

FREQUENT TURNOVER IN A RURAL MIDDLE SCHOOL: HOW DOES IT MAKE
SENSE TO THOSE INVOLVED?

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ABSTRACT

Countless research has identified that a good leader is crucial to the success of an organization. This is no different when looking in the school setting. Good leaders are paramount to the success of schools. In schools, the absence of good leadership, and more specifically a consistent leader itself, can be detrimental to the achievements of students, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders. Even though schools across the nation and the world are experiencing frequent principal turnover, there is little research into how this turnover is perceived by the stakeholders. This study focuses on the frequent turnover of leadership in one rural middle school where there had been eight principals in the past ten years, and how stakeholders made sense of this turnover. Framed by Turbulence Theory, this study details the importance for incoming leaders to recognize the impact that turnover has on stakeholders of the school. The study also identifies the need to identify and find ways to work with the stability factors present during a period of frequent turnover.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Frequent principal turnover is becoming an increasing problem, challenging the schools facing this problem because, as Hargreaves (2009) puts it, it is such a “significant event” and is plagued by a lack of success. “One of the most significant events in the life of a school is a change in leadership. Yet few things in education succeed less than leadership succession” (Hargreaves & Fink, 2005, p. 163). Finding an answer to the lingering principal turnover concern facing America’s schools is a daunting task. Perhaps, it just may be impossible. What we do know, however, is something must be done.

Statement of the Problem

Some may ask why the effects of principal turnover are such a problem. One reason is leadership turnover is directly related to teacher turnover (Fuller & Young, 2009), and teacher turnover can negatively impact student achievement. Research has defined the “compositional” effect as a way students are impacted by teacher turnover (Rondfeldt, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2013). This effect can simply be translated to the idea that, in most cases, less experienced teachers are not as effective as experienced teachers (Borman & Dowling, 2008). Therefore, when a new teacher replaces a teacher who leaves, it can have a negative impact on student achievement (Rockoff, 2004). This is especially true in high-turnover schools where teachers frequently leave after only a few years (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, & Wyckoff, 2005).

The impact of teacher turnover on student achievement is important because there is a direct correlation between administrative turnover and teacher turnover. Schools that have high principal turnover are shown to have high teacher turnover (Fuller & Young, 2009). After looking at the relationship between both, Barnes, Crowe, and Schaeffer (2007) found several degrees of correlation: A high correlation if the principal has served less than two years and the school has had at least four principals in the last ten years; low if the principal served at least three years and there were no more than two principals in the past ten years; and medium with a combination. In their study, Fuller and Young (2007) also identified that increased teacher turnover is directly correlated with increased administrative turnover. We know that teacher turnover is detrimental to student achievement; therefore, the relation between administrator and teacher turnover should not be ignored.

Leadership turnover itself is directly related to decrease in student achievement. Lesnick and Goldring (2008) discovered in their survey of over 2000 teachers that principal turnover limits the ability for principals to develop relationships that are so necessary for implementing change and improving student achievement. A recent study published by the Wallace Foundation (2009) agrees when the authors assert that schools that experience rapid turnover are often “reported to suffer from lack of shared purpose, cynicism among staff about principal commitment, and an inability to maintain a school-improvement focus long enough to actually accomplish any meaningful change” (p. 165).

One final reason is that the culture of the building can be greatly impacted. Teachers can become cynical over the commitments of the incoming principals, causing them to question the loyalty of the new leader (Loeb, Kalogrides, & Horng, 2010). In

effect, they “wait the administrators out”, making them resistant to any changes or new initiatives enacted by the new administrator (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2004).

Although I addressed a few reasons above how principal turnover affects schools and student achievement, this study dove deeper into how teachers and staff, district and building administrators, and parents made sense of the frequent turnover in a rural middle school. Most frequently, the literature focuses on urban settings. This study added to the research by narrowing the focus to a rural setting and specifically to a middle school.

Challenges in Rural Schools

According to the United States Department of Education (2011), 57% of the nations’ public school districts are in rural communities and close to one-third of public schools are in rural communities. Furthermore, approximately one out of every six children attending the nations’ public schools lives in communities with populations of less than 2,500 residents (Browne-Ferrigno, 2007). These students face unique opportunities and challenges that are much different from those attending urban and suburban schools (Arnold, 2004; Rodriguez & Conchas, 2009).

Research has been conducted on filling administrative positions in “hard-to-staff” schools (Cruzeiro & Boone, 2009; Hertling, 2001; Roza, 2003). Many of these schools are schools with a high population of poor students, have high rates of minorities, and are labeled as urban. Very little research has been conducted on filling administrative positions in rural school districts. This study is significant because it focuses on a rural school.

According to the report *The State of Rural Pennsylvania* (2008), there are several things that make rural populations in Pennsylvania unique.

- Only 45% of adults (ages 25-64) have more than a high school degree versus 56% in urban areas.
- Only one in five rural Pennsylvanians (ages 25-64) has a college degree, compared with almost one in three in urban Pennsylvania.

These things combined with an increase in population growth, rising tax payments and shrinking tax bases separate rural environments from urban and suburban ones (Ayres, 2011).

Students in rural schools and neighborhoods consistently perform well behind the achievement levels of comparison peers in more advantaged U.S. neighborhoods (Balfanz, Herzog, & Mac Iver, 2007). In addition, rural educational settings can be plagued by high rates of teacher turnover. This turnover in low-income rural schools can have a direct effect on the success of students (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003). One of the key causes of teacher mobility in rural environments is leadership instability and turnover (Knapp et al, 2005).

Administrators in rural school districts face difficult jobs. Rural districts and schools have unique needs that incoming administrators must investigate and be able to meet in order to be successful (Wood, Finch, & Mirecki, 2013). They may have to take on additional roles and responsibilities as compared to their urban and suburban counterparts. Versland (2007) calls effective rural administrators “generalists” because rural school leaders have to be prepared to do almost anything. Rural leadership can be more demanding because many rural, “Districts have no middle management and depend

on their administrators to carry additional responsibilities” (Wood, Finch, & Mirecki, 2013, p. 2). Some of these additional responsibilities can include playground duty, driving the school bus, being in charge of the Title I program, and leading curriculum efforts (Cruzeiro & Boone, 2009). Beyond the extra responsibilities, there is also a greater importance of learning the culture of the school community (Salazar, 2007). If that does not happen, it will be difficult to establish open communication and relationships with community members and parents in a rural district (Mryan, Stanzo, & Clayton, 2011). Arnold (2004) identifies, “Being a rural administrator is a difficult job that fewer and fewer people are willing to take” (p. 5).

Staffing rural schools with principals can be a daunting task. According to Wood, Finch, and Mirecki (2013), “When attempting to staff rural schools with effective principals, school boards of education often find themselves at a disadvantage in recruiting and retaining administrators” (p. 2). They go on to say that when rural schools are staffed, many times, the principal hired cannot become the instructional leader necessary because of a lack of access to professional development.

Despite the realization the rural principalship is becoming more difficult to fill, research is limited. In fact, this is evident particularly in regards to ways to recruit and retain principals needed to fill vacancies in high-need rural schools (Arnold, 2005; Browne-Ferrigno & Allen, 2006). The danger in the lack of sufficient research is “policymakers and practitioners cannot make decisions regarding the likelihood of success for any given intervention with a high degree of confidence” (Arnold, Gaddy, & Dean, 2004, p. 20).

The Puzzling Middle School Years

The middle school years can be very challenging for students. It is during this time in students' educational careers when they can begin to develop risk factors such as family problems, behavioral problems, and academic difficulties that can increase the potential for dropping out (Jozefowicz, Colarossi, Arbreton, Eccles, & Barber, 2000). "Nearly half of American adolescents are at a high or moderate risk of seriously damaging their life chances" (Gutman & Midgley, 2002, p. 223). In addition, "Many choices and decisions about school that can have critical effects on adolescents' educational and life chances are made by adolescents" (Sanders, 2000, p. 66).

One of the reasons students struggle is due to the transition from elementary school to middle school. This transition can be very difficult, and there are many factors that cause the difficulty. The transition brings the realization that teachers begin to assume the idea that they need to prepare the students to be independent. This decreases the emotional support from teachers and staff. Another reason is due to the fact that students generally have one main teacher in elementary school and now have to rotate classes between many different teachers in middle school. This produces an inherent decrease in the contact between the students and their teachers. Finally, the peer relationships they developed in elementary school may break apart due to the lack of contact simply because of the vastness of the middle school environment (Gutman & Midgley, 2002). Students "must adjust to school environments that are typically larger, less personal, more departmentalized and more achievement oriented than what they encountered in elementary school" (Lane, Parks, Kalberg, & Carter, 2007, p. 210).

Significance of the Study

Increasing principal turnover is something that is plaguing not only American education, but also education across the world. Three main reasons can be identified to explain this. First, there is a decreasing tenure and retention rate. Second, “Generational Turnover” (Gross, 2009) is facilitating an increase in openings. Although this will not be the focus of the study, one other main reason is the practice of consistent principal rotation.

Research has identified the three reasons listed above as an explanation for the turnover of principals over the last decade or two. In Chapter 2, I add another component when I discuss the accountability shift that has taken place. This shift brought about the increased focus on things such as standardized testing results. As a result, principals are becoming increasingly “under the microscope”. The continued shift in accountability has put increasing pressure and demands on principals. This cannot be ignored.

Education has become a dynamic profession. The changes that impact educational environments can be compared to turbulence an airplane faces when in flight (Gross, 1998). In passengers, it can create a time of unpredictable circumstances and fears. In addition, based on the experiences, beliefs, and attitudes of particular passengers, it can create different reactions among those passengers. Not every passenger will react to the turbulence the same.

Leadership instability and turnover cause such periods of turbulence (Gross, 2004). There can be many different reactions to this turbulence. Some administrators “weather the storm and ride out” the turbulence felt by the school as an organization. Others, however, choose to leave the school. In most circumstances, when administrators

leave their position, it can add to the turbulence felt by an organization such as a school. Thus, a cycle begins. Turbulence can be caused by an event, circumstance, or a series of events. Even if things begin to stabilize, then an administrator chooses to leave his/her position, it can cause another period of turbulence. When this cycle repeats itself over and over as more and more administrators choose to not stay in their position at a school, people react in different ways.

There are many studies that have highlighted the impact a loss of a leader has on an organization (Fauske & Ogawa, 1987; Gephart, 1978; Jones & Webber, 2001; Miskel & Gosgrove, 1985; Ogawa, 1991). Other studies have focused on the succession process and its impact on organizations (Guest, 1962; Hart, 1993; Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006; Hargreaves, 2009; Miskel & Gosgrove, 1985; Pfeffer & Davis-Blake, 1986; Rowan & Denk, 1984). This body of work falls short of identifying what impact frequent turnover has on the stakeholders of a school and the turbulence caused by inconsistent tenures of its leaders. Adding to the body of research on the loss of a leader and succession, this study attempted to discover how consistent turnover impacts a specific rural school in a suburban district and how the stakeholders of that school made sense of the frequent turnover.

Purpose of the Study

As shown above, there is much research that has identified that a good leader is crucial to the success of an organization. This is no different when looking in the school setting. In schools, the absence of good leadership, and more specifically a consistent leader itself, can be detrimental to the achievements of students, parents, teachers, and

other stakeholders. With rapid turnover being experienced by schools across the nation and the world due to a variety of factors such as feelings of inadequate pay and/or lack of autonomy, more studies need to be conducted that focus on how many affected stakeholders, beyond just building administrators, make sense of the frequent turnover.

The goal of this study was to accomplish just that. It sought to identify how the impact of frequent leadership turnover impacts one rural school and how the stakeholders made sense of the turnover. The intent of this study is to identify these factors in the hope that they can be confronted in schools with frequent turnover in an attempt to “right the ship”. Once these factors are determined, schools experiencing frequent turnover will be better prepared to deal with them. There are several questions that informed the purpose for this study and guided the research.

Research Questions

Overarching Question:

What impact does frequent principal turnover have on a rural middle school, its staff, and parents?

Sub-Questions:

1. How does the current principal understand his decision to remain in the school and what are his perceptions about the impact the turnover has on the school?
2. How do former principals understand the impact of turnover on their decision to leave the school and what are their perceptions of the impact the decision has made on the stakeholders of the school?

3. How do district administration, teachers, and parents understand the impact of turnover on the school and themselves?
4. What were the local contextual factors that affected the school and how did they change during the period of turnover?

Definitions of Terms

1. Period of leadership instability-When buildings experience an administrative vacancy at the rate of at least one per year for no less than three years.
2. Succession-The process of one school leader replacing another.
3. Rural-A population density of less than 284 persons per square mile as defined by the Center for Rural Pennsylvania and adopted by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE).

Delimitations and Limitations of This Study

This qualitative study focused on a single rural middle school in Pennsylvania. Due to the limited financial and time resources available to me, it was geographically limited to this single site, with a period of time defined by months, not years. The largest source of data was intensive interviews of faculty and administrators at the school during and after the period of instability. These respondents were current or past employees of the district. Although I focused on the faculty and administrators, I conducted interviews with other stakeholders such as parents. This study flows from my own interests and experiences in a school similar to the school chosen for this study.

As a result of the study being focused on one site, the sources I chose were finite. I also recognized that not all students attend a rural school. Therefore, generalizations were not made to schools in urban or suburban districts. Even though generalizations cannot be made to schools in other environments, it does not take away from the results of the study.

Some argue that case study methodology can only be used as preliminary research or that case studies lack rigor. However, according to Yin (2009), case studies are very beneficial, particularly when looking at contemporary issues where there is little control of behavior. “The case study’s unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence” (p. 11) beyond what might be practical for other studies to encompass. Since this study focused on the contemporary event of principal turnover in one rural school district, there was little control over behavior, and used a variety of evidence, a case study method was ideal.

Participants

After identifying a site, I determined that several key participants needed to be interviewed. These included:

1. At least one building principal involved in the frequent turnover
2. At least one assistant principal employed during the time of the frequent turnover
3. The current principal
4. The current superintendent
5. The current assistant superintendent
6. The superintendent employed during the time of the frequent turnover

7. At least five parent representatives
8. Eight to ten teachers who were present during the period of frequent turnover.
9. One school board member

Beyond the initial participants listed above, it was important to interview others that could be identified by these participants as important sources of information. I interviewed a variety of staff members of the building. As stated above, I interviewed teachers. In addition to the teachers, I interviewed a school nurse, guidance counselor, and a secretary who had been at the building since it opened.

It was necessary to have the perspective of several of the building representatives in order to address the research questions. For example, the teachers were able to reveal their thoughts about the culture of the building during the period of instability. District-level administrators were able to disclose their ideas about why there had been such a period of instability. Parents and school board members were able to present an “outsiders” viewpoint of the period of instability.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The job of a principal is more difficult today than it has ever been (Fuller & Young, 2009; McGhee & Nelson, 2005; Pijanowski & Brady, 2009). One of the results is that administrator turnover has reached and continues to maintain a high level of disruption to schools. In this chapter, I give an overview of the past and current state of administrator turnover in education. In addition, I discuss the effect of administrator turnover on the succession process and explore a history of the literature on leadership succession. Finally, Turbulence Theory will frame leadership turnover.

Succession has an important role in the turnover of the position of school leader. The attrition rate is a key factor in the sense of the stability of a school culture and can affect all stakeholders. In addition, the loss of a leader causes a major disruption to an organization (Gross, 2004; Gupton, 2003; Ogawa, 1991). For the purpose of this study, succession will be described and referred to as a process, not a singular event. It will first be explored by identifying factors that occur even before the succession that influence the process. Miskel and Cosgrove (1985) noted that “pre-arrival” factors can guide how the loss of a principal is felt by an organization. The circumstances surrounding the departure have a direct effect on the succession process. Fauske and Ogawa (1987) determined that faculty members made sense of the impending succession through the themes of detachment, fear, and expectation. Jones and Webber (2001) identified these three themes not only affect faculty members, but they also stretch to support staff, students, and all other stakeholder groups.

The impact the leadership succession process has on organizations is important. I explore this by first viewing the literature on how succession affects organizations in general, as this is the focus of much of the early literature. I show that the effect of succession on these organizations was positive, negative, or indifferent. There are similarities and consistencies between these findings and more recent studies that focus specifically on the school setting. Each will be discussed.

In the final section, I will present the succession process as it is viewed through the lens of Turbulence Theory. Three tenets of Turbulence Theory will be discussed: positionality, cascading, and stability. Understanding how Turbulence Theory can frame a change in an organization, such as the loss of a leader, is important for leaders, both those in the organization as well as those coming into the organization. It can help to ensure that the changes brought about by the succession process do not become detrimental to the school and any effective reform efforts that are already in place.

How Dire is the Principal Turnover Problem?

There has been extensive research over the past few decades regarding the principal turnover dilemma. In order to further understand the nature of the problem, we must identify how dire the problem really is and why it has become such a problem. This section addresses two themes that are found in the literature that explain this crisis. First, there are decreasing tenure and retention rates. I present how this is a problem at the state, national, and international levels. Second, there is an aging generation of leaders. In the literature, this is known as “generational turnover” (Gross, 2009) or the “generation gap” (Mitgang, 2003). I explore the impact on the state, national, and international levels. In

addition, I address the differences and similarities between rural, suburban, and urban environments.

Tenure and Retention Rates

The challenge of recruiting and retaining effective administrators is not discriminate; it affects rural, suburban, and urban schools alike (Burdette & Schertzer, 2005; Quinn, 2002). According to the 2007-2008 School Staffing Survey (United States Department of Education, 2009), the average number of years a principal has been at his/her current school is 4.2. A study conducted by Fuller and Young (2009) on the tenure and retention of principals in Texas produced staggering results identifying the nature of the problem in Texas. Using data from teacher certification records and the Texas Education Agency, they analyzed the employment of Texas principals from 1996-2008. Here is a summary of the results:

- The average tenure of a principal was almost 5 years for elementary principals, 4.5 for middle school principals, and 3.8 for high school principals.
- Approximately 56% of the high school principals remained at the same school for three years. Only 31% remained at the school for five years or more.
- In high poverty schools, just 25% of high school principals and 33% of middle school principals remained at the same school for five years or more.

The phenomenon repeats itself in states like Vermont, Washington, and Kentucky where the turnover has reached alarming rates of 20% or more. In New York City schools, the turnover rate can exceed 25% in a two-year period (Gates, Ringel, Santibanez, Ross, & Chung, 2003). Papa (2007) followed cohorts of principals in New

York City schools and found that after four years only 46% of the principals are still at the same school. This can be seen in other states such as Indiana and North Carolina where only 37% and 21%, respectively, of the principals in the cohorts studied remained after six years (Gates, Ringel, Santibanez, Guarino, Ghosh-Dastidar, & Brown, 2006).

Pennsylvania is not immune to this trend. In 2003, the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania ordered a study on the shortage of principals in Pennsylvania. The results of the study showed there was approximately a 12.5% yearly turnover rate of administrative personnel. In addition, the reported percentage of principal vacancies that were not filled in a reasonable amount of time was approximately 23% (Administrative Shortages in Pennsylvania's Public School Districts, 2003).

These high turnover rates are seen especially in schools with certain demographics. Using a multivariate analysis of a large panel data set, Papa (2007) found that schools with high populations of at-risk students and ineffective or unqualified teachers are at a significant disadvantage in their attempts to attract and retain principals. Those with a high population of minority students experience large amounts of turnover. However, a principal is more likely to remain in the school if his/her race/ethnicity matches the race/ethnicity of the largest racial/ethnic group in the school (Papa, Lankford, & Wycoff, 2002).

An Aging Generation of School Leaders

Compounding the problem of the tenure and retention rates is the imminent retirement of a generation of building leaders. An increasing challenge is that we are

directly imbedded in a season of an aging generation of school leaders (Gross, 2009). According to the U. S. Department of Education (2009), the percentage of principals nationwide over age 55 rose from 20% in 1993-94 to 31% in 2003-2004. By 2007-2008, the percentage was 34%. This trend can be seen from the data in many states across the country. In New York, according to a RAND Education study conducted for the DeWitt Wallace/Reader's Digest Fund, 66% of the principals that were hired in 2000 in the state of New York were at least 50 years old (Mitgang, 2003). In Massachusetts, the average age of principals in 2008 was 52.2 (Gajda & Militello, 2008). In Minnesota, according to Harr and Robicheau (2007), 52% of school administrators were at least 51 years old. Combine these statistics with the fact that there is a pattern of principals retiring as soon as they are eligible, usually around age 55, because they are fed up with the stressors of the job, and the crisis becomes more severe (Tirozzi & Ferrandino, 2000).

This retirement trend can also be seen across the country. According to Gajda and Militello (2008) and the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2001), about forty percent of principals across the nation were planning on retiring within ten years. A study by DiPaola and Tschannen-Moran (2003) found that more than half of the principals in Virginia currently on the job intended to retire in the next decade. At the end of the 2001 school year in Vermont, one out of five school leaders in Vermont either resigned or retired (Groff, 2001). In a study on principals in Arizona, thirty percent of the participants in a study identified their plan was to retire early (Norton, 2001). In California, 40% of school leaders are expected to leave their jobs over this next decade (Maxwell, 2009). In Massachusetts, 523 principals took an on-line survey. Out of the principals surveyed, 63% indicated that they intended to leave the profession within the

next five years. Out of this 63%, a majority (70%) are leaving due to retirement (Gajda & Militello, 2008). In Minnesota, 60% of school administrators anticipate leaving their position in the next six years (Harr & Robicheau, 2007). In 2000, in New York, sixty-six percent of urban principals were nearing retirement, while fifty-four percent of suburban and rural principals were nearing retirement (Papa and Baxter, 2005).

Some may feel that the current and projected leveling off of student enrollment might ameliorate the problem of principal vacancies caused by the aging administrator population. However, this is not the case. According to the US Department of Labor (2005), the number of school administrators will increase 10.4% from 2004-2014. According to the Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2009), student enrollment for that time period will only increase 7.7%. In addition, between 2000 and 2004, the number of job openings in elementary and secondary educational administration increased from 178,000 to 183,000 while the number of administrators decreased. There can be very little doubt that the aging generation of school leaders is a contributing factor to this increasing spread.

This is not unique to the United States. In New Zealand, a large number of principals are expected to retire in the next several years (Brookings, Collins, Court, & O'Neil, 2003). In addition, the average age of administrators is 51. Looking further, in 1998, 17% of administrators were over 55. By 2006, that percentage rose to 31% (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2011). In Canada in 2004-2005, the percentage of principals over age 50 was 57% (Blouin, 2006). In 2001 in Victoria, specifically, the average age of an administrator was 49.5, with 71% of the administrators being between age 45 and 54 (Gronn & Rawlings-Sanaei, 2003). In

England in 2007, 31% of primary and 40% of secondary headteacher vacancies were created because the former headteachers retired before the age of 60 (Howson, 2007). In Chile, the average age of headteachers is 53 (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, 2011).

As noted above, the ideas that the school administrator population is “aging” and there are a concerning amount of retirements of school administrators looming on the horizon are evident across the nation and even the world. In addition, despite the projected leveling off of student enrollment, administrative positions and vacancies are expected to increase. These phenomena are contributing to the principal shortages and increasing the openings to which there is already a lack of potentially qualified candidates that can or want to fill these openings (Cruzeiro & Boone, 2009).

Where Are Principals Going?

As mentioned above, a large group of principals across the nation and the world are reaching retirement age. The logical next step for these principals in leaving the profession is to retire. In addition to principals retiring, they are also leaving their job as principal to pursue other interests. Some principals are leaving administration to take a job in education that is not related to school administration (Newton & Witherspoon, 2007). They are also leaving the position as a result of getting promoted. According to Zepeda, Bengston, and Parylo (2012), “Leadership succession is inevitable in schools as principals are promoted to fill existing vacancies” (p. 136).

Table 1 shows where principals who left the job in 2007-2008 ended up for the 2008-2009 school year. It also shows where the principals who left the job in 2011-2012

ended up for the 2012-2013 school year. As noted previously, there are large numbers of principals who are reaching retirement age and/or choosing to retire early. This group of principals is the highest percentage for both years (45.4% and 37.6% respectively).

Although the percentages are the highest for both years, a lower percentage retired in just four years after the initial data was collected. In looking at the rest of the table, that decrease is directly related to an increase in those leaving the principalship, but remaining in the same school in a different role.

After looking at Table 1, one can question the need for the continued research on the focus on the retirement of principals. Perhaps, it is time for more research to be conducted to determine the effects of a principal taking a different role in the same school in which he or she had previously served as the principal. This trend appears to be increasing. At this time, there is very little research focused in this area.

Table 1. Reasons for Principals Leaving (Comparison of 2008-2009 and 2012-2013)

Status	2008-2009	2012-2013	% Difference
Status of all	10,690 total	10,290 total	
-Retired (not working)	45.4%	37.6%	-7.8%
-Working in K-12 school (not principal)	15.6%	24.7%	+9.1%
-Working in K-12 education (not in a school)	33.2%	29.9%	-3.3%
-Working in a job outside education	3.2%	6.9%	+3.7%
Status of those working in a position in a K-12 school, but not as principal	1,668 total	2,541 total	
-Working in current school	21.3%	35.0%	+13.7%
-Working in a different public school	64.7%	56.8%	-7.9%
-Working in a different unknown school type	13.0%	1.2%	-11.8%
Status of those working in a position in K-12 education, but not in a K-12 school	3,549 total	3,077 total	
-Working in district office as a superintendent, assistant superintendent, or other administrator	66.2%	61.8%	-4.4%
-Working in district office, not as a superintendent, assistant superintendent, or other administrator	24.9%	26.6%	+1.7%
-Working at a job associated with K-12 education, but not associated with any schools.	6.8%	9.8%	+3

Table 1 adapted from (Battle, 2010) and (Goldring & Taie, 2014)

Why Are Principals Leaving?

