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An Analysis of Principal Preparation Programs at Pennsylvania State Schools

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AN ANALYSIS OF PRINCIPAL PREPARATION PROGRAMS
AT PENNSYLVANIA STATE SCHOOLS

Karlin Burks

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education

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OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

APPROVAL FOR SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE

Doctoral Candidate, Karlin Burks, has successfully defended and made the required
modifications to the text of the doctoral dissertation for the Ed.D. during this Spring
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and date this document only when revisions have been completed. Please return this
form to the Office of Graduate Studies, where it will be placed in the candidate’s file and
submit a copy with your final dissertation to be bound as page number two.
Abstract

In this era of data-driven accountability for school success and high student achievement, successful school leadership has been hailed as one of the most important tools in creating effective schools. Principal preparation programs have an ever-demanding job of producing high-quality principals capable of effective school leadership, as the failure or success of a school can be directly attributed to the training and preparation of the school principal. It is the desire of the researcher that the findings of this study will add to the research on school leadership and perhaps encourage university principal preparation programs to examine their practices and engage in ongoing communication with the school districts in which they serve.

The purpose of this study was to examine principal preparation programs within the Pennsylvanian State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) and to ascertain whether their programs were structured in a way that would equip principal candidates with the leadership roles deemed essential for 21st century school leadership. The four leadership roles uncovered in this research as essential for 21st century school leadership success are: (1) instructional leadership, (2) ethical leadership, (3) distributed leadership, and (4) visionary leadership. The sample size for this qualitative case study consisted of nine schools (N=9), and data for this study were collected by means of available online program documentation.

Examining principal preparation through the lens of General Systems Theory and Systems thinking, the researcher analyzed the program structure and overall program design for each principal preparation program within the PASSHE system of schools. Study results revealed two important findings of note: (1) principal preparation programs
within the PASSHE system of schools overwhelmingly structured their programs around the ideals of instructional leadership, with the other three leadership roles only sparsely covered in program content and (2) although PASSHE is purported to be a collective system of schools, none of the schools in the study adopted a set of common principles or operated their principal preparation program in the same way. Each school operated as a separate entity, with varying requirements and program objectives.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002) resulted in a national standards-based reform movement in our nation’s public schools. Part A of NCLB stipulated that student academic achievement could be increased by the placement of highly qualified principals and assistant principals in every school building (NCLB, 2002), as effective school leadership was found to be a necessary condition for successful school reform efforts (Marzano, 2003). However, results from research studies suggest that legislation alone cannot effect the type of change currently needed in today’s schools (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Mathis, 2004; Meier et al., 2004).

In 2003, The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future cited teacher quality as the single greatest component required for student achievement. Subsequent research conducted by Leithwood et al. (2004) and Louis et al. (2010) also cited the importance of teacher quality. However, there is a growing body of correlational research that suggests principal leadership to also be a factor in influencing student achievement and overall student success (Cotton, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Marzano et al., 2005. According to a report by the Wallace Foundation (2012), the school principal is the primary individual that is in a position to ensure that high-quality teaching happens in every classroom in the school building.

Background of the Problem

The legislation of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001) positioned school leadership at the center of the national school reform effort outlined by three goals: (1)
creating effective schools, (2) closure of subgroup achievement gaps, and (3) a focus on the need for effective school leadership. According to the Wallace Foundation (2007), effective school leadership and successful school reform efforts depend on having principals properly trained to improve instruction and change schools. Several researchers contend that 21st century schools require leaders experienced beyond that of school manager to encompass the varied roles of visionary, community builder, budget analyst, facility manager, social worker, therapist, and curriculum expert (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Dembowski, 2006; DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Fullan, 2007; IEL, 2000). However, current university-based principal preparation programs charged with adequately training future school leaders for the challenging work of school reform have been questioned as to their effectiveness (Darling-Hammond, 2009, Murphy, Moorman, & McCarthy, 2008) and also criticized as one of the primary weaknesses in our country's education system (Levine, 2005). Levine (2005) further questioned whether higher education institutions are capable of re-engineering their leadership preparation programs to educate principals to lead effectively in the 21st century.

According to critics, current principal preparation programs fail to address the myriad roles required of principals to become effective leaders (Davis et al., 2005) and do not equip them with the necessary tools to effectively deal with instructional leadership, community relationships, and time management issues (McNeese et al., 2009). Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) concurs with this position and posits that the problem with leadership preparation programs is two-fold: (1) lack of knowledge on the best ways to prepare and develop highly qualified candidates and (2) lack of established methods for assessing the effectiveness of a program's impact on the graduates or on the graduates'
performance in their leadership role. Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) further state that much of the principal training and preparation programs of today focus on the management rather than the leadership role of principals, centering on “a collection of courses of general management principles, school laws, administrative requirements, and procedures—with little emphasis on knowledge about student learning, effective teaching, professional development, curriculum, and organizational change” (pp. 9-10).

**Interstate School Leader Licensure Consortium Standards**

Effective leadership is necessary to the successful operation of schools (Marzano et al., 2010); and schools in the 21st century require visionary leaders, as one factor, to be successful (Snyder et al., 2008). The National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2007) designed and adopted the Interstate School Leader Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards, first introduced in 1996 and revised in 2008 as a national model for the desired standards of practicing administrators. Assessment standards provide test specifications to determine how licensed administrators should demonstrate entry-level knowledge and skills. Evaluation standards guide how practicing administrators should be evaluated as they move toward expert performance as defined by ISLLC. Practice standards can be used to establish professional career plans and guide professional development as leaders demonstrate continuous improvement toward expert performance.

The revised 2008 ISLLC Standards, adopted by The National Policy Board for Educational Administration, are as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Although many states have adopted the ISLLC standards as a guideline for effective principal performance, it is important to note that the requirements of university-based principal preparation programs are dictated by state and national prerequisites; therefore, the blame for poor school leadership performance cannot solely be placed with the universities or with school administrators.

21st Century School Administrator Expectations

School administration expectations have changed from the early 20th century model of building manager to encompass the current need for school administrators to
serve as visionaries, instructional leaders, change agents, and curriculum and assessment experts (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). The school administrator role of today is met with an accumulation of expectancy that has increased the complexity of the position (Kafka, 2009). To adequately prepare school administrators for current and future demands, a major shift in principal preparation needs to occur (Barnett, 2004). Higher education institutions provide the training and opportunities necessary in order to meet the needs of current and future school leaders. NCLB was a catalyst for this change, as administrator preparation programs were heavily scrutinized and held accountable to produce higher quality principals capable of providing the instructional leadership necessary to improve student achievement in 21st century schools.

Efforts to improve school leadership and preparation programs have also been of concern in the state of Pennsylvania. According to the Pennsylvania’s Department of Education (PDE), school leaders are a critical component to the success of Pennsylvania’s educational system (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2008). As a result, PDE established the Framework and Guidelines for Principal Preparation Programs, a set of mandated standards aimed at placing effective school leaders in all schools within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Another important goal of the Framework and Guidelines for Principal Preparation Programs is to increase program consistency throughout the state and to raise student achievement, as “it has become increasingly clear that there are commonalities in the leadership programs that have correlated program design to higher student outcomes” (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2008, p. 2).
Pennsylvania’s Framework and Guidelines for Principal Preparation Programs works in tandem with the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC): Standards for School Leaders. ISLLC, a program under the authority of the Council of Chief State School Officers, is a set of six guiding principles and professional expectations for school leaders. In order to work as an administrator in Pennsylvania, one must successfully pass Educational Testing Services’ (ETS) School Leaders Licensure Assessment, a content of assessments based on the six ISLLC standards. ETS’ School Leaders Licensure Assessment was designed to encapsulate the essential role of school administrators and to focus on the essential aspects of school leadership as it relates to student success (ETS, 2003).

The role of school principal was not formally recognized in education until the 1920s (Grogan & Andrews, 2002). The role began with school administrators functioning as building managers, responsible for building facilities and student discipline concerns (Cotton, 2003). According to Holland (2004), the managerial tasks of the school administrator comprised much of what a principal did in the early years, as it was viewed as the responsibility of the principal to oversee the work being done and the quality of the work being produced in the organization. However, according to Fullan (2007), the principal’s job has become dramatically more complex and overloaded within the last decade and has moved further away from the building manager role. DiPaola and Tschannen-Moran (2003) supported this notion, stating that the job responsibilities of the principal have been expanded to include significantly more instructional leadership responsibilities.
Principal Preparation Programs and ISLLC

Since its inception in 1996, the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium’s (ISLLC) Standards for School Leaders has gained recognition by many as the model for principal preparation programs, certification, professional development, and leadership performance evaluation across the United States (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996; Lashway, 2002; Murphy & Shipman, 1999; Murphy, Yff, & Shipman, 2000). According to Standard 2 of the professional standards identified by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, the principal should be “an educational leader who promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth” (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008, p. 20). The ISLLC standards illustrate the scope of educational expectations required of current school administrators and the level of accountability placed on principal preparation programs (Gupton, 2003) to raise their training standards to meet the needs of 21st century schools.

Murphy (2007), one of the writers of the ISLLC standards, questioned the effectiveness of preparation programs when he asserted, "What universities have been doing to prepare educational leaders is, at best, of questionable value and, at worst, harmful" (p. 582). Brown (2006) supports this assertion, stating, “If current and future educational leaders are expected to foster successful, equitable, and socially responsible learning and accountability practices for all students, then substantive changes in educational leadership preparation and professional development program are required” (p. 705). Experts agree that a predictor of effective school administration can be associated with “incorporating clear and consistent standards and expectations into a
statewide education system” (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008, p. 10).

**Pennsylvania Principal Preparation Programs**

Principal preparation programs in the state of Pennsylvania are approved through Pennsylvania’s Department of Education. The quality of each program is dictated through the guidelines and mandated standards detailed in The Framework and Guidelines for Principal Preparation Programs (2008). As of 2012, Pennsylvania has fourteen state schools under the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE), nine of which offer approved programs for principal certification.

According to The Framework and Guidelines for Principal Preparation Programs (2008), Pennsylvania school administrators are expected to implement effective management practices that influence student success and achievement. There is a growing body of research that supports the idea of school administrators’ influence on student achievement. The idea of school administrators directly influencing student achievement began in the late nineties, as Peterson (1999) noted that principals significantly influenced student achievement by providing new teachers with effective instructional leadership and nurturing. Additionally, several other researchers suggested school principals positively influence student achievement through the daily interactions and communications with the school’s teachers (Hallinger et al., 1996; Leithwood et al., 2004; Murphy et al., 2006). Although student achievement has historically been associated with the direct actions of the classroom teacher, along with other internal and external factors outside the control of school personnel, current research finds student achievement can be attributed to the nurturing and guidance received from the school administrator, as principals have been proven to produce gains in student achievement
(Marzano et al., 2010) through their daily actions and interactions.

**Statement of the Problem**

The preparation of school administrators has come under considerable scrutiny in recent years (Levine, 2005; Murphy, 2007) with the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) description of conventional administrator preparation programs as "well-intentioned, but insufficient," and "lacking vision, purpose, and coherence" (Orr, 2006, p. 493). According to Darling-Hammond et al., (2007) and Levine (2005), principal preparation programs have not advanced far enough to meet the training demands of the new principal paradigm, which is to redesign schools that will prepare students to compete in the 21st century global context.

Critics argue that current principal preparation programs are archaic, focus on a weak knowledge base and managerial duties, (Levine, 2005; Orr 2006) and do not align coursework to meet the needs of practitioners out in the field (Murphy, 2007). However, as most requirements for university principal preparation programs are dictated by state standards, researchers need to focus the reform work of principal preparation programs towards the national scale. The lack of qualitative research describing the methods for assessing the alignment between the course of study in principal preparation programs and the extant research on the characteristics of effective principals needs to be addressed.

**Purpose of the Study**

The proper training of school administrators is essential if principals are to successfully navigate the education reform landscape that requires them to perform as building manager and knowledgeable instructional leader, ultimately responsible for the
success of every student in their school (Marzano et al., 2005). Principals play a role in creating effective schools, but existing knowledge on the best ways to prepare and develop highly qualified principals is sparse (Darling-Hammond, 2009). Thus, my purpose for this qualitative study was to examine principal preparation programs at Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) schools and describe whether the programs include coursework and field experiences that would imbue school administrators with the leadership and practical skills needed to successfully function in 21st century schools. Specific to this study, research will be conducted to understand how each program is structured in a way that would equip principal candidates with the four leadership roles found to be essential for 21st century school leadership: (1) instructional leadership, (2) ethical leadership, (3) distributed leadership, and (4) visionary leadership.

Significance of the Study

According to NCLB (2002), school administrators are solely responsible for student achievement and overall student success in their school buildings. Pennsylvania’s Accountability Plan, a plan established to measure school improvement and student achievement in Pennsylvania schools, also delineates school improvement and school reform efforts as the sole responsibility of school administrators (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2006). An examination of Pennsylvania’s principal preparation programs is prudent, as other states around the nation have overhauled their leadership preparation programs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009), to address the level of preparedness of those individuals responsible for student achievement and reform efforts in 21st century schools.

Researchers have called for substantive changes in educational leadership
preparation programs to include a focus on the development of strong theory and practice and a complete understanding of principal preparation (Brown, 2006; Elmore, 2003). Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) posit that it is possible to create preparation programs that train school administrators to implement the practices associated with effective schools and that such programs would be research-based, have curricular coherence, provide experiences in authentic contexts, use cohort groupings and mentors, and are structured to enable collaborative activity between the program and area schools (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Levine, 2005). However, to date, limited research has been done to evaluate the effectiveness of university-based leadership preparation programs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Murphy & Vriesenga, 2004; Orr, 2003); and no empirically based metrics of success have been developed.

Given what the research theorizes about effective leadership preparation programs, higher education institutions have a duty to ensure school administrators are well prepared (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Levine, 2005) for the rigors of 21st century school administration. By examining the current research and best practices on current principal preparation programs, this research can add to the discourse on effective training methods for 21st century principals. Additionally, principal preparation programs could utilize these findings to evaluate their programs’ alignment with school leadership best practices and implement changes as needed. Finally, this research provides future school districts and future principals with a realistic understanding of the practical skills and leadership requirements needed to successfully lead 21st century schools.

**Research Questions**

I guided the study with the following question: To what extent are principal
preparation programs at the nine approved Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) schools structured to imbue principal candidates with the leadership and practical skills needed to successfully function as principals in 21st century schools?

Two subsidiary questions were also examined:

Subsidiary Question 1: How do the course content and program design of each of the nine principal preparation programs in the PASSHE system of schools support the acquisition of the four leadership roles identified in the literature: (1) instructional leadership, (2) visionary leadership, (3) distributed leadership, and (4) ethical leadership.

Subsidiary Question 2: What are the opportunities in each principal preparation program for candidates to develop the four leadership roles identified in the literature through provided internships and field experiences?

**Design and Methodology**

This study is a qualitative case study describing the published content of principal preparation programs across multiple sites (n=9) in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education schools. An analysis of the nine approved principal certification programs were examined by means of available print and online documents that describe the curriculum from each university for the years 2000-2011. According to Huberman and Miles (2002), limiting a study to document analysis eliminates the concern with the distortion of information or a lack of factual accuracy.

Documents were examined to review the content, structure, and overall program design within each principal preparation program. Specific evaluation was given to the Program Goals/Philosophy, Program Curriculum/Course Content, and Program
Internship/Field Experiences. The data were evaluated to determine each program’s alignment with current research and theories on effective school administration and the characteristics of high-quality principal preparation programs as identified by scholars in the field. Additionally, each program was analyzed as to its ability to prepare candidates for the four leadership roles outlined in the study through specific course offerings and field experiences. The 2008 Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards served as criteria for evaluation for this study.

Delimitations of the Study

This study was delimited by the choice to describe principal preparation programs at Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education schools as evaluated through the institution’s publicly accessible media documents. Only publicly available media documents from the years 2000-2011 were examined.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this qualitative research study are as follows:

1. The study used a qualitative case study design, and thus, the results cannot be used to draw casual connections between preparation programs and the effectiveness of their candidates as principals.

2. As researcher, I was the primary instrument of data collection (Merriam, 2009).

3. Possible inconsistencies may exist between the published documents and the actual practices of the respective principal preparation programs.

4. The availability of documents and information in each of the 9 PASSHE schools may vary and access to detailed information may be limited,
impacting the strength of the inferences that can be generated (Patton, 2002).

