader policy development. By bridging established literature with the empirical realities of the pandemic, this study offers a compelling case for systemic change. As schools continue to navigate an ever–changing educational and societal landscape, supporting the well–being and effectiveness of school principals is not just a matter of individual resilience, but a collective imperative for ensuring the strength and success of our educational system.

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APPENDIX A

MARZANO'S 21 RESPONSIBILITIES OF A SCHOOL LEADER

Responsibility	The Extent to Which the Principal...
Involvement in Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	Is directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices
Knowledge of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment	Is knowledgeable about current curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices
Resources	Provides teachers with materials and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their jobs
Intellectual Stimulation	Ensures faculty and staff are aware of the most current theories and practices and makes the discussion of these a regular aspect of the school's culture
Optimizer	Inspires and leads new and challenging innovations
Change Agent	Is willing to challenge and actively challenges the status quo
Focus	Establishes clear goals and keeps those goals in the forefront of the school's attention
Input	Involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies
Ideals/Beliefs	Communicates and operates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling
Outreach	Is an advocate and spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders
Culture	Fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation
Affirmation	Recognizes and celebrates accomplishments and acknowledges failures
Contingent Rewards	Recognizes and rewards individual accomplishments
Relationships	Demonstrates an awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and staff
Communication	Establishes strong lines of communication with and among teachers and students
Flexibility	Adapts his or her leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and is comfortable with dissent
Visibility	Has quality contact and interactions with teachers and students
Monitoring/ Evaluating	Monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning
Discipline	Protects teachers from issues and influences that would detract from their teaching time or focus
Order	Establishes a set of standard operating procedures and routines

Situational Awareness	Is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems
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APPENDIX B
SURVEY EMAIL INQUIRY

Dear Colleague,

My name is Katherine Sylvester, and I am currently a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership program at Temple University. If you have already completed this survey, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for participating in my research. I could not do it without you.

If you have not had the chance to complete the survey yet, I am writing to request your participation in a brief survey that will be used in my research study for completing my dissertation. My research focuses on understanding the perceptions of school principals regarding the changes in school leadership due to COVID-19. I am seeking your input as an experienced professional and am not collecting any identifiable information.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and all your responses will be kept confidential and anonymous. The survey will take about 20 minutes to complete. No compensation will be provided.

Please click the link below to go to the survey (or copy and paste the link into your Internet browser). By completing the survey, you agree to be part of the study.

Survey link: https://educationtemple.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5owiihYqfXKEWhM

At the end of the survey, you will be asked if you would be willing to volunteer for a follow-up virtual interview via Zoom to last approximately 30-60 minutes. If you agree, you will be directed to another link where you can enter your contact information.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at Katherine.Sylvester@temple.edu.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Have a fantastic summer!

Sincerely,

Katherine Sylvester

APPENDIX C

RESEARCH SUBJECT CONSENTS

Survey Research Subject Consent

Title: Principal Views on Changes in School Leadership Due to COVID–19: The “New Normal”

Protocol Number: 31444

Investigators:

Principal investigator: Dr. Christopher McGinley, christopher.mcginely@temple.edu

Student investigator: Katherine Sylvester, katherine.sylvester@temple.edu (215) 840–1403

RESEARCH CONSENT SUMMARY

You are being asked for your consent to take part in a research study. This document provides a concise summary of this research. It describes the key information that will help inform your decision whether to take part in this research.

What should I know about this research?

- Someone will explain this research to you.
- Taking part in this research is voluntary. Whether you take part is up to you.
- If you don’t take part, it will not be held against you.
- You can take part now and later drop out, and it will not be held against you
- If you do not understand, ask questions.
- Ask all the questions you want before you decide.

Why am I being invited to participate in this research?

This research is intended to better understand the impact of the COVID–19 pandemic on school leadership and school leaders. It will be designed to gather data in an effort to examine the principals’ perceptions of how the shock of the pandemic changed school leadership in the short term and in lasting ways and what is now the “new normal” for school leaders. The hope is to better understand the longer–term effects of the pandemic on school leadership and surface recommendations for ways to better prepare and support school principals.