Challenges Faced by Today's Principals

Despite the reason for principals leaving the job, it is important to understand why they are leaving. The job of a principal today is very difficult and principals face a lot of pressures and challenges. Fuller and Young (2009) describe four primary factors that influence the turnover crisis.

Accountability Pressures

One of the most prominent causes of the principal shortage is the accountability shift that has been taking place since the passing of legislation such as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB). This shift is adding to all of the intensity school leaders are facing. The pressure from these standards and from the legislation surrounding them is tremendous (Gray, 2009), and weighs heavily on school leaders, decreasing job satisfaction and seriously limiting the opportunity for sustained tenures. Although the goal of the legislation to improve schools was well-intended, the result is that policy makers have dramatically increased the demands on school leaders which, in turn, has created an attitude of fear relating to the mystique of unforeseen consequences. Tucker and Coddling (2002) explain this pressure is like a vise. Leading the school to unprecedented levels of achievement, which is required by the accountability legislation, “seems to be the stuff of fantasy for the principal in the vise” (2002, p. 1).

School leaders used to be measured by a broad range of factors that mirrored the intricacy and difficulty of the job. They only needed to be a “jack of all trades, masters

of none”. Now, the accountability movement has constricted the focus (McGhee & Nelson, 2005). Because of this, administrators are now being forced to be specialists in many areas (Rayfield & Diamentes, 2004). Making it even more challenging is that the influence they have over some of these areas, like those revolving around budgetary constraints or physical plant issues, can be minimal. For new administrators, it becomes significantly more stressful because they lack the wisdom and maturity needed to prioritize the demanding tasks associated with these areas (Gross, 2009) and the confidence to let go of the areas in which they have little or no control.

Despite the increased importance placed on the narrow assessment of administrators’ success related to the accountability imposed by legislations, there is also an increase in accountability from other stakeholders. This has brought challenges from those such as parents, students, unions, and teachers (Jones & Webber, 2001). Whether right or wrong, the accountability legislation has increased the rights of various stakeholders, specifically those that exist beyond the school walls. As a result, challenges from these stakeholders have resulted in increased litigation, adding pressure onto what is already a tense and difficult profession (Thompson, Blackmore, Sachs & Tregenza, 2003). “Principals often feel like they are asked to do the impossible without the tools and time necessary to do the job well” (Fuller & Young, 2009, p. 18).

This idea that the principal is responsible for academic achievement (measured by “test scores”) has increased the focus on principals being instructional leaders. Even though it is difficult to define, the educational reform movement has spurred politicians, district leadership, building leadership, and parents to recognize the link between instructional leadership and student achievement (Jazzar & Algozzine, 2006). Principals

are now responsible to “know the most effective techniques for improving classroom instructional practices to increase student performance” (National Conference of State Legislators, 2002, p. 2). What this means is that student learning needs to become a major focus of the duties of an administrator. Unfortunately, due to the increased time being spent on management, instructional leadership is frequently not a priority of administrators. However, what educational leaders need to be careful of is, essentially, using their management responsibilities as an excuse to not be effective instructional leaders (Jenkins, 2009). There is countless research and case studies that prove that one can effectively balance managerial tasks with instructional leadership. What is important is that if administrators want to take their job seriously, they must seek to find this balance.

Complexity and Intensity of the Job

There are other major stressors beyond the accountability movement that are seen as factors in turnover. One is the continued increase in the expectations of principals, which is creating a complex and intense job. According to Copland (2001), “Expectations for the principalship have steadily expanded since the reforms of the early 1980s, always adding to, and never subtracting from, the job description” (p. 4). Recently, principals report long hours, unending supervision of after-school activities, feelings of being overwhelmed by high expectations, mountains of paperwork, and the complexity of the job as reasons for giving up their administrator positions (Hertling, 2001). Other studies add that a lack of community and parent support and a lack of respect from all stakeholders hinder long tenures (Norton, 2002/2003). As the National Association of

Secondary School Principals (2007) describes in their report on the changing role of school leaders,

Principals and assistant principals in today's schools are required to lead and manage differently more so than ever before. They must manage and lead differently while addressing issues and problems that are relatively new, complex in nature and scope, paradoxical and dilemma-filled, and unknown to schools. (p. 2)

One of the driving factors for teachers to become principals is their desire to positively influence the lives of students (Harris, Arnold, Lower & Crocker, 2000; Malone, Sharp, & Thompson, 2001). Unfortunately, principals are finding that many of the intricacies discussed above are consuming most of their time and eroding their authority to affect change. "Principals are now expected to be business managers, instructional leaders, community engagement experts, data analysts, and even marketers for the school" (Fuller & Young, 2009, p. 18). As a result, the ability to impact the lives of children in the educational setting wanes. Nationwide, the amount of time principals are able to interact with students is declining. According to the United States Department of Education (2009), in 2003-2004, principals reported they worked a total of 57.9 hours per week with 22.6 of those hours spent interacting with students. By 2007-2008, although the number of hours worked per week remained consistent (57.3), the number of hours interacting with students dropped to 20.5 (United States Department of Education, 2008). As this continues, there is a solid likelihood that principal openings will increase.

There are several movements that have been started in an attempt to reverse this trend and change the focus of education from accountability to creating ethical decision makers out of the students. One of these movements is the New Democratic Ethical Educational Leadership (The New DEEL). The New DEEL is made up of university

faculty, practitioners, and students from countries such as the United States, Australia, Hong Kong, Canada, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. The aim of the New DEEL is to introduce a democratic ethical model to education, which is currently being run by a “top-down control regime modeled after corporations” (Gross, 2006). According to Gross (2010), one of the founders of the movement, the focus of educational leaders and schools needs to shift. According to Shapiro (2008):

Those who are part of this movement believe that the first job of the school is to help all young people become effective citizens in a democracy. Democratic citizenship, in any era, is a complex task but it seems especially difficult at this time when international conflict and growing economic and social inequality are the rule and not the exception. The spirit of the New DEEL is towards a liberating education enabling students from different social classes, ethnicities, races, and even genders, to make intelligent and moral decisions as future citizens. (para. 3)

Lack of Support from Central Office

In a study that analyzed the interviews of a number of school principals who left the profession partly based on their school’s low test scores from a Texas accountability system, McGhee and Nelson (2005) found one of the common themes that came to the forefront was a lack of shared accountability. The principals’ perceptions were they had little to no access to their superintendents. This caused a feeling of isolation among the administrators, and, “This professional isolation was devastating for the administrators” (p. 367).

The opposite side of a lack of involvement from central office is an over-involvement. This was noted in Fuller and Young’s (2009) study when principals cited, “excessive interference from central office staff, lack of autonomy to run the school as they see fit, lack of resources necessary to effectively run the school, and lack of

mentoring and support as reasons many principals leave a school” (p. 18). Tucker and Coddling (2002) present it in this way: “The central office has as much control as ever over the budget, the curriculum, hiring, firing, and the assignment of key leadership positions in the school” (p. 3). The only difference, since there has been an “attempt” in the last few years at some form of school site governance, is the principal now has to share his/her power with others such as teachers, parents, and even students. The result is, “The principal has even less authority than before while being expected to accept much more responsibility” (Tucker & Coddling, 2002, p. 3).

Compensation

Studies by Ferrandino (2001), Hertling (2001), Kimball and Sirotnik (2000), and others have highlighted the idea that salary is a key factor in recruitment and retention of principals. In rural areas, it becomes more of a factor, as the salary is generally lower than the norm (Monk, 2007). Just as it is an important factor in the recruitment and retention of principals, it may also be one of the most important factors that dissuades candidates from pursuing administrative positions (Education Research Service, 1998). The move from teaching to a principalship, although it may draw a larger salary, usually increases the amount of working days. In proportion to the teacher salary previously attained, the increase in the salary is unsubstantial (Norton, 2003). In cases such as this, “the monetary benefits of becoming a principal simply do not outweigh the additional time commitments and stress of being a principal” (Fuller & Young, 2009, p. 18).

According to the United States Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics’ Digest of Education Statistics (2008), the average annual salary for

a principal in 2007-2008 was \$79,300. The average for a teacher was \$50,816. Knowing that the average principal works 227 days and the average teacher works 185 days (Cooke & Licciardi, 2008), the daily rate for principals is 22% higher than that of a teacher. But for those entering the principalship, they will not be making the average salary. The average salary for a principal with less than three years of service in the principalship is \$70,200. The average salary for a veteran teacher is \$62,200. When this is broken down into a daily rate, teachers actually make 8% more than principals. The salaries discussed above are only salaries for principals. The disparity becomes worse when one realizes that a majority of new administrators will enter as assistant principals. One other factor to consider is that in 2007-2008, the average number of hours per week that a principal worked was almost five hours more than the average of teachers (United States Department of Education, 2009).

There is hope. According to Cooke and Licciardi's (2008) review of elementary and middle school principals' salary data, between 2003-2004 and 2007-2008, principals' salaries increased 14.3 percent, while salaries for teachers increased 12.5 percent. They also found that the average percent increase for principal salaries has been exceeding the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the past few years. In 2003-2004, the CPI exceeded the salary increase of principals by almost 1.5%. However, in 2007-2008, principals' salaries exceeded the CPI by almost the same percentage.

As the research on the problem of principal turnover and the little that has been done to confront it continues to develop, one thing remains constant: The problem is not going away. In fact, it seems to be getting worse. The pressures resulting from the accountability movement and the increasing demands of the job continue to drive

principals out of the profession. The situation becomes more dismal when one combines this with the retirement boom and a lack of interest from qualified potential candidates to fill open positions.

Now that we know there is a principal turnover problem and some of the causes why the problem exists, it is important to know how the result of that problem, principal succession, can impact the school as an organization.

The Departure of the Predecessor and Its Role in the Succession Process

In order to fully understand the outcomes the succession of leadership has on an organization, it is important to look at all steps in the succession process. Before looking at the next step in the process, the succession of the replacement principal, one must explore the impact the loss of a principal has on the school as an organization. This is an important focus as the reason for the departure of a principal can influence the way others respond and “shape the incoming principal’s work in the school organization” (Jones & Webber, 2001, p. 7). In addition, the reasons for the departure of a principal can amplify or even diminish the effects of the impending succession.

One of the first studies on the conditions that exist prior to succession was conducted by Gephart (1978). In this study, he focused on the actual members of a graduate students’ association and how they made sense of the events leading up to the succession of the president of the association. Not only was he concerned with how they made sense of the events, he was also interested in the role the members played both in the public status degradation process of the former leader and the role they played in the replacement process of that leader. This was one of the first studies that highlighted the

need to focus on the impact the predecessor and the events leading up to the succession have on the succession process (Ogawa, 1991).

In a later study on sense-making, which focused on faculty members of an elementary school and the way they coped with the impending departure of a principal, Fauske and Ogawa (1987) identified that unlike the participants in Gepharts's (1978) study, faculty members of a school do not participate in public status degradation ceremonies. Three themes developed out of the way faculty members made sense of the impending succession: Detachment, fear, and expectation. The detachment could be seen in the way the faculty and staff minimized the importance of the successor. It could also be seen in the fact that the faculty felt they in no way would be part of the selection process of the new administrator, creating a sense of a lack of power. Eighty percent of the respondents in the study also identified they were fearful or anxious about the unknown and the potential for a loss of autonomy. Finally, expectation created hope. The teachers were able to identify qualities they would like to see in the successor and they were able to unite around these qualities (Fauske & Ogawa, 1987).

Jones and Webber (2001) expanded on the concepts of detachment, fear, and expectation by broadening their scope beyond just faculty members to support staff, students, and parents. Fear resounded in all of the stakeholder groups. Both the faculty and the outgoing principal experienced fear that the new principal will, "Challenge their accomplishments and redirect the school's focus from that which they had fostered" (p. 7). Students feared that the environment they had been used to would be upset and become unpredictable. Support staff feared that their roles and employment would change. The parents, who had grouped themselves into two factions based on the

direction they wanted to see the school take, feared that the principal would support one group or the other.

In Fauske and Ogawa's (1987) study, there were two other sources of fear that were identified. First, the teachers were worried about a loss of autonomy. Teachers "were concerned that the new principal might intrude on their instructional prerogative" (p. 37). The second source of fear was the fear of the unknown. The teachers were not sure how they would get along with the new principal, how the new principal would relate to them, or how the status quo would be affected. As one teacher in the study responded, "I was real disappointed because the status quo is safe, especially when we don't know who is coming" (Fauske & Ogawa, 1987, p. 37).

As Fauske and Ogawa (1987) noted, there is some detachment felt by faculty during the succession process. Detachment can be felt in a variety of ways. Teachers can "detach themselves from the succession by minimizing the importance of the succession to school operation" (p. 36). In Jones and Webber's (2001) study, the focus of the detachment was sensed in relation to the selection process of the new principal. The faculty was able to express their opinions on what qualities they felt were needed by the incoming principal in order to be successful. This attempted to provide ownership to the faculty and staff, and in certain terms, accomplished this. However, they became detached when they believed that the opinions would not be a driving factor in the decision-making process for the new administrator. This detachment was clearly noticed in the expression of several teachers that the parents, not the teachers, was the group to have the power to influence the school board's decision for a successor.

Finally, Jones and Webber (2001) identified that all stakeholders in an organization, whether it be school boards, district administration, parents, or students, experience an expectation of change. These stakeholders, “associate principal succession with anticipated changes in the direction and organization of the school” (p. 7). The idea the new principal would shape the culture and structure of the school as an organization based on what qualities, values, and beliefs the new administrator possessed permeated the expectations of all stakeholders.

Miskel and Cosgrove (1985) emphasize that “pre-arrival” factors can guide how the impact of the loss of principal is felt by an organization. They point out these factors or the circumstances surrounding the departure have a direct effect on the positive or negative impact of the succession process. One of these factors is the reason why there is a change in administrators. They state, “The successor confronts different consequences depending on the reason for the vacancy” (p. 89). They group reasons into two categories: Environmentally controlled and organizationally controlled. Out of the two, environmentally controlled reasons that involve a feeling of legitimacy among those affected are the reasons that are the least likely to elicit negative feelings and reactions (Grusky, 1963 as cited in Ogawa, 1991). When environmentally controlled factors, such as death, retirement, or illness occur, these factors appear “to result in discontinuity because the transfer of the predecessor’s knowledge to the successor is absent” (Hart, 1985, p. 3). The result is a lack of opportunity for the transference of the previous administrator’s knowledge, experiences, and view of the organization to the incoming administrator. The effect can be that unguided, rapid policy changes are put into place causing disarray to the organization (Miskel & Cosgrove, 1985).

Organizationally controlled circumstances such as demotion or dismissal also have an impact on the succession process. Even circumstances when a predecessor gets promoted to a higher position within the organization can have a drastic effect on the organization and the succession process. When a predecessor gets promoted, many times the thought from outside influences such as school boards and communities is that the organization must be running smoothly and achieving. Promotion “is often viewed as a sign that the organization has judged the predecessor’s policies and behaviors as successful” (Hart, 1985, p. 3). The belief is the evidence of this is in the fact that the predecessor was promoted to a superior position. In fact, this idea can produce fear in the faculty and even the outgoing principal. What happens, then, is the incoming administrator may adopt the “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” attitude and be reluctant to make changes since the organization is already viewed as being successful based on the policies, procedures, and vision established by the successful predecessor. New principals can succumb to ineffective mechanical and suggested practices and responses to problems, which may not necessarily instill the trust from the faculty that is so desperately important (Macmillan, Meyer, & Northfield, 2004). In Jones and Weber’s (2001) case study of an incoming principal to an organization where the outgoing principal had been promoted, the successor “was willing to overlook actions and cultural ways of being in the school that may have contradicted her own beliefs as long as she felt there was no harm to the children” (p. 8). Overlooking the actions, beliefs, or culturally accepted behaviors that have a negative impact on the organization and the succession process can compromise a successor’s own values and beliefs. Finally, if any changes are made by the incoming administrator that lead to success, there may be a lack of due

credit because the positive impact of these changes will be attributed to the predecessor's actions (Miskel & Cosgrove, 1985).

The loss of a leader, whether it occurs in a business, sports team, or school, causes a major disruption (Ogawa, 1991). No matter if the departure is caused by environmental or organizational factors, it still is dynamic and presents challenges for any incoming administrator. Now that we are aware of the pre-arrival factors, it is important to explore the impact that the actual leadership succession has on an organization.

The Impact of Leadership Succession on an Organization

In this section, an overview of the succession literature and its application to organizations in general will be presented. This is important as this was a focus of much of the early studies of the impact succession has on organizations. Following the discussion of this succession literature, the impact of succession will be applied to schools.

Early studies that focused on the relationship between succession and organizational variables have conflicted on the nature of the impact succession has on an organization. At best, the results of the research are mixed (Fauske & Ogawa, 1987). Some studies indicate there is a direct correlation between an increase in positive organizational performance and succession (Guest, 1962; Rowan & Denk, 1984). Others report the impact that leadership succession has on positive organizational performance is minimal, if any at all (Miskel & Gosgrove, 1985; Pfeffer & Davis-Blake, 1986). Beyond having minimal, if any, positive impact, leadership succession, can also “have the detrimental effect of altering the organizations' lines of communication, relationships,

and the decision-making process” (Noonan & Goldman, 1995, p. 2). In this section, these positive, negative, and indifferent responses are explored.

Positive Response to Succession

In several studies, organizational norms are shown to greatly influence an organization’s response to succession. To be more specific, “The relationship between existing organizational norms and the behavior of the successor affects how members interpret a succession” (Ogawa, 1991, p. 33). There are several early studies that reflect the positive response that organizations can have to succession.

One of the initial studies was conducted by Guest (1962), who studied a change of management in an automobile plant. The successful manager was able to do several things that caused the positive effects. It was through his personal interactions with workers that allowed him to uncover their needs, learn the technical side of the plant operations, and establish a base of power in the organization that he would later be able to use to influence the response to difficult decisions. The manager was also able to improve communication as he carefully established informal contacts within the organization. It was a result of this manager being able to do these things that “led Guest to argue that succession can be a positive organizational event” (Hart, 1993, p. 45).

Another study that showed a positive outcome to succession was conducted by Salaman (1977). At the center of the study was a dominant autocratic managing director of a manufacturing company. He was notorious for being personally involved in all aspects of the organization and was never “prepared to sacrifice his right to influence, overturn, or replace any decision or process” (Salaman, 1977, p. 374). As a result of this

involvement and high centralized power, there were feelings of vagueness, ambiguity, and confusion of those determining what needed to be done (Hart, 1993). Managers were left to guess what they needed to do. Despite all of this, Salaman (1977) observed the managers and workers within the organization idealize and praise this leader after he had been succeeded. The retired manager still posed a threat to the successor by continuing to exercise control and influence (Hart, 1993). However, the successor was charismatic and was able to break free from the negative effects of the predecessor that bound the company. This breakthrough, claimed Salaman (1977), provided evidence that succession provided a positive outcome.

Negative Response to Succession

When relating administrator succession to organizational variables, such as performance, there are several studies that show performance declines. In his landmark study, Gouldner (1952) describes the succession of supervisors in a gypsum mining factory in Buffalo, New York. To increase productivity, a well-liked manager was replaced. Because the previous manager had developed practices of hiring family members and the replacement manager was an “outsider”, he was viewed as an illegitimate successor. In an attempt to increase productivity and efficiency, changes had to be made. These changes that were made “bureaucratized the plant in a punishment-centered way” (Firestone, 1990, p. 350). They violated deeply embedded social norms creating what Gouldner (1954) describes as “bureaucratic sabotage”. The result was subordinates responded negatively, causing the “new leader to fall back on hierarchical

authority, increasing tension and stress” (Hart, 1993, p. 46). The new leader had to create rules and procedures to subdue the resistance.

One of the outcomes of these new rules and procedures was the organizational members responded by spreading the “Rebecca Myth”. The Rebecca Myth was named after Daphne du Maurier’s story about a young woman who married a widower and moved into his mansion. The servants and people in the town did not like her because they idolized the former wife (whose name was Rebecca) and constantly compared the new wife to Rebecca. In relation to succession, the Rebecca Myth implies that former leaders can become idealized by members of an organization regardless of their qualities or what the perception of them by the organization was during the time the leader was in his/her position. In Gouldner’s (1952) study, the response to the new rules and procedures was the establishment of an idealization of the former manager. Unlike what happened in Salaman’s (1977) study, however, the myth in the gypsum mine persisted in spite of the fact that it was inauthentic. As a result, Gouldner (1952) concluded, “It is the emergence of problems of succession which require the successor learn and use bureaucratic methods” (p. 349). He believed, in the case of the gypsum mine he studied, the result of the loss of an idealized leader and the impending succession caused a negative disruption to the organization (Hart, 1993).

Morgan (2006) explains that the loss of an idealized leader can trap employees in a “psychic prison”. He states, “A particular aspect of organizational structure or corporate culture may come to assume special significance and be preserved and retained even in the face of great pressure to change” (p. 228). The attachment to a former leader can

define the employees' sense of identity. He explains this dynamic may help explain, "why there is often so much unconscious resistance to change in organizations" (p. 228).

In several studies, Grusky (1959; 1960; 1964) identified succession as disruptive to organizations. A study of a prison camp revealed that shortly after a prison camp official was replaced, the number of inmates who were either voluntarily or involuntarily transferred increased. More disturbing is the fact that so did the escape rate. In addition, after this same official was replaced, staff morale plummeted to an all-time low (Grusky, 1959). Grusky later identified that leadership succession "sets the conditions for the development of new policies, disturbs the traditional norms of the organization, and promotes changes in the formal and informal relationships among members of the system" (1960, p. 105).

Finally, in a study of baseball teams, Grusky (1964) showed that changing coaches when a team is not performing well does not improve the performance of the team. What he did find was teams with poor performance are stuck in a vicious cycle where their performance causes leadership succession (a new coach). This succession becomes disruptive to the team causing further poor performance. The poor performance then requires a new coach, and the cycle repeats itself. The effect is, "the successor, therefore, can easily be perceived as a disruptive force, for he serves as an easily observable symbol of undesired change." (Grusky, 1960, p. 108).

Indifferent Response to Succession

"Perhaps more confusing to those who appoint or study leaders in organizations than disagreement over the positive or negative effects of succession was the contention

that it does not matter” (Hart, 1993, p. 47). Early studies supporting the notion that succession events had no impact, either positive or negative, on organizations arose out of research on sports teams.

One such study was Gamson and Scotch’s (1964) study on managerial succession of major-league baseball teams. This was one of the first studies to declare that succession has no effect on the effectiveness of organizations. Much like Grusky (1963), they analyzed baseball teams that had undergone coach and/or manager changes and that had been consistently losing. Instead of attributing the losing performances of teams to the change in coaches and managers as Grusky (1963) had done, Gamson and Scotch (1964) argued, “Succession [...] is better seen as a scapegoating ritual performed during transitory performance slides to appease client-fans and to mask more fundamental organizational weaknesses” (Brown, 1982, p. 2). Gamson and Scotch (1964) believed success had more to do with the processes of the organization, such as drafting, scouting, and securing talented players, which were outside of the control of the coaches and managers.

Leadership Succession in Schools

There are three factors that can determine whether the effects of principal succession on a school are positive, negative, or indifferent. First, the reason for the selection can define the impact. There are studies that show the selection process has no effect on the organization. Miskel and Owens (1983) studied the impact succession had on a variety of institutional variables such as student attitudes, school climate, discipline,

isolation, and perceived organizational effectiveness. The study found there was no evidence that principal succession increases or decreases organizational effectiveness.

Even though the process of selection may not have an effect on the organization, the reason for making the selection does (Miskel & Cosgrove, 1985). According to Davidson and Taylor (1999), “Administrator changes do produce positive results, particularly when the new leader was chosen because of dissimilarity with the other members of the school” (p. 7). From this perspective, the succession of a new administrator into a school experiencing difficulties maintaining AYP scores, frequent teacher turnover, etc. can help solve these problems. Hargreaves (2009) notes that the leadership succession of heroic leaders, used as an opportunity to “shake things up”, can bring about some dramatic improvements. However, these improvements will very rarely bring about sustained change. In addition to being dissimilar with other personnel within the school, school leaders chosen because of a discontinuity with the previous principal’s mediocrity can bring positive change to a school (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006).

Second, socioeconomic factors can affect how principal succession impacts a school. Rowan and Denk (1984) studied the effects of change in 149 schools in the San Francisco Bay Area. The study suggested that schools with a high percentage of students with low Socioeconomic Status (SES) were less rigid and were adaptable to changes that promote improvement. One of these changes that facilitated growth in student achievement was principal succession. The analysis of the results of the study showed, “In schools with higher proportions of economically disadvantaged students, the succession of new principals to school leadership tended to result in higher academic outcomes. However, in schools with proportionally fewer disadvantaged students, the

opposite was the case” (Rowan & Denk, 1984, p. 532). This study showed that a variety of organizational and environmental factors, not solely the succession process itself, play an important role in determining how leadership succession will affect an organization.

The final factor in whether the succession of a school leader positively, negatively, or indifferently affects an organization is teachers’ view of the type of leader the departing principal was. The loss of a charismatic leader can have a negative effect on the staff of a school. The Change Over Time? study (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2004) followed schools in the United States and Canada over the course of thirty years. At two of these schools, “Teachers mourned the loss of charismatic leaders and worried (rightly so) if anyone would be able to fill their shoes” (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006, p. 18). There was also betrayal felt by the staff members when these leaders took some of the best staff members to their new schools. This can be especially troublesome if there was a reminiscing culture imbedded in the school. Unwanted changes such as the loss of a well-liked principal as well as the after-effect of losing good teachers to another school can remind teachers of the way it used to be. This can open up teachers’ “nostalgia”, increasing their resistance to any change (Goodson, Moore, & Hargreaves, 2006).