5. The available print and online documents were aimed at attracting students into the program and were written from a public relations as opposed to an empirical perspective (Yin, 2003).

6. The study results may not be generalizable, as the findings were limited to the principal preparation programs in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education schools.

**Definitions of Concepts and Terms**

The following are definitions and abbreviations relevant to the study:

*Distributed Leadership* – Leadership that enhances the skills and knowledge of people in the organization, creating a common culture of expectations around the use of those skills and knowledge, holding the various pieces of the organization together in a productive relationship with one another, and holding individuals accountable for their contribution to the collective result (Elmore 2000, p. 15).

*Educational leader* – A leader who promotes the success of each student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth (Officers, 2008).

*Ethical Leader* – A leader who embraces the domains of ethical enactment, treats everyone in the schools as human beings and citizens with rights and responsibilities and engages his or her staff in the ethical core work of the school; namely, authentic teaching and learning (Staratt, 2005, p. 131).

*Field-related Experiences* – Any experience, as part of a preparation program, in which the participant is involved in the actual practice of school district administration in
a low-risk setting (Schon, 1991).

*Instructional Leader* – A leader who utilizes his or her skills to exercise the functions that enables schools to achieve the goals of ensuring quality in what students learn (s, 2000).

*Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards* – The ISLLC standards were first introduced in 1996 and revised in 2008 and are a set of six guiding principles and professional standards expected of school leaders.


*PILS* – The Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership Initiative, a statewide, standards-based leadership development and support system for school leaders in Pennsylvania.

*Principal Preparation Programs* – Programs at accredited universities through which individuals become certified to serve as school principals.

*Principalship* – The post of principal

*Servant Leader* – See ethical leader

*Visionary Leadership* – A leader who is prepared to provide professional support and guidance at all levels of the school (Bottoms et al., 2003; Koerner, 1990).

**Summary and Organization of the Study**

This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter I provides an introduction to the study, a statement of the problem and significance of the study as well as a general description of the design and study methodology. Chapter II presents a review of the relevant research on effective school administration and the changing demands of school leadership in the 21st century. Chapter III includes a description of the selected samples,
procedures for data collection, and process used for data analysis. Chapter IV presents the data, data analysis, and interpretation of the findings as it pertains to the research questions. Chapter V presents a summary of the study and implications and recommendations for future policy and practice in the field of school administration.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The following literature review examines the characteristics inherent to highly effective school leadership. Literature relevant to the principal's job as examined through the various leadership roles required of 21st century school administrators is also included. The chapter begins with a historical overview examining principal preparation programs and past practices of training school leaders. Finally, characteristics of effective principal preparation programs are examined across the nation, followed by an overview of the current condition of principal preparation in the state of Pennsylvania.

Overview of Existing Research

Research into principal preparation and leadership has been extensive over the years. Researchers such as Morrow (2003), Cotton (2003), Waters et al. (2003), Marzano et al. (2005), Levine (2005), and Murphy, Moorman, and McCarthy (2008) all examined the relationship of principal preparation or principal leadership. The following is a synopsis of the major studies in the area of principal leadership and training.

Morrow’s (2003) qualitative study examined Illinois public school principals’ perceptions of the ISLLC standards found to be most crucial to the daily job performance of practicing school administrators. The study also examined the importance of the ISLCC standards in 21st century principal preparation programs. Morrow’s survey of 182 principals concluded that principals in the study perceived the ISLLC standards to be valuable in the execution of their jobs. Two additional conclusions pertinent to this study were as follows: (1) the principal’s role has shifted away from building resource manager to instructional leader, and (2) principals viewed the responsibility for making the vision
of learning in the school clear and understood by all stakeholders as a critical component of their role.

Cotton’s (2003) qualitative study examined the link between principal characteristics and behaviors and their relationship to student outcomes. Cotton found that principals of high achieving schools exhibited similar characteristics and behaviors. Similar to the research of Morrow (2003), Cotton’s research found that effective principals are (1) vision and goal oriented and focus on high levels of student learning, (2) understand the importance of instructional leadership, and (3) use student data for program improvement (pp. 67-72).

Levine’s (2005) qualitative study on leadership examined the utility of principal preparation programs across the country. Levine’s (2005) study was a follow-up to the 1987 National Council on Excellence in Educational Administration (NCEEA) study that found major deficiencies in the alignment of the training conducted in principal preparation programs to the actual demands of the principal’s job. Levine’s four-year study consisted of 28 case studies of diverse principal preparation programs around the country and survey data from principals and other educators affiliated with principal preparation. Levine’s overall conclusions concurred with the original results from NCEEA that found the quality of university-based principal preparation programs to be deficient. Also of note from this study were the survey results that found 89% of participants cited that their leadership preparation programs failed to adequately prepare them for the rigors of real practice (Levine, 2005).

Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) examined the notion of school leadership from a quantitative perspective by conducting a meta-analysis of 69 studies over a 35-
year span. Marzano et al. (2005) examined the effect of school leadership on student achievement and found that the more effective the leader, in terms of leadership abilities, the greater the gains in student achievement. Marzano’s (2005) research was the first of its kind to quantify the leadership traits and actions of school principals and placed a statistical analysis to the 21 leadership behaviors uncovered in the study.

Murphy, Moorman, & McCarthy’s, (2008) qualitative study, *A Framework for Rebuilding Initial Certification and Preparation Programs in Educational Leadership: Lessons from Whole-State Reform Initiatives*, investigated the extent to which meaningful reform was occurring in university-based school leadership preparation programs in 54 universities across six states. This study found that leadership preparation programs were inconsistent and fell short of the goal of adequately preparing school leaders. Another important finding was that leadership preparation programs still adhered to an outdated and unproductive training paradigm focused primarily on weak curriculum and course content.

**Focus of the Review**

The proper training of school administrators is essential to the success of all schools, as it is the school principal that is ultimately responsible for the success of every student in his or her charge (Marzano et al., 2005). Although principals play a vital role in student achievement and school success, existing knowledge on the best ways for principal preparation programs to train highly qualified principals is sparse (Darling-Hammond, 2009). According to Darling Hammond et al., (2007) and Levine (2005), principal preparation programs have not progressed far enough to meet the training demands of the new principal paradigm, which is to redesign schools that will prepare
students to compete in the 21st century global context. This study will examine relevant literature on principal preparation programs utilizing the framework outlined in Boote and Beile (2005) for effectively organizing a literature review. The review of related literature serves as the foundation for this research study.

**Literature Search Methods**

Literature to be reviewed for this study was accessed for the years 1996-2011 via online databases: (a) Pro Quest, (b) JSTOR, (c) ERIC and (d) Google Scholar. In addition, several works by known scholars in the field such as Darling-Hammond, Marzano, and Elmore, who advocate for increased rigor in principal preparation programs, were reviewed.

**Criteria for Inclusion and Exclusion of Literature**

There is little quantitative or qualitative research conducted on principal preparation. This literature review includes theoretical research on principal preparation programs as well as limited available empirical case studies describing characteristics of highly effective principal preparation programs. The literature chosen for selection in this study represents a list of documents that helped form the basis of the research topic.

I restricted the parameters of my search to peer-reviewed journals and used the key words/phrases of principal preparation, principal preparation programs, and school administration to guide my search. To provide a more comprehensive study, both quantitative and qualitative studies were included. The ProQuest database was also used to access doctoral dissertations that researched principal preparation programs and principal training to support my study focus. Additionally, relevant research on educational leadership and the principalship was included.
The Evolution of Leadership

The idea of leadership has evolved over the past one hundred years beginning with Carlyle’s (1888) “great man” theory, which is the notion that leaders are born with predisposed characteristics rendering them capable of assuming a variety of leadership roles and responsibilities. During the 1960s, however, behavior theorists rejected Carlyle’s notion that leaders were born with gifted traits better suited to leadership positions and opted to examine the observable patterns of behavior leaders exhibited that could be categorized as specific “leadership styles” (Jago, 1882) or traits. Present day researchers such as Northouse (2004), have moved beyond investigating leadership through the sole examination of the leader, to encompass a more complete understanding of the relationship between the leader and his or her followers and the combined efforts on organizational performance (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2004).

Although the notion of leadership has been examined for nearly one-hundred years, no defining or universal trait distinguishing effective leaders from ineffective leaders has been uncovered (Northouse, 2004). Much of the research on leadership is examined through the lens of the leader and fails to consider external forces such as those individuals working with the leader or the leader’s context or task (Northouse, 2004). Particularly germane to this study, the current leadership research fails to distinguish between effective leadership and effective management, (Kotter, 1990), which continues to be a central issue in the evolution of the principal’s job.

Principal as School Leader

The role of school principal was not formally recognized in education until the 1920s (Grogan & Andrews, 2002). Researchers first identified the varied duties of school
principals as functioning as building managers, responsible for building facilities and student discipline concerns (Cotton, 2003). Holland’s (2004) research supported earlier study findings concluding that the early job of school principal was comprised mainly of the day-to-day management and operation of the school.

The literature on school leadership and principal preparation suggests that the training of school leaders, and their ultimate success in schools, has been at the forefront of education reform for over 40 years. The National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) stated that every educational reform report of the last decade concludes that the United States cannot have excellent schools without excellent leaders (NPBEA, 2002). As early as 1969, researchers called for a new breed of school principal to effectively and productively lead the reforms efforts in our schools (Culbertson et al., 1969). However, early researchers examining preparation of school administrators found the programs lacking, citing significant discrepancies between the training needs of school leaders and the opportunities provided them in their formal preparation programs (Culbertson et al., 1969). Twenty years later, researchers continued to call for a change in principal preparation and professional development programs to focus more on the areas of content knowledge, skills, and leadership ability proven to make a difference in today’s schools (Bookbinder, 1992). Under the current era of standards accountability, principals are required to possess the skills and knowledge necessary to improve teacher instruction and student achievement (Elmore, 2000).

School principals are so essential to effective schools that promote powerful teaching and learning for all students (LaPointe, Meyerson, & Darling-Hammond, 2006) that their skills and abilities must be broad enough to encompass the full range of duties
required of effective leaders. According to Rooney (2008), leaders in today’s schools must be equipped with the skills or characteristics of (a) relationship builder, (b) listener, (c) reflector, prior to making major decisions, and (d) mentor. In the 2012 report jointly commissioned by The National Center for School Leadership (NCSL) and The Wallace Foundation entitled *Preparing a Pipeline of Effective Principals: A Legislative Approach* (2012), five key roles were outlined for effective principal leadership. Effective principals (a) shape a vision of academic success for all students, one based on high standards, (b) create a climate hospitable to education, (c) cultivate leadership in others so teachers and other adults assume their part in realizing the school vision, (d) improve instruction to enable teachers to teach at their best and students to learn at their utmost, and (e) manage people, data, and processes to foster school improvement. As outlined in NCSL’s (2012) report, the job of the 21st century school principal is multifaceted and increasingly challenging to master.

**Standards and Accountability Impact on School Leadership**

The driving force behind the increased demand placed on 21st century principals is the current era of high-stakes standards and school accountability that began in the 1980s. The Goals 2000 standards-based reform initiative required all students to reach higher levels of academic achievement by the year 2000. Following the Goals 2000 initiative, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), another standards-based initiative, required all states to steadily improve in academic performance by the year 2014 and required statewide accountability systems be put in place for all public schools (Cotton, 2003). In addition to the statewide accountability measures of NLCB, all schools were expected to show consistent progress towards the 2014 academic goals that NCLB
termed adequate yearly progress (AYP) in order to continue receiving federal school funds. Of particular importance to school leaders, the nationwide reform efforts held schools, students, and by extension, principals accountable for achieving high academic standards through the establishment of standardized tests to measure students’ attainment, or lack thereof, towards the required goals (Heinecke et al., 2003). Schools failing to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) toward state proficiency goals faced a variety of sanctions up to and including state takeover of the school district (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

The standards and accountability movement greatly increased the importance of the principal’s role in school effectiveness (Lashway, 2003) and placed principal preparation firmly in the center of the education reform movement. In order to be deemed effective in this highly accountable era, Goodwin et al., (2003) contends principals must master effective instructional leadership and demonstrate knowledge of teaching and learning. In 2005, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) issued a challenge to educators to equip every school with the leadership necessary to improve student performance, as Levine (2005) contends leadership begins with an effective school principal.

**The Evolution of the Principal’s Job**

According to National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP, 2010) the landscape of our schools has changed and is driven by factors such as greater accountability, technological innovation and complexity, and greater diversity of school communities. Thus, the school principal’s job needs to change to accommodate the scope and demands placed on current school administrators, which has become dramatically
more complex and overloaded within the last decade (Fullan, 2007). Current school administrator duties have shifted away from building manager to encompass a more multi-faceted role with significantly more instructional leadership responsibilities (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003).

According to NASSP (2010), school principals face complex societal issues influencing education today; and effective principals need skills to resolve these issues with judgment, an orientation toward results, and organizational ability. Along these lines, The Southern Regional Education Board SREB (2007) noted that effective principals are crucial to improved student performance so much so that substantial improvements are not likely to take place without highly effective principals in all schools. Thus, 21st century schools require principals that can be effective building managers, capable of managing the facilities side of their school buildings, and effective instructional leaders, capable of leading the educational reform efforts in their schools towards greater student achievement and outcomes.

According to Orr (2007), the manner in which a principal leads his or her school influences the school’s outcomes in terms of improvement, student achievement, and teacher satisfaction. Further research on school leadership, school effectiveness, and the role of the school principal suggests that, second only to the influences of classroom instruction, school leadership strongly affects student learning (Leithwood et al., 2004). In spite of what the latest research shows about the importance of placing effective school leaders in all schools, many principals may not be equipped for the role of instructional leader (Davis et al., 2005), capable of increasing the achievement of students in their charge (Hale & Moorman, 2003; Hess, 2003; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003).
The blame for poor principal performance traditionally was placed with university principal preparation programs, as many researchers believed current programs were ill equipped to handle the training demands required of 21st century school administrators. Levine, a strong critic of principal training, concluded that principal preparation programs were the primary weakness in our country's education system (2005).

Historically, the focus of principal preparation programs emphasized management and administrative issues over curricular and instructional concerns, causing a profound disconnect between the university training of school administrators and the current realities and demands of the job to be instructional leaders (Hale & Moorman, 2003). In spite of the fact that teaching and learning have taken the front row in the list of skills the school principal is expected to perform (Hale & Moorman, 2003), many principal preparation programs have resisted change.

Researchers contend that 21st century schools demand highly qualified, efficient school leaders. Thus, tremendous expectations have been placed on school leaders to improve student achievement (NCLB, 2001) and solve the ills facing the nation’s schools (Darling Hammond et al., 2007). In order to manage this changing landscape, 21st century schools must be equipped with principals that exhibit high degrees of educational leadership expertise (NASSP, 2010).

The hiring of qualified principals is an urgent issue in many school districts across the country as they scramble to meet the requirements for greater student achievement under NCLB and other standards-based reform initiatives. Mallory (2007) contends that the costs associated with hiring a principal ill-equipped to function as an effective school leader can potentially damage the district’s financial outlook as well as their public
persona in their communities. The only way to ensure all schools are equipped with excellent principals is to ensure school administrator preparation programs reflect the new training paradigms required of 21st century schools (Orr, 2003). The outlook for principal preparation programs is improving as, according to Green (2005), many higher education institutions across the country have restructured and updated their preparation programs to incorporate research-based and practice-oriented approaches that respond to the new and emerging need of accountability, efficiency, effectiveness, and excellence.

**Principal Standards**

**Interstate School Leader Licensure Consortium Standards**

The Interstate School Leader Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards, first introduced in 1996 and revised in 2008, have emerged as the definitive model for principal preparation programs and leadership performance evaluation across the United States (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996; Lashway, 2002; Murphy & Shipman, 1999; Murphy, Yff, & Shipman, 2000) and is considered by many educators to be a national model for the desired standards of practicing school administrators. The ISLLC standards provide a set of common expectations for the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of school administrators, grounded in principles of effective teaching and learning (NPBEA, 2001). As of 2010, 46 states, including Pennsylvania, have adopted the ISLLC standards for principal preparation certification for its school administrators (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010). The ISLLC assessment standards provide test specifications to determine how licensed school administrators should demonstrate entry-level knowledge and skills to be deemed effective in their role.