How long will I be in this research study?

We expect that you will be in this research for about 20 minutes while completing the survey. The survey data collection will take place from May to August 2024.

What happens if I agree to participate in this research?

Participants will complete a brief 20–minute survey during May and June 2024. The survey will be the extent of involvement for the majority of participants. Participants will be anonymous. At the end of the survey, participants will be asked if they would be willing to volunteer for a follow–up virtual interview via Zoom to last 60 minutes to take

place from May to August 2024. If anyone agrees, they will be given another link where they can enter their contact information.

What are the risks of this research?

There are no expected risks or discomfort for participating in this research.

How can being in this research benefit me?

It is not expected that you will personally benefit from this research. We cannot promise any benefits to others from you taking part in this research. However, possible benefits to others include informing leadership professional development opportunities for school leaders.

What happens to the information collected in this research?

No one other than Dr. McGinley and Ms. Sylvester will have access to individual survey responses. We may publish the results of this research. However, since your responses are anonymous, no identifying information will be included in the publication.

Your private information will be shared with individuals and organizations (if applicable) that conduct or watch over this research, including:

- The Institutional Review Board (IRB) that reviewed this research
- Temple University

We may publish the results of this research. However, we will keep your name and other identifying information confidential.

We protect your information from disclosure to others to the extent required by law. We cannot promise complete secrecy.

Data or specimens collected in this research might be de-identified and used for future research or distributed to another investigator for future research without your consent.

Who can answer my questions about this research?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about this research, you may email the research team members at the email addresses provided on page 1.

This research is being overseen by an Institutional Review Board (IRB). An IRB is a group of people who perform independent reviews of research studies. You may talk to them at (215)707-3390 or may contact them via email at irb@temple.edu. You should contact IRB if:

- You have questions, concerns, or complaints that are not being answered by the research team.
- You are not getting answers or responses to your questions from the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone else about this research.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.

Can I be removed from this research without my approval?

The person in charge of this research can remove you from this research without your approval. Possible reasons for removal include:

- It is in your best interest
- You are unable to keep your scheduled appointments

What happens if I agree to participate in this research, but decide later that I no longer want to participate?

You may begin the survey and then change your mind and not complete it. The survey does not collect names or attach contact information to the survey responses.

Interview Research Subject Consent

Title: Principal Views on Changes in School Leadership Due to COVID–19: The “New Normal”

Protocol Number: 31444

Investigators:

Principal investigator: Dr. Christopher McGinley, christopher.mcginely@temple.edu

Student investigator: Katherine Sylvester, katherine.sylvester@temple.edu, (215) 840–1403

RESEARCH CONSENT SUMMARY

You are being asked for your consent to take part in a research study. This document provides a concise summary of this research. It describes the key information that will help inform your decision whether to take part in this research.

What should I know about this research?

- Someone will explain this research to you.
- Taking part in this research is voluntary. Whether you take part is up to you.
- If you don’t take part, it will not be held against you.
- You can take part now and later drop out, and it won’t be held against you
- If you don’t understand, ask questions.
- Ask all the questions you want before you decide.

Why am I being invited to participate in this research?

This research is intended to better understand the impact of the COVID–19 pandemic on school leadership and school leaders. It will be designed to gather data in an effort to examine the principals’ perceptions of how the shock of the pandemic changed school leadership in the short term and in lasting ways and what is now the “new normal” for school leaders. The hope is to better understand the longer–term effects of the pandemic on school leadership and surface recommendations for ways to better prepare and support school principals.

How long will I be in this research study?

For those who volunteer to participate in an interview, you will be asked to meet for a 60-minute interview with the researcher via Zoom. The interview audio will be recorded with consent by the participant. No third-party transcription service will be involved. The interview data collection will take place from May to August 2024.

What happens if I agree to participate in this research?

The interviews will be held on Zoom from May to August 2024. The interview time is expected to last approximately 60 minutes. The interview will be done in a conversational style with the researcher asking questions about the participants' experiences as a leader. Participants will be asked questions about their background, perceptions, and experiences as a leader. The interview responses will be used as data for this study.

What are the risks of this research?

There are no expected risks or discomfort for participating in this research.