In another review of the Change Over Time? study (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2004), Fink and Brayman (2006) note that the charismatic leader’s successor’s, “more formal paternalistic, ‘by-the-book’ approach had a profoundly debilitating affect on the mission and morale of the staff” (p. 69). On the other hand, when these types of leaders are replaced, a positive impact occurs. Hargreaves and Goodson (2006) explain when, “Authoritarian or bureaucratic leaders were succeeded by one with a more human touch...the overwhelming feeling was one of relief” (p. 19).

Recent studies have sought to identify ways to increase the chance for a positive succession process. One such way is to groom internal applicants for the position. Gronn and Lacy (2006) describe this trend as “role cloning”. In an analysis of a study conducted by the National College for School Leadership, Bundrett, Rhodes, and Gkolia (2006) noticed there is a suggested “direct link between high-quality leadership development and student outcomes” (p. 265). Placing a concentrated effort on developing future leaders can also foster an increased motivation of the candidate to apply for the position and look past some of the reasons that were identified for the lack of applicants for open administrative positions. “Teachers who believe that encouragement from current school leaders is important to their pursuing a position as principal seem to be more highly attuned to both the incentives and disincentives associated with the job” (Howley, Andrianaivo, & Perry, 2005, p. 772).

Pernick (2001) identifies two advantages for the school and district for focusing on building leadership talent. First, focusing on internal candidates that have been a concentration of building leaders can ensure the candidate is in line with the cultural and strategic vision and mission of a district and school. This is not so much about an attitude, leadership style, or temperament match to the outgoing administrator. Instead, it is about the incoming administrator being molded to the leadership culture of the school (Gronn & Lacey, 2006). Second, the implementation process of this vision and mission by the successor is quickened because there is greater control of the leader or leaders with the necessary skills to make this happen.

Another opportunity to increase the chance for a positive succession experience is through leadership mentoring. Traditionally, principals have been “thrown to the wolves”

to face cultural, social, demographic, and accountability demands (Gronn & Rawlings-Sanaei, 2003). According to Malone (2001), a recent Carnegie Foundation study concluded that principal leadership mentoring programs are one of the most successful ways to support principals in their careers. In addition, much research has been conducted that identifies key components of these leadership mentoring programs (Alsbury & Hackman, 2006; Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2006; Crow & Matthews, 1998; Gross, 2009). Although very difficult to define (Hall, 2008), the role of a mentor has morphed from a protégé finding a mentor that will serve as a counselor to an opportunity for “socialization into a new community of practice and assumption of a new role identity” (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2006, p. 275).

There are several benefits to mentoring programs. Principals value “the opportunity for reflective conversations, emotional and moral support, and the affirmation that they are doing a good job” (Saban & Wolfe, 2009, p. 5). In a survey of principals, Crow and Matthews (1998) found that these principals referred to mentors as their primary and best source of support in becoming effective school administrators. The principals reported that the protégé/mentor relationship had a greater impact than even their courses and professors in their advanced leadership development programs leading to certification. Well-planned programs can also be beneficial to the mentors and the schools and districts in which the mentoring program operates (Alsbury & Hackman, 2006; Crow & Matthews, 1998).

Early studies on the effects of succession were focused on organizations such as prisons, sports teams, and manufacturing businesses, but these studies relate to recent studies on the effects of succession in schools. Three main dynamics, the selection

process, socioeconomics, and the view of the outgoing leader, affect how succession events are perceived in schools. Although some are negative or indifferent, researchers, practitioners, and legislators alike are now recognizing and supporting ways to increase the chance for the succession process to be a positive event in schools. Grooming future leaders and developing leadership mentoring programs are just two of these ways.

Turbulence Theory and Succession

In this section, Turbulence Theory will be applied to changes, such as the loss of a principal, in a school. Three main tenets of Turbulence Theory will be discussed: Positionality, cascading, and stability. In addition, the four stages of Turbulence Theory will be defined. Understanding how Turbulence Theory can frame a change in an organization is important for leaders, both those already in the organization as well as those coming into the organization, as it can help to ensure these changes do not become detrimental to the success of a school.

The weather around us is constantly changing. It may be cloudy for an hour, or even for a few days, and then the clouds disappear revealing the radiant sun shining down on us. A few hours later, the clouds may roll back in, begin to get dark, and eventually, rain begins to fall. These changes are natural and necessary to sustain life.

The change process in education is much the same. According to McMurrin (2001), educational institutions are constantly changing. New students join teachers' classes, schedules may change due to a snow delay, or teachers may have to move classrooms. These changes mark a minor disruption to the environment of the school. Many times, people working in the school barely recognize the disruption these events

cause, because the school returns to its normal operations. Every once in a while, however, a school experiences a period of turbulence, creating instability in the school as an organization. Gross (2004) found when the period of turbulence involves leadership succession, it can have a lasting, profound impact on a school. In his study of exemplary schools, he describes how one elementary school went through a difficult succession experience after losing a beloved and visionary leader to another school. When the incoming leader questioned some of the efforts of a reform process led by the previous administrator and embraced by the teachers, the faculty and staff began feeling like the new leader was leading them away from what they had worked so hard to accomplish. As a result, the reform effort crumbled (Gross, 2004). Turbulence Theory explores this notion that organizations can be impacted by change, both seemingly unrecognizable changes and those causing a period of marked instability (Gross, 1998).

Turbulence Theory also recognizes there is a positive side to turbulence. As stated by Gross (2008), “The same turbulence that makes us so uncomfortable also opens up new possibilities.” Gross (2004) described another school in the middle of a reform effort that was experiencing the loss of a leader to another position. However, in this school, the new leader recognized the reform effort was being effective and decided to not make any unnecessary changes. Instead, she decided to add to what was already being done. One of the ways she did this was to help teachers better understand how to interpret and link student data to their teaching practices. As a result, despite the same change as the school mentioned above, the reform effort grew deeper and even more effective than it had already been. The succession became a positive period of turbulence in the culture of the school.

According to Turbulence Theory, any time there is a change in the organization, there are four categories of turbulence that may be a result of that change. Gross (2014) explains these degrees in this way:

- Light turbulence-Associated with ongoing issues, little or no disruption in normal work environment, subtle signs of stress
- Moderate turbulence-Widespread awareness of the issue, specific origins
- Severe turbulence-Fear for the entire enterprise, possibility of large-scale community demonstrations, a feeling of crisis
- Extreme-Structural damage to the institution's normal operation is occurring.

These degrees serve as a foundation for understanding Turbulence Theory. However, there are three facets of Turbulence Theory, positionality, cascading, and stability, which help us understand how principal succession can impact an organization.

Positionality

Under Turbulence Theory, "Individuals have an enhanced ability to calibrate the severity of the issue at hand" (Gross, 2014, p. 19). However, not all individuals will calibrate the severity the same way. One of the reasons is because of their "position" in the organization. According to Gross (2014), positionality in an organization is a factor in the way the turbulent event is perceived. He explains:

When thinking of positionality as developed in Turbulence Theory, it is important to understand the relative situation of individuals in the organization in *a multidimensional fashion*. In the case of educational institutions, this means not only attempting to be empathetic to the turbulence as students might experience it, for example, but also acknowledging that groups of students [...] may experience it differently.

Equally, it means seeing individuals in each of their group affiliations and simultaneously as separate beings. This is not a linear, easily nested process. (p. 253)

The loss of a principal through succession is not just felt by the faculty and staff. Students, parents, and community members feel the impact as well (Gross, 2004). Depending on their position in the organization, they may feel the impact in differing degrees. As Gross (2014) noted, it is important for leaders to be aware of the many different “positions” in the school. When faced with what are seemingly simple decisions, principals should consider each “position” and the individuals within that “position” as the effects of these decisions can be far-reaching. They can impact each group of people in differing ways and severity levels.

Cascading

Another component of Turbulence Theory that helps to explain how situations and circumstances such as the loss of a principal and the impending succession impact an organization is the concept of cascading. Even though someone or group within an organization may be experiencing a lesser degree of turbulence as a result of a singular event, “understanding cascading is a matter of understanding context and the force of a series of turbulent conditions” (Gross, 2014, p. 254).

Stability

The final tenet of Turbulence Theory is stability. The concept of stability is based on the idea that the same problem can hit two institutions, and the impact can be detrimental for one, but minimal for the other (Gross, 2008). In regards to principal

turnover, Pijanowski, Hewitt, and Brady (2009) state, “Leadership shortage is experienced differently by varying types of schools, as well as grade levels” (p. 86). For example, a school that is making AYP, has low incidences of special education and low socioeconomic status students, and has a stable faculty will be impacted by turbulence such as principal turnover in a different and, perhaps, a less traumatic way than a school facing severe budgetary problems, lack of AYP success, etc.

The attrition and turnover of the principal can cause a period of turbulence. Since the attrition rate of school leaders is a key factor in the sense of stability of a school culture (Gupton, 2003; Taylor, 2009), the transition from one principal to another can be devastating. “Leadership succession has potentially profound implications for individuals and, in turn, for the schools in which they work” (Rhodes & Brundrett, 2005, p. 15). The loss of something familiar, such as a school leader, provokes change (Brown & Moffett, 1999). It can mark a significant turning point in the culture of the school. The school culture that is affected by the damage the turnover of a principal causes reaches far beyond the four walls of a school building. It affects all stakeholders differently (Jones & Webber, 2001). In addition, the circumstances surrounding the loss of that principal can be a factor in heightening the effects of the departure of the outgoing principal and the resulting succession and the impact on the organization (Jamison & Taylor, 1999). Viewing and analyzing the succession experience through the lens of Turbulence Theory and its three tenets (positionality, cascading, and stability) can help leaders at all levels to direct the organization toward success, and away from the negative effects of the turbulence caused from the change in leadership.

Conclusion

Many are concerned over the impending leadership shortage that has developed because of decreasing tenure and retention rates, an aging generation of school leaders, and applicant shortages. State, national, and even international statistics show these phenomena.

Succession as a process plays a major role in the effects of increased turnover in the position of school leader. Pre-arrival factors, both environmentally controlled and organizationally controlled, can shape how the succession process is felt by an organization (Miskel & Cosgrove, 1987). Faculty, staff, students, and other stakeholders can feel emotions such as detachment, fear, and expectation (Ogawa, 1987) after the loss of a leader.

Finally, Turbulence Theory can help explain how succession is felt. It can also assist incoming administrators in dealing with the succession process in an organization. It is a valuable lens by which the incoming administrator can help to ensure that changes improve, not become a detriment to, any effective school reform efforts already in place (Gross, 2008).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Assumptions and Rationale for a Qualitative Design

According to Green (2008) “The goal of educational research is to acquire and arrange educational data that will serve to explain, predict, and control behavior, events, and educational programs” (p. 1). In order to accomplish this in this study, however, a qualitative design of a case study must be utilized.

The choice of research methodology should depend on the type of research questions posed by the researcher (Merriam, 1998; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005; Yin, 2009). Because the questions were based on the how and why, a qualitative approach was necessary.

An underlying tenet of this study is an effort to make meaning out of respondents’ perceptions to the events caused by leadership instability. In a sense, it is, as Onwuegbuzie and Johnson (2006) describe qualitative research, an attempt to “capture authentically the lived experiences of people” (p. 49). As Merriam (1998) explains, “A case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved” (p. 19). Because this study looks at the people involved in these circumstances through the lens of their own reality, a qualitative design is the most effective (Hesse-Biber, 2010).

This study asked the following questions:

Overarching Question:

-What impact does frequent principal turnover have on a rural middle school, its staff, and parents?

Sub-Questions:

1. How does the current principal understand his decision to remain in the school and what are his perceptions about the impact the turnover has on the school?
2. How do former principals understand the impact of turnover on their decision to leave the school and what are their perceptions of the impact the decision has made on the stakeholders of the school?
3. How do district administration, teachers, and parents understand the impact of turnover on the school and themselves?
4. What were the local contextual factors that affected the school and how did they change during the period of turnover?

Role of the Researcher

I am a doctoral student at a research university. At this time, I am a principal at a junior high school in south central Pennsylvania. My career has been in public education, part of which was as a teacher in an urban district that experienced rapid administrative turnover over a four-year period. I experienced, first-hand, the trauma that the rapid departures and the frequent transitions of new administrators caused to the morale of the staff, the management of the school, student achievement, and student behavior.

Conversely, I have experienced the rebuilding of trust, morale, culture, and achievement

that effective and stable leadership can facilitate. Data for this study were collected through human interaction with members of the faculty and staff of a rural school that has experienced a period of leadership instability. In addition, I utilized interaction with administrators, either incoming or outgoing, of these schools during the same period.

I developed thorough and comprehensive interview protocols that remained consistent. These protocols guided me through the interview process and allowed me to keep the interview focused. I knew the protocols well and used interview skills that were effective and efficient.

At the time of most of the interviews, I had just become principal of a middle school. One of my major concerns was to protect against my own bias of being thrust into an unstable school and the experiences through which I was living. As a way to confront this concern, I sought direction from critical friends who provided support and guidance. They were objective readers of the dissertation and offered insight to ensure I was not writing from a biased point of view. Both were aware of my current challenges as principal of a middle school. Through the input of these two critical friends, I was guarded against being “blindsided” by preconceived notions.

Data Collection

According to Tellis (1997), the design of case studies places the focus on getting details from the participants’ viewpoints using multiple sources of data. One of the sources of data used in this study was a review of demographic information. This demographic information included the population the district serves. In addition, state

assessment data, reports of progress, and Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) data were reviewed.

The original design was to conduct a meaningful review of artifacts such as district and school newsletters and newspaper articles. I conducted a search in the local newspaper and I looked for school and district newsletters, but I could not find any information on the turnover. I began to realize there was no communication to the community about the turnover during this time. As I proceeded further in my study, I realized that communication was not just lacking to community members, it was also insufficient to other stakeholders more directly associated with the district and school such as staff members. Not finding any artifacts such as newsletters and newspaper articles seemed to have no negative impact on this study.

I did attend a board meeting. Although the board minutes were not relevant to my study, it was at this board meeting that I was introduced to the board member whom I eventually interviewed.

Site and Participants

Site

For the purpose of this study, the site chosen had to meet several conditions. They were:

1. A rural school

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, there was one main reason for studying rural schools. That reason was a lack of research on turnover in rural schools. Much of the research focuses on urban environments where turnover seems more prevalent. However,

there has been little attention given to rural environments where frequent turnover is also taking place.

2. A middle school

It was important for me to study a middle school because the middle school seems to be in the background in the conversation about educational reform. The high school level receives a lot of attention and there is a lot of discussion about things like graduation rates. Elementary education is also in the “spotlight”. Things such as early intervention programs have come to the forefront. However, very little is said about the middle school and the important role these years play in students’ lives. I discussed this in Chapter 1.

3. A school that experienced a period of turnover of at least one new principal per year for at least three years. Three years was chosen because it is an appropriate number to use to establish a pattern of turnover.

As a reference point, I retrieved a list of all of the rural school districts in Pennsylvania from the Center for Rural Pennsylvania. The search began with making contact with 32 rural school districts across Pennsylvania. None of these school districts matched the criteria for the study. Out of these 32 school districts, 23 had “regular” turnover (retirements followed by immediate leadership, promotions to central office, etc.), but not enough to meet the criteria. Two of the school districts had consistent turnover, but only at the assistant principal level. The remaining seven had other sources of turnover such as realignment of district administrators, but, again, it was not the amount of consistent turnover that would have adequately answered the research questions.

After conducting the search, I identified one school as a possible site. However, after meeting with the superintendent of that district, I determined that because the principal had been dismissed and as a condition of this dismissal no one was able to speak about it, the site would not meet the criteria for the study.

There was one rural school within a suburban district that had experienced a period of administrator turnover. Although the school district is classified as suburban, the individual school is classified as rural. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2011), the school's locale code is identified as "Rural: Fringe (41)". A Rural: Fringe area is defined as a "Census-defined rural territory that is less than or equal to 5 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an urban cluster" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). Beyond being identified as a rural school, this school had experienced rapid and consistent turnover that more than matched the research questions. After collecting information on the school about the amount of turnover, I determined the amount of turnover that had taken place exceeded the original expectation for the study.

Another stipulation for the study was to find a school that had experienced turnover at the rate of at least one principal per year for three years. In this case, the neighboring school met the criteria. Since the 2003-2004 school year, there had been six different principals (one served two separate terms). At the end of the 2007-2008 school year, a principal left the building to move to a central office position. For the 2008-2009 school year, there was one principal that served the entire year. For the 2009-2010 school year, there was a different principal that served the entire school year. This individual

also served as the principal for the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year. However, another principal took over in the middle of the first semester of that school year.

Based on the criteria needed to answer the research questions, Cross County Area Middle School (CCAMS) was chosen. This school is part of the Cross County Area School District (Both “Cross County Area Middle School” and “Cross County Area School District” will be used as pseudonyms for the actual school and district).

According to 2000 census data, the Cross County Area School District (CCASD) served approximately 58,000 residents. However, 2010 census data showed the population increased to approximately 63,000 people. At that time, it was reported that the median family salary was close to \$58,000. The CCASD is the largest school district in the metropolitan area of a major city in the northeast United States, and had a 2013-2014 budget of approximately 96 million dollars. The CCASD covers close to 78 square miles of rural, suburban, commercial, and industrial regions. There are sixteen schools in the district that house approximately 8,000 students.

The CCAMS is one of four middle schools in the CCASD. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2011), CCAMS has a population of close to 637 students in grades 6th through 8th and is made up of about 94.5% white students, 1.5% black students, 2% Latino/Hispanic students and 1.5% Asian/Pacific Islander students. The Economically Disadvantaged population is approximately 20.6%. The IEP population (students receiving Special Education supports and services) is close to 18%. The school is fed from three out of the district’s six intermediate schools, and the students of CCAMS feed into one of two high schools in the CCASD.

After making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2009-2010, the CCAMS made AYP in all categories except IEP Math for the 2010-2011 school year. They were able to meet the benchmark in IEP Reading and Economically Disadvantaged Reading by the “Safe Harbor with Confidence Interval” of scoring. As a district, Cross County Area School District met AYP in 2011, but did not in 2012.

Table 2. Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) of Cross County Area Middle School (CCAMS) and Cross County Area School District (CCASD)

<i>Testing Year</i>	<i>Made AYP (CCAMS)</i>	<i>AYP Status (CCAMS)</i>	<i>AYP Status (CCASD)</i>
<i>2012</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>School Improvement I</i>	<i>Warning</i>
<i>2011</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Warning</i>	<i>Made AYP</i>
<i>2010</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Made AYP</i>	<i>Made AYP</i>
<i>2009</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Made AYP</i>	<i>Made AYP</i>
<i>2008</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Making Progress</i>	<i>Made AYP</i>
<i>2007</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>School Improvement II</i>	<i>Made AYP</i>
<i>2006</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Making Progress</i>	<i>Made AYP</i>
<i>2005</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>School Improvement I</i>	<i>Warning</i>
<i>2004</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Warning</i>	<i>Made AYP</i>
<i>2003</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Made AYP</i>	<i>Warning</i>

These specific statistics are important as they show how the school, and its progress toward making AYP, may be affected by the turnover (although this was not a focus of this study).

Participants

After determining a site, I concluded that several key participants needed to be interviewed. I conducted a total of nineteen interviews, eighteen of which were face-to-face. Of those eighteen interviews, seventeen were recorded. The interview that was not face-to-face was with the superintendent. The superintendent decided that it would be easier for me to send the questions to her. She wrote her responses to the questions and sent them back to me. I was able to interview the following:

1. At least one building principal involved in the frequent turnover

I had the opportunity to interview two former building principals that were present during the period of turnover. One had left the building to become an assistant superintendent in the same district and then became a superintendent in a district in a neighboring county. The other former principal became a principal of another building within the district.

2. At least one assistant principal employed during the time of the frequent turnover

I interviewed one former assistant principal who was there throughout much of the period of turnover I studied.

3. The current principal

There were two interviews conducted with the current principal. The first one focused on previously formulated questions and the interview closely followed these questions. However, the second interview focused more on the principal's plans for the upcoming year. Since the principal was recently board-approved as the principal (previously he was only the "Acting" principal), it was important to touch base with him

about his plans for the upcoming school year. This interview took place during the summer in a relaxed atmosphere.

4. The current superintendent

The current superintendent responded to my interview questions in writing.

5. The current assistant superintendent

Although the original design was to interview the current assistant superintendent, I decided to interview the Director of Secondary Education. There were several reasons for this. First, the current assistant superintendent was only in that position for one year. Second, the background of the assistant superintendent was in food service and transportation. The Director of Secondary Education had been in administration, either at the building (a different building in the district) or district office level, for the entire time of the period of turnover being studied.

6. The superintendent employed during the time of the frequent turnover

After additional information was gained from interviews, I determined that the superintendent that was present early on in the period of turnover would not be interviewed. The previous superintendent was only in that position during the first two years of the turnover. Another reason was that the previous superintendent moved out of the state, and I was unable to secure contact information of this individual.

7. At least five parent representatives

Only two parents were interviewed for this study. Both parents had children attend the school before the period of turnover and during the period of turnover.

8. Eight to ten teachers who were present during the period of frequent turnover.

I spoke with eight professional staff members at the school (including a school nurse). They had varied experiences relating to the turnover because of their tenure at the school. For example, I interviewed a teacher who had been there for six years and a professional staff member who was retiring a few months after the interview.

9. One school board member

I attended a school board meeting. It was at this meeting that I met the board member I would later interview. This board member served for the entire time the period of turnover took place. Although I would have liked to interview more than one board member, I received an e-mail from the superintendent shortly after my research began stating that because this was a personnel matter, the district solicitor had recommended the board members not speak to me.

Table 3 highlights the demographics of those I interviewed. In chronological order by the date of interview, Table 3 includes the code used to identify the individual, role of the person interviewed, years directly connected to CCAMS, gender, race, and whether or not he or she is still connected (still working at the school, still employed within the district, etc.). As noted in the table, those interviewed represented a variety of years of experience as well as a mix of genders. A majority of those interviewed were still connected to the school in some way or another at the time of the interview.

Table 3. Demographics of Those Interviewed

Code	Role	Years at CCAMS	Gender	Ethnicity	Still Connected to CCAMS
T-01	Teacher	4	F	White	Y
P-01	Current Principal	>1	M	White	Y
T-02	Teacher	11	M	White	Y
T-03	Teacher	15	M	White	Y
T-04	Teacher	16	F	White	Y
T-05	Teacher	12	F	White	Y
AP-01	Former Assistant Principal	8	F	White	N
T-06	Teacher	15	F	White	Y
N-01	Nurse	7	F	White	Y
T-07	Teacher	9	F	White	Y
SS-01	Building Secretary	20	F	White	Y
PP-01	Previous Principal	4	M	White	N
CO-01	Director of Secondary Education	N/A	F	White	Y
SB-01	School Board Member	N/A	F	White	Y
P-01	Current Principal (second interview)	>1	M	White	Y
PP-02	Previous Principal	3	M	White	N
CO-02	Superintendent	N/A	F	White	Y
PA-01	Parent	N/A	F	White	N
PA-02	Parent	N/A	M	White	N

The main reason I chose to interview such a broad range of stakeholders was to ensure I was able to get an accurate picture from a variety of lenses. For example, the teachers were able to reveal their thoughts about the culture of the building during the period of instability. District-level administrators were able to disclose their ideas about why there had been such a period of instability. Parents and school board members were able to present an “outsiders” viewpoint of the period of instability.

I started out interviewing a teacher who was recommended to me by a staff member of the CCASD. This teacher refused to let me record the conversation, and provided very basic responses to the question. So, I went “back to the drawing board”. I decided to interview the current principal, so he would have a frame of reference should he receive questions from others about the process and what information I would be seeking. At that interview, he recommended a few teachers who he felt would provide information. I decided to start out interviewing the individuals he recommended. I felt because he had only been at the school a few months, his recommendations would not be based on any bias.

I started with teachers. As I began to interview teachers, each one was able to recommend others who may provide information. At this point, I naturally questioned whether their recommendations would be biased, and the teachers chosen would have similar perspectives and opinions to the ones before. However, as I proceeded, I realized that each teacher had a different story to tell. After interviewing five teachers, I had the opportunity to interview the former assistant principal of CCAMS who was present throughout most of the period of turnover. I took advantage of this opportunity. That interview provided me with a different perspective. After interviewing five teachers, this

change in perspective from the former assistant principal was refreshing to me because it exposed a different “side” of things.

Following the interview with the former assistant principal, I interviewed three other professional staff members. At this point, the recommendations of these staff members of who to interview began to wane, and, when recommendations were made, almost all of them were names of people to whom I had already spoken. I strongly felt at that point I had received enough relevant and important information from the professional staff members that I did not need to keep pushing for more recommendations from them.

After interviewing a building secretary who had been at the school since it opened, I shifted my focus to administrators. It was during this time that I was able to interview two former principals, two district office administrators, and the current principal. I knew I needed to get the perspective of someone not involved in the field of education, so I went to a school board meeting hoping to meet someone to interview. At that meeting, a former colleague introduced me to a school board member and I explained my research to the school board member. The school board member quickly agreed to meet me at a local restaurant and speak to me. After attempting to contact a few other board members, I was notified in email by the superintendent that the solicitor of the CCASD recommended to the board members they not speak to me because I was researching a “personnel issue”.

Finally, I interviewed two parents. Both parents had a child in CCAMS prior to the period of turnover and one in CCAMS during the period of turnover. I strongly desired to interview parents who had a student in the school during the turnover and also

after the turnover. However, this did not happen, although it was not due to lack of effort on my part.