There have been few research studies examining the ISLLC standards and their
relevancy to the principal profession. However, *The Standards We Need: A Comparative Analysis of Performance Standards Shows Us What Is Essential for Principals To Know and Be Able To Do To Improve Achievement* (Waters, & Kingston, 2005) was a comparative analysis of the six key findings of the Mid-continent Research for Education & Learning (McREL)’s Balanced Leadership Framework with the 184 ISLLC Indicators. The purpose of the study was to provide insight about what future standards for school-leaders should encompass. The study found that both the McREL and ISLLC Standards propose a wide range of principal responsibilities; however, neither set of standards provides a clear distinction between important and essential responsibilities of the principal (Waters, & Kingston, 2005). Ultimately, this study confirmed that what effective principals must know and be able to do on the job encompasses a vast amount of responsibilities.

Another study on the ISLLC standards was conducted by Morrow (2003) and examined the usability of ISLLC standards in the everyday work of school principals. The study also examined the practicality of the ISLCC standards in 21st century principal preparation programs. The study drew several conclusions as a result of surveying principals; however, two were pertinent to this study: (1) the principal’s role has shifted away from building resource manager to instructional leader and (2) principals viewed the responsibility for making the vision of learning in the school clear and understood by all stakeholders as a critical component of not only the principal’s role but also critical to current principal preparation programs.

Evaluating principals by means of standards and accountability has become the norm in education. Most states around the nation rely heavily on various assessments as
part of their certification processes for principals (Sanders & Simpson, 2005) and include use of the ISLLC standards completely or in part to evaluate the effectiveness of principals in their everyday roles. In an evaluation of effective leadership capacity building programs around the nation, Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) found that those programs utilizing curriculum aligned to state and professional standards, such as the ISLLC standards, when preparing future school principals to be most successful.

ISLLC Standards in Pennsylvania

Like other states around the nation, Pennsylvania modeled their curriculums, administrator standards, and certification requirements for its principal preparation programs school after the standards outlined in the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC). The ISLLC standards, organized by the Council of Chief State School Officers, is a set of six guiding principles and professional expectations for school leaders, devised for the purpose of developing model standards and assessments for school leaders. The ISLLC standards were devised to address the critical components of school leadership as they related to student success and achievement and to help transform the profession of educational administration and the roles of school administrators.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) deems school administrators critical to the success of the entire Pennsylvania educational system and has begun examining its leadership preparation programs in an effort to improve leadership practices around the Commonwealth. Education experts agree that a predictor of strong school leadership can be directly linked to “incorporating clear and consistent standards and expectations into a statewide education system” (Officers, 2008, p. 10) and
Pennsylvania recognizes the accountability level at which school principals are placed and the important leadership role principals must assume to facilitate the success of the schools they administer (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2006).

In the state of Pennsylvania, principal preparation program quality is dictated through the guidelines and mandated standards detailed in The Framework and Guidelines for Principal Preparation Programs (2008). The Pennsylvania K-12 School Leadership Project of the Education and Policy Leadership Center (EPLC), a twenty-member study team of education experts selected from the local, state, and federal sectors, were also charged with identifying issues and concerns regarding district and school leadership in the state and developing recommendations that would lead to improved practice and greater student achievement. The primary goal of EPLC was to clearly define the roles of school principals, based on current research and leadership best practices, and to develop a list of knowledge and skills required for effective school and district leadership to be implemented in principal preparation programs around the state.

The updated six ISLLC standards of 2008 currently in use in Pennsylvania were born out of the following set of principles for school leaders to follow (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008). The following seven principles set the direction and priorities during the development of the new policy standards: (1) reflect the centrality of student learning, (2) acknowledge the changing role of the school leader, (3) recognize the collaborative nature of school leadership, (4) improve the quality of the profession, (5) inform performance-based systems of assessment and evaluation for school leaders, (6) demonstrate integration and coherence, and (7) advance access, opportunity, and empowerment for all members of the school (Council of Chief State School Officers,
2008). From the principles outlined above, the following six ISLLC standards and functions were devised and implemented in several states across the nation, including Pennsylvania:

Table 1

*ISLLC Educational Leadership Policy Standards*

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<th>ISLLC Standard</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Expected Principal Function</th>
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| 1              | An education leader promotes the success of every student by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders. | A. Collaboratively develop and implement a shared vision and mission.  
B. Collect and use data to identify goals, assess organizational effectiveness, and promote organizational learning  
C. Create and implement plans to achieve goals  
D. Promote continuous and sustainable improvement  
E. Monitor and evaluate progress and revise plans |
| 2              | An education leader promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth. | A. Nurture and sustain a culture of collaboration, trust, learning, and high expectations  
B. Create a comprehensive, rigorous, and coherent curricular program  
C. Create a personalized and motivating learning environment for students  
D. Supervise instruction  
E. Develop assessment and accountability systems to monitor student progress  
F. Develop the instructional and leadership capacity of staff  
G. Maximize time spent on quality instruction  
H. Promote the use of the most effective and
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<th>appropriate technologies to support teaching and learning</th>
<th>I. Monitor and evaluate the impact of the instructional program</th>
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| 3 | An education leader promotes the success of every student by ensuring management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment. | A. Monitor and evaluate the management and operational systems  
B. Obtain, allocate, align, and efficiently utilize human, fiscal, and technological resources  
C. Promote and protect the welfare and safety of students and staff  
D. Develop the capacity for distributed leadership  
E. Ensure teacher and organizational time is focused to support quality instruction and student learning |
| 4 | An education leader promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources. | A. Collect and analyze data and information pertinent to the educational environment  
B. Promote understanding, appreciation, and use of the community’s diverse cultural, social, and intellectual resources  
C. Build and sustain positive relationships with families and caregivers  
D. Build and sustain productive relationships with community partners |
| 5 | An education leader promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner | A. Ensure a system of accountability for every student’s academic and social success  
B. Model principles of self-awareness, reflective practice, transparency, and ethical behavior  
C. Safeguard the values of democracy, equity, and diversity  
D. Consider and evaluate the potential moral and legal consequences of decision-making  
E. Promote social justice and ensure that individual student needs inform all aspects of schooling |
An education leader promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

| 6 | A. Advocate for children, families, and caregivers  
B. Act to influence local, district, state, and national decisions affecting student learning  
C. Assess, analyze, and anticipate emerging trends and initiatives in order to adapt leadership strategies |

*Source: ISLLC 2008*

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) also uses the ISLLC Standards to accredit university-based preparation programs (NCATE, 2007) as evidence that those programs continually improve their practices and align leadership behaviors with effective education outcomes (ISLLC, 2008). As of 2012, there are 14 state schools under the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE), nine of which offer approved programs for principal certification and incorporate the ISLLC standards into their program guidelines. To date, eight out of the nine schools selected for this study are NCATE certified and utilize the ISLLC standards, as well as the knowledge and skills identified by the Pennsylvania K-12 School Leadership Project of the Education and Policy Leadership Center (EPLC), to guide principal expectations in their preparation programs.

According to the Southern Regional Education Board (2006), “Better prepared school leaders are essential to achieving state goals for higher student achievement and economic progress” (p. 13). Thus, the ISLLC standards provide a template for success for the 21st century principal (Morrow, 2003). Additionally, the ISLLC standards serve to accurately describe the daily job duties needed by a school leader to be successful (Barnet, 2004).
Criticism of the ISLLC Standards

The ISLLC standards, accepted by most of the educational community as the definitive set of common expectations for the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required of school administrators (Davis et al., 2005), has not been without its critics. Researchers such as English (2003), Hess (2003), and Murphy (2005) contend that there are major deficiencies with the ISLLC standards such as the lack of an empirical base and proven research methodology. Murphy (2005) continues his criticisms, asserting that the ISLLC standards include intangible assessment elements of one’s beliefs and values as a way to assess a principals’ effectiveness, as there is no research stating that an effective principal possessed one belief or value over that of another that directly led to their school leadership success.

Hale & Moorman, (2003) contend that the ISLLC standards are vague about what school principals must know and be able to do to successfully lead schools. Murphy (2005) supports that assertion, stating that the standards place too little emphasis on the specific responsibilities required of school leaders to improve schools and increase student achievement. Simply put, the concepts within the ISLLC standards do not go deep enough nor do they make successful administrative practice (Hess, 2003; Marshall & McCarthy, 2002). Thus, the current ISLLC standards are not specific enough to warrant the level of influence yielded in the profession (Murphy, 2005).

Particularly germane to this study is the criticism that the ISLLC standards do not serve to measure the work of university training programs in effectively preparing school administrators for the task of successfully leading 21st century schools. English (2006) faults the content of the ISLLC standards as too generic, fragmented, and missing
significant content. English (2000) further states that the ISLLC standards do little to reduce bureaucracy in university preparation programs, but rather disguise the bureaucracy that does exist. English challenged the validity and usefulness of the ISLLC standards by providing this analysis:

The ISLLC (Murphy, Yff and Shipman, 2000) standards simply are not entirely what they claim to be; i.e., ‘what research and practitioners have told the ISLLC representatives are critical components of effective leadership’ (ETS 1997:4). Some dispositions and performances, which comprise the standards, are neither scientific (research-based) nor empirically supportable. The standards are ambiguous and not without internal contradiction. When such a doctrine is proposed to be nationally applied in the training, preparation and licensing of educational administrators embraced by the political power of the state for enforcement, we are about to embark on what Michel Foucault (1980: 32) has aptly identified as a ‘regime of truth.’ Such regimes are politically repressive to all other possibilities. Given the looming national implementation and test based on the ISLLC standards, it is my position that such a doctrine deserves the most serious and sustained interrogation (English, 2000, p.159).

Although the ISLLC standards has many critics about the validity of its content and utility in current principal preparation programs, “the purpose of the ISLLC Standards is to provide a clear, organized set of curriculum content and performance standards that could be used to drive the preparation, professional development, and licensure of principals” (Jackson & Kelley, 2002, p. 194). Most states around the nation currently rely on various assessments as part of their certification processes for principals
(Sanders & Simpson, 2005) including the ISLLC standards to evaluate the effectiveness of principals in their everyday roles. Thus, 21st century principal preparation programs must be filled with opportunities that include the knowledge base specified in the ISLLC standards as one means to adequately prepare principals for the task of successfully leading 21st century schools (Grogan & Andrews, 2002).

**The Leadership Roles of 21st Century Principals**

The purpose of this study was to examine how school principal preparation programs prepare school leaders for the challenges faced in 21st century schools. Schools have radically changed from the beginning of the twentieth century where students were prepared for work in an industrial economy, which is very different from the technological economy in which we live today (Gates & Gates, 2003). As schools have changed, so too must the school leader. An evolution from building manager to knowledgeable instructional leader (Marzano et al., 2005), is needed to successfully execute the skills of school business manager, liaison to the district office, spokesperson of the community, legal exert, and disciplinarian (Davis et al., 2005). Strong leadership is at the “heart of all effective organizations” (Hale & Moorman, 2003, p. 9) and 21st century schools require principals well versed in the art of effective leadership.

According to Reeves (2006), the dimensions of school leadership are well defined. These dimensions encompass a wide range of characteristics and skills that effective principals need to master in order to successfully lead schools. These dimensions of leadership are (a) visionary leadership, (b) relational leadership, (c) systems leadership, (d) reflective leadership, (e) collaborative leadership and (f) communicative leadership. It is import to note that these leadership dimensions will
rarely be represented in a single leader; however, they should be represented by one or more members of the school leadership team (Reeves, 2006). Another important element of this study was the recommendation to include training on these dimensions of leadership into principal preparation programs preparing future school leaders (Reeves, 2006).

The National Association for Secondary School Leaders (NASSP, 2010) conducted a similar study on the characteristics of principals in their thirty-year analysis of the principalship, where they assessed and studied the skills required of school leaders. Through NASSP’s analysis, observation, and research, ten skills of the 21st century school leader were outlined. The ten skills are as follows: (1) setting instructional direction, (2) teamwork, (3) sensitivity, (4) judgment, (5) results orientation, (6) organizational ability, (7) oral communication, (8) written communication, (9) developing others, and (10) understanding your own strengths and weaknesses. The ten skills can be further grouped into four main themes of educational leadership, resolving complex problems, communication, and developing self and others. A depiction of the relationship of the ten skills to the four themes is outlined in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 is from the National Association of Secondary School Principals NASSP Executive Summary, 2010, p. 1.
Figure 1. Themes and Skills of 21st Century School Leaders

NASSP’s ten identified skills of 21st century school leaders provides a framework for this study as the role of principal is examined through the various leadership roles required of current school principals. Models described in the literature review include instructional leadership, visionary leadership, distributed leadership, and servant leadership. The school principal’s role is analyzed through each of the four model descriptions. Finally, an examination of current principal preparation programs is examined to ascertain whether they can successfully train school administration candidates to function according to the best practices described for each leadership model.

Conducting similar research, Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) examined the notion of school leadership by conducting a meta-analysis, examining 69 studies over a 35-year span. In the study, teacher surveys of principal behaviors and student achievement were examined which found principals can positively affect student
achievement. Marzano et al. (2005) examined the effect of school leadership on student achievement and found the more effective the leader, in terms of leadership abilities, the greater the gains in student achievement. As a result of Marzano’s (2005) study, teachers were no longer solely considered as impacting student achievement; effective principal leadership behavior was also found to positively affect student achievement.

Marzano’s (2005) research was the first of its kind to quantify the leadership traits and actions of school principals and placed a statistical analysis to these characteristics. Marzano et al. (2005) found 21 leadership behaviors that influence student achievement and effective leaders were thought to exhibit some if not all of the leadership behaviors. These behaviors are (a) affirmation, (b) change agent, (c) contingent rewards, (d) communication, (e) culture, (f) discipline, (g) flexibility, (h) focus, (i) ideals/beliefs, (j) input, (k) intellectual stimulation, (l) involvement, (m) knowledge, (n) monitoring/evaluation, (o) optimizer, (p) order, (q) outreach, (r) relationships, (s) resources, (t) situational awareness, and (u) visibility. In a similar vein, Murphy et al. (2007) states that leadership behaviors are heavily influenced by four major conditions: (1) the previous experiences of a leader, (2) the knowledge base the leader amasses over time, (3) the personal characteristics a leader brings to his position, and (4) the set of values and beliefs that help define the leader.

In stark contrast to Carlyle’s (1888) “great man theory” that leaders are born, Bennis’ book, On Becoming a Leader (2003), posits that leaders can be made and evolve out of sheer determination and grit rather than by external forces. Bennis (2003) outlined three basic ingredients of leadership behaviors necessary in the 21st century: “(1) a guiding vision—knowing what he or she wants to do, personally and professionally, and
the know-how and persistence to get there; (2) passion—the leader loves what he or she does and loves doing it; and (3) integrity—self-knowledge, candor, maturity” (pp. 31-32).

In preparing principals for the demands of 21st century school leadership, these dimensions of leadership should be included in principal preparation programs (Reeves, 2006), as the evolution of school leadership has to be clearly understood (Hess & Kelly, 2005) by future principals and the personnel training in these programs.

**Principal as Instructional Leader**

The concept of school principal as instructional leader emerged in the early 1980s as the educational community called for a shift away from principals functioning solely as building managers to that of instructional or academic leaders of the school. This shift was largely influenced by the research conducted by the Effective Schools Movement that found effective schools were led by school principals who stressed the importance of instructional leadership (Brookover & Lezotte, 1982). Research clearly indicates that learning and student achievement does not occur in schools without effective leadership fully in place (Davis et al., 2005).

In 2001, The National Association of Elementary School Principals (2001) defined instructional leadership as a leader that leads the learning community. Elmore (2000) and Schmoker (2006) defined instructional leader as one who makes instruction the priority in the school and creates a student-centered environment. Under the current accountability era, that definition for instructional leader has expanded to incorporate the importance placed on academic standards and the need for school principals to be accountable for greater student achievement and outcomes.
According to (Blase et al., 2010), the role of instructional leader is essential to help keep schools focused on why schools exist; which is to help all students learn and achieve. Historically, school leaders have failed or succeeded to increase student learning and achievement in the privacy of their school buildings, however in the 21st century, privacy is replaced with an increasingly engaged school community obsessed with publically scrutinizing school results. Persistent public expectations in the 21st century require school administrators to be responsible for actual results, not simply the appearance of results or ones best efforts (Childress et al., 2007). Producing the kind of school results needed in 21st century schools is daunting and necessitates having the right people in place with the knowledge, skill, and judgment to make the improvements that will increase student performance. (p. 9). Well-intentioned principals are no longer tolerated as they were in the past and now must demonstrate instructional leadership expertise in addition to knowing the right thing to do to achieve school improvement results (Elmore, 2003).