How can being in this research benefit me?

It is not expected that you will personally benefit from this research. We cannot promise any benefits to others from you taking part in this research. However, possible benefits to others include informing leadership professional development opportunities for school leaders.

What happens to the information collected in this research?

No one other than Dr. McGinley and Ms. Sylvester will have access to individual survey responses. We may publish the results of this research. However, since your responses are anonymous, no identifying information will be included in the publication.

Your private information will be shared with individuals and organizations (if applicable) that conduct or watch over this research, including:

- The Institutional Review Board (IRB) that reviewed this research
- Temple University

We may publish the results of this research. However, we will keep your name and other identifying information confidential.

We protect your information from disclosure to others to the extent required by law. We cannot promise complete secrecy.

Data or specimens collected in this research might be de-identified and used for future research or distributed to another investigator for future research without your consent.

Who can answer my questions about this research?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about this research, you may email the research team members at the email addresses provided on page 1.

This research is being overseen by an Institutional Review Board (IRB). An IRB is a group of people who perform independent reviews of research studies. You may talk to them at (215)707-3390 or may contact them via email at irb@temple.edu. You should contact IRB if:

- You have questions, concerns, or complaints that are not being answered by the research team.
- You are not getting answers or responses to your questions from the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone else about this research.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.

Can I be removed from this research without my approval?

The person in charge of this research can remove you from this research without your approval. Possible reasons for removal include:

- It is in your best interest
- You are unable to keep your scheduled appointments

We will tell you about any new information that may affect your health, welfare, or choice to stay in this research.

What happens if I agree to participate in this research, but decide later that I no longer want to participate?

You may begin the interview and then change your mind. The interview will be stopped, and your responses will be deleted. Additionally, if you decide you would not like your interview responses to be included in this research, you may contact the research team, and your response will be deleted. Additionally, your decision to participate in or withdraw your interview will be kept confidential and will not be shared with other participants.

APPENDIX D

SURVEY QUESTIONS

Q1 Thank you for being willing to take this survey. Your thoughts are important, and I know that they will just make my dissertation better!

Now I would like to start. Which of the following do you most identify with?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)
- Other. Please specify. (3) _____

Q2 with what race/ ethnicity do you identify?

- African American or Black (1)
- Asian American or Asian (2)
- Hispanic or Latinx (3)
- White (4)
- Other. Please specify. (5) _____

Q3 What is your age category?

- 20 – 29 (4)
- 30 –39 (5)
- 40 – 49 (6)
- 50 – 59 (7)
- 60 and up (8)

Q4 In what year did you first teach full time? _____

Q5 In what year did you become a full–time principal? If this is your first year serving as principal, please enter a 1. _____

Q6 What is your current job title? _____

Q7 What type of school do you lead?

- Private or Parochial School (1)
- Charter School (2)
- Traditional Public School (3)
- Other. Please explain. (4) _____

Q8. In any of your leadership preparation coursework or job embedded professional development, is the following content covered?

	Yes (1)	No (2)	No, but if would have been a good idea (3)
Facilities management (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Remote learning (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Crisis management (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personal work–family–self balance (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Staff/ teachers work–family–self balance (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Student well–being (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other. Please explain. (12)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q9 Currently, about what percentage of you time is spent on

	0% (1)	1–25% (2)	26–50% (3)	51–75% (4)	76% and higher (5)
Student issues including discipline and academic guidance (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School administrative tasks (e.g., HR/personnel issues, regulations, reports, budgets) climate management (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Curriculum and teaching–related tasks (e.g., teaching, lesson prep, classroom observations, mentoring) (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
District activities (e.g., Meetings, reports, etc.) (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Parent programming and interactions (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Technology (hardware and software) issues (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other. Please explain. (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q10 The next two questions are related. The first series relates to PRE–COVID conditions and the second to POST–COVID conditions. Please make sure to respond to

both. Leadership is complex. How important do you think the following possible components are?