I made many attempts to contact parents. During the second interview with the current principal, I asked him for contact information of parents who may be interested in speaking with me. He gave me phone numbers of three parents who possibly would be willing to speak with me. I decided, based on my experience as a building administrator, that I would not call these parents because I felt that they needed to be contacted first by the current principal to see if they were comfortable speaking with me rather than the first contact being made by me. I e-mailed the current principal three times after making this decision, asking for his support and if he would be willing to contact the parents to see if they were interested and then give me their e-mail address. I did not hear back from the principal.

I also connected with a community member who was willing to ask those in her neighborhood if they would be interested in talking to me. After talking with her two weeks later, it became apparent that this strategy did not work. She was not able to find anyone that fit the criteria for my study.

Finding parents who had children at CCAMS during the turnover and also a current student there would have been helpful. It could have provided me an additional perspective, especially of how the turnover currently affects the stakeholders of the school. Although these interviews could have provided me with additional perspectives, not conducting them did not weaken this study.

I would have liked to interview all of the individuals I had originally listed in my proposal; however, I was not able to do so. Even though I struggled to interview exactly

whom I set out to interview, I strongly believe that I was able to answer my research questions with the information I gained. The information provided by all of the nineteen people interviewed proved very comprehensive and extremely important to the findings of this study.

Data Analysis

As Merriam (1998) explains, data analysis does not take place only after the data have been collected. Instead, it is a concurrent progression that is in effect throughout the entire data collection process. The more data one gathers through the collection process, the more rigorous the analysis has to become. However, the analysis does not stop after the data have been collected. In fact, “Analysis becomes more intensive as the study progresses, and once all the data are in” (p. 155).

I used the constant comparative method to analyze the data both during and after the collection process. Before the data collection process began, I had well-developed questions to focus my inquiry (see Appendices A-J). As I began to compare and contrast the interviews through the use of the transcripts, categories developed. “Units of data” (Merriam, 1998) were placed into these categories. At the onset, it is impossible to know what is going to become meaningful, so the categories initialized as broad categories. As the interviews continued and the categories matured, comparing the categories became just as important as comparing the data that fit into those categories. I anticipated that by the end of the study, the categories that have been constructed through the use of the constant comparative method were the characteristics this study attempted to discover.

I used a qualitative data analysis program (Hyperresearch) to assist me in analyzing the data. As I began to use this program, the first few codes I used centered on

an increase in accountability and communication. As I began to take a deeper look at the data, trust and visibility emerged alongside accountability and communication. I continued to analyze the data and started to find these pieces fit together to create more complex data. They all had a common theme: Many of those I interviewed identified the principal who served for thirteen years before the frequent turnover began possessed these attributes and that is why these attributes were important for a principal of CCAMS to possess.

At the same time I was noticing how those pieces fit together, I started to recognize that there were two other categories developing; again, not in isolation of each other. I coded all of the data relating to the assistant principal and all of the data relating to the power staff held and saw a more complex subsystem develop. This subsystem was these two things became stability factors during the period of turnover.

It was near this point when I realized I had to analyze the data several times through the lens of each research question individually to answer each effectively. After analyzing through each lens, I went back and focused on how the “answer” to the four research questions fit together. I noticed an unexpected finding that stood out immediately to me. It appeared that for every question, almost every stakeholder I interviewed said the same things. It was almost as if they shared their responses to the interview questions with each other. I never expected stakeholders would recognize the same effects the frequent turbulence had on them and other stakeholders of CCAMS. I never thought most would identify things such as the assistant principal and the power certain staff held were important stability factors during the turnover. They also described similarities between the current principal and the principal who served before the

turnover began. Even though they all had different perspectives, almost every stakeholder noticed the same things.

Methods of Verification

The largest sources of data for this study were interviews. All but two interviews were recorded, and then transcribed exactly as they took place. Respondents were sent a copy of the transcription of the interview and had the opportunity to read the transcription and respond to any information they perceived had been misinterpreted. There were no responses to their review of the transcripts.

Using a digital recorder was crucial to ensuring that the information being collected was accurate and it allowed me to focus on the interviews. For one of the interviews, the respondent refused to let me record the interview. For another, the respondent communicated her responses in writing. I also took field notes both during and after the interview. This was particularly important for one of the eighteen face-to-face interviews where the person being interviewed did not want to be recorded.

I collected data from several different groups of people so I was able to triangulate the data (see Table 3). Even though all of the interview subjects were asked very similar questions about the period of instability, each one had a different perspective. Because I have experienced a period of leadership instability in my career, it was important, although difficult, for me to keep my biases separate from the study. I firmly believe that no bias impacted this study.

I sought out professionals and scholars from the field who are knowledgeable about the topics of research interest that I have. These professionals and scholars were immersed in the research process and directed me through the study to ensure validity.

Ethical Issues

Because I used interviews as the main data collection method, I needed to ensure that the participants were completely informed of who I am, the purpose of the study, and how their responses would be utilized. Once informed, all interviewees gave consent with the knowledge that they could stop the interview at any time. The interview itself, as an intervention, was purposeful with the focus of the interview only on gaining data for the study. I guaranteed confidentiality, and explained the process to the participants of how their responses would be coded to conceal their identity.

The superintendent of the Cross County Area School District gave permission for me to interview the faculty and staff as well as both past and current administrators. All participants were given a consent form that was signed before the interview began. In addition, the participants had the right to stop the interview at any time. I guaranteed that I would do everything I could to protect confidentiality and explained the process of how their responses will be coded to conceal their identity.

Beyond the actual interview process, there are several conditions that ensured there was no breach of ethics. One of the conditions was the confidentiality of the respondents. Each respondent was coded. I was unable to keep the people interviewed from talking to each other about their participation in the process. In fact, some of those interviewed shared with me they had conversations with others whom I had already

interviewed. However, I never mentioned any names of people whom I interviewed, even when asked by others. By sending the transcripts to the respondents, I ensured they were completely comfortable with the information they gave during the interview.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Temple University approved this study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

The reason for the study was to determine the impact frequent principal turnover had on a rural middle school and its stakeholders. I analyzed the perceptions of each group of stakeholders based on each research question. What follows is the presentation of the findings of this case study:

- Initially, the current principal was unaware of the effects of the turnover and had no interest in uncovering them. His focus on his transition was correcting what his predecessor had damaged. It was not until he became personally connected to the turnover process that he truly began to notice the effects.
- The circumstances surrounding the entrance into and the exit from the principal position played a significant role in the previous principals' perspectives of the effects of the turnover on them and others. These effects had no impact on their decision to leave the school.
- The district administration, teachers, and parents were trapped in a “psychic prison” and were counting on the current principal to break them out. However, they were cautious because they knew the history of the frequent turnover. They had lived through it.
- The assistant principal became a source of stability and a constant for the stakeholders. The power held by certain members of the staff was an even stronger factor and became a “survival resource” for those living through the turnover.

In order to understand just how much turnover has occurred at CCAMS and to provide a frame of reference of the timeline of the tenures of the different principals, Table 4 highlights the amount of turnover starting with the 2003-2004 school year. The principals in quotation marks were interviewed for this study and/or referenced by others in this chapter. They are listed in chronological order.

Table 4. Tenure of Principals of Cross County Area Middle School (CCAMS)

School Year	Principal (Code)	Tenure
1991-2004	“Principal 1” (Principal 1)	Thirteen Years
2004-2005	Mr. Foore	One Semester
2004-2005	Principal 1 returned	One Semester
2005-2007	“Previous Principal 1” (PP-01)	Three Years
2008-2009	“Previous Principal 2” (PP-02)	One Year
2009-2010	Mr. Raab	One and a Half Years
2010-2012	Mr. Simon	Just Over One Year
2012-2013	“Current Principal” (P-01)	Current

The Principal's Perception of His Decision to Remain in the School and the Impact the Turnover Had on the School

The specific research question this section will answer is:

How does the current principal understand his decision to remain in the school, and what are his perceptions about the impact the turnover has on the school?

Finding

Initially, the current principal was unaware of the effects of the turnover and had no interest in uncovering them. His focus on his transition was correcting what his predecessor had damaged. It was not until he became personally connected to the turnover process that he truly began to notice the effects.

In order to answer this research question, I conducted two interviews. The first took place shortly after the current principal became “Interim Principal” from his position as assistant principal. The second interview took place after he had been appointed principal for the following school year.

The current principal originally came to CCAMS because he lived in the Cross County Area School District (CCASD). In fact, one of his sons was attending CCAMS during the timeframe of the two interviews. His motivation to accept the job at CCAMS was born out of his desire to work in the CCASD because of the quality of education: “[My wife and I] were always very, very happy with the quality of education that our kids had received. It was always one of my professional objectives to try to obtain employment with [CCASD].” (P-01)

Disconnection from the turnover

From the start, the current principal was disconnected from the effects the turnover may have had on him or others. He explained he had very little perspective on the history of the turnover:

I really don't know the history of what caused the high turnover in this building. I really don't know. I know of the people that were here the one person actually moved up in central office. But other than that, I really don't know why the principals left. (P-01)

He took it one step further beyond just his lack of knowledge of why former principals left. When asked directly whether the past history of turnover affected him, the current principal responded, "No, [...] I don't really care about the past." (P-01) This lack of concern for the past was a crucial influence on his view of the turnover and its effects. It showed, at the time of the first interview, he did not recognize the importance of the turnover on others. Instead, his initial focus was on "righting the wrongs" of the former principals. He felt this was the major concern facing the stakeholders of CCAMS, and his belief was it had nothing to do with the turnover.

Focus for the transition

Shortly after discussing his lack of knowledge of the reasons why other leaders left the position, I asked the current principal specifically how the turnover has affected stakeholders, particularly those who worked at CCAMS. He explained he felt the turnover had affected morale. However, he immediately turned the conversation to the need for increased accountability of the staff. He felt initiatives and changes were necessary because of the current culture, not because of the impact the turnover had on the building. He said:

I think the turnover has affected teacher morale. I think teachers have felt that they can pretty much run the building on their own. There were certain fractions in the building that had access to the office and the person in the office and those groups of teachers pretty much dictated how the building was run. It was, I don't think there was a lot of accountability as far as the staff goes, dress code, and things like that. So, you have a large portion of the faculty that had always been professional and do whatever. And then there's a portion of the faculty that really has kind of been allowed to do their own thing [...] I get the impression that the culture was allowed to slip and was not truly professional or acting in the best interest of students for awhile [...] So my perception, and I've heard from a lot of people that they really appreciate some straight forward expectations and someone that's willing to stand up and make some decisions for the building. (P-01)

Even though I asked him specifically to identify the impact of the turnover, he quickly shifted his response away from the impact of the turnover to the perceived need for accountability and clear expectations.

His emphasis moved to the leadership qualities the only principals he knew were present during the turnover had or did not have. His attention started with the principal (Principal 1) who had served for thirteen years. It was after this principal's tenure that the period of seven years of frequent turnover began. The current principal said about him, "He [Principal 1] was here when my daughter was here. So, as a parent, I was very impressed with [Principal 1] and how he ran the building. He pretty much, [Principal 1's] way and that's the way it was." (P-01) His ability to identify Principal 1 as an effective leader from his experiences, not just from what he heard about him, was important. It is directly related to stakeholders' feelings that Current Principal and Principal 1 were similar in their approaches. This notion is discussed later in this chapter.

As he continued, he turned the focus of the conversation to his predecessor, who he served under for three months as an assistant principal. He identified his concentration

for his transition was on confronting what he perceived as ineffective practices and approaches of the principal he succeeded:

The other person I could comment on is my predecessor, [former principal]. I worked with him for a brief time in the summer [...] I was actually worried about being associated with his lack of leadership as an assistant principal as we moved forward. (P-01)

He became more specific in his criticism of his predecessor. He stated, “There wasn’t a lot of communication even as an assistant principal to him, being new in the position I would email him something, a question, and it would go unanswered, which really bothered me.” (P-01) He continued to critique his predecessor’s leadership and expressed his desire to correct what he had broken:

He’s (former principal) an extremely friendly, out-going person. And, I felt he wanted to make everybody happy [...] I also felt that there was, there were too many loose ends. [...] I think I am almost a polar opposite of where he was [...] I need to have an understanding of what’s going on in the building and [...] I want to make sure that things are getting done and they’re getting done right. (P-01)

Current Principal was more concerned with the “culture” of CCAMS and confronting the negative attitudes of some. He lacked an interest in the turnover and the effects of it. Instead, he believed if he set high expectations and communicated effectively, he would be able to shift the culture from one that focused on the staff to one that focused on the students. These were the exact things he felt his predecessor had not been able to do. He possessed no motivation to identify the effects of the turnover and address them.

Personal connection to the turnover

As the end of the school year approached, the principal had to move past the “I don’t care about the turnover” attitude and his perceived need to confront the negative

leadership of his predecessor. It was necessary for him to move on because he was directly confronted by the turnover, and it affected him personally. He knew it was at the end of the school year when the district administration would make a determination on whom the principal would be at CCAMS for the next school year. If they did not choose him to be principal, his leadership tenure would be less than a year, adding to the era of consistent turnover. His title at the time was “Interim Principal”, and there was no guarantee that he would remain at the school. He had a strong longing to remain in the position. This was clear in his statement, “I really have a desire to be the leader of the building.” (P-01) However, he was unsure whether he would remain in the position based on the history of principals being moved in and out of that position.

This insecurity in whether he would return is identical to what some of the other leaders before him felt. More importantly, it was at this point, that Current Principal began to personally feel the effects of the turnover. As a result of the turnover history personally impacting him, he was forced to become aware of how it also affected others. He explained he finally recognized that he was not the only one feeling uncertain about the leadership for the following school year. He clearly realized others were impacted by the uncertainty of whether he would remain in the position:

I think that (whether he would return as principal) was on everyone’s mind, because on a daily basis for probably six to nine weeks, someone would say, “Did you hear anything about your future yet? Are you going to be here? What’s happening with you?” (P-01)

It turned out the district administration did recommend him to the school board for the position of principal of CCAMS for the following school year. He believed CCAMS needed to look to the future, not worry about the past. He expressed, “I’m hoping now that I am here again that we can just concentrate on the present and move

forward.” (P-01) He did not feel he was the only one ready to move forward. He felt the staff supported his passion to move on and were happy he was the one to lead them:

I’ve received a lot of emails, a lot of supportive emails, a lot of phone calls so I believe that they are ready to continue moving forward with what, I think they’re happy with the progress we’ve made, but they’re also very happy we’re going to continue it. (P-01)

This support from stakeholders is significant. As I discuss later in the chapter, it had not been since Principal 1 was leading the building that the staff really stood behind their leader. His perception that the stakeholders wanted to move forward and build on what he had already established was accurate. However, he was not fully aware just how important it was to them that he was remaining in the position.

Former Principals’ Perceptions on the Impact of the Turnover on Their Decision to Leave the School and the Impact the Decision Made on the Stakeholders of the School

The specific research question this section will answer is:

How do former principals understand the impact of turnover on their decision to leave the school, and what are their perceptions of the impact the decision has made on the stakeholders of the school?

Finding

The circumstances surrounding the entrance into and the exit from the principal position played a significant role in the previous principals’ perspective of the effects of the turnover on them and others. These effects had no impact on their decision to leave the school.

Reasons for Wanting to Come to CCASD

Previous Principal 1 succeeded Previous Principal 2, and identified his reason for wanting to leave his previous district. He was a principal at another district and realized there was minimal opportunity for upward movement. So, he applied for the position of principal in a district where he felt he would be able to move “up the ladder”. He stated:

I wanted to move away from [former district] because there wasn't going to be any kind of ladder movement, so I wanted to open myself up to more so I figured if I moved into a principal position in this school district (CCASD), it would eventually allow me to move to an upper administration position. (PP-01)

He explained the circumstances around him ending up at CCASD:

I actually came to [CCASD] to interview for the principal's position at [CCAMS], and [Previous Principal 2] and I were the top two candidates, and he won out [...]. However, when I didn't get the position for [CCAMS], I was called by the superintendent and offered a central administration position. So, I did take that position and lasted in that, I don't want to say lasted, but did that position for two years. (PP-01)

Previous Principal 2 was hired in the middle of the period of turnover. He was brought in from another district to be principal of CCAMS. He had a very similar reason for wanting to leave his district. When asked what brought him to the school, he stated:

The opportunity to get a building. I was assistant principal at [a middle school in another district], and prior to that I was assistant principal at [a high school in another district], so having the secondary building experience, I was ready for a building of my own. (PP-02)

Both principals had similar reasons for wanting to come to CCASD. They both were trying to advance their career. That is where the similarities end. Even though they had similar reasons for coming, the circumstances surrounding their entrance into and exit from the position were very different. In addition, how they gained their knowledge of the history of the turnover was different. Their knowledge was gained through different experiences. Previous Principal 1 knew of the turnover because he had lived

through it, but Previous Principal 2 learned about it throughout his three-year tenure as principal at CCAMS and his several-year tenure as assistant superintendent at CCASD. He had no perspective of the turnover when he transitioned into the principal position because he came from outside the district.

The Appointment to the Position

Much like there were differences in the knowledge of the effects of the turnover, there was a difference in the circumstances behind why they were appointed as principal at CCMAS. Previous Principal 1 was transferred from a central office position in the CCASD into the principal position at CCAMS after Previous Principal 2 moved up into central office at CCASD. Previous Principal 2 was hired directly to that position from another school district. The differences surrounding their entrances into the principal position had an effect on their confidence in their ability to break the pattern of principal turnover.

Previous Principal 1 was aware of the desire of the staff for someone to lead at CCAMS long term. He identified, “I knew going in that these people hadn’t had a solid administrator for several years, and of course, my first statement to them was, ‘Don’t worry. I’m here as long as they’d [central office] have me here.’” However, he lacked confidence in that statement. He continued, “But when you’re looking at that kind of dynamic and that kind of history, you’re always going to wonder, you know, ‘How long are they going to be here?’” (PP-01) This doubt was an obvious result of the frequent turnover that occurred. Unfortunately, the stakeholders had seen this lack of confidence and doubt in other leaders.

Others sensed this fear and lack of confidence in those who had been transferred from other positions within the school district:

I think it was from fear. I think, while they wouldn't express it externally, I think the administrators who have been there have always had that fear because things aren't working. And again, from the staff, "Oh you'll be gone too like the rest" type thing. So I think, especially all of those who came internally who knew the history there, there was a greater level of fear among if they mess up because there had been mess ups in that building. (CO-1)

[CCAMS] for years was known like after [Principal 1] and after [Previous Principal 2], we were known for the building that we broke principals. That's what we were known for. Or if administration didn't think they were doing a good job, they'd put them here, and then they would leave the district or they would find a new job. That's what we're known for is breaking principals. (T-04)

There are some people that I work with that feel like we were punished for years because they would put administrators here who had come from other buildings and they weren't – didn't seem like they were doing what they needed to do and then they come here. (T-07)

The lack of confidence felt by Previous Principal 1 and other principals and that other stakeholders recognized it are important components in understanding the effects of the frequent turnover at CCAMS. The stakeholders realized that confidence was not only defined by the leaders' belief they could be successful, but also by the opinion of other stakeholders whether that leader had previously been successful. They began to anticipate that leaders transferred to CCAMS were automatically deemed incompetent by central office. The stakeholders began to feel it was impossible for incoming leaders to be confident because they were already deemed incompetent.

Previous Principal 2 also knew the staff longed for someone to be there long-term, but what separated him from Previous Principal 1 was his confidence he would remain in the position for a long time. He never anticipated he would be promoted to central office. He explained:

I knew that the staff and the faculty wanted someone there long term. My goal was to stay there long term. I had no intentions of moving to central office. I loved being in a building and running it, and doing good things for the kids. I thought that central office was too far removed. (PP-02)

The difference between the previous principals was Previous Principal 2 had confidence in his ability to be successful, and this was directly correlated to the circumstances surrounding his appointment. Part of the reason he was confident was he was brought in from the outside, giving him very little perspective on the impact of the frequent turnover taking place at the time. He felt the reason many were not successful was because they were transferred from within the district:

[CCASD] had a history of promoting from within, and that's not necessarily the best way to go. Instead of picking the best person, they picked the best person from within, and I think people were promoted past their level of competency and that's probably the Achilles Heel for [CCASD] [...] For too long we shuffled people, and just because you weren't successful at the high school, moving you to the middle school doesn't guarantee that you're going to be successful even though there was a good system in place because now you're just going to ruin that system. (PP-02)

One would wonder why the district would continue to transfer principals from other positions within the district into the principal position at CCAMS, especially with so many stakeholders recognizing that this practice increased the challenges for the incoming leader and the stakeholders. In essence, they were setting these principals up for failure. As discussed above, some began to anticipate the failure of the incoming leaders. They would take the "wait and see" approach, expecting the leader's tenure to be very short. Despite all of this, even though they knew it may not be the best approach, some of those making the decisions folded to the pressure to hire from within. They stated:

[Current principal's] good thing is he came from the outside of the district and it was probably a good, fresh start. A fresh start, fresh face there with no ties to the

district was the best scenario which was one we had considered when we were interviewing and actually put [current principal's predecessor] in that position when we knew the challenges the person was going to face, but it was difficult when you had several internal candidates vying for that principal position. (CO-1)

I would say twice, at least in my opinion, we settled [...] it was a good candidate but not ideal, but you have to have a body to fill a building and short of creating upheaval at every building by doing the change, we slotted someone in. They were good but there probably were better candidates out there. (SB-01)

Somewhere along the line, for whatever reason, the pressure got to those making the decisions. Despite the fact they believed hiring from the outside may be a better option to confront the impact of the frequent turnover, they continued to transfer leaders from within the district. Their actions completely conflicted with their beliefs. This adds a deeper layer to what was going on not only at CCAMS, but also at CCASD. It became an additional factor of the turbulence CCAMS was facing. Not only did the stakeholders feel a disconnect from the principals throughout the period of turnover, they also had very little trust for those appointing their new leaders.

The Departure from the Position

The departure from the position also impacted their view of the effects of the frequent turnover on them. Previous Principal 1 was transferred to another building after only one year. However, Previous Principal 2 was promoted to a central office position after three years. Both identified that the central office frequently transferred people within the district and that this approach may not be the best way to confront the turnover. Despite this, their perspectives why people were transferred were different.

Previous Principal 1 started his conversation by presenting the frequent transfers in a positive light. His belief was the district places certain people in positions where they

fit best. He stated, “This district, they shift you around as they see a need or a void that needs to be filled or a building that needs to be fixed or something along those lines.”

(PP-01) He kept this same viewpoint when discussing why the superintendent moved him from CCAMS to his current middle school after only one year:

[The superintendent] has proven over the years that she doesn't just move people around. She always has that reason for doing it. She may not tell you what the reason is, but she, if you're moved to a certain building there's a reason for it. So it's not just a shift to be shifted [...] Sometimes I don't even know the reason but, you know, it is comforting for me to know that she has a reason for doing it and she had a reason for moving me [to his current building] [...] Once she saw my leadership style and saw what it could do, she said, “You will be better off and make more of an impact at [his current school]” [...] Obviously, if she didn't feel that I was a better fit for here [his current school], she wouldn't have moved me from [CCAMS]. (PP-01)

Previous Principal 1 tried to put a positive spin on his transfer out of the principal position, however, the more he talked, the more he began to contradict himself. At one point, he spoke of the conversation with the superintendent when she told him he would be moving out of CCAMS. He explained, “I did say something to her like, ‘How much say do I have in this?’ And, you know, just the mere fact of her saying, ‘None.’ You close up at that point.” (PP-01) This contradiction reinforces Previous Principal 1's lack of confidence discussed above. Although he desperately wanted to frame his transfer out of the principal position in a positive way, it became clear he felt he was on the same level as the other previous principals; the same principals that were deemed incompetent by many.

Previous Principal 1's perception on why principals were moved out of CCAMS was quite different than other stakeholders. He framed the reason for transition as positive one. Previous Principal 2, knowing his reason for leaving the position was because he was promoted, felt that many of the other transfers of the principals from

CCAMS were not for positive reasons. When asked why there is such a difficulty keeping someone at CCAMS, he responded, “Mine was opportunity and I moved up, so I can’t speak for myself. I think what happens is at [CCASD] they move people around instead of moving them out.” (PP-02) Several others agreed the reasons were not so positive, at least for some of the principals who were transferred out of CCAMS. One teacher believed, “I think sometimes the principals were moved out of like personality differences or other things. Sometimes it was based on their own personal needs that they didn’t return.” (T-07) Another explained, “[One of the principals] came down because he couldn’t handle the high school, and then, well he wasn’t fired here, but he was pushed out, and everybody knew what was happening.” (T-03)

These statements began to paint a picture that the circumstances and reasons for the exit from the position played a major role in how success was perceived. The stakeholders’ perception of whether a principal was successful was directly connected to the reason he/she exited the position as principal of CCAMS. Despite being transferred out of the position after only one year, Previous Principal 1 viewed the reasons for the continued placement of principals as positive. However, he was alone in his perception in the transfer being positive. Previous Principal 2 and most of the other stakeholders of CCAMS clearly felt the reasons for the transfer were not because of the leadership abilities of the principals. Rather, they believed CCAMS was a place where principals were moved to for other reasons, not because of a special skillset that would help confront the effects of the turnover. They began to feel that since the moves were a result of a lack of success in other administrative positions, the likelihood was very high the transferred principal was not going to be successful at CCAMS either. This background is

important when looking at the differences in how Previous Principal 1 and Previous Principal 2 perceived the impact of the turnover on themselves and others.