In an examination of school leadership research, studies have focused on the role of the school principal as the instructional leader by identifying several key skills and behaviors found to be prevalent in many effective schools. Glickman (1990) found that effective instructional leaders possessed: (a) knowledge of the tasks associated with providing teacher growth and school success; (b) interpersonal skills emphasizing communication with teachers; and (c) technical skills or the processes of planning, assessing, observing, and evaluating instructional improvement. Sheppard (1996) also analyzed twelve instructional leadership studies and found that school leaders exhibited leadership success with: (a) framing and communicating school goals, (b) supervising
and evaluating instruction, (c) coordinating curriculum, (d) monitoring student progress, (e) protecting instructional time, (f) maintaining high visibility, (g) providing incentives for teachers, (h) promoting professional development, and (i) providing incentives for learning.

In 1998, Blasé and Blasé conducted a study of more than 800 elementary, middle, and high school teachers and found three predominant themes of instructional leadership where leaders (a) created a collaborative culture with staff, (b) established equality between administration and staff, and (c) promoted instruction through talk, growth, and reflection (or the TiGer model). Two additional qualities found in effective instructional leaders in the study was the notion of visibility and praise. Principals were very visible in their schools and spent time giving positive praise to their teachers. Similarly, Bottoms & O'Neill, (2001) found in their research on instructional leadership that effective leaders are those leaders that ensured a constant focus on quality instruction, were visible in their schools, conducted observations, and gave timely feedback to their teachers.

The notion of visibility and communication required of effective instructional leaders concurs with Hale and Moorman’s (2003) research that instructional leaders needed to be visible in their schools, but more importantly, visible in their classrooms. Instructional leaders require the pedagogical expertise to know what is missing in their classrooms, what is missing in lesson plans, or what might be missing when participating in informal walk-throughs (Hale & Moorman, 2003). Kafka (2009) also posited the importance of school leaders being instructionally aware and the need for frequent and consistent classrooms visits.
In the research conducted by Nettles and Herrington (2007), several critical features of effective instructional leadership were identified. The leader (a) provided a safe and orderly environment, (b) clearly stated a vision and mission, (c) engaged with stakeholders and community, (d) actively monitored school progress through personal interaction and data, (e) maintained an instructional focus, (f) held high performance expectations for students, and (g) participated in continued learning and offered professional development opportunities to the staff. Along these lines, DiPaola and Hoy (2008) created a synthesized model of instructional leadership based on 30 years of research. The DiPaola and Hoy (2008) model identified three functions that are basic to instructional leadership: “defining and communicating shared goals, monitoring and providing feedback on the teaching and learning process, and promoting school-wide professional development” (p. 5).

Twenty-first century school principals must be prepared to demonstrate understanding about teaching and learning and academic content and pedagogical techniques (Bottoms & O’Neil, 2001). Specifically, effective instructional leaders need the expertise to guide school improvement by (a) frequently monitoring information about student performance, (b) focusing on supporting teachers in the classroom, and (c) prioritizing academics (Elmore, 2003). In the report *Principals and Student Achievement: What the Research Says* (2003), Cotton concluded that principals in high-performing schools support and facilitate instruction as their primary goal, thus embodying the ideals of effective instructional leadership.
Training Principals for Instructional Leadership

In an effort to address the pressure for school administrators to be effective instructional leaders, university principal preparation programs scrambled to develop programs that prepared school principals effectively (Lashway, 1998). The pressure for school principals to be instructional leaders, capable of effectively implementing standards-based reform, has given unprecedented prominence and political visibility to the problems in our schools of higher education (Hale & Moorman, 2003). Principal preparation programs have been scrutinized to conduct a systemic overhaul in leadership preparation programs to meet these new challenges and expectations (Barnett, 2004).

According to Achilles (2005b), what is needed in current principal preparation programs is an agreed-upon structure for developing and organizing a knowledge base capable of producing education leaders who (1) understand and know what to do in schools to improve student achievement, (2) know how to implement and assess the practices, and (3) understand why certain practices should be selected instead of others. In Pennsylvania’s Framework and Guidelines for Principal Preparation Programs, the purpose statement of the document calls for the development of instructional leaders who can lead towards the purpose of improved student learning and achievement. The document further outlines the need for “instructional leadership” in addition to effective management practice as essential tools for student success at both the school and district levels (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2008, p. 2).

Principal as Visionary Leader

According to McEwan (2003), instructional leaders are led by a vision. Many researchers contend that in order for school reform efforts to be successful, schools must
be guided by a visionary leader, one who is prepared to provide professional support and
guidance at all levels of the school (Bottoms et al., 2003; Koerner, 1990) and support the
learning of all students. Visionary leadership can be viewed as a vital component of 21st
century schools as it is the visionary leader that brings the necessary commitment and
conviction that all children will learn at high levels in their schools. True visionary
leaders also work tirelessly to inspire and project a positive vision both inside and outside
the school building (Institute of Educational Leadership, 2000). Thus, redesigning
schools to prepare students to succeed in a global context has become a primary concern
of 21st century schools, and it is the visionary leader who will understand and foster the
necessary skills in his or her students that will enable them to anticipate what the future
will bring (Snyder et al., 2008) and successfully function on the global stage.

The problem with visionary leadership is that most school leaders lack confidence
in their ability to be visionary leaders who can create, articulate, and support a vision for
their school (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Kouzes & Posner, 1996). As the ultimate goal of a
visionary leader is to ensure the success of all students and successfully communicate the
vision to the various stakeholders about those beliefs regarding student achievement, it is
paramount that principals understand the role of visionary leadership in their day-to-day
practice. As concluded in the research conducted by Effective Schools (2001), the role of
the principal as the articulator of the mission and vision of the school is crucial to the
overall effectiveness of the school.

Training Principals for Visionary Leadership

There have been few research studies conducted detailing the link between
visionary leadership and the success and effectiveness of schools. What the research has
revealed is that effective visionary leaders create an “agenda for change” with two major elements: a vision balancing the long-term interests of key parties, and a strategy for achieving the vision while recognizing competing internal and external forces (Kotter, 1998, as cited in Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 214). The successful visionary leader is equipped with the skills necessary to develop and empower work teams that progress toward a common vision of redesigning schools that will prepare students to compete in a global context (Snyder et al., 2008). Unfortunately, many graduates of principal preparation programs are not trained to become effective visionary leaders and do not possess the skills necessary for visionary leadership (Bottoms, O’Neill, Fry, & Hill, 2003; Daresh, 1990; SREB Leadership Initiative, 2002).

The first Core Standard of Pennsylvania’s Framework and Guidelines for Principal Preparation Programs states, “The leader has knowledge and skills to think and plan strategically, creating an organizational vision around personalized student success” (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2008, p. 7). Visionary leadership is a very challenging and new concept in the field of principal preparation and training. Very little research has been conducted to determine if principal preparation programs are adequately preparing principals to face this new challenge (Wildman, 2001) or if the curriculum in current principal preparation programs is targeted to support the development of skills required of visionary leaders (Quinn, 2005).

Further research needs to be conducted to determine the extent to which current principal preparation programs provide the proper training needed to produce effective visionary leaders. In this time of high-stakes accountability, these findings regarding visionary leadership training within principal preparation programs may provide valuable
insight into how programs can adapt to prepare their candidates better for the role of visionary leadership.

**Principal as Distributed Leader**

There is a growing consensus among educational experts that the antiquated “command and control” leadership model does not work in today’s high accountability school systems. Consensus is leaning towards effective leadership for 21st century schools to encompass a shared or distributed leadership model, as according to Tanner & Tanner (2007), “The distribution of leadership is not an option; it is a necessity (p. 427). Spillane (2005) described distributed leadership as “the interactions between people and their situation” (p. 1). Specific to education, distributed leadership describes the interactions of the principal and teachers working together towards a common school goal (Spillane, 2005).

In the book, *District Leadership That Works* (2009), Marzano & Waters included the three things that matter most in effective schools: “(1) getting the right people to become teachers, (2) developing them into effective instructors, (3) ensuring that the system is able to deliver the best possible instruction for every child” (p. 21). The core of those three ideas is at the heart of distributed leadership; leadership activities are distributed widely across multiple roles and role incumbents (Hart, 1995; Heller & Firestone, 1995; Hord & Huling-Austin, 1986; Smylie and Denny, 2005) and do not place the principal as solely responsible for the success of the entire school. School systems that focus on better teaching and learning require leadership throughout the levels of the system, the idea behind distributed leadership. Elmore (2000) defined distributed leadership as follows:
Primarily about enhancing the skills and knowledge of people in the organization, creating a common culture of expectations around the use of those skills and knowledge, holding the various pieces of the organization together in a productive relationship with each other, and holding individuals accountable for their contribution to the collective result (p. 15).

Spillane et al. (2003) conducted a study of 84 teachers and determined that leadership was owned by a variety of people in the schools, not just the principal. The study also noted that the most important capital for all leaders, especially principals, was that of cultural capital, which staff members viewed as a positive interactive style to leadership (Spillane et al., 2003). Spillane further theorized that utilizing the distributed leadership model provides principals with the knowledge to create cultures of inquiry that keep data at the center of decision-making and distributes leaders and leadership throughout the entire school (Spillane et al., 2003).

**Training Principals for Distributed Leadership**

Preparing principals to become effective in the art of distributed leadership has become crucial to day-to-day management of busy 21st century schools, as the principal’s job has become increasingly more complex and overloaded within the last decade (Fullan, 2007). “The best organizational theory holds that one does not begin with the formal administrative position; one begins with the work to be done” (Tanner & Tanner, 2007, p. 426), as successfully demonstrated in effective schools, as it is about the job to be done, not about who is doing the job. Today’s models of distributed leadership embody this theory, as it views leadership in terms of performing key functions rather than the work of individuals who hold formal positions in the organization (Smylie,
Conley, & Marks, 2002 as cited in Tanner & Tanner, 2007). Distributed leadership has become a vital tool in 21st century schools, as once overworked principals are now freed up to concentrate on all areas of the school and not get bogged down in the day-to-day emergency management required of the past.

Another positive benefit of distributed leadership, as identified in the literature, is the ability of the principal to develop and further mentor leadership skills among the teachers. Wagner (2001) posited that leaders create opportunities for teachers to learn about and use best practices (as cited in Tanner & Tanner, 2007, p. 431); and as Todd Whitaker pointed out in his book *What Great Principals Do Differently*, it is the “principals’ primary job to ‘teach the teachers’” (p. 35). Pennsylvania’s Framework and Guidelines for Principal Preparation Programs outlines the need for principals to identify and support emerging leaders with the goal of improving professional practice, which can ultimately be accomplished through a distributed leadership model. As the principal’s job continues to grow and swell to envelop more day-to-day responsibilities, it is critical that principals are trained in the skills necessary to become effective at distributed leadership.

“The traditional image of a leader has been oversimplified and inadequate for some time; building an organization’s culture and shaping its evolution is the unique and essential function of leadership” (Senge, 1990, p. 10). Senge further posits that new leadership roles require new leadership skills of (a) building a shared vision, (b) surfacing and challenging mental models, and (c) engaging in systems thinking. These new skills required of educational leaders should not be limited to the leader alone but must be distributed throughout the organization (Senge, 1990) so that all individuals can contribute their expertise, build their knowledge and skills, and strive collectively toward a shared
school improvement goal (Hulme, 2006). A principal who successfully utilizes the distributed leadership model in his or her school empowers “school personnel to notice, face, and take on tasks of changing instruction as well as harness and mobilize the resources needed to support the transformation of teaching and learning” (Spillane et al., 2003, p. 9). Further research needs to be conducted to determine the extent to which current principal preparation programs provide the proper training needed to produce leaders that can recognize the value of distributed leadership in their role as principal.

**Principal as Ethical Leader**

The idea of educational leadership has undergone a mind-set shift during the last several years as school leaders grapple with the notion that the work of school administrators in the 21st century has evolved to encompass more moral and ethical decision-making, determined largely by one’s own sets of beliefs and values (Starratt, 2007). Typically, the ideas of leadership and morality can be found at polar opposites, particularly in education, where the notion of separation of church and state is at the very heart of our educational system. However, as school leaders try to stay afloat in what Wheatley (2002) described as “turbulent times,” the search has begun to uncover a level of comfort and meaning within their jobs and halt the physical and moral energy drain (Houston, 2002) that results from being a 21st century school leader.

Staratt (2005) summarized the traits of an ethical leader as follows:

- an educational administrator who embraces the domains of ethical enactment.
- That means treating everyone in the schools as human beings with care and compassion, treating them as citizens with rights and responsibilities in the pursuit
of the common good, and engaging them in the ethical exercise for the core work of the school, namely authentic teaching and learning (p. 131).

Rebore (2003) further expounded the attributes of a servant leader to include allowing stakeholders to exercise their freedoms as human beings to make decisions regarding themselves as well as others. Rebore contends that “it is the responsibility of each educational leader and the education community in the aggregate to continually search for what is ethically good in providing services for students and in supporting the activities of school district employees” (Rebore, 2001, p. 45). As a principal, it is often difficult to think of one’s staff in terms of individuals with individual needs or to actively evaluate all decisions from an ethical stance. However, according to Rebore (2011), an effective leader “will quickly realize that he or she cannot deal with the variety and intensity of issues in the leadership milieu unless he or she has an ethical base from which to lead” (p. 53), to make decisions, and to interact with staff.

Training Principals for Ethical Leadership

Training school principals to be ethical leaders is the newest notion to confront higher learning institutions across the nation. Due to increased public scrutiny, school principals are routinely held responsible for everything from failing test scores to poor teacher performance to student drug and violence concerns. As a result, school leaders must be prepared to confront difficult ethical dilemmas on a daily basis and attempt to achieve a sense of balance in their daily decision-making. According to Greenfield (1995), schools are moral institutions, designed to promote social norms; and principals are moral agents who must often make decisions that favor one moral value over another.
The question of whether principals have been adequately prepared to lead twenty first
century schools ethically is of paramount concern.

Training principals for ethical leadership has become increasingly important as
many educational leadership standards now reflect the notion of ethical leadership into
their doctrine in some fashion. The ISLLC (2008) Standard 5 dictates that an “education
leader promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness and in an
ethical manner” (CCSSO, 2008, p. 15). The Pennsylvania Framework and Guidelines for
Principal Preparation Programs (2008) follows suit, stating, “The leader operates in a fair
and equitable manner with personal and professional integrity” (p. 14). The doctrine goes
on to specifically state that an educational leader in Pennsylvania “models high ethical
standards in all decision-making processes, and follows through on commitments to
words, values, beliefs, and organizational mission (p. 14).

The idea of ethical leadership and student achievement are not mutually exclusive
concepts. According to Heathfield (2011), “The best leaders exhibit both their values and
their ethics in their leadership style and actions” (p. 1) and employ reflective practices as
one-way to assess their every action and decision towards the goal of improved student
achievement.

The Link between School Leadership and Student Achievement

Although principals utilize various leadership styles in their daily work of running
21st century schools, the goal of the principal’s job has not changed, which is to improve
student achievement. Many researchers have studied the link between effective school
leadership and student achievement. Elmore (2006) identified the main goal of school
leaders as that of increasing student learning and performance. Davis et al. (2005) further
stated that effective school principals are “successful school leaders who can influence student achievement through two important pathways: the support and development of effective teachers and the implementation of effective organizational processes” (p. 1).

As the role of school principal continues to evolve, the practices of school leaders will continue to be carefully studied and examined to determine their effect on student achievement. In 2003, the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning, (McREL), an educational research and development corporation, sought to uncover the link between effective school leadership and student achievement. In a groundbreaking study on the skills of educational leaders, The McREL 21 Leadership Responsibilities were introduced to the educational community. The research, conducted by Tim Waters, Robert Marzano, and Brian McNulty, provided a framework of the 21 leadership skills important to effective school leadership.

The McREL study was the first of its kind to examine school leadership from a quantitative point of view. The report correlated a statistical analysis to the leadership traits and characteristics known to have a positive impact on student achievement. What McREL’s 21 Leadership Responsibilities did for the field of school leadership was place the actions of school principals into the equation of promoting student achievement in the same limelight once reserved solely for the classroom teacher.