	Very important (1)	Important (2)	Somewhat important/ Somewhat unimportant (3)	Unimportant (4)	Very unimportant (5)
Recognize achievements (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Establish good communication lines between students and teachers (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Monitor school practices effectiveness (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have strong ideals and beliefs about schooling and communicates these (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inspire and lead new and challenging innovations (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have direct involvement in curriculum design (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Acknowledge and reward individual achievement (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have knowledge about current curriculum and assessments (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Demonstrate an awareness of personal aspects of faculty and staff (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q11 POST – COVID

	Very important (1)	Important (2)	Somewhat important/ Somewhat unimportant (3)	Unimportant (4)	Very unimportant (5)
Recognize achievements (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Establish good communication lines between students and teachers (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Monitor school practices effectiveness (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have strong ideals and beliefs about schooling and communicate these (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Inspire and lead new and challenging innovations (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have direct involvement in curriculum design (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Acknowledge and reward individual achievement (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have knowledge about current curriculum and assessments (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Demonstrate an awareness of personal aspects of faculty and staff (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3 (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q12 Again, this question is in two parts, the PRE–COVID conditions and the POST–COVID conditions. Please make sure to respond to both of them. Other components of leadership. Please rate how important you think each component is. First, the PRE

COVID issues. leadership. Please rate how important you think each component is. First, the PRE-COVID issues.

	Very important (1)	Important (2)	Somewhat important/ somewhat unimportant (3)	Not important (4)	Very unimportant (5)
Establish clear goals and maintains focus on them (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Involve teachers in decision making and implementation of policies (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ensure faculty and staff are aware of current pedagogy and policies (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Limit distractions and influences among teachers (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Willingly challenge the status quo (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide materials, resources, and professional development opportunities (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Foster a sense of community (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Adapt leadership behaviors to current needs (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Establish a set of operating procedures and policies (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advocate and speak for the school to all stakeholders (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Be aware of system undercurrents and use this information to address school issues (14)

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Have quality contact with teachers and students (16)

○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Q13 POST-COVID

	Very important (1)	Important (2)	Somewhat important/ Somewhat unimportant (3)	Unimportant (4)	Very unimportant (5)
Establish clear goals and maintain focus on them. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Involve teachers in decision making and implementation of policies (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ensure faculty and staff are aware of current pedagogy and policies. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Limit distractions and influences among teachers. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Willingly challenge the status quo. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide materials, resources, and professional development opportunities. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Foster a sense of community. (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Adapt leadership behaviors to current needs. (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Establish a set of operating procedures and policies. (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Advocate and speak for the school to all stakeholders. (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Be aware of system undercurrents and use this information to address school issues. (11)

-
-
-
-
-

Have quality contact with teachers and students. (12)

-
-
-
-
-

Q14 To what extent do you agree with the following statement: I had the support and resources that I needed to be effective as a principal during the coronavirus pandemic?

- Strongly disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Somewhat agree (3)
- Strongly Agree (4)
- I was not a principal during that time. (5)

Q15 While issues and situations arise unexpectedly, in general what do you think is the most important leadership component?

Q16 Have things changed? Please indicate how each of the following goals may have changed for your school compared to what it was before your school building closed due to the pandemic.

	Much lower priority (1)	Somewhat lower priority (2)	Same priority level (3)	Somewhat higher priority (4)	Much higher priority (5)
Planning for future school closures or other emergencies (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Addressing disparities in student performances (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ensuring student health and safety. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enacting social or emotional learning interventions or initiatives (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Engaging with families. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Promoting student learning engagement (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Supporting professional learning for teachers (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Implementing student behavior interventions (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Enacting new academic criteria or initiatives (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Adopting interim assessments (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Preparing for year-end assessment. (11)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q17 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Indifferent (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
The stress and disappointments involved with being a principal at this school are not worth it. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am generally satisfied with being the principal at this school. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am generally satisfied with being a principal. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I could get a higher paying job, I'd leave this job as soon as possible. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think about transferring to another school. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do not seem to have as much enthusiasm now as I did when I began this job. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think about just staying home from school because I am just too tired to go. (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think about transferring out of this school district. (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The COVID pandemic made this job much harder. Please explain. (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q18 Which statement best describes how long you plan to remain a principal?