The Impact of the Turnover on Others

Both principals understood the impact the turnover had on the staff with whom they worked. However, Principal 1 was much more sympathetic to the staff and the impact of the turnover on them. He spoke a lot more about the impact on the staff and others than Principal 2. At one point, he described the unfair perception that some looking in from the outside may have because of the frequent turnover:

In some respects maybe, you know, people have been moved there that haven't been able to handle the job I think, but at the same time they were given that chance to be able to because of a certain skill set. Yeah, I can see, when you're looking at four administrators over the course of five years that's a lot of turnover. Where even five administrators over the course of six years, that's a lot of turnover so I can see why people would say, you know, "They can't handle it" or, "It's a horrible school" or something like that. But, it's not exactly true and how do you get that out there? You can't. (PP-01)

He continued and identified the impact of the frequent turnover on the staff:

When you go into a climate like that [frequent turnover at CCAMS], they're always hesitant to get comfortable with a new administrator. They always want to see, okay, what are you going to change now and, you know, what is it that you're going to make us do that the other person didn't do, and what can we get you to make sure you don't do, you know, that sort of climate so there's always a guardedness. (PP-01)

He also described the impact of the frequent turnover on the incoming administrators. He gave an example of how the turnover impacted incoming administrators in the School Improvement Plan development process, which was a constant activity that each incoming principal had to deal with. Throughout the period of turnover, the accomplishment of CCAMS meeting AYP changed every year. One year,

they would make AYP, the next year they would not. When they did not, the principal was tasked with creating a School Improvement Plan. Previous Principal 1 expressed his perception on how this affected the incoming administrators:

They're saying I'm buying into this, but then they [the administrators] leave. Then, you have a new administrator who's going to be coming in and taking a look at this document and saying, "Okay, I don't buy into it" or, "I buy into this piece but not this piece" and then yes, that is going to change the dynamic because now you have one person who is not involved with the original development of the plan, who now is going to be either forced to create a new committee to create a new plan or [...] follow a plan that was developed before they got in there. (PP-01)

Previous Principal 1 had been personally affected by the impact the turnover had on others. Because of the circumstance surrounding his entrance into and exit from the position, he had become part of the CCAMS machine that spit out incompetent principals. The idea that he clearly explained the impact the frequent turnover had on many different stakeholders signifies a heightened awareness and sensitivity that Previous Principal 2 did not have. This awareness and sensitivity to the impact was a result of him being a principal at CCAMS during the period of frequent turnover.

In contrast to what Previous Principal 1 shared, Previous Principal 2 hardly spoke about how the turnover affected others. He did identify that the turnover did not affect him at all. Part of the reason he felt it may not have affected him was that he was principal of CCAMS for three years when no one else was there for longer than one year. From his perspective, the struggle with lack of stability had nothing to do with the turnover itself. Instead, he focused on his successor (Previous Principal 1) not being successful because he did not continue with the vision and approaches he took:

I was in the military so I was used to change, and every three years I'd move somewhere, so change to me was normal. It was just a way of life so it didn't affect me in a negative way [...] There was a rough time when you had my

leadership style, which is more empowered, followed by [Previous Principal 1] who was more autocratic, followed by [another principal] who didn't have a leadership style, followed by [another principal] who was overwhelmed [...] I made sure if I was leaving that I had a system in place so someone else could just take over the system if they chose to. [Previous Principal 1] chose not to and that's, I think, where the biggest disconnect at [CCAMS] happened. Not so much that the two following principals weren't qualified, but [Previous Principal 1] just – we had some stability and they had to start over again. Right, wrong or indifferent – I'm not saying my way is the right way. His (Previous Principal 1) way was just different, and so there was upheaval after I left. (PP-02)

Even though he almost never focused on the effects of the turnover on him and others, Previous Principal 2 did describe the type of leader he thought CCAMS needed to confront the challenges of turnover and bring stability:

It's really putting the right person in place. I don't think it matters if you have ten administrators in five years if those administrators have the same vision and the same way of working with people to attain that vision. If not, then you have the turmoil [...] You've got to be committed to what you believe in; to your vision, and that vision has to center around student achievement [...] Once you know what you want and how you want to get there, stay consistent to that. There is going to be "Well, we've always done it this way" people [...] You have to find out who your good teachers are and it's quick. I mean that is so easy to find out just by walking through the building and stopping in the classrooms, talking to kids. They know who the good teachers are. Not the easy ones, but the actual good ones. Once you have that team together, be willing to change, not your vision or your goals, but how you're going to get there. Use the resources, the personnel resources that you have. Don't be afraid to go to bat for your teachers, your kids, your building against central office. Get what you need for them. (PP-02)

It is interesting to note that in the interview, Previous Principal 2 identified he possessed all of the qualities and implemented the strategies he described above that an effective leader would need to confront the turnover at CCAMS. His measure of effectiveness was gauged only by how closely the succeeding principals aligned to his vision, strategies, and management style. Because there were none who fit this mold, he deemed all of the recent principals after him as unsuccessful. He completely failed to recognize that the turnover had an impact on the stakeholders of CCAMS. He only

focused on the lack of success of the succeeding leaders. Measuring “success” was the only thing that was important to him.

Although both previous principals were a principal at CCAMS during the time of turnover, they each had their own individual perspective about the effects of the turnover on themselves and others. The entrance into and exit from the position significantly impacted their perspectives. In addition, the confidence level that each would remain in the principal position for a significant length of time was different. Previous Principal 1 came from within the district so he knew how frequent the district transferred principals into and out of the position of principal. However, Previous Principal 2 came from outside the district giving him little, if any, perspective on the history of how frequent principals were transferred.

District Administration, Staff, and Parents' Perception of the Impact the Turnover Had on the School and Themselves

The specific research question this section will answer is:

How do members of the district administration, teachers, and parents understand the impact of turnover on the school and themselves?

Finding

The district administration, teachers, and parents were trapped in a “psychic prison” and were counting on the current principal to break them out. However, they were cautious because they knew the history of the frequent turnover. They had lived through it.

Psychic Prisons

As discussed in Chapter 2, Morgan (2006) explains that the loss of an idealized leader can trap employees in a psychic prison. He states, “A particular aspect of organizational structure or corporate culture may come to assume special significance and be preserved and retained even in the face of great pressure to change” (p. 228). In the case of CCAMS, the event that assumed special significance was the loss of an idealized leader. The principal (Principal 1) who served for thirteen years before the period of turnover began was referenced over and over as being effective, and the principals after him were constantly being compared to this leader. One stakeholder expressed, “When he (Principal 1) retired that was, that was probably the beginning of the end.” (AP-01) The current principal even heard this. He stated, “I have to kind of

laugh because I've been told that this building has not had true leadership since [Principal 1's] time." (P-01) In a sense, the stakeholders of CCAMS were trapped in a psychic prison when Principal 1 retired.

Another aspect of organizations trapped in a psychic prison is that some individuals within these organizations define their identities by the event or phenomenon to which they are attached. When the rituals attached to the event or phenomenon are challenged, the individuals feel like it is their own identity being attacked. Their reaction, or fear, to this may then be way out of proportion to the perspective of those that are separated from the event or phenomenon. Morgan (2006) states this dynamic may help explain, "why there is often so much unconscious resistance to change in organizations" (p. 228). In the minds of some connected to CCAMS, they needed someone with identical leadership skills, attributes, and personality as Principal 1 to come and be an effective principal. Even if change was necessary and the principals involved in the frequent turnover had good ideas, set a clear vision for improvement, and provided the appropriate support, without similar skills as the principal (Principal 1) to whom the staff was attached, any attempt at change was resisted because it became too personal.

Principals Involved in the Turnover

One of the things stakeholders perceived Principal 1 did effectively was communicate. Many expressed their concern that the administrators involved in the frequent turnover did not effectively communicate. Several expressed this did not just affect teachers and staff at the building, but it also affected other stakeholders:

There was a lot of times where people were not real happy with the administrators because they couldn't – they didn't have the time or couldn't find the time for

them to be able to come and sit down and talk with them. You know, they didn't always want to hear what you had to say just because maybe it was somebody that they just didn't necessarily care about. I don't want to say care about, but, you know, weren't as close to as somebody else. I mean other people had a little bit more of come on in. My door's open. I'll talk to you. And we saw that sometimes with parents, too. You know, if there was parents that wanted to come in and meet with an administrator, it depended upon who the parent was if they wanted to make themselves real available. (SS-01)

The last two principals didn't want to communicate, and before that teachers were empowered to make decisions and were empowered to make changes and then we were cut dry. Like we had no communication. We had no idea what's going on, and we really, we needed that. (T-04)

Some perceived the leadership skills of most of the principals involved in the turnover were not adequate and did not match the skills of Principal 1. They felt the leaders had no direction, and the leaders were inconsistent in their involvement of what was going on at

CCAMS:

As all the other administrators came through, I got to tell you the truth [...] I don't think any other one had an idea of what they wanted. They didn't seem like they had a style or a plan [...] no style, no plan. And that's what I looked at. They never really told us why we were doing what we were doing to get where they wanted to get. I didn't know where they wanted to get [...] Maybe it's a lot of things, but I think that there are people less willing to go above and beyond for at least the last three guys. (T-03)

(There was) one that tends to be a little authoritarian [...] and then the other two or actually three if you count our little three-month principal, were just too lackadaisical. You know, too "Well, you guys are running it. I'm going to let you run it." (T-05)

You had administrators who were very micro-managing, very hands on; others who were just more or less do your job, do it right and I'm not going to bother you, you know, so weren't very hands on. So, and we've had the middle-of-the-road where they want to know what's going on, but you know, as long as you're doing your job and getting done what needs to be done, you know, they're okay with that too. So we've had those that had to have their fingers in everything, and those that just kind of left you do whatever. (SS-01)

Other administrators have come along and said, "This is the way I want it to be", but there wasn't always the consistency [...] Sometimes it would happen that

way; sometimes it wouldn't happen that way, and I think probably more than me, I think teachers sometimes found that frustrating. (T-06)

Others questioned the qualifications and personalities of some of the administrators

during the period of turnover:

When you have somebody coming in here and maybe they're over their head for whatever the reason is. Some people aren't made out to be teachers. Some people aren't made to be administrators [...] I mean there was some tough times and there was, if I'm going to put myself in a position to do a job and to be an administrator then I'm going to make sure I have the qualities to do that. I think a lot of people were frustrated because it was quite evident that some people maybe weren't qualified. (T-02)

Each personality was different, and I honestly have to say, you know, when I first came, my first two years, [principal name] was here, and the feeling I got was that if he wasn't hearing complaints about me from parents or students then he was happy, you know. He was always very personable but never really got involved. And then [another principal] came, and [he] was involved in everything, you know, there wasn't – so that was a big switch. And then [another principal] came, and I'm not quite sure what he was. He was just different; just different but supportive. I can't say that none of them were supportive, you know. And then [another principal] came and I'm not sure what [his] deal was but he was a nice guy, but he was just more concerned about being friends than an administrator/leader, and you know, we all have our own place. I mean I'm not saying, I don't want you to think that I'm talking badly of them, but you know, everybody's different. Everybody's got their own personality. (N-01)

Previous leaders' ineffective communication, lack of direction, insufficient leadership skills, and differing personalities identified above are only a minor cause of the impact stakeholders felt from the frequent turnover. It was these things that were observable and obvious to the stakeholders, so they spent a great deal of time blaming the lack of success of previous leaders on these things. What they were blinded from was the foundation of their frustration. The root was purely that the past leaders did not compare to Principal 1. After so many turnovers, they focused on the last source of "stability" and began to make comparisons of all incoming leaders to that era and leader. Certainly, there were different factors that separated each leader since that time from the other. It

was a challenge for the stakeholders to constantly try to figure out each one, and just when they felt they may have started to understand the different leadership styles, personalities, etc., the principals were gone. This became very frustrating to them. Ultimately, however, their underlying concern still originated from the notion that none of the leaders during the period of turnover had the same or even similar practices, skills, and beliefs as Principal 1.

The Current Principal

As people began to talk about the current principal their tone completely changed, and they became more positive. They identified the quick impact Current Principal had made on CCAMS in less than a year. They identified things like effective professional development, communication, and a clear direction improved their climate and motivation. Current Principal adapted well to change, and they felt the timing of his transition into the position of principal was just right. One said, “I think [Principal 1] being here right now is the right time.” (T-03) Others expressed:

He stepped into a war zone, and he really has stepped up and done a wonderful job. I could take [Current Principal] being our principal for years and years to come because he has dealt with all the problems that have been thrown at him and there have been some pretty major things that they said, “Oh you need to change this.” And he has dealt with it, and yet is still trying to freshen things up and, you know, make the kids want to make this the best school so he’s one of the stronger ones. (T-05)

Parents have you know, have big concerns this year [...] And I said, you know, “Just trust me; this man (Current Principal) learns it quick. He takes an interest. It will be okay.” And, I don’t know if I would have been able to say that with anybody else. He is definitely something special. (T-7)

Some things that you never would’ve talked about before; things you never would’ve read before, and I think that is a big change in leadership that we did not have. Never once, never once in the last three administrators has any one of the

principals said, “Here’s what we’re going to do.” Like, “Here’s what we want to become.” [Current Principal] said right away, “We want to become a reading school”, like first thing. None of those people ever said those things. (T-03)

It’s kind of been a whole, fresh, new value, and it might be because he (Current Principal) came from outside of the district. I mean he was in the district for a short time last year but came from outside of the district with a new perspective, something that, you know, we’ve not done before, but I think it’s a much different atmosphere than what we’ve had in many years for the past; people working together and not as much against each other. (T-02)

This has been a wonderful year. The administrative change that we’ve had this year has been excellent. I think it has probably been, in my opinion, one of the best we’ve had in a lot of years. [Current Principal] is, I mean he’s very much of a go-getter. He’s very caring. He cares about his staff, which we haven’t seen some of that over the years. (SS-01)

On the surface, it appeared Current Principal possessed outstanding leadership qualities and the stakeholders were drawn to them. It was not just that the current principal was caring, had a vision, and communicated well which made the stakeholders feel great about him. Certainly, these things are all attributes they recognized that made Current Principal a great leader in a time when there was so much turnover (and in no way am I trying to take anything away from these leadership attributes and skills for which he was being recognized). This is clear in their interview responses displayed above. However, the main reason stakeholders were attracted to these attributes was not just because the current principal possessed them, it was because Principal 1 idealized them in his thirteen year tenure. This was glaring as some began to compare Current Principal with Principal 1. One said, “He’s (current principal) really big on getting people’s input, and [Principal 1] always was too.”(T-06) Another said, “I think he’s (current principal) probably as close to the whole package as we’ve seen so far.” (SB-01)

One summed it up:

Well I say this. It's as close right now today, it's as close to that as it has been since [Principal 1] been in the building. And, there's been good administrators here, and they've been good at certain things. But, you know [Principal 1] was somebody that everybody worked for and [Current Principal] is somebody that everybody here is working for. (T-02)

Many felt there was a strong connection between the attributes, skills, and leadership qualities Principal 1 had and Current Principal possessed. As a result, they began to psychologically transplant themselves back into an era where they felt stable. This was the era when they were led by Principal 1. They repeatedly made comparisons and, as similarities between the two were realized, their excitement and belief in Current Principal strengthened. They began to rely on him and look to him to provide stability that they felt they had not had since Principal 1. The information in Table 5 clearly identifies just how strong the stakeholders felt the connection really was. I link the comments made about Previous Principal 1 to those made about the current principal. These comments focus on four attributes, skills, and leadership qualities: Visibility, expectations, trust, and communication.

TABLE 5. COMPARISON OF PRINCIPAL 1 AND CURRENT PRINCIPAL

Topic	Principal 1	Current Principal
<p>Visibility</p>	<p>He (Principal 1) was somebody who was very visible. He was around. He knew what was going on. (AP-01)</p> <p>The biggest part of climate we thought was good when [Principal 1] was here was [Principal 1] was the most visible principal I've ever been around in my life, and this is 17 years in, and we actually had. No one has ever been close to [Principal 1]. He was the most visual administrator I've ever been around. (T-03)</p> <p>One of the things [Principal 1] did, and he was known for it, and if you'd ask all, call us the old teachers, who were here when he was, he made a point of putting his head in his classroom, your classroom every single day. Those years I was downstairs on the first floor, and he would come in and he would do mental math problems on the board with the kids every day. He was known for that. Kids knew to expect the principal to be in your classroom. That was all back, you know, 12, 14, 15 years ago. (T-04)</p> <p>[Principal 1] was in my classroom twice a day. I mean I don't know how he did it. He just – even just, he was talking in everyone's classroom at least once a day, but some of us twice a day no matter what. He'd walk in, stir up a little trouble in the class, play around a little bit or just walk in, look and leave. (T-03)</p>	<p>[Current Principal] is always comfortable with the decisions I make, but then – I mean for me and I don't know if anybody else thinks this, but it is also the fact that they (current building administration) both come and check on me and my students every day. They are here. (T-07)</p> <p>He's (Current Principal) on the announcements. He has a very good presence here at [CCAMS] which is a good thing. And we need it. (T-02)</p> <p>[Current Principal] walks around the hall and he's in classes. You know, he's a visible person as much as he can be. (T-05)</p> <p>You see him (Current Principal) in the hallways, you see him in your classes. He's there. When we have an assembly or something, he's there. That's not how it always was. (T-02)</p>

TABLE 5. COMPARISON OF PRINCIPAL 1 AND CURRENT PRINCIPAL

Topic	Principal 1	Current Principal
Expectations	<p>When we went through the [Principal 1] era because he was here so long, I think the morale was good because people knew what to expect. They knew what his expectations were. (SS-01)</p> <p>[Principal 1] had, you know, a process where I kind of knew what to expect all the time [...] [Principal 1] was very consistent. I mean once he stated this is how I expect things to go, that was how he handled things, and we all kind of knew what to expect. (T-06)</p> <p>[Principal 1] ran a tight ship. He had control of the culture [...] He had authority, and he was very involved in the school. (T-01)</p> <p>[Principal 1] was the rock. Things were calmer [...] You knew the rules. You knew the expectations. You knew if your child did X, Y, or Z that this would be the ultimate result or the ultimate consequence. (PA-02)</p> <p>You knew where you stood with [Principal 1] [...] you knew if you were being called to his office that you'd better be ready to hear what he has to say [...] it may have been good but he was calling a spade a spade. But he was there to support you too. He was very supportive. (AP-1)</p>	<p>When he (Current Principal) says things, he means them. And the kids can tell that. I feel more supported with my students. I have seen him do such positive things with my students. I can't imagine having anybody else here. (T-07)</p> <p>I mean this year we've had a good change. But I think a lot of it came with [Current Principal] setting policy and people knew what his expectations were, and over the years we didn't always have that. You kind of flew by the seat of your pants till you figured things out. (SS-01)</p> <p>He (Current Principal) follows through. He does what he says he's going to do. There isn't wishy-washiness. There isn't just ignoring it [...] when he says he's going to do something, he does it [...] There's an overall expectation in the building now that is positive that people will perform, that people will do their jobs. (N-01)</p> <p>I think he's (Current Principal) got very clear expectations and that's a good thing. (SB-01)</p>

TABLE 5. COMPARISON OF PRINCIPAL 1 AND CURRENT PRINCIPAL

Topic	Principal 1	Current Principal
Trust	<p>I think people just trusted [Principal 1]. I mean they, we really did. They trusted him with personal things. They trusted him. (T-03)</p> <p>The consistency that was developed (while Principal 1 was at CCAMS) and the fact that the people [...] knew what to do. They knew what to expect. They knew they were trusted; the kids were trusted. (AP-01)</p> <p>That was the type of trust people had in [Principal 1] but also knew that that kind of went both ways and if [Principal 1] asked you to do something he wasn't trying to lean on you, but you kind of felt like, "Hey, this is a two-way street." (T-03)</p> <p>Everybody would do everything for [Principal 1] because he was [Principal 1], and it really did make the building move. (T-03)</p>	<p>If they (current building administration) are out and about in the building, if they are talking to the kids and they get to know the kids and they look to build that respect with them, it helps us trust them because we know that they are in it for that and it is not just something else. I think for me he (Current Principal) has not done anything to make me distrust him. He has been supportive. He has you know, if I tell him something in confidence, it stays in confidence. And I think he also trusts me back. I mean part of that is being trusted and he knows that I can run my classroom. (T-07)</p> <p>With somebody here you at least trust in the front office at least you feel like all right, this guy's (Current Principal) got my back. (T-03)</p> <p>While I didn't want yet another change at [CCAMS], but [Current Principal] had quickly gained the trust of the staff [...]He acquired it quickly. (CO-1)</p> <p>With [Current Principal] I feel like, you know, he would tell me something and I would believe it. (N-01)</p> <p>Everything about [Current Principal's] leadership style is that of a principal [...] But just the trust among the community, the parents and so forth. (CO-1)</p>

TABLE 5. COMPARISON OF PRINCIPAL 1 AND CURRENT PRINCIPAL

Topic	Principal 1	Current Principal
Communication	<p>We were used to [Principal 1] being right on top of things. He always kept us informed and I think we felt like we were all on the same page. (T-06)</p> <p>[Principal 1] was, you know, a great communicator. It was because people wanted to listen. (T-03)</p> <p>[Principal 1] brought forth – he was very involved with the parents. He gave a lot of information. He asked a lot of questions of the parents [...] Even the last couple years he was there, you could just see, you know, he really gave a lot of attention to the kids. He gave a lot of attention to the teachers as well. He was at all the events, spoke very eloquently at all the events, spoke of values a lot. (PA-01)</p> <p>If something would happen over the summer, and he'd (Principal 1) have a question he'd call me at home and we'd get it all worked out. I was always in the loop. (T-06)</p>	<p>Now I do have to say this guy (Current Principal) is awesome. I feel like I'm – I would almost say I would go another year or two if I knew I was going to stay with [Current Principal] because that has, that's back again. Communication this year has been awesome, and I really, really, really like that. (T-06)</p> <p>I think he's (Current Principal) doing communication. He is sharing. He is empowering us to help make decisions again. He's listening to us. I think he's believing in most of us [...] Now we're being heard. We're being heard, and I think all of those are really important things, and that's making us as teachers want to believe in our administrator (Current Principal) and follow his lead and his guidance. (T-04)</p> <p>The last two principals didn't want to communicate [...] Like we had no communication. We had no idea what's going on, and we really, we needed that. We were thirsty for that, and this principal (Current Principal) is doing a really nice job of communicating, which we all enjoy. Now we know what's going on. (T-02)</p> <p>That's something that our building was lacking before he (Current Principal) got here is communication. (T-04)</p>

Table 5 shows the significance of the connections between Principal 1 and Current Principal. As mentioned before, the reasoning was not so much of the actual characteristics Current Principal possessed; it had more to do with how they were identical to Principal 1. Principal 1 was an idealized leader, and the stakeholders perceived that Current Principal was similar to him. The stakeholders felt they finally had a leader who could break them out of their current prison and return them to an era when they last felt stable. However, as a result of the frequent turnover, they still had a fear of the repeat of the past.

Fear of a Repeat of the Past

The stakeholders of CCAMS clearly felt Current Principal was the only principal they could ever believe in to stop the cycle of turnover. This excitement and hope for the stability they so desperately wanted clashed with one of the effects of the frequent turnover: The fear that he would not return. Many were guarded about getting too attached due to their experience that over the past several years, there was at least one new principal every year. They knew it was a reality Current Principal may not return the following school year, thus continuing the pattern of turnover.

I've worked in an ER for 20 years as a nurse and had lots of nurse managers and I have worked, well I worked substituting in two other school districts, and had all these administrators and he is by far the best that I've ever had anywhere. But that's not the [CCASD] way, because they're closing the middle school. It's just crazy; just crazy how this will probably all play out [...] Unfortunately, I truly believe he will not be here next year in this position. (N-01)

I was just talking to some colleagues last night about, you know, what we can do because again next year we're going to be put into a situation where it's unknown again. I mean there's already talk about the situation that we have this year, the chances are very, very great that we're going to have a completely different situation and to know right now that we have somebody in the office that is

guiding us and who's leading us, the people are just eating it. They're eating it up [...] We're all crossing our fingers that we don't get another wrench thrown at us for next year. And again, that's the frustrating portion of that. But we've bounced back a lot of times and we'll do it again. And, that's within our faculty prime. If we have to we'll do it again. But we'd like to do it with [Current Principal]. (T-02)

We want [Current Principal] to be the guy but also that worry that he's a new guy in the district and now we're going to end up getting somebody back. So, you know, a whirlwind tour there [...] I think we're headed in the right direction, but all of us, all of us who head in that right direction who have been here awhile I think are all starting to bite our tongues a little bit knowing that we have a middle school closing. We have administrators over there with a lot more experience and if they just push them back in, come back in a year and have this conversation again I think it would be really, really different [...] we kind of want what we've got for the first time in a while, and for a while everybody kept talking about like why do we keep being the ones, why are we the ones, you know, spit on like this [...] It's almost worrisome knowing that we have something I think decent going on here, and it could just like that go away. (T-03)

Definitely this year we're going back up in the right direction so I know many teachers would love to see him (Current Principal) stay here and be the principal next year. Don't know what's going to happen for next year [...] So, next year's going to be another change, and again, we don't know what administrator we're going to have. (T-04)

His (Current Principal) title right now is Acting Principal and that scares the staff I think. His talk has been very positive about what we're going to do next year, and I think we hear that, you know, he truly wants to be here and be with us, but whether, you know, that will happen because we know the history of this building, so it's just wait and see. I will be very sad, though, if he doesn't get to keep this position because I think he's excellent. (T-06)

The stakeholders of CCAMS had such desperation for Current Principal to remain the principal. However, the frequent turnover had ingrained in them a perception that additional turnover was imminent. This brought a pressure to fight the urge to be optimistic. Still, they held on to some hope that the current principal would be able to break them out of their psychic prison. One central office member explained this glimpse of hope:

They're (staff at CCAMS) demanding over there that [Current Principal] be the principal, so while staffing will be put in place on June 20th that building has a strong voice and they know what they want [...] I believe that [Current Principal] has the support of the board. He has gained the full support of the staff and the administration [...] If [Current Principal] is named as principal at [CCAMS], I believe that building's turnover will be settled. (CO-1)

The Local Contextual Factors That Affected the School and How They Changed

During the Period of Turnover

The specific research question this section will answer is:

What were the local contextual factors that affected the school, and how did they change during the period of turnover?