After the McREL study, several researchers continued examining the link between principal leadership and student achievement. In the book, School Leadership that Works (2005), Marzano and his team continued the research of the McREL study where he also identified 21 effective leadership practices that are most likely to influence student achievement. Among the most important ones cited are contingent rewards,
change agent, flexibility, focus, intellectual stimulation, involvement in curriculum, instruction and assessment, visibility, mentoring, and evaluation among others.

In addition, Leithwood et al. (2004) commissioned by the Wallace Foundation, made two important claims with respect to the role of the principal in improving student achievement. The first claim is that leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school. Secondly, leadership effects are usually largest where and when they are most needed; and without an effective leader, troubled schools are unlikely to be turned around (Leithwood et al., 2004). The final thought surrounding school leadership and student achievement is that a principal’s leadership abilities, or lack thereof, can greatly impact the success of a school and overall student achievement. According to The National Association for Secondary School Leaders (NASSP, 2010), every principal should regularly ask, “What impact do I have on my school’s success through my knowledge, skills, and dispositions—not simply through the programs initiated” (NASSP, 2010 p. 1).

Several researchers have documented the importance of effective school leadership to school improvement and student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). However, according to Maxwell (2005), the true measure of leadership is influence. Donaldson (2001) supports this assertion in his definition of school leadership: “to mobilize people to change how they themselves work so that they collectively serve better the emerging needs of children and demands of society” (p. 6). School leaders influence classroom outcomes through two primary pathways that are linked to student outcomes (Leithwood et al., 2004). The first pathway involves leadership practices that directly influence teaching and learning, and the second
pathway includes activities that indirectly influence practice by creating organizational conditions in the school that are conducive to positive change (Leithwood et al., 2004).

Although the primary role of the principal is to align all aspects of schooling toward the goal of improving instruction and student achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004), the principal’s job description has expanded to a point where today’s school leader is expected to perform in the role of chief learning officer, with ultimate responsibility for the success or failure of the entire enterprise (Bottoms & O'Neill, 2001). Simply put, the 21st century principal’s job consists of a variety of leadership role requirements and a multitude of daily responsibilities, any of which can distract from the most important goal: cultivating high-quality instruction (Darling-Hammond, 2007). “In order to foster successful, equitable, and socially responsible learning and accountability practices for all students, substantive changes in educational leadership preparation programs are required” (Brown, 2006, p. 705) so that principals can master the leadership skills that lead to student achievement before they enter their school buildings.

**Restructuring Principal Preparation Programs**

“The founding purpose of educational administration was the improvement of teaching and learning, (Tanner & Tanner, 2007, p. 446), and that premise has not changed today. What has changed is the need to better train educational administrators to attain the goal of improving student achievement in their schools. It is believed that effective principals create and establish schools that promote effective teaching and learning for all students, participate in the design and implementation of curriculum, and adapt their leadership to address the context-specific needs of teachers, students, and other stakeholders (Waters & Grubb, 2004; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003);
however, whether or not principals receive those skills in their preparation programs is in question.

According to The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) (2006), redesigning principal preparation programs around leadership practices that have an impact on students’ learning should be of high priority in all university preparation programs. However, the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) described conventional administrator preparation programs as "well-intentioned, but insufficient," and "lacking vision, purpose, and coherence" (Orr, 2006, p. 493). As the demands of the principal’s job continue to evolve, traditional methods once used in preparing administrators are no longer adequate to meet the leadership challenges posed by 21st century schools (Elmore, 2000; Levine, 2005, Peterson, 2002). Several researchers suggest that the skills, knowledge, and experience that aspiring principals receive during their school leadership preparation programs is “troubling” because it does not prepare them for the demands of the job (Grogan & Andrews, 2002; Hale & Moorman, 2003; Peterson, 2002). Thus, the need to incorporate research-based and practice-oriented approaches that respond to the new and emerging need of accountability, efficiency, effectiveness, and excellence among the nation’s schools has led many higher education institutions across the country to restructure and update their school administration and leadership programs (Green, 2005).

Traditionally, the typical course of study for the principalship has had little to do with the job of being a principal (Levine, 2005) and has been described as archaic, focused on weak knowledge base and managerial duties, (Levine, 2005; Orr 2006) and lacking alignment to the coursework and the needs of practitioners out in the field
Elmore (2006) asserted that university-based programs should be focused more on instructional practices and the development of a practical knowledge dynamic about the practice. New training for preparing 21st century leaders requires preparation programs to adapt to create a more coherent bridge between theory and the practical demands of the job (Murphy, 2001).

**Criticism of Current Principal Preparation Programs**

Current principal preparation programs are filled with candidates ready to lead 21st century schools. However, criticism of current preparation programs found candidates’ background, specifically their pedagogical expertise, lacking. A study conducted in 2001 by Creighton and Jones reviewed 450 principal certification programs and found that a candidate’s admittance into a program was based primarily on Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores and undergraduate grade point averages. Only 40% of the principal certification programs sought candidates with prior teaching experience or expertise. In 1987, the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration (NCEEA) examined educational leadership preparation programs and cited ten major “deficient” areas, one of which was a lack of quality candidates for preparation programs (NCEEA, 1987). Given what we know about the pedagogical demands of 21st century principals, major changes need to occur in principal preparation programs (Creighton & Jones, 2001) with respect to admission requirements.

Other prevalent criticisms associated with current principal preparation programs are preparation programs too grounded in educational theory and light on the practical demands of the job. In addition, current preparation programs have also been accused of not preparing principals for the various leadership roles required to successfully function
in 21st century schools. Levine (2005) asserted this assumption, stating that educational administration programs are weak in their standards, curriculum, staffing, the caliber of their student body, and scholarship, thus failing to provide the skills and knowledge school principals really need (Levine, 2005). Adding to the bad reputation of administration training programs, Farkas et al. (2001), concluded that 69% of principals and 80% of superintendents believed that typical leadership programs “are out of touch with the realities of what it takes to run today’s school districts” (p. 39). In Levine’s (2005) study, 89% of participants surveyed cited that their leadership preparation programs failed to adequately prepare them for the rigors of the daily demands of the job.

According to several researchers, preparation program criticisms can be grouped into one of five categories: (1) slow to follow changes in society, (2) curriculum/methods/results, (3) lack of grounded practice, (4) non-compliance with ISLLC Standards and NCATE review process, and (5) staffed by people with little pragmatic experience (Andrews & Grogan, 2002; Bottoms & O’Neill, 2001; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000). According to Murphy (2001), “The problem with educational leadership programs today is that they are driven by neither education nor leadership” (p. 1).

Progress with current preparation programs has been slow to materialize, particularly for those principal candidates assuming positions in urban districts, as they are finding their training vastly out of touch with the real-life, day-to-day demands confronted by urban principals (Fenwick, 2000; Hess, 2003; Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003). However, according to some researchers, the outlook for current principal preparation programs has taken a positive shift. Orr (2008) posits there is
evidence that current reform efforts to revamp preparation programs have been producing positive influences on the practices of graduates out in the field. In addition, some universities are being revamped to meet the needs of future school leaders (Mitgang, 2008).

**Devising Coherent Principal Preparation Programs**

The prevailing research on the best ways to reshape principal preparation programs is very clear; institute coherent programs that focus more on the practical demands of the job. However, far too many “university-based principal preparation programs are still offering last century curriculums overloaded with courses on management and administration when they should be spending more time helping aspiring principals develop the competencies they need to lead a team of highly skilled and motivated teachers” (SREB, 2007, p. 5). In a research study conducted by Murphy, Moorman, & McCarthy (2008) examining 54 universities across six states, the study found that leadership preparation programs still adhered to an outdated and unproductive training paradigm focused primarily on weak curriculum and course content and fell short of the goal of adequately preparing school leaders.

Coherent programs are ones that link goals, learning activities, and candidate assessments around a set of shared values, beliefs, and knowledge about effective administrative practice (Knapp et al., 2003, as cited in Davis et al., 2005). Coherent programs also provide learning experiences that link theory and practice and are framed around the principles of adult learning theory. Jackson and Kelley (2002) concluded that most reputable principal preparation programs are described in terms of their vision, purposes, and goals, and the degree to which they are internally and externally coherent.
Coherent leadership preparation programs, thus, allow learners to scaffold their learning, foster deep self-reflection, and devise multiple venues for applying new knowledge in practical settings (Granott, 1998).

The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) (2002), in an attempt to assist schools in re-shaping leadership preparation programs, identified key actions universities could take to re-structure their programs for program coherency. The recommendations outlined by SREB included infusion of performance-based standards into preparation programs, integration of well-planned clinical experiences with coursework, and tiered certification systems in which principals will not get their standard certification unless they provide evidence of successful on-the-job performance (SREB, 2002, as cited in Lashway, 2003).

Although state policies and strategies intended to promote the redesign of principal preparation programs have produced only marginal improvements (SREB, 2007), substantial reforms in administrator preparation program accreditation and state licensing standards need to continue if school principals are to be prepared to make a difference in America’s schools (Kowalski, 2004). Sweeping changes are needed in principal preparation programs to address the inadequacies of twenty first-century principals out in the field. Programs are also called upon to re-structure their programs to allow for program coherency.

**Characteristics of Effective Principal Preparation Programs**

There has been much research conducted on the characteristics of effective principal training programs over the past decade. General consensus between researchers and practitioners in the field is that the traditional principal preparation programs,
considered by many as too theoretical, totally unrelated to the daily demands of today’s school, and lacking the clinical and practical experiences necessary for real-world applications (Hale & Moorman, 2003) are a thing of the past. A call for today’s preparation programs is for school leaders to be immersed not only in theory, but also well versed in the practical requirements of the job.

Many researchers have worked to identify the common elements consistent in successful principal preparation programs. According to Orr (2006), high quality leadership preparation programs have most or all of the following features:

(a) Rigorous selection that addresses prior leadership experience and initial leadership aspirations; (b) underserved groups, particularly racial. Ethnic minorities are given priority; (c) have clear focus and clarified values about leadership and learning around which the program is coherently organized; (d) promote standards-based content and internship experiences; (e) provide supportive organizational structures to facilitate retention and engagement; (f) focus on coherent, challenging, and reflective content and experiences; and (g) boast appropriately qualified faculty.

Smallwood and Jazzar (2006) also researched characteristics of effective principal preparation programs and identified thirteen critical skills principal preparation programs should adopt to enhance the competence level of future school leaders. The training should focus on “administrative duties and responsibilities, student discipline, faculty and staff evaluation, attendance, conferencing, written communication, faculty and staff improvement, special services, problem solving, finance and law, group communications, facility management, and career planning and development” (para. 17).
In addition, Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) synthesized and distinguished the following common elements among effective training programs:

Effective programs have (a) a comprehensive and coherent curriculum aligned with state and professional standards, particularly the ISSLC standards, which emphasize instructional leadership; (b) philosophy and curriculum that stress instructional leadership and school improvement; (c) student-centered instruction that integrates theory and practice and stimulates reflection; (d) instructional strategies that include problem-based learning, action research, field based projects, journal writing, and portfolios; (e) knowledgeable faculty; (f) cohort structure; (g) formalized mentoring by expert principals; (h) vigorous, targeted recruitment and selections to seek out expert teachers with leadership potential; and (i) well-designed and supervised administrative internships that allow candidates to engage in leadership responsibilities for substantial periods of time under the tutelage of expert veterans. (p. 6).

**Roadmap to Revamping Principal Preparation Programs**

The time to revamp principal preparation is now, as promising research in the field has yielded consistent elements critical to effective principal preparation programs. States and school districts cannot afford to be complacent about the status of principal preparation, as effective school leaders are essential to higher student achievement (Southern Regional Education Board, 2006). Programs that provide well-planned internships and quality mentoring over a continued period of time and which offer aspiring principals an array of hands-on experiences are more likely to effectively prepare new school leaders (Gray et al., 2007) and contribute to the positive current reform
efforts. According to Darling Hammond et al. (2007), exemplary principal preparation programs not only bridge theory and practice and made connections between course material and the broader social context but they have at their core foundation the following set of criteria:

1. Admission/Selection - They recruit and select candidates that were former outstanding teachers as well as candidates that expand the racial and ethnic, cultural, and gender diversity of the pool, along with its overall quality.

2. Program Curriculum - The curriculum is formed around the best practices of instructional leadership and candidates have ample opportunities to develop and evaluate curriculum, use data to diagnose the learning needs of students, serve as a coach and mentor to teachers, and plan effective lessons.

3. Field Experiences/Internships – Authentic opportunities for field experiences are tightly woven into the program, as is the idea of internships. Gray et al. (2007) observed that well-planned internships which provide quality mentoring over a continued period of time and which offer aspiring principals an array of hands-on experiences are more likely to effectively prepare new school leaders. According to Darling-Hammond (2007), principal preparation programs providing candidates with mentoring from expert principals were found to be highly successful. Mentored internships where the principal candidate gets to connect the academic coursework to the day-to-day realities of solving real problems in real schools (Hale & Moorman, 2003) was thought to produce candidates well prepared for the demands of the job.

4. Cohort Model - Exemplary programs embrace the cohort model, which
promotes collaboration, networking, and teamwork in addition to providing natural opportunities for group projects and reflection on their leadership development (Darling-Hammond 2009). Meyerson (2005) asserted that effective training programs grouped aspiring school leaders in cohorts on the premise that cohort grouping promotes adult learning, group and individual knowledge, creative thinking, problem solving, team building, and opportunities for collaboration and teamwork in practice-oriented situations. According to Hale & Moorman (2003), university-based programs that get the highest marks for preparing principals for the demands of 21st century schools are typically cohort-based.

**Examining Principal Preparation Programs in Pennsylvania**

Principal preparation programs in the state of Pennsylvania are approved through Pennsylvania’s Department of Education, and program quality is outlined through the guidelines and mandated standards detailed in The Framework and Guidelines for Principal Preparation Programs (2008) and the ISLLC revised standards (2008). A copy of both standards are provided in Appendices A and B. In conjunction with Pennsylvania’s Framework and Guidelines for Principal Preparation Programs (2008), The Pennsylvania K-12 School Leadership Project of the Education and Policy Leadership Center (EPLC), a twenty-member panel of educational experts from around the state, developed a list of knowledge and skills required for effective school and district leadership programs. The EPLC project standards, which were signed into Pennsylvania state law in July 2007, encompass the content of the ISLLC standards, as well as the standards of The Framework and Guidelines for Principal Preparation
Programs.

Principal preparation programs in the state of Pennsylvania are guided by three concrete and explicit sets of standards. The underlying purpose of all three guidelines is the development of instructional leaders capable of leading Pennsylvania schools and improving student achievement. Horace Mann concurred with this underlying principle when he surmised the goal of the principalship as being curricular, upgrading the quality of instruction (p. 447, as cited in Tanner & Tanner, 2007).

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is utilized in research studies to explain the research issue to the reader and to outline the practice of the investigation employed by the researcher (Leshem & Trafford, 2007). Conceptual frameworks also serve to bridge the gap between paradigms and to summarize the research topic within the larger context and body of literature (Leshem & Trafford, 2007). According to Miles and Huberman (1984), conceptual frameworks may be presented graphically or in narrative form. In the case of this study, the researcher chose to utilize a combination of both forms.

General Systems Theory (GST)

The conceptual framework for this study is borrowed from the general systems theory offered by Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1936). General systems theory was initially developed as a rigorous method of describing the structure and mechanisms of complex systems found within the human body (Smith, 2004). However, in a more general understanding, general systems theory seeks to provide common principles to allow researchers to think more clearly about any system of study (Chen & Stroup, 1993) and to uncover the interdependent nature and interrelatedness of those systems. In the extension
of general systems theory within the confines of this study, the researcher sought to analyze the reform efforts of the smaller system of Pennsylvania principal preparation programs to the larger system and reform efforts occurring within principal preparation programs across the nation and to determine the interdependence and interrelatedness of both systems.

**Systems Theory/Thinking**

Under the umbrella of general systems theory is that of systems theory and systems thinking. In relation to one another, systems theory is viewed as encompassing the whole of a system, whereas systems’ thinking allows one to analyze and examine the parts of a system and its interconnectedness to the whole. According to Senge (1990), systems’ thinking is the ability to see the big picture and to distinguish patterns as it relates to organizational complexity and potential for change.