- As long as I am able (1)
- Until I am eligible for retirement benefits from this job (2)
- Until I am eligible for retirement benefits from a previous job (3)
- Until I am eligible for Social Security benefits (4)
- Until a specific life event occurs (e.g., children graduate from college, relocation) (5)
- Until a more desirable job opportunity occurs (6)
- As soon as I can (7)
- Undecided at this time (8)
- Other. Please explain. (9)

Q19 This project is focused on learning more about what educational leaders need to succeed. Is there anything you would like to add?

Q20 Please highlight the following link and paste into a new window to add your name and email address:

https://educationtemple.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0rLDx5IiJWxc8Lk

OR

Please just highlight the link, right click, and select the "go to" option. Thank you! https://educationtemple.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0rLDx5IiJWxc8Lk

APPENDIX E
INTERVIEW EMAIL INQUIRY

Dear Colleague,

My name is Katherine Sylvester, and I am currently a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership program at Temple University. About nine months ago, you completed my dissertation survey. I want to thank you for participating in my research. At the end of that survey, you indicated you would be willing to participate in an interview.

I am writing to request your participation in a follow-up interview that will be used to deepen my research, which focuses on understanding the perceptions of school principals regarding the changes in school leadership due to COVID-19. I am seeking your input as an experienced professional.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and all your responses will be kept confidential and anonymous. The interview will take 30-60 minutes and will be conducted via Zoom. No compensation will be provided.

If you can participate, please click the link below to schedule an interview using Calendly (or copy and paste the link into your Internet browser). By signing up for an interview spot you agree to be part of the study. I will follow up with an email confirming the appointment that contains the Zoom link.

Survey link: <https://calendly.com/katesylvester-a897/30min>

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at Katherine.Sylvester@temple.edu.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Katherine Sylvester

APPENDIX F
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

What grade levels do you serve:

How many students:

What type of setting:

1. Can you tell me about your experience as a school leader in March 2020?
2. Had your principal preparation program addressed crisis preparation and/or management?
3. Had your district addressed crisis preparation and/or management prior to March of 2020?
4. How did your responsibilities change because of COVID-19?
5. How did your priorities change because of COVID-19?
6. How did the pandemic change your satisfaction with the role?
7. Did stressors at home impact your satisfaction at work?
8. What strategies effectively supported your well-being?
9. What do you wish had been in place to support your well-being?
10. What would you consider to be the longer-term effects of COVID-19?
11. What do you think preparation programs should consider as a result?
12. What do you think school districts should consider as a result?
13. Is there anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX G

ADDITIONAL PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Gender of Respondents

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
Male	74 (55.6%)
Female	59 (44.4%)
Total	133 (100%)

Race/Ethnicity of Respondents

<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
African American or Black	4 (3%)
Hispanic of Latinx	2 (1.5%)
White	127 (95.5%)
Total	133 (100%)

Age of Respondents

<i>Age</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
30–39	12 (9%)
40–49	54 (40.6%)
50–49	62 (46.6%)
60+	5 (3.8%)
Total	133 (100%)

Year Respondents Became a Principal

<i>Year</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
1994–2006	34 (25.6%)
2007–2018	72 (54.1%)
2019–2023	27 (20.3%)
Total	133 (100%)

Number of Years as Principal

<i>Number of Years</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
1-4	27 (20.30%)
5-9	32 (24.06%)
10-14	29 (21.80%)
15+	45 (33.83%)
Total	133 (100%)

APPENDIX H

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF INTERVIEWEES

Demographic Profile of Interviewees

Variable	Item	Frequency
Age	30–39	2 (28.6%)
	40–49	2 (28.6%)
	50–59	3 (42.9%)
Gender	Male	5 (71.4%)
	Female	2 (28.6%)
Race	White	7 (100%)
Geographic Location	Urban	2 (28.6%)
	Suburban	4 (57.1%)
	Rural	1 (14.3%)
Number of Students	0–499	2 (28.6%)
	500–999	3 (42.9%)
	1000+	2 (28.6%)
Type of School	Elementary	4 (57.1%)
	Middle	1 (14.3%)
	High	2 (28.6%)
Moved Since COVID?	No	3 (42.9%)
	Yes	4 (57.1%)