Finding

The assistant principal became a source of stability and a constant for the stakeholders. The power held by certain members of the staff was an even stronger factor and became a "survival resource" for those living through the turnover.

It is clear the frequent turnover of principals at CCAMS caused a period of instability. Stakeholders did not know what to expect from one leader to another. By the time they started to understand the leadership style, attributes, and personality of a principal, that principal would be gone. Beyond just the turnover in leadership, there were local contextual factors that impacted the stakeholders during the period of turnover. Some of these were inconsistent test scores, change in leadership at the central office

position, and the closing of another middle school in the district. These factors were not impacted by the turnover, but still did affect the stakeholders (these factors will be discussed in Chapter 5). However, there were two main contextual factors that were directly influenced by the period of frequent turnover. One factor was the consistent tenure of the assistant principal.

The Assistant Principal

There was one constant throughout six of the seven years of turnover at CCAMS. That constant was the assistant principal. During the period of principal turnover, there were many stakeholders who relied on her. They believed there was no other source of stability to which they could turn because the frequent turnover of principals had left a major void. Parents turned to the assistant principal for guidance, direction, and a source of communication:

The assistant principal became the go to for many parents. Again, speaking as a parent [...] I know many parents reached out to the assistant principal time and time again because we knew she was the one constant. She knew our kids. She knew us whereas the revolving door — they didn't. (PA-02)

Teachers also turned to her for support and looked at her as a source of stability. Unknowingly, they identified that the assistant principal possessed some of the same traits and attributes they felt made Principal 1 and Current Principal a good leader. They explained that the assistant principal could be trusted, worked hard, and communicated effectively. One said, “Working with [AP-01]. She was the one common thread through all those people as an assistant principal. We would work with her.” (T-03) Another identified:

A lot of us ended up doing most of the things we did mainly because we had a really good assistant principal and a hardworking assistant principal. [Assistant Principal] always was like that as assistant. We could always go to her [...] She was someone the people trusted and she was someone that people went to for advice, and people knew that she actually had educational ideas; that she was a good classroom teacher. (T-03)

Our previous assistant principal [AP-01], she was so diligent [...] She was good with the students and she was a stability for us, as our main office person was moved and moved again. It was nice to have that stability. (T-07)

Throughout most of the turnover we had an assistant principal, [AP-01] who because she was there for most of it up until this last year when she transferred, she was like the consistency. She was the, she was our stability because even though she wasn't in the front office, she still knew what was going on. She still was able to have her finger on the pulse of everything. (T-05)

If there were issues beyond the classroom other than poor [assistant principal] who fielded lots, but in her assistant principal role, as you know, is very different than the head principal, and she would often times have to take it to the next step. Well depending who that next step was your question could go unresponded to for quite a long time. (PA-02)

These comments show just how deep the level of support and stability the assistant principal provided to a variety of stakeholders. Many appreciated the stability provided by the assistant principal throughout the period of turnover. That stability provided to them was consistent throughout her tenure at CCAMS. Once she was moved from the position to assistant principal at another building, that stability factor was taken away from the stakeholders of the school.

Stakeholders felt the turnover had no impact on their ability to count on the assistant principal. However, as the turnover continued, it directly impacted the assistant principal. She experienced increased pressure to be there for the stakeholders, while at the same time, providing the appropriate support to the principal under whom she was serving. For one, being the source of stability was tiresome and burdensome to the

assistant principal. She felt the pressure of having to rescue those being impacted by the frequent turnover:

Did it weigh on me? Yes. It was wearing at times because I couldn't solve everybody's problem, and at times I felt like I was more their liaison between the teachers and the principal trying to bridge the gap that now is starting to be created because there's a change [...] The pressure to understand somebody's style and still hear the teachers, be there for the students, be there for the parents, put out fires, a lot of fires because people's reactions were always, "Why is this happening when it wasn't like this before?" (AP-01)

Another aspect of the internal pressure she faced was her struggle between supporting the incoming principals and also doing what she thought was right. She said:

I felt like I had to do a lot of getting everybody to buy in to the change and stay with it in the fact that it's going to be okay. We'll be fine [...] At times it was really, it was very difficult to try to be able to support everybody's style that came in there and still do what was best for students. (AP-01)

It was not just internal pressure she felt. She also felt the pressure from the principals whom she supported as assistant. Naturally, the incoming principals discovered the assistant principal had been the "go-to" person for a long time, and that would not change just because they were now the principal. This did not sit well with some. One teacher described:

We could always go to her (AP-01) and that, I think, rubbed some of those guys who were her bosses very much the wrong way. I know it rubbed [Previous Principal 1] the wrong way. I know it rubbed [another principal] the wrong way [...] It was a stressful situation for her because often she felt that pull. People wanted to go to her for advice in the classroom, for anything, and they didn't want to go to them (the principals). (T-03)

This pressure only increased each time there was turnover. The assistant principal explained:

It did get worse, and every time I felt like there was more and more on me to be the principal without actually being the principal. As the changes were occurring people wanted me to be more answering, but I really didn't have the power to

make the final decision, but I didn't want that either. I liked my role as the assistant principal, but I also saw my own role changing. (AP-01)

The assistant principal identified she faced a level of internal and external pressure because of her need to be a stable force during the period of frequent turnover. Even though stakeholders recognized her struggle with this pressure, they believed she remained an effective source of stability throughout her time as assistant principal. In their view, the frequent turnover had very little impact on the effectiveness of the assistant principal's support and the stability she provided to others.

Power Held by Some Members of the Staff

During the frequent principal turnover, there was a shift in power from the building principals to certain staff of CCAMS. This shift became apparent to some. One of the central office personnel identified, "That building (CCAMS), in particular, as they went through this leadership change, it united them as a group, but it also empowered a core group of individuals." (CO-01) CO-01 believed the shift in power was a negative effect of the frequent turnover, and she was not the only one who felt that way.

"Previous Principal 2" explained just how much influence this group who gained power had over others:

I knew that there was a lot of cliquishness going on. I knew that there was a lot of "Let's keep this away from the administrators so they don't know what we're doing" kind of thing. I knew that there were several key people in the building that were go-getters, and certain key people that had a couple others under their thumb. (PP-02)

Many used the term "core group" to describe the staff members, mainly teachers, of CCAMS that became a major source of power. This shift in power elevated some of those belonging to this core group, and they saw themselves as equivalents to the

incoming administrators. One stated, “Our building, we almost needed like a co-leader, like one who makes sure we were going in the right direction and pulling us in when we needed versus, ‘This is what you’re doing.’” (T-04) The idea that those in the core group rose to the same level of power of the principals transitioning into the building was not something anyone tried to hide. They embraced and began to expect that power from incoming principals:

We craved having teacher decisions and the years when it was an administrator who was “It’s all me, and I make the decisions,” was the years it went down [...] Like what works for the kids, what works; let’s decide together. And I think most of the teachers in this building need that. We want to help make the decision. We don’t want to be told what to do. (T-04)

If the power was not given to them, some decided to take it:

If it’s my idea or your idea, or when we hear something needs to get done then it’s going to get done without me having to go to them. And maybe that’s my ego, but a couple of us really felt we had to go to certain administrators saying, “What do we need to do for this?”, because it wasn’t a question asked to us. (T-03)

I was always in the loop (with the principal before the frequent turnover began), but then when new people came in that wasn’t often happening, and I would come back and things would be different, and I would actually come back a couple days early to try and meet with the new administrators to find out what in the world was going on with the schedule because nobody had contacted me all summer [...] I would say we need to have this done by a certain time, and I would feel like I had to constantly check because I wasn’t sure it was going to happen by that time. (T-06)

We will step up and we will be the strong one as this person is coming into and acclimating themselves into the building [...] It was kind of like you will have people that will want to, you know, take that control, because they like having that control. (T-07)

Even though some stakeholders viewed this shift of power negatively, for some it became a source of comfort. As a result of some continuously embracing this power, others began to rely on this core group to provide stability in a time when there was so

much principal turnover. Even though this was positive to some, and this core group of staff who held power was a source of comfort for many during the period of turnover, it presented challenges to incoming principals. The Director of Secondary Education expressed:

To try something new to be different and again they (principals) were walking in taking a challenging building that's been empowered, and there are several people there who feel they're in charge right now. There are two teachers there [...] the joke was that people are putting Principal and Assistant Principal behind two teacher's names under the former administration over there when those teachers would send out an email or whatever. It would just be this big joke of "oh Principal so-and-so." (CO-01)

A teacher agreed when she stated:

[CCAMS teachers] do their own thing [...] teachers push the limits [...] we have a strong staff. Being strong also gives them a lot of personality and they are leaders and when you have a lot of leaders together, you get a lot of, you know, not miscommunication but kind of like you have a million Indian Chiefs and nobody wants to be like under anybody else." (T-07)

Despite the challenges it presented to incoming principals, the shift in power was clearly worth it to some, and, perhaps, critical for others. Without the "core group" seeking and assuming the vacant power that was left by a period of frequent turnover in leadership, some stakeholders could have been left dangling without a source of stability in a very unstable environment.

Survival Resources

Any new leader is going to need to develop power, whether it is good or bad. In this study, it became clear that in order for the incoming principal to gain power, some had to be given up by others. Undoubtedly, there were those in the school who had gained power during the period of principal turnover. In the absence of consistent

leadership at the principal position at CCAMS, they gained influence and had overwhelming input in decisions that were made. These influences turned out to become “survival resources” for many of the stakeholders.

A few noted the comfort they felt knowing there was a core group of people who could help them survive when facing frequent turnover:

We know what we need to do, and we know what we need to do to survive. And, we know who we can turn to and what we can do. So, I think what’s helped us survive is that we are pretty much a core group, and some people will step up to a leadership role when it’s necessary, and I think that that’s helped it. (T-05)

There was a period of years when we had a very strong teacher/leader group, and it was a lot of positives, a lot of go-getters, problems solved on our own because we kind of had to because we had so many of our own principals turn over that we kind of led our own building for so long. (T-04)

Over time, this “survival resource” became stronger, not only because of the turnover in leadership itself, but also in the way some of the principals approached the change process. The diversity in the approaches of each principal during this period of turnover confused some stakeholders and became another layer of the impact of the turnover. Some principals were lackadaisical in their approach, and, perhaps, they were not fully aware of how the frequent turnover shifted the balance away from the principal “position” to those who were actually living through the turnover. One teacher mentioned:

We know that they are the ones in charge and they are the ones making the decisions. I don’t think we always knew that, but with the people (staff) that were here it was kind of like, “Oh well, I guess I get to make the decision now.” (T-07)

Another expressed there was one certain principal who allowed the power and control to remain with the staff. He stated, “I tell you the truth, as long as work was being done, he didn’t care [...] He was also easily manipulated by people who wanted to manipulate

him.” (T-03) They continued to identify that it may have been more common than not. One expressed, “Then administration changed in the front office, and they pretty much said, ‘Okay, that’s your baby go with it.’ So we still had the consistency with that (letting us continue to make the decisions).” (T-05) Another said, “The years when it felt like we had zero administrator, two names pop in my head, it was just you come in and you do what you need to do.” (T-04) These descriptions define just how diverse the approaches of the principals at CCAMS were. This diversity only added to the instability the stakeholders were facing. The varying approaches of so many principals in such a short period of time demanded the need for the core group to take some control.

On the surface, it may seem negative that staff members felt they held and expected so much power, but it became a positive “survival resource” for some. The frequent turnover caused it to develop out of necessity. The staff needed someone to be a “leader”. They could not rely on the person in the hierarchical leadership position of principal because they had experienced, time after time, the frequent exit of the principal. As a result, they had no choice but to count on each other.

Chapter Summary

An underlying tenet of this study was an effort to make meaning out of respondents’ perceptions to the events caused by leadership instability. As a result of my research, I uncovered four findings. Each of these findings related to one research question.

The first finding of this study was the current principal transitioned into the position with no knowledge of the turnover. In fact, he had no desire to learn about the

principals who were in the position, and he did not care about the past. His main goal in his transition was to correct what his predecessor had broken. However, once the turnover became personal to him, he began to recognize the impact of the turnover on him and the staff. Originally, he was appointed to the position of “Interim Principal”. As the end of the year approached, he realized the administration would be making a decision who would be the permanent principal for the following school year. This was a position he desired, but he was aware of the history of principals being moved out of the position after serving only one year or less. In addition, some stakeholders continued to question him about his position for next year. This situation forced the current principal to recognize the impact of the turnover on him and other stakeholders.

The second finding was two previous principals had very different perspectives of how the turnover affected them and others. These perspectives were based on the situation surrounding the entrance into and the exit from the position. One principal was transferred to the principal position from within the district. He was transferred out of the principal position after only one year. His perspective of the frequent transfer process was positive, and he was sympathetic to the impact the frequent turnover had on stakeholders. The other previous principal was hired from outside the district and was promoted to a central office position after serving three years. He did not share any opinions about how the turnover affected him and/or others. Rather, he spoke only about the inadequacies of other principals during the period of turnover and the ineffectiveness of CCASD’s practice of transferring administrators within the district into the position of principal at CCAMS.

The third finding was that stakeholders were trapped in a “psychic prison” and were hoping the current principal would break them out. Many compared the attributes and skills of the current principal to the attributes and skills of a principal who had been at CCAMS for thirteen years. This principal was idealized as the last effective principal at CCAMS. The comparison of the two principals focused on four areas: Visibility, expectations, trust, and communication. Despite being hopeful the current principal would save them, the stakeholders were very guarded because they lived through the period of turnover and knew there was a great chance there would be a different principal brought in the following school year. This would continue the cycle of frequent turnover.

The final finding was that there were two local contextual factors that provided a source of stability for stakeholders. The first was the assistant principal who served for six of the seven years of the period of frequent turnover. This assistant principal became the “go-to” for many, as the revolving door of principals brought with it different leadership styles, philosophies, etc. of the ever-changing leaders. Another source of stability was the power that a core group of staff members held. Not only did it bring stability for many, it also was a “survival resource” for some as well. Many counted on this core group of staff members to provide leadership and direction when the hierarchical leadership assumed by the principal position broke down due to the frequent turnover.

There is no doubt the frequent turnover affected many stakeholders of CCAMS in different ways, and some it did not affect at all. Stakeholders were stuck in a previous era of stability, but it is difficult to determine whether it was the leadership of the principal or the length of tenure itself that provided them with an idealized principal. If the current

principal is the one to break the stakeholders out of the “psychic prison” as many believe, he cannot do it alone.

In this chapter, I shared the findings from the data, which relied heavily on the interviews I conducted. In Chapter 5, I analyze these findings and use Turbulence Theory as a lens through which I can unravel them. I include recommendations based on this analysis and discuss implications for further research. I will apply this research to my current reality.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK, RECOMMENDATIONS, IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH, AND APPLICATION

Introduction

In this chapter, I first discuss the application of Turbulence Theory in analyzing the effects of frequent turnover on the stakeholders of CCAMS. I also explain lessons I learned from the study and link them to recommendations. I then discuss recommendations for further study before applying the results of this study to my current practice.

Turbulence Theory

Introduction

According to McMurrin (2001), educational institutions are constantly changing. New students join teachers' classes, schedules may change due to a snow delay, or teachers may have to move classrooms. These changes mark a minor disruption to the environment of the school. Many times, people working in the school barely recognize the disruption these events cause because the school returns to its normal operations. Every once in a while, however, a school experiences a period of heightened turbulence, creating instability in the school as an organization. When the period of heightened turbulence involves leadership succession, such as what occurred at CCAMS, it can have a lasting, profound impact on a school. Turbulence Theory explores this notion that organizations can be impacted by change, both seemingly unrecognizable changes and those causing a period of marked instability (Gross, 2014).

In Chapter 2, I explained Turbulence Theory in detail and how I would use it as a theoretical frame by which to view the results of this study. Gross (2014) identifies a process that is not a formula, but can act as a guide when applying Turbulence Theory. He identifies three variables related to this process. What follows is a discussion of how I used each variable of this process in my application of Turbulence Theory to the impact of the frequent turnover at CCAMS.

Identify the Contextual Forces Affecting the Impact of the Turnover

The first thing Gross identifies as helpful in applying Turbulence Theory is to identify the contextual forces affecting the situation. Gross (2014) believes one must determine whether the “current turbulence is an exception or part of a larger pattern of disruption” (p. 259). One way to do this is to examine how Cascading, Stability, and Positionality contribute or detract from the level of turbulence an organization is feeling.

Cascading. A component of Turbulence Theory that helps to explain how situations and circumstances like the frequent turnover at CCAMS impact an organization is the concept of Cascading. Even though someone or group within an organization may be experiencing a lesser degree of turbulence as a result of a singular event, there may be other “forces in the environment that may propel the turbulence to higher levels [...] that when put together could be explosive” (Gross, 2014, p. 254). In essence, a difficult situation, such as a loss of a leader, does not happen in isolation. There are other forces that may be unrecognized that can escalate what is felt by those impacted by that loss.

This concept is relevant to what the stakeholders experienced at CCAMS. As discussed in Chapter 4, there were contextual factors that provided stability and were a direct result of the impact of the turnover. However, there were others that directly impacted how the turnover was felt by various stakeholders.

One of these contextual factors was the changeover in leadership at the central office level. The frequent changeover at central office, particularly at the superintendent position, elicited a variety of emotions. With each new superintendent, many felt a sense of hope. However, as the turnover continued, many felt fear and lost trust in that position. This lack of trust in central office impacted the way some felt during the period of turnover at CCAMS. As discussed in Chapter 4, many held the view that central office was partly responsible for the continued turnover because they continued to place ineffective, unqualified, and unsatisfactory leadership from within the district to the position of principal at CCAMS.

Another stressor stakeholders faced during the time of the frequent turnover was the lack of success on state mandated assessments. During the time of frequent turnover, CCAMS would make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) only once. Staff at CCAMS began to feel defeated by the lack of success, and started to blame certain factors like a large special education population, the placement of an alternative school at the building, and the inability for principals to be able to foster a focus on student achievement. The impact of the lack of success on state mandated assessments, in isolation, would have enough of a negative influence on the stakeholders of the school. In the context of the frequent turnover, it added another layer to the impact of it.

In addition to the turnover at central office and not making AYP, there was a closing of a middle school. This meant more students and additional faculty would be transferred to CCAMS. They knew that the principal of that middle school had more experience than the current principal of CCAMS. This perpetuated a fear that the administrative shuffling caused by this closing would mean the current principal, who was holding the “Interim” title at the time, would not be made permanent. The dynamic of having a middle school closing added to the turbulence the staff were already feeling from the consistent turnover.

As noted above, there were several factors that added to the cascading effect of the turbulence relating to the turnover felt by the stakeholders of CCAMS. When looking at the Turbulence Level of any situation, it is important to recognize how the concept of Cascading can affect the situation. It clearly had an effect on CCAMS.

Stability. Another tenet of Turbulence Theory is Stability. The concept of Stability is based on the idea that the same problem can hit two institutions, and the impact can be detrimental for one, but minimal for the other (Gross, 2014).

Stability was on the minds of the stakeholders. The attrition rate of the principals at CCAMS was a direct blow to the stability they felt. They were hesitant to accept a new principal, not because the new principal was not being effective in his/her reform efforts, but simply because there had been no recent stability. In fact, some principals had made some positive gains with the staff. However, to the stakeholders, it became more about the instability of the position, not the effectiveness of the person in that position.

Viewing the turnover at CCAMS in light of Stability is helpful. There had to be some stability factors during the period of turnover. Without them, there could have easily been chaos at CCAMS. Those specific stability factors, the assistant principal and the power held by some, were discussed in Chapter 4. Gross (2014) warns against assuming certain stability factors in a turbulent situation are concrete and everlasting. Eventually, the forces (frequent turnover) acting upon an organization (CCAMS) will take over. Therefore, maintaining stability requires organizations to be flexible and willing to change. This underlines a significant concern I have regarding what is happening at CCAMS. It appears the stakeholders are unable to be flexible and are not willing to change. They are relying too heavily on one individual to break them out of their psychic prison, and have almost given up on their ability to be part of a solution.

Positionality. Once the contextual factors such as Cascading and Stability are analyzed, the attention must turn to how the event affects people differently based on the “position” held in an organization. Under Turbulence Theory, “Individuals have an enhanced ability to calibrate the severity of the issue at hand” (Shapiro & Gross, 2008, p. 19). However, not all individuals will calibrate the severity the same way. One of the reasons is because of their “position” in the organization. According to Gross (2014), in order to make sense of the events facing an organization, one must understand that Positionality in an organization is a factor in the way the turbulent event is perceived.

The position through which the frequent turnover was viewed had a large impact on how not only the turnover impacted each stakeholder, but also how each reacted to the turnover. Before the turnover, parents were involved in the school, and there was a strong

network of parents who supported each other. As the turnover began, parents felt uncomfortable and became frustrated. They became distant from the school because they felt there was a lack of communication. They withdrew from being involved, which collapsed the parent network. They played the “waiting game” recognizing they would only need to feel the effects of the turnover for three years, since CCAMS housed grades six through eighth.

However, some were not so lucky and were not able to see any light at the end of the tunnel. Some were stuck, and they knew there was little hope they would be able to escape. The staff had very little recourse but to endure the effects of the frequent turnover. They believed it was unrealistic they would be able to break out of the turnover cycle by themselves. Other than being transferred, which none really wanted, or finding a new job, which was not an option for most, they were forced to remain and bear the effects of the turnover. Because they realized they had to remain, this added to their desire to find someone who could break them out of their psychic prison. This concept was discussed in Chapter 4.

As Gross (2014) notes, Positionality “means seeing individuals in each of their group affiliations and simultaneously as separate beings” (p. 253). This principle clearly applied to those in the position of principal. They mutually felt the same impact of the turnover. They were tasked with leading a school whose stakeholders had become distant and some who felt hopeless they would be able to break out of the cycle without help. However, they were also individually impacted in different ways, and even viewed the effects of the turnover differently. Previous Principal 1 immediately recognized the turnover had an impact on the staff and the incoming principals, and Previous Principal 2

only learned about this impact over time. The current principal chose to ignore the turnover until it directly impacted him.

It is necessary for all to recognize how the position which one holds can affect the way the impact of the turnover is viewed. They also must recognize the position affects how the turnover is felt. This is especially important for any incoming leader transitioning into the role of principal in a school that has experienced frequent turnover.

Combining the Three Forces

Before I move on to the next part of applying Turbulence Theory, it is important to note that Cascading, Stability, and Positionality are not segregated. In isolation, these three forces have a substantial impact on any organization experiencing turbulence. Combine them, and the impact can become incredibly threatening. When viewing the impact of the frequent turnover at CCAMS, I recognized all of the components as individual ones, but I also became aware how they interact with each other. It is only after analyzing these forces in this way that I could truly determine how the stakeholders of CCAMS truly experienced the frequent turnover.

Establish the Current Level of Turbulence

Once the forces of Cascading, Stability, and Positionality are evaluated, Gross (2014) suggests, “It is more likely that a reasonable estimate of the level of turbulence may be made” (p. 260). Turbulence Theory can help organize the disturbance the leadership turnover caused on the stakeholders of CCAMS. There are four degrees of turbulence: Light, moderate, severe, and extreme. The stakeholders of CCAMS did not

start out in one degree and get stuck there. It was clear, over time, the degrees of turbulence changed as the frequent turnover continued.

Turbulence Levels

Light turbulence includes ongoing issues with the normal functioning of an organization. Shapiro and Gross (2004) note, “The key to light turbulence is the fact that it is part of the school’s environment and that it can be handled easily in a way that will, at least, keep the issue in check” (p. 49). There were a few references by the stakeholders of CCAMS to light turbulence. First, some identified they lacked control over the turnover. Because of this, they believed the ongoing effects of the turnover on them were minimal. In addition, the frequent turnover became such “status quo” to them that they felt there was no need for reform. In effect, they felt they were doing just fine. Finally, the frequent turnover provided them a great deal of autonomy in their control of the classroom. In a sense, they closed their classroom doors and “did their thing”. Beyond the autonomy within the classroom, the frequent turnover gave them the independence to make decisions that had a significant impact on them.

Moderate turbulence focuses on turbulence in a school that causes the need for immediate attention to the situation, yet a solution can still be found. One condition is the concern is widespread among the organization (Gross, 2014). The stakeholders of CCAMS identified the turnover became a problem, and some reasons for this were the lack of accountability of staff, inconsistent or absent vision of principals, and ineffective communication. They realized they needed to learn the differing leadership styles, personalities, and qualities of new principals. Just when they felt they had been able to

accomplish this with some principals, that principal was transferred and a new one was brought in. As a result, many adopted a “wait and see” approach before actively becoming part of the solution.

Severe turbulence is serious enough to threaten the existence of an organization like a school. There must be a sense of urgency to find a solution, and “business-as-usual thinking needs to be suspended” (Shapiro & Gross, 2004, p. 50). There is a fear for the entire enterprise and a feeling of crisis (Gross, 2014). Most of the evidence identified that the stakeholders were currently in the severe degree of turbulence. They, particularly the staff at CCAMS, believed the central office did not care about the school and continued to place incompetent leaders at the school. The school continued to fail state-mandated assessments and it received an increase of “needy kids” as a result of redistricting. As time passed, they felt they could no longer contribute to the solution. Instead, they needed someone to come in and rescue them. In their minds, the only way someone would be qualified to be the savior was if he/she was identical to the principal who had served for thirteen years and was the last constant before the frequent turnover began. Despite feeling some hope Current Principal was that one, there was a systemic fear that he, only being the “interim principal”, would not be appointed as the permanent principal.