In Senge’s book, *The Fifth Discipline* (1990), Senge discusses the necessity of systems thinking in an organizational context as essential to building organizations capable of continued learning and growth. Senge (1990) further states that business systems are interrelated and interconnected entities that must learn to focus on organizational openness as a means of identifying the shortcomings permeating organizational structure. One way an organization can achieve organizational openness is through reflective openness (Senge, 1990).

Reflective openness occurs when organizations allow all members of the organization to participate and engage in ongoing communication and organizational feedback (Senge, 1990). Ongoing communication and feedback between the entities responsible for principal preparation is an essential component of the type of systems
thinking and change needed to ensure continued organizational learning and growth (Senge, 1990). Much of the reform efforts that have occurred in principal preparation can be attributed to school districts’ willingness to be more reflective on the type of leader needed to be successful in their schools and their openness in communicating that information back to principal preparation programs.

The researcher selected general systems theory as the underpinning of this study in an attempt to analyze and think more clearly about the current condition and structure of principal preparation programs in Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) schools. Further embracing Senge’s (1990) systems thinking and his concept of leverage, the researcher sought to identify changes to practice that could be applied to produce significant improvements within principal preparation programs across the state of Pennsylvania to facilitate continued learning and enhance overall organizational growth. As systems theory is a classic input/output model, the researcher sought to outline in this study the interconnectedness of designing stronger principal preparation programs within the state of Pennsylvania, resulting in better-trained principal candidates, which in turn will yield better schools for Pennsylvania students. Figure 2 outlines this interdependence:
Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

Chapter Summary

According to the National Center for Educational Leadership (2003), there still exists a wide variability in admission requirements, program content and structure, program duration, in addition to field-based requirements (NCEI, 2003), but as reflected in this literature review, common aspects across exemplary programs have emerged. As 21st century principals continue to face increased levels of accountability, expanded roles of responsibility, and increased demands from politicians and stakeholders, preparation programs must be trusted to adequately prepare future school leaders. School districts cannot afford to employ poorly trained candidates incapable of leading in a time of change. The combination of these two issues has created a profession under stress that
requires immediate and effective solutions (Childress et al., 2003; DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000; Kaplan et al., 2005).

Becoming a good leader is a lifelong learning process (Maxwell, 2005). Schools in the 21st century require principals well versed in the art of instructional leadership, community leadership, and visionary leadership (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000; Tracy & Weaver, 2000) as well as being able to understand the power of praise and create a positive and equitable atmosphere (Whitaker, 2003), which is the underlying ideal of ethical leadership. Hale and Moorman (2003) proclaimed that today’s leaders should be (a) leaders of instruction, (b) leaders able to shape an organization that demands and supports excellent instruction and dedicated learning by students and staff, and (c) leaders able to connect the outside world and its resources to the school and its work.

This literature review serves to outline the infinite traits of an effective school leader. School principals play a critical role in the success of schools and on student achievement (Hess & Kelly, 2005). Principal preparation programs must adapt their practices to prepare future leaders to meet the demands to successfully lead all schools. As this researcher examined the nine approved principal preparation programs in the state of Pennsylvania, evidence was scrutinized to ascertain if each program is adhering to the "best practices" outlined in this literature review and whether each school is doing its part to produce highly effective, highly capable 21st century school administrators for all Pennsylvania schools.
CHAPTER III
DESIGN AND METHODS

Purpose of the Study

The purpose for this qualitative study was to examine principal preparation programs at Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) schools and describe whether the programs include coursework and field experiences that would imbue school administrators with the leadership and practical skills needed to successfully function in 21st century schools. In this chapter I describe the design and methodology used in this study and provide a rationale for how the design and methodology support the purpose of the study. Each principal preparation program was scrutinized through the examination of the course content and overall program design as evidenced through the published information of the institutions. Deeper insight was sought into how principals in Pennsylvania were prepared in their university preparation programs to execute the practical and leadership skills needed in 21st century schools that would lead to positive student outcomes in the current standards and accountability era.

Research Question

According to Creswell (2003), research questions are used to shape and focus the purpose of the research study. The guiding question for this study was as follows: To what extent are the principal preparation programs at the nine approved Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) schools structured to imbue principal candidates with the leadership and practical skills needed to successfully function as principals in 21st century schools?

Subsidiary Question 1: How do the course content and program design of each of
the nine principal preparation programs in the PASSHE system of schools support the acquisition of the four important leadership skills identified in the literature: (1) instructional leadership, (2) visionary leadership, (3) distributed leadership, and (4) ethical leadership?

Subsidiary Question 2: What are the opportunities in each principal preparation program for candidates to develop the four leadership roles identified in the literature through provided internships and field experiences?

Research Design

This study can best be described as a qualitative case study examining the published content of principal preparation programs across multiple sites (n=9) in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education schools (PASSHE). According to Merriam (1998), qualitative case studies require the following four essential characteristics: (1) particularistic, (2) heuristic, (3) inductive, and (4) descriptive. The particularistic characteristic focuses the study on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon. This study is particularistic because it focused on the nine certified principal preparation programs in the PASSHE system of schools. The heuristic characteristic provides the reader with understanding of the phenomena outlined in the case study. In this study, the phenomena explained to the reader are the inherent challenges associated with principal training and preparation around the nation. The inductive characteristic examines the emerging patterns, themes, and concepts that develop out of the study data. In this case study, data were inductively examined to identify codes, themes, and categories in each of the nine cases and to make comparisons across cases. The final characteristic is descriptive, which
provides the reader a rich description of the phenomenon under study. In this case study, a thorough description of the history and current status of principal preparation and training across the nation was provided.

Analysis of the nine approved principal certification programs’ course content and program design was conducted by means of available print and online documents for the years 2000-2011. According to Huberman & Miles (2002), limiting a study to document analysis eliminates the concern with the distortion of information or a lack of factual accuracy. Program documents were examined to review the content, structure, and overall program design within each principal preparation program. Specific examination of the Program Goals/Philosophy, Program Curriculum/Course Content, and Program Internship/Field Experiences were conducted. The data were evaluated to determine each program’s alignment with current research and theories on effective school administration and the characteristics of high-quality principal preparation programs as identified in my literature review.

Additionally, each program was analyzed as to its ability to prepare candidates for the four leadership roles outlined in the study through specific course offerings and field experiences. According to Darling Hammond et al. (2007), exemplary programs produce leaders who bridge theory and practice and make connections between course material and the broader social context. The 2008 Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards will serve as criteria for evaluation for this study.

Case Study
A case study approach was selected for this study based on its usefulness and appropriateness, as it emphasizes collecting descriptive data in natural settings, using inductive thinking, and emphasizes understanding of subjects’ point of view (Bodgan & Biklen, 2007). The case study design was also selected as it accurately matches the research methods and objectives of this study. According to Merriam (1998) and Yin (2003), case studies provide an in-depth understanding of the context and meaning of participants in a bounded system such as a person, a unit, or a program. Case studies can be particularly useful for studying a process, program, or individual in an in-depth, holistic way that allows for deeper understanding (Merriam, 1998). Merriam points out the following:

A case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The interest is in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation (p. 19).

Merriam further posits, “A case study is a particularly appealing design for applied fields of study such as education and is especially useful for evaluating programs and studying educational innovations” (Merriam, 1998, p. 41). Patton (2002) described evaluation research as “being able to be conducted on virtually any explicit attempt to solve problems or bring about change” (p. 218). Analysis of the principal preparation programs at PASSHE schools has allowed the researcher to evaluate and describe the characteristics of each program and to conduct a cross-case comparison using Merriam’s deductive analysis method (Merriam, 1998).
Qualitative research takes place in a natural setting, which could be an office, house, church, or university (Creswell, 2003). As this research study takes place in a university setting, a case study methodology is best suited as it examines questions of “how” or “why,” and the focus of the study is a contemporary phenomenon set within a real-life framework (Yin, 2009). According to Creswell (2003), a phenomenon examines numerous variables over an extensive period of time in order to uncover the way things are and how and why they came to be that way (Creswell, 2003). Further, case studies add valuable knowledge to the researcher concerning the phenomena (Yin, 2003). The phenomenon under examination in this case study involves understanding the role that principal preparation programs play in effective school leadership in 21st century schools. Based on this case study analysis and evaluation, recommendations are offered to improve the preparation of principal candidates at PASSHE schools in Pennsylvania.

Single-case Study

A case study design was deemed appropriate for this study because it involved “detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (Creswell, 1998, p. 61). According to Stake (2000), there are three types of case studies: (1) intrinsic, (2) instrumental, and (3) collective. Based on Stake’s (2000) case study definitions, this study can be classified as a collective case study, as it encompasses more than one case “in order to investigate a phenomenon, population, or general condition” (p. 437).

A single-case study analysis was useful in examining each individual principal preparation program; however, Merriam (1998) explains that when research is conducted on more than one case, a multi-case study, or cross-case study is required. Merriam
(1998) posits that multi-case studies enhance the trustworthiness of the research findings and, according to Baxter & Jack (2008), garner more robust findings than a single-case study yields. Thus, this case study is deemed a multi-case study, as it examines nine principal preparation programs across multiple sites.

**Multiple-case Study**

A multiple-case study approach was selected for this study, as it afforded me the opportunity to examine existing factors unique to each individual program and similar or contrasting factors across programs. Merriam (1998) explained that when researchers conduct a study using more than one case, they are conducting multi-case studies within a case study. Thus, this case study examining the nine principal preparation programs is also a multi-case study with each of the individual programs serving as one case.

According to Yin (1994), the use of multiple cases within a study provides an operational definition of the phenomenon of interest and strengthens the data and overall study findings. Multiple case studies allow for the data to be analyzed for insights both within each case and across cases (Merriam, 1998). Multiple-case studies are “considered more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as more robust” (Yin, 2003, p. 46).

**Setting**

The setting for this study took place in the nine accredited principal preparation programs within the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) school system. PASSHE was formally established in July 1983 and comprises a collection of 14 state-owned colleges and universities across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. PASSHE is the tenth-largest university system in the United States and is the largest
provider of higher education in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The total PASSHE university campus comprises approximately 4,700 acres, in rural, suburban, and urban settings, and educates more than 120,000 undergraduate and graduate students. As outlined on PASSHE’s website, the primary mission of the organization is “the provision of instruction for undergraduate and graduate students to and beyond the Master’s Degree in the liberal arts and sciences, and in the applied fields, including the teaching profession.”

Principal preparation is a unique topic within the PASSHE system due to the distinctiveness of each institution from the others. PASSHE schools vary from one another in setting—suburban, rural and urban—as well as the varying types of school districts and students which each university services. As a result, not every PASSHE institution will prepare its principals to face the same types of economic, social, or academic challenges or provide their principals with the same kinds of internships and field experiences.

**University Program Descriptions**

A comprehensive analysis was conducted on each of the nine principal preparation programs within the PASSHE school system. Programs ranged in location, rural to suburban, with one principal program geared towards the training of urban principals. Programs also ranged in the size of the student body which they serviced, from as many as 15,000 students down to 1,200 students.

**School A**

School A is a large, rural university serving approximately 10,000 students at the time of this study. The school opened in the mid 1800s to service the needs of training
school teachers. The school transitioned into a state college in the early 1960s and joined the PASSHE system of schools in 1983.

School A offers both a Master’s of Education program route for principal certification as well as a certification only route to the principalship. The program offered at School A is a traditional, face-to-face format. School A is also a fully certified NCATE school.

School B

School B is considered a medium-sized school housed within in a rural university setting. At the time of this study, School B services approximately 9,400 students. The school opened in the mid 1800s to service the needs of training school teachers. The school transitioned into a state college in the later part of the 1950s and joined the PASSHE system of schools in 1983.

School B’s principal credentialing program is quite unique, as it is offered through a completely online format. The program offers both a Master’s of Education program route for principal certification as well as a certification only route to the principalship. School B is a fully certified NCATE school.

School C

School C is a small university with approximately 1,200 students at the time of this study. The school is situated within a suburban setting; however, much of the graduate classes for the principalship are conducted at their off-site urban location. The school opened in the mid 1800s to service the needs of training minorities to work as schoolteachers. School C joined the PASSHE system of schools in 1983.

School C’s principal preparation program offers both a Master’s of Education
program route for principal certification as well as a certification only route to the principalship. School C offers its principal program in a traditional, face-to-face format. At the time of this study, certification with NACATE is pending.

**School D**

School D is a medium, suburban university serving approximately 7,000 students at the time of this study. The school opened in the late 1800s to service the needs of training school teachers. The school transitioned into a state college in the early 1960s and joined the PASSHE system of schools in 1983.

School D offers a certification only route to the principalship, as candidates are required to enter the program with a master’s degree. The program offered at School D is a traditional, face-to-face format. School D is a fully certified NCATE school.

**School E**

School E is a medium, rural university serving approximately 7,500 students at the time of this study. The school opened in the late 1800s to service the needs of training school teachers. The school transitioned into a state college in the early 1960s and joined the PASSHE system of schools in 1983.

School E offers a Master’s of Education program route for principal certification and a certification only route to the principalship. The program offered at School E is an online format. School E is a fully certified NCATE school.

**School F**

School F is a very large, suburban university serving approximately 15,300 students at the time of this study. The school opened towards the end of the 1800s to service the needs of training school teachers. The school transitioned into a state teacher’s
college in the mid 1920s and achieved university status in 1965. School F is the only university in this study to have achieved doctoral-granting status.

School F offers a certification only route to the principalship. The program offered at School F is a traditional, face-to-face format. School F is also a fully certified NCATE school.

School G

School G is a small, rural university serving approximately 5,500 students at the time of this study. The school opened in the late 1800s to service the needs of training school teachers. The school transitioned into a state college in the early 1960s and joined the PASSHE system of schools in 1983.

School G offers a Master’s of Education program route for principal certification and a certification only route to the principalship. The program offered at School G is an online format. School G is a fully certified NCATE school.

School H

School H is a mid-sized, rural university serving approximately 7,644 students at the time of this study. The school opened in the late 1800s to service the needs of training school teachers. The school transitioned into a state college in the late 1920s and joined the PASSHE system of schools in 1983.

School H offers a Master’s of Education program route for principal certification and a certification only route to the principalship. The program offered at School H is a traditional format. School H is a fully certified NCATE school.

School I

School I is a mid-sized, rural university serving approximately 7,724 students at
the time of this study. The school opened in the late 1800s and transitioned to a Teacher’s College in the mid 1920s. School I joined the PASSHE system of schools in 1983.

School I offers both a Master’s of Education program route for principal certification as well as a certification only route to the principalship. The program offered at School I is a traditional format. School I is a fully certified NCATE school.

Site Selection

The PASSHE system of schools was selected through means of purposeful sampling, specifically site selection. Purposeful sampling is "selecting information-rich cases for study in depth" (Patton, 1990, p. 169). Patton (2002) states that a common qualitative sampling strategy involves “studying a relatively small number of special cases that are successful at something and therefore a good source of lessons learned” (p. 7). Thus, this study examines nine principal preparation programs in the state of Pennsylvania as qualitative researchers often select sites and participants based on the specific phenomenon one needs or wants to understand.

My selection of the PASSHE school system for this research study was also of a personal nature. As a former graduate of a PASSHE school and certified principal in the state of Pennsylvania, I was particularly interested in the status of principal preparation across the Commonwealth. Although I did not obtain my principal certification from a school within the PASSHE school system, I did obtain my bachelor of arts from a PASSHE school. As the PASSHE school system is the largest provider of higher education in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, many of the principals I have worked with over the years have also matriculated at a PASSHE school at some point in their career. From the conversations and observations I have had over the years at various
professional development events, it was obvious that many of my colleagues possessed varying levels of instructional and leadership skills as a result of their vastly different principal preparation.

**Role of the Researcher**

The role of the researcher in qualitative research is that of instrument for data collection (Merriam, 1988; Patton, 1990; Yin, 1994). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), humans are the instruments of choice for qualitative research, as they possess six critical characteristics. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985, these characteristics are as follows:

1. Are responsive to environmental cues and able to interact with the situation
2. Have the ability to collect information at multiple levels simultaneously
3. Perceive situations holistically
4. Process data as soon as they become available
5. Provide immediate feedback and request verification of data
6. Explore atypical or unexpected responses

Creswell (1998) supports this assumption, stating that qualitative researchers “build complex, holistic pictures, analyze words, report detailed views of informants, and conduct the study in a natural setting” (p. 15).