Extreme turbulence identifies a situation where there is a realistic chance of an organization imploding caused by significant “structural damage to the institution’s normal operation” (Gross, 1998, p. 114). There was minimal, if any, reference to extreme turbulence. One circumstance that may have caused extreme turbulence would have been if the “interim principal” was not made the permanent principal. As stated in Chapter 4, for the first time since they had six principals in seven year, the stakeholders connected to

CCAMS felt they had the savior at their fingertips. However, they were crippled with fear that he would not remain. If the current principal would not have been named as leader of CCAMS, there was a potential for “structural damage” to CCAMS. The lack of trust in leadership, direction, and consistent leadership could intensify, contributing to this potential.

Turbulence Gauge

After looking at the data from my study, I created a Turbulence Gauge to help me analyze the impact the frequent turnover had on specific stakeholder groups. This gauge was beneficial in not only recognizing the level of turbulence on these specific stakeholder groups, but it also afforded me the opportunity for greater success in analyzing the challenges incoming administrators to a building experiencing frequent turnover may have.

At the onset of Turbulence Theory, the four levels of turbulence and the Turbulence Gauge became very important in creating a general understanding the impact that an event or series of events has on an organization. As the theory progressed, it became evident to Gross (2014) that a general Turbulence Gauge was not enough. What he discovered, much like the position in an organization causes one to feel the effects of an event or series of events in a specific way (Positionality), the Turbulence Gauge changes based on the position of that person and lens by which a person views the events.

While I had a choice in selecting from whose point of view I would create the Turbulence Gauge, I chose the staff because their perspective is the most interesting, and perhaps the most beneficial to the study. I originally had thought I would create the gauge

from the principal's point of view, but there just was not enough information to create the gauge. There was a prevalence of information from staff, and, more importantly, the staff held the power at CCAMS.

When applying Turbulence Theory to each Degree of Turbulence in Table 6, it is understood that the event causing the turbulence is the frequent principal turnover at CCAMS, and the degree of turbulence CCAMS is facing is "severe." The Turbulence Gauge below has been adapted from Gross' (2014, p. 260) work.

Table 6. TURBULENCE GAUGE (TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE]

<u>Degree of Turbulence</u>	<u>General Definition</u>	<u>Applied to the Turnover</u>
Light	Little or no disruption in normal work environment, subtle signs of stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have no control of the turnover • Turnover not a problem • Continue to operate under the “status quo” • No need for reform; doing just fine • Autonomy
Moderate	Widespread awareness of the issue, specific origins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problems are identified: lack of accountability, vision and communication • Identify turnover itself as a problem • Lack of success on state-mandated assessments • Learn differing leadership styles of new principals • Change in Central Office leadership • “Wait and See” approach
Severe	<i>Fear for the entire enterprise, possibility of large-scale community demonstrations, a feeling of crisis</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Fear of the Interim Principal not being appointed as Principal</i> • <i>Central office does not care about CCAMS (places incompetent leaders at CCAMS)</i> • <i>Loss of the “Teaming” approach</i> • <i>Continued failure on state-mandated tests</i> • <i>Change in leadership at the assistant principal position</i> • <i>Increase of “needy kids” as a result of redistricting</i>
Extreme	Structural damage to the institution’s normal operation is occurring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of power, control, and autonomy • No trust in leadership • No direction • Continued frequent turnover • Fear of the unknown • The “interim principal” not being appointed as principal

The Positive Side of Turbulence

One might think that an effective solution must lower the turbulence level in order for it to be successful. However, in any situation relating to turbulence in an organization like a school, what is important is to discover how to use the turbulence for improvement of the organization (Gross, 2007). Turbulence Theory also recognizes there is a positive side to turbulence. Gross (2008) believes the same turbulence that can be painful can also force organizations to be open to change. This was certainly the case at CCAMS.

A positive result was the frequent turnover caused the central office and school board in their last search for a principal to look outside of the district. They had very little success in transferring principals from other positions in the district into the principal position at CCAMS. As each person from within the district was transferred, the feeling of frustration by the stakeholders and their lack of support for that person increased.

The current principal, as shown in Chapter 4, had quickly gained the respect of many of the stakeholders of CCAMS, mostly as a result of the increase of accountability and communication. The “fresh start” of coming from outside of the district might have been a key in helping him be successful. It is clear the stakeholders were relying on him to break them out of the psychic prison in which they found themselves, and without looking outside of the district, central office and the school board would have never found the current principal.

The period of instability also had a positive impact on the current principal. He was able to focus on some of the reasons he felt the prior leaders were unsuccessful. As discussed above, his similarity to the principal who had served for thirteen years helped him establish credibility and begin to implement effective change. If there was no

frequent turnover and the stakeholders did not perceive his predecessors as ineffective and unqualified (which had a negative impact on them), the immediate success the current principal had would have been less substantial.

As noted above, there were positive effects of the turbulence at CCAMS. It may be helpful for an incoming principal to a school that has experienced frequent turnover to create a Turbulence Gauge, analyze where the school falls at that specific moment, and discover how to use the current turbulence for positive reform.

Turbulence Theory can help explain how many different stakeholders felt the frequent turnover at CCAMS. It is a valuable lens by which an incoming administrator can help ensure that changes improve, not become a detriment to, any effective school reform efforts already in place. Viewing the turnover and the impending changes through the eyes of Turbulence Theory adds to the discovery of the “severe” turbulence those associated with the school were feeling. Although labeled, “severe”, this turbulence was not all negative. The turbulence caused a shake-up in the way in which the district pursued candidates and provided opportunities for the incoming principal to quickly make improvements.

Conclusion

As a result of the data, I identified three contextual factors that either were impacted by the turnover or impacted the turnover. These were the turnover at central office, fluctuating PSSA scores, and the closing of a middle school. The stakeholders, particularly the staff at CCAMS, may not have been able to clearly dictate that these were contributing factors to the turbulence at CCAMS. However, these factors became very

relevant to establishing the “global” picture of the effect the frequent turnover had on the stakeholders of the school. I discuss later that an incoming principal must be able to recognize other local contextual factors beyond those that are clearly visible and easily identified. Developing this awareness adds to a successful transition, especially in a school that has experienced frequent turnover.

Beyond discovering other local contextual factors that influenced the impact of the frequent turnover on the stakeholders of CCAMS, I categorized the stakeholders of CCAMS as experiencing severe turbulence and created a Turbulence Gauge. I explored characteristics that caused/could cause them to face a different degree. I also explained the positive aspects of the frequent turnover at CCAMS.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

In this section, I explain what I have learned from this study as it relates to what was happening at CCAMS. I list each recommendation and explain the connection to each finding discussed in Chapter 4. The following are the recommendations I will discuss in this section:

1. Incoming administrators, particularly in a period of frequent turnover, should care about the past and its relationship to the present.
2. Those making the decisions about who to select as a new principal after frequent turnover should strongly consider looking from outside the district to find a candidate.
3. The incoming principal to a building that has experienced frequent turnover should investigate the reasons for previous leaders’ exit from the position.
4. Incoming leaders in a period of frequent turnover should be cognizant the stakeholders may be trapped in a “psychic prison” and how that can relate to the change process.

5. During a period of frequent turnover, an incoming administrator should be aware there will be an inherent caution by the stakeholders to accept a new leader.
6. An incoming administrator to a school experiencing frequent turnover must identify those sources of power held by others. Once identified, the administrator must be willing to work with those who hold the power.

Recommendation 1

Incoming administrators, particularly in a period of frequent turnover, must care about the past and its relationship to the present.

Incoming administrators must not adopt an “I don’t care” attitude like the current principal at CCAMS did. Ultimately, as he found out, the effects of the turnover were deep-rooted and were something he recognized later he should have paid attention to in the beginning. Incoming principals must immediately seek to understand the impact the turnover has on the stakeholders of the school. The impact cannot be ignored because, eventually, the incoming administrator will be forced to confront it.

Recommendation 2

Those making the decisions about who to select as a new principal after frequent turnover should strongly consider looking from outside the district to find a candidate.

As Previous Principal 1 mentioned, transferring to a position as principal in another school within the same district presents its own unique set of challenges. One thing it brings is a chance for stakeholders to do a “background check”. One secretary at

CCAMS noted that knowing about the incoming administrator as a result of checking with prior staff who worked under that principal can be a good thing. However, if the information is not positive, it can taint the perspectives of new staff making them less open to the transition. Certainly, information can be gleaned about a new principal who came from outside the district; however, the information will most likely not be as thorough.

Another challenge that affects incoming administrators who were transferred from within the district is the knowledge of the past history of turnover and the circumstances surrounding that turnover. Previous Principal 2 was minutely aware of the history when he transitioned from outside the district. The same goes for the current principal. However, Previous Principal 1 had a vast knowledge of the past turnover, the circumstances surrounding that turnover, and a preconceived notion about what to expect. This caused some fear and lack of confidence and led him to question how long he would actually remain in the position. As noted in Chapter 4, stakeholders noticed this fear and lack of confidence.

Although hiring from outside the district is not the ultimate solution to solving the problem, it can bring a fresh perspective and may force the incoming administrator to analyze the current issues on a much deeper and objective level. In addition, a principal from outside the district will most likely be isolated from the fear and lack of confidence in whether or not he/she will remain in the position.

Recommendation 3

The incoming principal to a building that has experienced frequent turnover should investigate the reasons for previous leaders' exit from the position.

The exit from the position played an essential role in how the previous principals of CCAMS viewed the effects of the turnover on themselves and others. Logically, an incoming administrator will be unable to predict the circumstances surrounding his/her own exit from the position. However, the reason for the exit from the position of prior leaders can be beneficial to a new administrator.

It was clear from the study that stakeholders viewed Previous Principal 1 (transferred after only one year) and Previous Principal 2 (promoted after three years) through different lenses. Although there are many other factors like length of tenure, leadership styles of each, etc., that influenced the stakeholders' different perspectives, the fact one was transferred and one was promoted clearly played a role in their view of the success of each. The knowledge of the circumstances surrounding previous principal's exit from the position may be helpful in the transition of the new principal.

Recommendation 4

Incoming leaders in a period of frequent turnover should be aware the stakeholders may be trapped in a "psychic prison" and how that can relate to the change process.

At CCAMS, the stakeholders were trapped in an era when they had a leader whom they idealized. This leader served for thirteen years and was the last principal before the period of frequent turnover began. The stakeholders started to believe that it would take someone just like that leader to help provide stability, conquer current challenges, and invigorate the school. As time went on, principal after principal did not match their former idealized leader, and this became one of the reasons the stakeholders felt the principals had been unsuccessful.

This could be a connection to an idealized leader, event, or an accepted culture (Morgan, 2006). Because of the instability caused by the frequent leadership turnover, it is likely the stakeholders may begin to attach themselves to something (CCAMS attached themselves to the idealized leader) and use it as the basis for their definition of stability. If there is a strong connection to something, the incoming administrator must be able to identify it and work with it, not against it, to enact change. The stakeholders' identity may be rooted in this strong connection, and resistance to change may not be purposeful because of this. In fact, as Morgan (2006) identifies, there may even be an unconscious resistance by the stakeholders. The incoming administrator must understand that resistance to change may not be because the stakeholders do not want to change, it may be because they just do not know how to break out of their "psychic prison".

Recommendation 5

During a period of frequent turnover, an incoming administrator should be aware there will be an inherent caution by the stakeholders to accept a new leader.

As some connected to CCAMS identified, they found it very frustrating to put a lot of effort into getting to know a new administrator and understand his/her leadership because when they finally did understand, it was not long until a new principal was brought to the school. As a result, they began to play the “wait and see” game with each new administrator. They realized if there were things that were uncomfortable, even though they may have been necessary, they could just wait them out and the need for the stakeholders to change would go away with the exit of the principal.

It is with this perspective that incoming administrators should view the acceptance and change process. Again, it may not be a purposeful resistance to change from the staff. However, there may be hesitancy from them.

Recommendation 6

An incoming administrator to a school experiencing frequent turnover must identify those sources of power held by others. Once identified, the administrator must be willing to work with those who hold the power.

An organization such as a school cannot function without some guidance and leadership. It was clear the stakeholders of CCAMS could not rely on incoming principals to provide consistency and direction for them. As discussed above, many adopted the “wait and see” approach, confident in the idea the principal at the time would not remain for very long. Since the principal could not provide that, the stakeholders were

forced to look other places for that guidance and direction. They focused their attention, and to a degree their allegiance, to the assistant principal and other staff members.

Any stakeholder who was involved in the period of frequent turnover at CCAMS recognized this. Parents realized they needed to rely on the assistant principal for information. Central office administrators and a school board member recognized there were a certain “core group” of teachers in at CCAMS that held a lot of power. Even the staff members themselves acknowledged this core group of staff held the power, sought it out, and reacted negatively when anyone attempted to take some of the power away from them.

Certainly, it is necessary for an incoming principal to transfer some power back to him or her; however, one should not be overly aggressive in the approach, take it personal, or give up as some of the previous principals had done. These approaches from previous principals increased resistance from the stakeholders at CCAMS.

The current principal looked to include the “core group” and others. Several of the staff members mentioned the current principal sought their feedback and involved them in the scheduling process for the building and the PSSA administration. He brought back a “leadership council” where he met with staff members who represented the rest and discussed ideas, concerns, and effective processes and procedures. By first identifying those who held power and then involving them in appropriate decision-making processes, the current principal unknowingly transferred some of the power away from the core group, at the same time, benefitting from them. The current principal did not give up the power to make the final decision, but others knew they would be involved in the process.

The current principal did not recognize the need to identify the core group and discreetly take power away from them. Despite this, he was successful at doing it. Incoming administrators in a period of turnover must be purposeful in recognizing major sources of power and develop a way to utilize them to benefit all.

Implications for Further Research

The frequent principal turnover that CCAMS experienced is not something unique to that specific school. Many are concerned over the impending leadership shortage that has developed because of decreasing tenure and retention rates, an aging generation of school leaders, and applicant shortages. State, national, and even international statistics show the increase in principal turnover. Based on this study, there are several areas for further research that may help enlighten what it may take for incoming administrators in a period of frequent turnover to be successful.

After interviewing the participants in the study, several questions arose. One main one that became evident quickly is, “Was stability in the length of tenure of a principal more important to the stakeholders of CCAMS than effectiveness?” The two main principals (Principal 1 and Previous Principal 2) whom everyone spoke of as effective were there for more than a few years. In this study, some stakeholders of CCAMS connected the length of tenure to success, not necessarily the abilities of the principal. It is not even known if the stakeholders could really differentiate between effectiveness and tenure. This would be a concept to further explore.

After looking at how brief the tenure of school principals at CCAMS has been, one can ask two similar questions: “Despite the amount of time a principal stays in his/her position in a school, can a principal be ‘successful’?” and, “Does a lengthy tenure equal success?” Even though the current principal had only been there less than a year and held the “Interim Principal” status at the time I conducted most of the interviews, he was labeled by many as one that quickly gained others’ trust, empowered others, and increased accountability and communication. Future research should seek to determine, in situations where there is frequent turnover in a school, what the definition of “success” is for incoming leaders. Perhaps, just because someone has been there a brief period, does not mean they cannot be successful. Conversely, it may be that having a lengthy tenure may not equate to success for a principal.

Another question specific to trust is, “Is it hard to trust someone because of the frequent turnover or is it easy to trust the right person?” This becomes important in the transition of leaders into a principal position, especially after a period of frequent turnover. If frequent turnover truly does build a resistance to trust among the stakeholders of a school, the impact it has on an incoming principal may be substantial and must be understood by that principal.

Looking specifically at CCMAS, trust between the principal and the staff was valued, but many found it difficult to trust anyone. Despite the history of a lack of trust, building trust was possible, and the new principal was able to gain it quickly. Further research should be conducted to find out what exactly are the traits necessary to help a principal be successful at quickly gaining trust of all stakeholders. These traits are

important not only for those that are entering a building with frequent turnover, but also those who are simply succeeding another principal.

Another related question that remains is whether this perceived success of the current principal by many would continue once the proverbial “honeymoon period” is over. In fact, in one of the interviews, this notion was mentioned. Some looked at the current principal at CCAMS as a positive factor because he accomplished things such as increasing accountability and communication. It would be interesting to know whether these things, particularly the increase in accountability, will continue to be perceived as a positive factor as the tenure of the principal lengthens.

It will be important for additional research to focus on how central office turnover can affect frequent turnover of a principal of a school. As noted in Chapter 4, the central office turnover CCASD experienced had a direct impact on the stakeholders of the district. However, what was not discovered is whether there is a correlation of the central office turnover at Cross County Area School District (CCASD) with the principal turnover at Cross Country Area Middle School (CCAMS). Future studies can seek to determine the effect of central office turnover to frequent turnover of principals at a school. Attached to this, studies can seek out whether, even if there is no frequent turnover at the principal position, trust in the principal wanes with central office turnover.

This study explored where principals who left their role ended up after leaving. The study showed there has been an increasing amount of principals who are leaving to take a job in the same building, but not as an administrator. At CCAMS, principals were being transferred in and out of the position on a frequent, consistent basis. Instead of focusing on the impact retirements are having on the turnover process as the data show a

decrease in this phenomenon, a deeper focus must be given to the impact and challenges of an incoming principal based on the situation behind his/her entry into the position and the exit of the former leader.

Further research should be conducted that uses Turbulence Theory as a framework for analyzing how frequent turnover impacts individual stakeholder groups within a school experiencing frequent turnover. The focus can then be broadened to see if there are any commonalities between the transition of principals into a position in a building experiencing frequent turnover and those transitioning into a principal position in a building not experiencing frequent turnover. In addition, it may be helpful for an incoming principal to a school that has experienced frequent turnover to create a Turbulence Gauge, analyze where the school falls at that specific moment, and discover how to use the current turbulence for positive reform.

Finally, one of the most troubling discoveries from this study was the impact the frequent turnover had on the students was only mentioned by one other person besides the two parents. Further studies should focus on the impact frequent turnover has on the students, their feelings of success, and their connection to the school and each other. Until we clearly know how frequent turnover affects students, we cannot be prepared to deal with what really matters. What really matters is their success.

Application

In this section, I explain how this study became practical to me over the last few months. I clearly want to identify that none of my experiences became a bias to this study. There were experiences that directly related to my sincere interest in this study,

however, none of those experiences detracted from the validity of this study. As I discussed in Chapter 1, I implemented strong measures, such as using a critical friend who knew about my district over the past three years, to guard me from my bias.

What did occur is that I was “woken up” by this study. It forced me to realize and confront the current reality I am facing. As a result of this study, I was recently able to better transition into a role as principal in a school that had experienced similar turnover to CCAMS. Although there were many factors that were different in each of our situations and I could not generalize, the results of this study provided me a framework by which to plan an effective succession process.

Historical Framework

For over a decade, I have been interested in principal turnover. My first teaching job was in an urban middle school. It did not take long until I started to see the revolving door of administrators occurring at my school. In my third year, I served under eight different administrators at the assistant principal and principal level. I quickly began to hear the conversations from colleagues about the additional challenges this turnover caused in our urban environment. I heard questions like, “I wonder how long this one will last?” and statements such as, “Let’s take bets on whether or not this one makes it to Christmas.” I clearly remember walking back from a faculty meeting and seeing a seventh grade learning support teacher having a nervous breakdown in the doorway of a classroom. These experiences stuck with me even after I left this school. All of them laid the framework for my interest in this study.

A few years later, I began working in my current district as an assistant principal in a middle school of approximately 1,000 students. The district is rural, serving about 5,500 students and covering over 140 square miles. It covers more land area than many of the surrounding districts combined. The middle school I worked in was the only middle school in the district, causing some students to ride the bus for well over an hour each way to and from school. The former assistant principal had been in the position for two and a half years before leaving to go with her husband, who had just been relocated to the northern part of the state because of his job. The current principal had been at the school for over a decade. To me, I was entering a school that was extremely “stable” in the tenure of the leadership.

This was my first administrative position in a building. I chose to meet with every teacher and as many staff members as possible. I was blown away when two teachers asked me the exact same question, “How long are you planning on staying here?” I was confused by the question, and asked each teacher to explain. One of them responded, “Well, the former assistant principal only stayed two and a half years.” I could tell the look on my face perplexed him a little. I could not figure out why he would be so concerned over the former assistant principal staying for over two and a half years, so I quickly responded, “I plan on being here a long time.”

Throughout all of my courses in this program, I tried to focus as many assignments as possible on principal turnover. However, almost all of them focused on turnover in an urban school. After transitioning into this middle school in the rural district and spending a few years there, I began to recognize many things such as “frequent turnover” is not defined the same by every stakeholder and every situation, “consistent

and effective tenure” cannot be defined as a specific length of time, and the effects of turnover are not isolated to urban districts. It was these exact ideas that played a major factor in framing the main research questions of this study.

Connection Between My Experiences and Literature Review

I served as assistant principal for five years before the principal retired. When that happened, I took over as principal. I had begun doing research into administrator turnover at rural schools, and found there was a lot less research on rural schools as there was on urban schools. Beyond conducting research, it was at the point of the principal retiring that I began to live the research on rural principal turnover. What follows is a discussion of how my experiences support some of the research presented in this study.

Challenges of Rural Principals

In Chapter 1, I explained some of the research on the challenges facing rural principals (Arnold, 2004; Cruzeiro & Boone, 2009; Myran, Stanzo & Clayton, 2011; Salazar, 2007; Versland, 2007; Wood, Finch, & Mirecki, 2013). One of those challenges was the increase in responsibility given to principals because of the lack of staff to handle specific duties. For the past two school years, there has not been an Assistant Superintendent, and our Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment left the district at the start of the 2014-2015 school year. This left a void in two central office positions of which neither has been filled. In addition, there were several building-level administrative positions that were not filled. The district already had the highest student

to administrator ratio in several counties. When these positions were not filled, it became worse.

For the 2014-2015 school year, I was assigned as the principal of the largest elementary school in the district. I immediately felt the challenges of the lack of administrators in our district. For the four years this elementary school had been open, there had always been an assistant principal. When I started this year, the assistant principal position had been cut. I am now in charge of a 700+ student, 100+ staff member building with no other building-level administrative support.

Others felt the impact as well. There were several responsibilities formerly fulfilled by central office staff that were now distributed among the building principals. For example, one principal was assigned Title I; one was given charge of field trips, after school child care, and professional development; one former building principal became an administrator specifically focused on the observation and evaluation of non-tenured teachers across the entire district; and a principal was assigned the role of Supervising Principal. All of these responsibilities, among others, were given to building-level administrators with little support and no increase in compensation.

Increasing Turnover and Impact on the Culture

One of the reasons discussed in Chapter 2 that can explain the increasing amount of principal turnover is decreasing tenure and retention rates. This phenomenon is seen all across the nation and the world (Fuller & Young, 2009; Gates, Ringel, Santibanez, Guarino, Ghosh-Dastidar, & Brown, 2006; Gates, Ringel, Santibanez, Ross, & Chung, 2003; Papa, 2007;). My school district is no exception. Over the last three years, there

have been four principals with tenures at a school no longer than one school year, and two principals with tenures of no longer than two school years. Currently, the longest running tenure of a principal of a school in my district is three years. In addition, one school has seen six administrators in two years, and two schools have had three different principals in the past three years.

One of those schools with three administrators in three years is the current school of which I am principal. As discussed in Chapter 2, the culture of a school is significantly impacted by frequent turnover (Gronn & Lacey, 2006; Hargreaves & Goodson, 2004; Loeb, Kalogrides, & Horng, 2010; Salazar, 2007). Within the first few weeks of my time at my current school, I heard from parents, students, teachers, and staff how the culture of my school had been affected by the frequent turnover in the past three years. It was consistently brought up in my initial conversations with the stakeholder groups of my school. The stakeholders of CCAMS also experienced this impact of turnover on the culture. I discussed this in Chapter 4. Those such as the principal, former principals, Director of Secondary Education, teachers, staff, and parents all recognized and explained how the culture of CCAMS was affected by the frequent turnover there.

Where Principals Went

In this study, I discussed the extent of principal turnover and where principals go after leaving the principalship in their school building. These two challenges clearly played out in my current district. There are fifteen assistant principals/principals (I will refer to the collective group as administrators) across nine schools in the district, including both elementary and secondary. Since the principal at my middle school retired

and I took over as principal (less than three years ago), I saw turnover occur for every major reason listed in Table 1 in Chapter 2, which was adapted from the research of Goldring and Taie (2014) and Battle (2010), except one (a principal moving to a non-administrative job within the same school). In our district, three more administrators retired, four administrators moved to an administrative position not in a building, nine administrators changed buildings within the district as part of a “restructuring”, one administrator left for higher education, and two moved to another school district. This caused the district to have to hire five new building administrators, four principals and one assistant principal.

Connection to My Findings

As I transitioned into my new role as principal of an elementary school, I knew the frequent turnover affected the stakeholders in the school. I could not and did not ignore that. In my very first staff meeting I held at the end of the previous school year before I took over as principal, I acknowledged the fact I was the third principal in three years. From looking at the expressions and reactions of the staff, I knew it was something that was on their minds.

There was one experience in the first month of school that solidified my need to be constantly aware of the impact of the turnover. As a second grade class was passing by me in the hallway, one student stopped, looked up at me, and said, “I hope you are going to be our principal for a while.” Certainly, I had heard similar statements from parents and staff, but a simple statement by a six year old boy hit home.

Much like the current principal at CCAMS, I did not know at the time how significant the impact the turnover was on other stakeholders. The current principal at CCAMS did not care about the impact of the turnover and felt it would not affect him. The difference between him and me is I cared about the past. In relation to the turnover at my school, I knew the past was actually part of the present. I did not have to wait until it directly and significantly impacted me, like the current principal at CCAMS did, to be vigilant and aggressive in seeking to understand the turnover's impact.

I also understood the impact of the entrance of a principal into the position and how it related to frequent transfers of administrators within the school district. Much like what happened at CCAMS, my transition, and most transitions across the entire district, were a result of an internal transfer.

The year prior to my starting at my current school, every single elementary administrator was moved to a different building. As a result of this shuffle, teachers and parents became upset. Some went to board meetings to express their dissatisfaction with the superintendent's decision to make massive changes. In addition, as explained above, the next year, the year I transitioned into an elementary principal position, there were even more administrator moves across the district. This became a contextual factor that added to the cascading effect taking place in the school district. It was an important part of recognizing how my entry into the position influenced my view of how the frequent turnover impacted others.

I became aware how the exit from the position of previous administrators played a role in the impact the stakeholders felt from the frequent turnover. In my situation, one previous administrator left the district to take a job at an institute of higher education, and

the other was tasked at beginning a new program for students struggling with the prerequisite skills that help them be successful upon entering kindergarten. I knew this was different from the internal transfers across the district I discussed above. The fact that the former administrators here at my building were not transferred, rather “promoted”, made a difference in how the stakeholders at my building viewed my transition. It did not eliminate the effects of the turnover on them; however, it did somewhat decrease their fear that my tenure would only be short-lived.

At the onset of the study, I was interested in this research because I experienced frequent turnover of building administrators as a teacher. However, as I conducted this study, the impact of frequent turnover became “real” for me. I became armed with information that I can continue to apply to my current reality. I understand the research on turnover and how it applies to my situation. Finally, I gained ideas of how I can continue to make a positive impact based on the information I learned from this study. For me, this was the real benefit of conducting this research.

Conclusion

The most pronounced concept I learned from this study is frequent principal turnover has a direct impact on all stakeholders of a school. Although this may seem like common sense, what this study showed me is how deep the impact can actually be. It also became clear the effects of the frequent turnover at CCAMS were not just short term; the impact had long-lasting effects.

I am worried about the impact the frequent turnover has had on the stakeholders of CCAMS. It has not only affected many stakeholders’ view of the ineffectiveness of the

school to educate children; it also has caused a negative view of the whole school district. Teachers feel unsupported, parents have “given up” and expressed their dissatisfaction with the direction of the school district, and central office and board members seem confused on how to deal with the turnover. Some have recognized the community is concerned after hearing community members’ negative comments at local sporting events, and they noticed a lack of support for and participation in district and building activities. So much hope has been put in the current principal that I am concerned that if the current principal would happen to leave CCAMS, no matter the reason, the school and district could be facing an extreme level of turbulence.

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APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM



Office of the Dean *phone* 215-204-1380
501 Carnell Hall (040-11) *fax* 215-204-8781
1803 North Broad Street gradschool@temple.edu
Philadelphia, PA 19122-6095 www.temple.edu/grad

Title of research study:

WHEN FREQUENT ADMINISTRATIVE TURNOVER IS PRESENT IN ONE RURAL MIDDLE SCHOOL: HOW DOES IT MAKE SENSE TO THOSE INVOLVED?

Investigator and Department:

Investigator's Name: Dr. Steven J. Gross
Department: College of Education, Department of Educational
 Leadership and Policy Studies
Telephone: (215) 204-8064

Why you are being invited to take part in a research study

We invite you to take part in a research study because you are/have been a stakeholder of the school during all or part of the period of administrative turnover at the school.

What you should know about a research study

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- You volunteer to be in a research study.
- Whether you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part in the research study.
- You can agree to take part now and later change your mind.
- Whatever you decide, it will not affect your care.
- Feel free to ask all the questions you want before and after you decide.

Who can I talk to?

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, contact the research team at:

Investigator's Name: Kevin A. Peters
Department: College of Education, Department of Educational
 Leadership and Policy Studies

Project Title: When Frequent Administrative Turnover is Present
in One Rural School: How Does It Make Sense to
Those Involved?
Telephone: (717) 244-1448 (w)
(717) 858-7380 (h)
Advisor: Dr. Steven J. Gross
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Leadership and Policy Studies
Telephone: (215) 204-8064

This research has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board. You may talk to them at (215) 707-3390 or e-mail them at: irb@temple.edu for any of the following:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research subject.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

Why are we doing this research?

Countless research has identified that a good leader is crucial to the success of an organization. This is no different when looking in the school setting. Good leaders can be the catalyst to the success that is felt in an achieving school. Contrary to this, it can be said that without effective leadership, the success of an organization can be hindered. In schools, the absence of good leadership, and more specifically a consistent leader itself, can be detrimental to the achievements of students, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders. With rapid turnover being experienced by schools across the nation and the world due to a variety of factors such as feelings of inadequate pay and/or lack of autonomy, more studies need to be conducted that focus on the frequent leadership turnover in schools.

The goal of this study is to accomplish just that. It will seek to identify how the impact of frequent leadership turnover impacts one rural school and how the stakeholders make sense of the turnover. The intent of this study is to identify these factors in the hope that they can be confronted in schools with frequent turnover in an attempt to “right the ship”.

How long will the research last?

We expect that you will be in this research study for two interviews of approximately 30-60 minutes long.

How many people will be studied?

We expect about 20 people here will be in this research study out of 20 people in the entire study nationally.

What happens if I say yes, I want to be in this research?

- You will participate in two interviews of 30-60 minutes each.

- The research will be conducted at a time and in a place that is most convenient to you.

What are my responsibilities if I take part in this research?

If you take part in this research, you will be responsible for participating in two surveys of about 30-60 minutes in length.

What happens if I say no, I do not want to be in this research?

You may decide not to take part in the research and it will not be held against you. It will in no way affect your relationship with the study doctor.

What happens if I say yes, but I change my mind later?

You agree to take part in the research now and if you stop at any time, it will not be held against you.

If you stop being in the research, already collected data may not be removed from the study database. You will be asked whether the investigator can collect data from your routine medical care. If you agree, this data will be handled the same as research data.

What happens to the information we collect?

Efforts will be made to limit your personal information, including research study and medical records, to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete secrecy. For example, though the study team has put in safeguards to protect your information, there is always a potential risk of loss of confidentiality.

Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the IRB, Temple University, Temple University Health System, Inc. and its affiliates, and other representatives of these organizations, and the Office of Human Research Protections.

Participating in Future Research Studies

We may want to contact you in the future to see if you would be interested in participating in another research study and/or to obtain additional information related to your participation in this study. Please indicate by initialing on the line in the next

Your signature documents your permission to take part in this research.

DO NOT SIGN THIS FORM AFTER THIS DATE →

May 28, 2014

Signature of subject

Date

Printed name of subject

Signature of person obtaining consent

Printed name of person obtaining consent

paragraph below if you are willing to be contacted. Please know that you can amend your answer below at any time without prejudice to you or your relationship with the study, Temple University, or the Study doctor and team.

Yes, I agree to be contacted about future research studies. ____

No, I do not want to be contacted about future research studies. ____

Yes, I agree to be contacted to obtain additional information related to my participation in this study. ____

No, I do not want to be contacted to obtain additional information related to my participation in this study. ____

APPENDIX B

PERMISSION TO AUDIOTAPE



Office of the Dean *phone* 215-204-1380
501 Carnell Hall (040-11) *fax* 215-204-8781
1803 North Broad Street *email* gradschool@temple.edu
Philadelphia, PA 19122-6095
www.temple.edu/gr

Permission to Audiotape

Investigator's Name:

Kevin A. Peters

Department:

College of Education, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Project Title:

When Frequent Administrative Turnover is Present in One Rural School: How Does It Make Sense to Those Involved?

Respondent: _____

Date: _____

Log #: _____

I give Kevin A. Peters permission to audiotape me. This audiotape will be used only for the following purpose (s):

RESEARCH

This audiotape will be used as a part of a research project Temple University. I have already given written consent for my participation in this research project. At no time will my name be used.

WHEN WILL I BE AUDIOTAPED?

I agree to be audiotaped during the time period: May 2013-May 2014

HOW LONG WILL THESE TAPES BE USED?

I give my permission for these tapes to be used from: May 2013-May 2014

These recordings will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at the investigator's residence for three (3) years after completion of the study.

WHAT IF I CHANGE MY MIND?

I understand that I can withdraw my permission at any time. Upon my request, the audiotape(s) will no longer be used. This will not affect my care or relationship with Kevin A. Peters or Temple University in any way.

OTHER

I understand that I will not be paid for being audio taped or for the use of the audiotapes.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

If I want more information about the audiotape(s), or if I have questions or concerns at any time, I can contact:

Investigator's Name: Kevin A. Peters

Department: College of Education, Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Institution: Temple University

Street Address: 3241 Lynwood Lane
York, PA 17402

Phone: Office: (717) 244-1448
Home: (717) 858-7380

This form will be placed in my records at Temple University and the person named above will keep a copy. A copy will be given to me.

Please print:

Respondent's Name: _____

Date: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Respondent's Signature: _____

(Or signature of parent or legally responsible person if subject is a minor or is incompetent to sign.)

Relationship to Respondent: _____

Respondent cannot sign because: _____

but consents orally to be audiotaped under the *conditions described above*.

Witness Signature

Date

Witness Signature

Date

APPENDIX C

PREVIOUS PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interviewee ID# _____

Demographic Information: Name: _____ Gender: _____ Age: _____ Current Position: _____ Years in current position: _____ Interview #: _____ Date of Interview: _____
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Interview

Introduction:

The purpose of our conversation is to provide you with an opportunity to share your thoughts on how the recent frequent turnover of building principals has affected multiple stakeholders. There are four main questions that I'm going to explore:

- 1). *What environmental conditions may detract from or add to frequent turnover?*
- 2). *What qualities of school culture may detract from or add to frequent turnover?*
- 3). *What levels of academic performance may detract from or add to frequent turnover?*
- 4). *What political skills may detract from or add to frequent turnover?*

My questions are designed to allow you to guide the direction of our conversation. While I will ask a number of questions in response to the perceptions you share, I want you to feel free to describe those things that are most important to you in regard to how frequent turnover has affected you, your school, and school system.

Introduction:

1. Why did you come to the school/district?
2. Why did you choose to leave the school/district?

Section 1: What environmental conditions may detract from or add to frequent turnover?

3. In the midst of the turnover at the building, you had some leadership changes in the Central Office. How did that affect the turnover?
4. What pressures did you feel from Central Office during your tenure?

Section 2: What qualities of school culture may detract from or add to frequent turnover?

5. What was the culture like before you took over?
6. What was the relationship like between administration and Central Office before/during your tenure?
7. How did the past turnover affect your tenure?

Section 3: What levels of academic performance may detract from or add to frequent turnover?

8. You made/did not make AYP during your tenure. How did the turnover affect your results?
9. How did meeting/not meeting AYP affect the leadership of the school? you?

Section 4: What political skills may detract from or add to frequent turnover?

10. How were you different than the others before you? After you?
11. What skills are necessary to be successful during this time of turnover?
12. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?
13. Is there anyone else you think I should talk to?

APPENDIX D

CURRENT PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interviewee ID# _____

Demographic Information: Name: _____ Gender: _____ Age: _____ Current Position: _____ Years in current position: _____ Interview #: _____ Date of Interview: _____
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Interview

Introduction:

The purpose of our conversation is to provide you with an opportunity to share your thoughts on how the recent frequent turnover of building principals has affected multiple stakeholders. There are four main questions that I'm going to explore:

- 1). *What environmental conditions may detract from or add to frequent turnover?*
- 2). *What qualities of school culture may detract from or add to frequent turnover?*
- 3). *What levels of academic performance may detract from or add to frequent turnover?*
- 4). *What political skills may detract from or add to frequent turnover?*

My questions are designed to allow you to guide the direction of our conversation. While I will ask a number of questions in response to the perceptions you share, I want you to feel free to describe those things that are most important to you in regard to how frequent turnover has affected you, your school, and school system.

Introduction:

1. Why did you choose to come to the school/district?

Section 1: What environmental conditions may detract from or add to frequent turnover?

2. What is your relationship like with Central Office? How has it changed over the course of your tenure?

3. What are some things that may have been affected by the turnover?

Section 2: What qualities of school culture may detract from or add to frequent turnover?

4. What was the culture like before you got to the building?
5. How has it changed since you have come to the building?
6. How did the turnover affect you when you took over the building as principal? At what point did it become a problem? Is it still a problem?

Section 3: What levels of academic performance may detract from or add to frequent turnover?

7. The building made AYP for some of the years during the turnover. Others, including the past year, you did not. How did the turnover affect your results?
8. How did meeting/not meeting AYP affect the leadership of the school? you?
9. How have the PSSA and AYP impacted the you and the leadership of the building?

Section 4: What political skills may detract from or add to frequent turnover?

10. Why have you chosen to stay?
11. How would you describe the other leaders? In comparison to you?
12. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?
13. Is there anyone else you think I should talk to?

APPENDIX E

CENTRAL OFFICE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interviewee ID# _____

Demographic Information: Name: _____ Gender: _____ Age: _____ Current Position: _____ Years in current position: _____ Interview #: _____ Date of Interview: _____
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Interview

Introduction:

The purpose of our conversation is to provide you with an opportunity to share your thoughts on how the recent frequent turnover of building principals has affected multiple stakeholders. There are four main questions that I'm going to explore:

- 1). *What environmental conditions may detract from or add to frequent turnover?*
- 2). *What qualities of school culture may detract from or add to frequent turnover?*
- 3). *What levels of academic performance may detract from or add to frequent turnover?*
- 4). *What political skills may detract from or add to frequent turnover?*

My questions are designed to allow you to guide the direction of our conversation. While I will ask a number of questions in response to the perceptions you share, I want you to feel free to describe those things that are most important to you in regard to how frequent turnover has affected you, your school, and school system.

Section 1: What environmental conditions may detract from or add to frequent turnover?

1. In the midst of the turnover at the building, you had some leadership changes in the Central Office. How did that affect the turnover?
2. What are some challenges that the turnover caused?
3. What pressures did Central Office feel during the periods of turnover?
4. How have the pressures changed? How has the current leader relieved or added to some of these pressures?

Section 2: What qualities of school culture may detract from or add to frequent turnover?

5. What was the culture like before turnover? during? after?
6. What was the relationship like between administration and Central Office before turnover? during? after?
7. Was the turnover a problem? At what point did it become a problem? Is it still a problem?

Section 3: What levels of academic performance may detract from or add to frequent turnover?

8. You made AYP for some of the years during the turnover. Others, including the past year, you did not. How did the turnover affect your results?
9. How did meeting/not meeting AYP affect the leadership of the school? you?
10. How have the PSSA and AYP impacted the leadership of the current principal?

Section 4: What political skills may detract from or add to frequent turnover?

11. What skills did you look for when searching for building leaders during this time of the turnover?
12. How do you think the skills were different/same when looking for the current leader?
13. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?
14. Is there anyone else you think I should talk to?

APPENDIX F

PREVIOUS CENTRAL OFFICE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interviewee ID# _____

Demographic Information: Name: _____ Gender: _____ Age: _____ Current Position: _____ Years in current position: _____ Interview #: _____ Date of Interview: _____
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Interview

Introduction:

The purpose of our conversation is to provide you with an opportunity to share your thoughts on how the recent frequent turnover of building principals has affected multiple stakeholders. There are four main questions that I'm going to explore:

- 1). *What environmental conditions may detract from or add to frequent turnover?*
- 2). *What qualities of school culture may detract from or add to frequent turnover?*
- 3). *What levels of academic performance may detract from or add to frequent turnover?*
- 4). *What political skills may detract from or add to frequent turnover?*

My questions are designed to allow you to guide the direction of our conversation. While I will ask a number of questions in response to the perceptions you share, I want you to feel free to describe those things that are most important to you in regard to how frequent turnover has affected you, your school, and school system.

Introduction:

1. Why did you come to the district?
2. Why did you choose to leave the district?

Section 1: What environmental conditions may detract from or add to frequent turnover?

3. What things were particularly difficult during the period of turnover?
4. What pressures did Central Office feel during the periods of turnover?
5. How do you think those pressures have changed?

Section 2: What qualities of school culture may detract from or add to frequent turnover?

6. What was the culture like before turnover? during?
7. What was the relationship like between administration and Central Office before turnover? during?
8. Was the turnover a problem? At what point did it become a problem? Do you think it is still a problem?

Section 3: What levels of academic performance may detract from or add to frequent turnover?

9. You made AYP for some of the years during the turnover. Others, you did not. How did the turnover affect your results?
10. How did meeting/not meeting AYP affect the leadership of the school? district? you?
11. How do you think the PSSA and AYP has impacted the leadership of the current principal?

Section 4: What political skills may detract from or add to frequent turnover?

12. What skills did you look for when searching for building leaders during the time of the turnover?
13. How do you think the skills were different/same when looking for the current leader?
14. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?
15. Is there anyone else you think I should talk to?

APPENDIX G

PARENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interviewee ID# _____

Demographic Information: Name: _____ Gender: _____ Age: _____ Current Position: _____ Years in current position: _____ Interview #: _____ Date of Interview: _____
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Interview

Introduction:

The purpose of our conversation is to provide you with an opportunity to share your thoughts on how the recent frequent turnover of building principals has affected multiple stakeholders. There are four main questions that I'm going to explore:

- 1). *What environmental conditions may detract from or add to frequent turnover?*
- 2). *What qualities of school culture may detract from or add to frequent turnover?*
- 3). *What levels of academic performance may detract from or add to frequent turnover?*
- 4). *What political skills may detract from or add to frequent turnover?*

My questions are designed to allow you to guide the direction of our conversation. While I will ask a number of questions in response to the perceptions you share, I want you to feel free to describe those things that are most important to you in regard to how frequent turnover has affected you, your school, and school system.

Introduction:

1. What years did you have children at the middle school?

Section 1: What environmental conditions may detract from or add to frequent turnover?

2. How well did you know the principal/s during the time your child/children attended the school?

3. What was your opinion of the principal/s at the school?

Section 2: What qualities of school culture may detract from or add to frequent turnover?

4. What was the culture of the “parent network” like before turnover? during? after?
5. What was the relationship between administration and parents like before turnover?
6. How did you feel about having your children attend a school with such turnover?

Section 3: What levels of academic performance may detract from or add to frequent turnover?

7. What do you know about the PSSA and AYP?
8. You made AYP for some of the years during the turnover. Others, including the past year, you did not. What kind of pressure did that put on the past principals? current principals? parents?

Section 4: What political skills may detract from or add to frequent turnover?

9. How did the turnover affect your child/children?
10. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?
11. Is there anyone else you think I should talk to?

APPENDIX H

TEACHER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interviewee ID# _____

Demographic Information: Name: _____ Gender: _____ Age: _____ Current Position: _____ Years in current position: _____ Interview #: _____ Date of Interview: _____
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Interview

Introduction:

The purpose of our conversation is to provide you with an opportunity to share your thoughts on how the recent frequent turnover of building principals has affected multiple stakeholders. There are four main questions that I'm going to explore:

- 1). *What environmental conditions may detract from or add to frequent turnover?*
- 2). *What qualities of school culture may detract from or add to frequent turnover?*
- 3). *What levels of academic performance may detract from or add to frequent turnover?*
- 4). *What political skills may detract from or add to frequent turnover?*

My questions are designed to allow you to guide the direction of our conversation. While I will ask a number of questions in response to the perceptions you share, I want you to feel free to describe those things that are most important to you in regard to how frequent turnover has affected you, your school, and school system.

Section 1: What environmental conditions may detract from or add to frequent turnover?

1. In the midst of the turnover at the building, you had some leadership changes in the Central Office. How did that affect the turnover?
2. What are things that were difficult during the period of turnover?

Section 2: What qualities of school culture may detract from or add to frequent turnover?

3. What was the culture like before turnover? during? after?
4. What was the relationship like between administration and teachers before turnover? during? after?
5. How has the culture changed?

Section 3: What levels of academic performance may detract from or add to frequent turnover?

6. You made AYP for some of the years during the turnover. Others, including the past year, you did not. How did the turnover affect your results?
7. How did meeting/not meeting AYP affect the leadership of the school? you?
8. How have the PSSA and AYP impacted the leadership of the current principal?

Section 4: What political skills may detract from or add to frequent turnover?

9. How is your current principal different/same than the others?
10. How would you describe the other leaders? your current leader?
11. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?
12. Is there anyone else you think I should talk to?

APPENDIX I

SCHOOL BOARD INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interviewee ID# _____

Demographic Information: Name: _____ Gender: _____ Age: _____ Current Position: _____ Years in current position: _____ Interview #: _____ Date of Interview: _____
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Interview

Introduction:

The purpose of our conversation is to provide you with an opportunity to share your thoughts on how the recent frequent turnover of building principals has affected multiple stakeholders. There are four main questions that I'm going to explore:

- 1). *What environmental conditions may detract from or add to frequent turnover?*
- 2). *What qualities of school culture may detract from or add to frequent turnover?*
- 3). *What levels of academic performance may detract from or add to frequent turnover?*
- 4). *What political skills may detract from or add to frequent turnover?*

My questions are designed to allow you to guide the direction of our conversation. While I will ask a number of questions in response to the perceptions you share, I want you to feel free to describe those things that are most important to you in regard to how frequent turnover has affected you, your school, and school system.

Section 1: What environmental conditions may detract from or add to frequent turnover?

1. In the midst of the turnover at the building, you had some leadership changes in the Central Office. How did that affect the turnover?
2. What things that may have been difficult during the period of turnover have changed since there has been some stability?
3. What pressures did the school board feel during the periods of turnover?

4. How have the pressures changed? How has the current leader relieved or added to some of these pressures?

Section 2: What qualities of school culture may detract from or add to frequent turnover?

5. What was the culture of the building/district like before turnover? during? after?
6. What was the relationship like between administration/Central Office and the school board before turnover? during? after?
7. Was the turnover a problem? At what point did it become a problem? Is it still a problem?

Section 3: What levels of academic performance may detract from or add to frequent turnover?

8. You made AYP for some of the years during the turnover. Others, including the past year, you did not. How did the turnover affect your results?
9. How did meeting/not meeting AYP affect the leadership of the school? district? you?
10. How have the PSSA and AYP impacted the leadership of the current principal?

Section 4: What political skills may detract from or add to frequent turnover?

11. What skills did you look for in the current principal during the selection process?
12. How are those skills different than prior principals?
13. How is your current principal different/same than the others?
14. How would you describe the other leaders? your current leader?
15. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?
16. Is there anyone else you think I should talk to?

APPENDIX J

SUPPORT STAFF INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interviewee ID# _____

Demographic Information: Name: _____ Gender: _____ Age: _____ Current Position: _____ Years in current position: _____ Interview #: _____ Date of Interview: _____
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Interview

Introduction:

The purpose of our conversation is to provide you with an opportunity to share your thoughts on how the recent frequent turnover of building principals has affected multiple stakeholders. There are four main questions that I'm going to explore:

- 1). *What environmental conditions may detract from or add to frequent turnover?*
- 2). *What qualities of school culture may detract from or add to frequent turnover?*
- 3). *What levels of academic performance may detract from or add to frequent turnover?*
- 4). *What political skills may detract from or add to frequent turnover?*

My questions are designed to allow you to guide the direction of our conversation. While I will ask a number of questions in response to the perceptions you share, I want you to feel free to describe those things that are most important to you in regard to how frequent turnover has affected you, your school, and school system.

Section 1: What environmental conditions may detract from or add to frequent turnover?

1. In the midst of the turnover at the building, you had some leadership changes in the Central Office. How did that affect the turnover?
2. What things have been difficult during the period of turnover?

Section 2: What qualities of school culture may detract from or add to frequent turnover?

3. What was the culture like before turnover? during? after?
4. What was the relationship like between administration and teachers/support staff before turnover? during? after?
5. How has the culture changed?

Section 3: What levels of academic performance may detract from or add to frequent turnover?

6. What do you know about the PSSA and AYP?
7. You made AYP for some of the years during the turnover. Others, including the past year, you did not. How did the turnover affect your results?
8. How did meeting/not meeting AYP affect the leadership of the school? teachers? you?
9. How have the PSSA and AYP impacted the leadership of the current principal?

Section 4: What political skills may detract from or add to frequent turnover?

10. How is your current principal different/same than the others?
11. How would you describe the other leaders? your current leader?
12. Is there anything else you would like to tell me?
13. Is there anyone else you think I should talk to?

APPENDIX K



TEMPLE
UNIVERSITY®

**Office for Human Subjects Protections
Institutional Review Board**
Medical Intervention Committees A1 & A2
Social and Behavioral Committee B
Unanticipated Problems Committee

Student Faculty Conference Center
3340 N Broad Street - Suite 304
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19140
Phone: (215) 707-3390
Fax: (215) 707-9100
e-mail: irb@temple.edu

Certification of Approval for a Project Involving Human Subjects

Protocol Number: 20731
PI: GROSS, STEVEN
Review Type: EXPEDITED
Approved On: 29-May-2013
Approved From: 29-May-2013
Approved To: 28-May-2014
Committee: B BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
School/College: EDUCATION (1900)
Department: EDUCATION:LEAD/POLICY STUD (19030)
Project Title: When Frequent Administrative Turnover Is Present in One Rural Middle School: How Does It Make Sense to Those Involved?

The IRB approved the protocol 20731.

If the study was approved under expedited or full board review, the approval period can be found above. Otherwise, the study was deemed exempt and does not have an IRB approval period.

Before an approval period ends, you must submit a "[Continuing Review Progress Report](#)" to request continuing approval. Please submit the form at least 60 days before the approval end date to ensure that the renewal is reviewed and approved and the study can continue.

Finally, in conducting this research, you are obligated to submit modification requests for all changes to any study; reportable new information using the Reportable New Information form; and renewal and closure forms. For the complete list of Investigator responsibilities, please see the Policies and Procedures, the Investigator Manual, and other requirements found on the Temple University IRB website: <http://www.temple.edu/research/regaffairs/irb/index.html>

Please contact the IRB at (215) 707-3390 if you have any questions.