**Researcher Biases**

In qualitative inquiry, the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection (Merriam 2009) and as such needs to establish trustworthiness by acknowledging one’s biases. According to Patton (2002), one way a researcher can guard against personal biases and establish trustworthiness is to provide information about his or her
background. Thus, the biases I brought to this study are twofold.

First, as a result of having attended a university within the PASSHE system of schools, I might feel a sense of allegiance to skew the interpretation of the data in a way that painted my former university in a more positive light. Second, as a practicing principal in the state of Pennsylvania, I might want to skew the data to depict a more positive picture of the overall status of principal preparation programs across the entire state. Acknowledging these two biases as I carried out data collection, analysis, and interpretation was critical to protecting against the possibility of my biases skewing my overall findings.

I attempted to guard against the possibility of my prejudices skewing my findings by reviewing program documentation without preconceived notions and allowing the patterns and themes from the data sets to emerge naturally. I also examined data sets for existing outliers and for any unusual or contradictory results. I believe that by identifying my preconceived notions and personal biases, the overall credibility of my research study was strengthened.

**Data Collection**

Qualitative research studies allow the researcher to collect and analyze data in order to develop a broad view of a topic (Creswell, 2003). The information gathered and analyzed for this study was used to describe each principal preparation program and compare programs to one another. As a result of my analysis, this study can be described as descriptive and evaluative in nature.

I examined the nine Department of Education approved principal preparation programs within the PASSHE school system. I collected program documentation from
the years 2000-2011. I then collected and organized the data in order to gain a deeper insight into each principal preparation program by further examining the following:

1. Admission Requirements
2. Program Goals/Philosophy/Structure
3. Program Curriculum/Course Content
4. Internship/Field Experiences
5. Capstone/Action Research Project

The following sources of data were analyzed for this case study and tracked in a Microsoft Word chart:

**School Catalogs**

I examined each of the nine schools’ main website for current and past graduate school catalogs from the years 2000-2011. I reviewed all the available graduate catalogs’ written documentation and program requirements for principal certification within the program. I reviewed all available documentation pertaining to (a) delivery format and program duration, (b) admission requirements, (c) course requirements and course descriptions, (e) field experiences, and (f) capstone and graduation requirements.

**School Website**

After reviewing all available graduate catalogs, I proceeded to the College of Education homepage, where I searched specifically for the principal preparation programs’ homepage or section. I reviewed all available documentation pertaining to (a) delivery format and program duration, (b) admission requirements, (c) course requirements and course descriptions, (e) field experiences, and (f) capstone and graduation requirements.
Conceptual Framework/Program Philosophy

I reviewed the program philosophy and conceptual framework for each school when available. Program philosophies and conceptual frameworks for each school were analyzed to determine a program’s underlying philosophy of educating future principals as stated in its documentation. I also reviewed the program philosophy and conceptual framework for each school to determine a program’s unstated philosophy based on the verbiage utilized and the documentation. Key words I searched for to determine a program’s unstated underlying philosophy were (a) instructional leader or instructional specialist, (b) ethical or servant leader, (c) distributed leader and (e) visionary and transformational leader.

NCATE Website

I searched the NCATE website for available accreditation reports and school visit reports for each of the nine schools contained in this study. I analyzed all available program documentation from the years 2000-2011. All available documentation pertaining to the principal certification program was included in my data analysis.

Data Management

I created a folder on Microsoft Word for each university and assigned each school a letter designation. Individual program data were then stored in the corresponding Microsoft Word folder. After individual program analysis was completed, group analysis was conducted and recorded in Table 1 and Table 2 of this case study.

Credibility

According to Yin (1994), a case study is a special kind of qualitative work that seeks to investigate a contextualized, contemporary phenomenon within a specified
boundary. Merriam (1988) presented examples of a bounded phenomenon in education as “a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social group” (p. 13) which the qualitative researcher wants to investigate. In this study, the cases are bounded by time, as data were collected between the years 2000 and 2011, as well as place, as the study was restricted to the PASSHE system of schools.

According to Hatch (2002), qualitative researchers seek to understand how the phenomenon in the study is influenced by the context within the bounded system as they seek to answer the *what* and *how* questions involving the phenomenon, person, or program. The case study researcher examines the particular subject bounded in time and space, provides a detailed description of contextual material about the case setting, gathers extensive material from multiple sources to provide an in-depth picture of the case, and uses the researcher as an instrument of data collection (Creswell, 1998). Thus, the goal of the qualitative researcher is to provide high quality data that are credible, accurate, and true to the subject under study.

The researcher’s primary purpose in analyzing and evaluating program documents was to examine whether the program goals, philosophy, and course content articulated and outlined the intent of the preparation program to equip principals with the leadership and practical skills needed to successfully lead 21st century schools. The researcher reviewed all available print and online documents pertaining to the principal preparation program from the years 2000-2011. The researcher organized the collected data into the four general leadership themes of: (1) instructional leadership, (2) visionary leadership, (3) distributed leadership, and (4) ethical leadership, as well as by Internship/Field Experiences and Capstone Project.
The researcher maintained credibility for this research study through three critical ways. (1) I conducted a document analysis on available print and online documents for the years 2000-2011 only, (2) I utilized the four categories outlined by Murphy, Moorman, and McCarthy (2008) from no evidence to extensive evidence to evaluate each program, and (3) all biases pertaining to the researcher were exposed to guard against the possibility of my overall findings being unintentionally skewed.

Data Analysis

According to Yin (2009), “The case study’s unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence–documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations” (p. 11). Within this case study, data analysis was conducted on the content, structure, and overall program design for each principal preparation program through the review of program documents. Documents and records are useful in qualitative research, as they provide valuable information and clues to help the researcher understand the central phenomenon in the study (Creswell, 2002). Merriam (1988) supported this assertion, stating that the real value of documents and records in qualitative research is that they are easily accessible and available, free, and stable sources of data.

As this qualitative research fits the parameters for a multi-case study, Cresswell (2007) outlined two kinds of data analysis that should be utilized: (1) within-case analysis, which analyzes and describes each case in the study and (2) cross-case analysis, which generates findings across the multiple cases in the study. In this study, I utilized Creswell’s data analysis methods as well as inductive data analysis to process the various amounts of data. Inductive data analysis is “a process aimed at uncovering embedded information and making it explicit” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 203).
According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), inductive data analysis requires two processes: unitizing and categorizing. Unitizing is a process of coding which transforms and organizes raw data into separate units with related meanings. The second process, categorizing, is “a process whereby previously unitized data are organized into categories that provide descriptive or inferential information about the context or setting from which the units were derived” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 203). In this study, inductive data analysis was used to examine principal preparation programs at PASSHE schools across the nine cases. According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2009), consistent application of data coding and monitoring of any inconsistencies in the data analysis are necessities to qualitative research. As a result, this researcher utilized the three inductive data analysis steps outlined by Hatch (2002):

**Step 1 – Make open codes and keep a record of the relationships between the codes.**

**Step 2 – Build common categories, patterns, or themes across the important meanings of data and their relationships.**

**Step 3 – Make comparisons and give a final explanation.**

**Coding**

As previously stated, coding of the data “to generate categories or themes for analysis” (Creswell, 2003, p. 193), specifically open-coding, was conducted in this case study. Open coding is a form of microanalysis in which the data are examined and meanings are assigned to individual words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs (Creswell, 2002). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) supported the notion of open-coding, stating that it is when the researcher reads through the data, sorts their meanings, and then writes down
the words or phrases that cover and describe the data.

I collected and organized the data into the following four leadership themes found in the literature and a selection for field experience: (1) instructional leadership, (2) visionary leadership, (3) distributed leadership, (4) ethical leadership and (5) Internship/Field Experiences and Capstone Project. The data were coded and placed into categories respective to those themes. The purpose of the coding is to look for patterns that give meaning to the data uncovered in the case study.

In this study, coding was utilized to examine and sort the data garnered from the document analysis pertaining to the four leadership styles outlined in the literature review. A case study database was created to accurately code and sort the data as outlined by Yin (2009). According to Yin (2009), “A case study database markedly increases the reliability of the entire case study” (p. 119). In addition, initial coding of data was conducted within a single case (Merriam, 1998) and then across the nine cases.

**Categorizing**

The second process of data analysis is categorizing, which is grouping the coding concepts into categories. According to Yin (2009), categories help the researcher organize and sort data according to relevant characteristics. The researcher looked for common themes and analyzed the data for interconnections within the individual programs as well as across program groups. Short descriptive memos were recorded on sticky notes beside the codes to identify the relationship of important pieces of information and to compare the different pieces of data in order to find commonalities and linkages (Miles & Huberman, 1994).
Making Comparisons

The last step in data analysis is to compare the codes, categories, and themes identified in the first two stages (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and attempt to give meaning to the data (Creswell, 2003). According to Creswell (2002), case study data should be examined to uncover relationships between codes and codes, codes and categories, and categories and categories. In this case study, the nine cases were examined to identify similar codes and categories and to generate central themes across the cases as well as to identify outliers existing in the data. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the analysis of the data should be conducted multiple times to re-check comparisons and adjust and rearrange the data as necessary to ensure proper placement into appropriate categories.

The data analysis in multiple case studies enables the researcher to explore differences within and between cases and provide a detailed description of the case and the setting (Creswell, 1998) as well as provide a structured approach at analyzing the results. The cases selected for this study were chosen carefully to allow the researcher to make meaningful predictions of principal preparation in Pennsylvania and to identify similar results across cases or predict contrasting results based on a theory (Yin, 2003). All the cases selected for this study are state schools with approved principal preparation programs and are housed under the PASSHE school system. This researcher utilized the steps outlined above to offer transparency of my research methods as well as to strengthen my case study.

I used inductive analysis to review the program documents in this study, specifically reviewing the data to determine where it fits into the four leadership themes by means of narrative passages to convey the study findings. According to Patton (1990),
employing inductive analysis allows categories “to emerge from patterns found in the case under study” (p. 44). Patton (1999) went on to further identify four types of triangulation needed to ensure a comprehensive and well-balanced study. For the purpose of this study, reviewing available program documents at different points in time, particularly from the years 2000-2011, was used as a means of triangulation and allowed the researcher to present a rich, detailed description of each principal preparation program as well as support study conclusions.

As stated earlier, the researcher examined each principal preparation program as a single case study. Each program's documents were analyzed by the following guidelines:

1. Coding - Documents were coded by the relevant themes outlined in the literature. Next, the researcher identified and recorded key words and phrases relevant to each theme. Finally, the researcher sorted the key words and phrases uncovered through the coding process.

2. Categorizing - After coding, the researcher reviewed the codes to identify their relationships. Next, codes were separated based on their commonalities and similarities. Finally, related codes were placed into categories based on the themes identified in the literature.

3. Comparisons – According to Creswell (2002), case studies should be examined to uncover relationships among all parts of the data. Each category was analyzed to identify relationships between codes and codes, codes and categories, and categories and categories for each of the single cases. The researcher further analyzed the data to generate central themes across the cases as well as to identify outliers existing in the data.
Once the single-case analysis was completed for each of the nine programs, the cross-case analysis was conducted on the data. Coding, categorizing, and comparisons of the data were examined through the multi-case analysis lens; and central themes common to all principal preparation programs were identified, as were any outliers existing in the data. The researcher used the data generated from the single-case study as well as multi-case study to make program recommendations.

**Data Representation**

The final stage of data analysis is accurately representing and reporting the results of the study. The researcher’s challenge is to make sense out of massive amounts of data, to organize the data by patterns or themes, and to communicate the essence of what the data reveals (Hatch, 2002; Patton, 1990). However, according to Merriam (1988), “There is no standard format for reporting case study research” (p. 193). Thus, the goal of all researchers is to accurately portray the results in a manner that will educate the reader on the subject in a form that is readable and understandable.

**Chapter Summary**

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine principal preparation programs in the state of Pennsylvania and to ascertain whether the programs were structured in a way that would imbue principal candidates with the four leadership styles outlined in the literature and the practical skills needed to successfully function as leaders in 21st century schools. This study can be classified as a multi-case study, as I examined the nine principal preparation programs individually and across the PASSHE school systems. This chapter began with a restating of the research question guiding this body of work and included an overview of the design and methods used in this study. Data
analysis for this study was conducted through document review from the years 2000-2011; as a result, this research study is both descriptive and evaluative in nature.

Chapter IV provides a description and analysis of each of the nine principal preparation programs. Chapter V contains a discussion of the programs, individually and as a whole, with respect to the research question guiding the study. The research study concludes with a summary of findings and recommendations for practice and future research in the field of principal preparation and training.
Chapter IV presents a descriptive overview and content analysis of each of the individual principal preparation programs in this case study as it relates to the research questions. Document analysis for the years 2000-2011 provided the data for this study from a sample (N=9) of Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) schools. Document analysis was conducted on each of the program’s entry and exit requirements, educational philosophy, and conceptual framework, if available. Additionally, an in-depth examination was conducted on each of the program’s course offerings and curriculum as well as on the types of internship and field experiences available to prospective principal candidates.

Following the individual program analysis, a cross-case in-depth analysis was conducted on the nine programs as a whole. The cross case analysis sought to uncover common themes across individual cases as well as to identify outliers within the data sets. A holistic analysis was included to investigate the degree to which PASSHE schools have been influenced by the current research on effective principal preparation best practices and school leadership training as summarized in my literature review.

One main research question and two subsidiary questions guided this study:

Main Research Question: To what extent are the principal preparation programs at the nine approved Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) schools structured to imbue principal candidates with the leadership and practical skills needed to successfully function as principals in 21st century schools?

Subsidiary Question 1: How do the course content and program design of each of
the nine principal preparation programs in the PASSHE system of schools support the acquisition of the four important leadership skills identified in the literature: (1) instructional leadership, (2) visionary leadership, (3) distributed leadership, and (4) ethical leadership?

Subsidiary Question 2: What are the opportunities in each principal preparation program for candidates to develop the four leadership roles identified in the literature through provided internships and field experiences?

Addressing the Main Research Question

Based on the findings in this case study, principal preparation programs within the PASSHE school system are not fully structured to imbue principal candidates with the varied leadership roles required of 21st century leaders. Review of the data revealed that of the four leadership roles examined in this study, instructional leadership was the most represented in the principal preparation programs with respect to program philosophy and course offerings, followed by that of ethical leadership. The other two leadership roles, visionary leadership and distributed leadership, were sparsely represented throughout the programs and courses. None of the programs in this study offered prospective principal candidates opportunities to be fully versed in all four leadership roles. The following is a summary of the key findings of this case study as it pertains to the four leadership roles analyzed.

Finding 1. Instructional Leadership

According to The National Association of Elementary School Principals (2001) an instructional leader is one that leads the community and utilizes his or her skills and expertise to achieve the goals of ensuring quality in what students learn. “The need for
‘instructional leadership’ in addition to effective management practice is essential for student success at both the school and district levels” (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2008, p. 2); thus, instructional leaders are a vital component to Pennsylvania schools. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education (2008), principal preparation programs across the Commonwealth must be designed to produce educational instructional leaders highly capable of managing Pennsylvania schools and educational systems towards greater academic achievement.

A review of the data analysis in Chapter IV shows that instructional leadership training was the most prominent leadership role present within the PASSHE schools reviewed in this study. Out of nine schools analyzed, five, or 55.5% of the principal preparation programs, explicitly structured their program philosophy on the ideals of instructional leadership. Programs with an instructional leadership philosophy are better able to prepare future principals to function as instructional leaders capable of improving teaching and learning in Pennsylvania schools.

Courses that were deemed instructional leadership in nature were present in five of the nine schools, or 55.5% of the course load. Four represented the mean and median number of instructional leadership courses. The most frequent type of course offerings trained prospective school principals in school and student data analysis, curriculum analysis and evaluation, and instructional best practices and teacher evaluation.

**Finding 2. Ethical Leadership**

According to Staratt (2005), an ethical leader is one who treats everyone in the school equally and engages staff members in the ethical core work of the school; namely, authentic teaching and learning. According to Pennsylvania’s Framework and Guidelines
for Principal Preparation Programs (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2008), leadership-training programs are expected to equip Pennsylvania principals with the skills necessary to lead all schools in a fair and equitable manner and employ high ethical standards in all decision-making processes. Thus, the training for ethical leadership should be highly prevalent in principal training programs across the Commonwealth.

A review of the data analysis in Chapter IV shows that only three out of nine schools, or 37.5% of the principal preparation programs in this study, explicitly structured their program philosophy around the ideals of ethical leadership. The programs with an ethical leadership philosophy sought to prepare future principals to become reflective practitioners and decisive decision makers capable of meeting the needs of all students and other stakeholders in their charge. Of note, School C demonstrated an understanding that 21st century schools required ethical leadership as well as instructional leadership to be successful, combining the two philosophies in their program design. School C prepared principals for the role of ethical leader, one skilled in the art of reflective and mindful decision making, as well as for the role of instructional leader, capable of advancing student growth and development within their schools.

Pennsylvania’s Department of Education is required by law to issue Pennsylvania certificates only to applicants who possess good moral character (24 P.S. § 1209, 22 Pa. Code § 49.12.). The good moral character clause, as it is commonly referred to, is a requirement that applies to all applicants for any certification, which would include candidates seeking principal certification in the state. In light of Pennsylvania’s good moral character clause, one would expect ethical leadership courses to be more represented. However, ethical leadership courses were not widely represented in the
principal program curriculums reviewed for this study and were only found in three out of the nine schools, or 33% of the courses. There were only 3.5 ethical leadership courses offered, with one school combining an ethical leadership course with that of distributed leadership. The most frequent type of ethical leadership course focused on training prospective school principals in the art of reflective practice.

**Finding 3. Visionary Leadership**

Visionary leaders in 21st century schools are thought to possess the vital skills needed to empower work teams toward the vision of exceptional student achievement and provide the necessary professional support and guidance to faculty members to accomplish student achievement goals (Bottoms et al., 2003; Koerner, 1990; Snyder et al., 2008). Visionary leaders articulate the mission and vision of the school to various stakeholders, which is found to be crucial to overall school effectiveness (Effective Schools, 2001); and they work diligently to inspire and project a positive vision both inside and outside of the school setting (Institute of Educational Leadership, 2000). A core standard of Pennsylvania’s Framework and Guidelines for Principal Preparation Programs calls for school leaders to possess the “skills to think and plan strategically, creating an organizational vision around personalized student success” (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2008, p. 4); thus, one should expect visionary leadership training to be tightly woven into principal preparation programs across the state of Pennsylvania.

However, a review of the data revealed that none of the nine schools in this study structured their program philosophy around the ideals of visionary leadership. Out of the nine schools examined in this study, only five, or 56% of the programs, included courses
comprising the ideals of visionary leadership, with each school offering only one course each in visionary leadership. The most prominent skill present in the visionary leadership courses sought to train prospective Pennsylvania principals in long-term strategic planning.

**Finding 4. Distributed Leadership**

According to Elmore (2000), principals possessing distributed leadership skills demonstrate a mastery level understanding of how to create common school cultures of shared expectations by empowering and enhancing the skills of their staff through a collaborative leadership paradigm. A study conducted in 2003 by Spillane et al. revealed that 84% of the teachers favored the leadership model in which leadership was shared by a variety of people in the school, thus allowing multiple individuals to contribute their expertise and skills collectively toward a shared school improvement goal (Hulme, 2006). Researchers contend that leadership designs such as those found in the distributed leadership model are indispensable to 21st century school principals, who are often overloaded with a variety of daily tasks and responsibilities (Fullan, 2007) and would benefit from enlisting the entire faculty to lessen the load and work towards common school achievement goals (Spillane, 2005). According to Pennsylvania’s Framework and Guidelines for Principal Preparation Programs, Pennsylvania schools require school leaders skilled in the art of collaboration and able to engage and empower faculty to pursue excellence in learning (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2008).

Similar to the findings on visionary leadership, none of the nine schools in this study structured their program philosophy around the ideals of distributed leadership. Out of the nine schools examined in this study, five or 56% of the programs, included courses
comprising the ideals of distributed leadership, for a total of 4.5 course offerings. The most prominent skill present in the distributed leadership courses sought to train prospective Pennsylvania principals in collaborative communication and shared leadership practices.

**Addressing Subsidiary Research Question 1**

How do the course content and program design of each of the nine principal preparation programs in the PASSHE system of schools support the acquisition of the four leadership roles identified in the literature: instructional leadership, visionary leadership, distributed leadership, and ethical leadership?

Upon review of each program’s curriculum, it can be concluded that the principal preparation programs within the PASSHE school system do not fully support the acquisition of the four leadership roles identified in the literature. Table 2 outlines the percentage of each program’s curriculum dedicated to leadership training. Of the nine schools examined in the study, only two schools dedicated more than 80% of their curriculum to the acquisition of the four leadership roles reviewed in this study.

In addition to program offerings, the amount of program credits required for individual program completion varied greatly among programs. The average number of course credits per program was 25, with School G requiring the greatest number of credits at 36 and School I requiring the least at nine. Of note, School G required the highest amount of credit hours for principal certification at 36 and also offered at least one course addressing all four leadership roles.
Table 2

Leadership Roles Percentage Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leadership Role</th>
<th>Educational Philosophy Percentage</th>
<th>Leadership Coursework %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Leadership</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Leadership</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visionary Leadership</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distributed Leadership</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Addressing Subsidiary Research Question 2

What are the opportunities in each principal preparation program for candidates to develop the four leadership roles identified in the literature through provided internships and field experiences?

Principal candidates attending one of the PASSHE schools examined in this study will receive ample opportunities to develop the four leadership roles outlined in this study during their internship or field component requirement. All schools appeared to understand the importance of providing candidates with rich, authentic field-based experiences as evidenced by the amount and variety of opportunities provided. The field components offered by the schools placed particular emphasis on the acquisition of instructional leadership and visionary leadership skills. The variety of field experiences consisted of principal candidates working with authentic school and student data, developing long-term academic and school plans, providing teacher feedback, and engaging in self-reflection activities.
Additional Findings

A review of the data in this case study revealed three additional findings beyond that of principal training and principal preparation program best practices. The three additional findings pertained to (1) availability of information, (2) capstone project requirement, and (3) program delivery format. The information below outlines the data:

Availability of Information

The availability of online information varied greatly for each principal preparation program. As outlined in Table 2, the online information varied from limited available online information to excellent available online information. Information for this study was garnered from online course catalogs, program descriptions for each school’s leadership program, as well as from NCATE reports, if available. It should also be noted that most universities in the study reprinted their catalogs on a two- to three-year cycle, and changes to the principal preparation program description or course offerings were made infrequently.

Schools A and D, or 22% of the schools in this study, had limited online information, as not all course catalogs for the years outlined in this study were available for review. Schools B, C, G, and I, or 44% of the schools in the study, had moderate online information, with most years outlined in this study available for review. Schools, E, F, and H had an excellent amount of online information available for study. All course catalogs for the years outlined in this study were available for review, in addition to internship handbooks, course syllabi, and NCATE reports.
Capstone Requirement

The criticism that leadership preparation programs lack the established methods for assessing the effectiveness of a program's impact on its graduates (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009) is a valid concern for current principal preparation programs within the PASSHE system of schools. Although research best-practices on exemplary principal preparation programs call for the integration of performance-based assessment and evaluation for school leaders that link learning activities to effective administrative practices, such as with capstone projects, (Council of Chief State School Officer, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Davis et al., 2005), the majority of the schools in this study did not include capstone projects as a program requirement. Of the nine universities reviewed in this study, only four schools or 44% of the programs, required a capstone project for graduation. The capstone projects consisted of portfolio assessments, action research projects, and oral assessments.

Program Delivery Format

The most surprising finding to this researcher was the amount of online principal certification programs available within the PASSHE system of schools. Out of the nine universities reviewed in this study, four, or 44% of the schools, offered online principal certification. The inclusion of online principal certification programs is in stark contrast to the findings outlined in Chapter II on exemplary principal preparation programs, which called for ample opportunities for collaboration as the preferred model to better train principals for the demands of 21st century leadership (Hale & Moorman, 2003). Although the amount of available online programs proved to be of surprise to the researcher, it should be noted that all four schools embracing the online delivery format still included
the field experience component as a requirement for graduation and principal certification.

**Individual School Findings**

**School A**

School A provides a traditional, face-to-face program with all courses taught on-campus through lecture format. According to program documentation, School A’s delivery format will transition into an online configuration; however, no estimated date for the online transition was provided. School A provides principal certification only and does not require candidates to matriculate towards a Master’s of Education degree. Candidates are granted principal certification after successfully completing a total of 30 credits: 24 credits of coursework and six credits designated as field experiences and internship.

**Program entry and exit requirements.**

Entry into School A’s principal certification program is obtained through the general graduate application process for the university. Candidates must possess a bachelor’s degree and teaching certification in addition to successfully completing an entrance interview to be admitted into School A’s principal preparation program. School A candidates are also required to take either the GRE or MAT entrance examination; however, a minimum cut-off score was not provided for either assessment. School A does not require an essay or other form of scholarly writing for admittance into the principal preparation program, and candidates also do not need to submit recommendation letters vouching for their teaching expertise or leadership ability.
An end-of-program capstone project, demonstrating a candidate’s success in mastering the program objectives, is required for successful completion of School A’s principal certification program. Candidates are required to prepare a performance assessment portfolio for evaluation to formally demonstrate mastery of program objectives. The performance assessment portfolio demonstrates a candidate’s mastery of the program’s knowledge, skills, and dispositions as outlined in the program documents.

**Program philosophy.**

School A utilizes a constructive teaching framework for its principal preparation program. According to program documentation, principal candidates are provided a high-quality program of study centered on best practices in teaching and learning. A major crux of school A’s principal preparation program is its claim to prepare future principals to function as instructional leaders.

The role of the instructional leader is essential in 21st century schools, as principals must be prepared to demonstrate understanding about teaching and learning (Blase et al., 2010; Bottoms & O’Neil, 2001). Although School A’s philosophy states it is structured towards producing instructional leaders, 50% of the course work comprised in its principal preparation program contains theory-based, management-driven courses. In the research conducted by Levine (2005) and Orr (2006), this type of principal preparation program would be described as archaic, as it focuses on a weak knowledge base and the managerial duties of the school principal.

**Internship/field experiences.**

The internship and field experiences in School A’s principal preparation program adheres to the required 360 hours outlined by Pennsylvania’s Department of Education.
Candidates accumulate internship and field experience hours through embedded coursework activities, classroom and fieldwork assignments, or by shadowing and working alongside candidate-selected principal mentors. According to program documentation, more than 80% of the course assignments in School A’s principal certification program are job-embedded and directly related to the principal’s role as instructional leader.

A unique component of School A’s internship and field experience requirement is the inclusion of thirty mandated hours for candidates to participate in a diversity field placement. Research shows that well-planned internships offer aspiring principals an array of hands-on experiences and are more likely to effectively prepare new school leaders (Gray et al., 2007). School A’s diversity field placement component provides candidates with real opportunities to work alongside diverse student populations prior to assuming a permanent leadership post.

During School A’s diversity field placement, candidates are monitored by expert principal mentors out in the field and provided concrete, timely, and direct feedback on performance. Mentored internships, where the principal candidate gets to connect the academic coursework to the day-to-day realities of solving real problems in real schools (Hale & Moorman, 2003) was thought to produce candidates well prepared for the demands of the principal job. The assessment element of the diversity field placement requires principal candidates to complete a reflection narrative on their experiences and submit for evaluation.
21st century leadership skills.

According to the research outlined in this study, principals must be experienced in educational leadership in order to successfully lead 21st century schools (NASSP, 2010). Although school A’s grounding philosophy is to prepare future principals for the role of instructional leader, there was little to no evidence outlined in the program documentation to illustrate concretely how the program sought to assess whether that goal was achieved. However it should be noted that documentation available for analysis was limited for School A.

Of the eight classes required for principal certification, only two courses specifically mentioned the role of the administrator as instructional leader. The courses sought to train candidates in various types of student assessment data that could be utilized to enhance student academic performance. There was no mention in School A’s program documentation or curriculum of visionary leadership, distributed leadership, or ethical leadership coursework. As a result, only 25% of School A’s program curriculum is dedicated to training principals in one of the four leadership roles highlighted in this study: instructional leadership.

School B

School B is a completely online program. All courses at School B are taught 100% online through an asynchronous format. Principal candidates attending School B matriculate towards either a Master’s of Education degree with principal certification or principal certification only. Principal certification is granted after successfully completing a total of 30 credits for the Master’s of Education route and 24 credits for the principal certification route.
Program entry and exit requirements.

Principal candidates at school B can matriculate towards a principal certification with either a bachelor’s, master’s, or doctorate degree. Although candidates are required to possess a teaching certification, previous teaching experience is not required for admittance into this program. Candidates are required to submit one letter of endorsement from an immediate supervisor and a written statement outlining their career goals and objectives. Principal candidates in School B’s program do not need to complete an entrance interview or take either the GRE or MAT entrance examination.

According to school B’s program documentation, the principal preparation program incorporates alternative forms of instruction, course structures, class schedules and assessments. However, there was no evidence found in the program documentation to determine how candidates were evaluated at program completion; thus, one cannot ensure candidates mastered the necessary skills needed to function as effective 21st century school principals. Darling-Hammond et al., (2009) posits that one of the major problems with leadership preparation programs is the lack of established methods for assessing the effectiveness of a program's impact on the graduates or on the graduates' performance in their leadership role.

Program philosophy.

School B claims to be a practice-centered, performance-based program that is learner-centered. Part of what makes School B unique among other PASSHE schools is its unconventional approach to teaching, learning, and assessment. School B is committed to providing alternative forms of instruction and assessments, and as such students are graded on a pass/fail system as opposed to receiving actual letter grades.
**Internship/field experiences.**

School B relies heavily upon the school district partnership to provide its principal candidates with authentic clinical activities and field experiences. Principal candidates receive opportunities to work with advisers and peer mentors throughout the duration of their program. The internship and field experiences in School B’s principal preparation program adhere to the required 360 hours outlined by Pennsylvania’s Department of Education. Both certification only and master’s program candidates are required to complete a full school year internship. According to program documentation, the internship is a standards-based learning experience designed to bridge the gap between theoretical coursework and practical experience. An important part of the yearlong internship is to allow candidates the opportunity to work alongside experienced mentors and deepen their understanding of how to function as change-agents, experienced in the art of instructional leadership.

School B’s Master’s of Education program requires two additional supervised field projects for program completion. The additional projects are centered on solving practical school problems dealing with leadership, special education, research, and evaluation through the use of simulations. Research shows that high quality leadership preparation programs incorporate standards-based content and internship experiences into their programs (Orr, 2006).

**21st century leadership skills.**

Twenty-first century principals require a multitude of leadership skills and experiences in order to be deemed successful. Reeves (2006) asserts that principals need to master several dimensions of school leadership characteristics and skills in order to
successfully lead schools. According to program documentation, School B has successfully incorporated several dimensions of leadership into its principal preparation program.

The coursework in school B’s program is comprised of eight courses, 24 hours for principal certification and ten courses, 30 hours for master’s plus certification. Both programs require an additional six credits for the internship component. Of the eight classes required for principal certification in School B’s principal certification program, several have foundations addressing the many leadership roles and responsibilities required of 21st century principals. Two courses, or 25% of the program curriculum, are designed around the ideals of principals as instructional leaders. In the instructional leadership courses, principals work directly with school data and with standards-based instruction.

Two additional courses offer opportunities for principal candidates to develop visionary leadership, distributed leadership, and ethical leadership experience. The visionary leadership course has principal candidates develop a five-year community plan and practice skills of faculty motivation through classroom simulations. The other course combines training in distributed leadership and ethical leadership, as principals receive preparation in the effective and ethical practices of power as well as culture development in schools. Thus, 51% of School B’s program curriculum is dedicated to training principals in three of the four leadership roles outlined in this study: visionary leadership, distributed leadership, and ethical leadership.
School C

School C provides a traditional, face-to-face program with all courses taught on-campus through lecture format. School C provides principal candidates two routes towards principal certification: a Master’s of Education degree with principal certification or principal certification only route. Principal certification is granted after successfully completing a total of 42 credits for the Master’s of Education route and 33 credits for the principal certification only; nine of the credits are field experiences and internship program requirements.

Program entry and exit requirements.

The application process into School C’s principal certification program is obtained through the general requirements for acceptance into the graduate program. Candidates are required to possess a bachelor’s degree and teaching certification. In addition, School C’s principal candidates are required to provide three letters of recommendation from the applicant’s principal or immediate supervisor and a 500-word writing sample in response to a topic selected by program administrators. Candidates are not required to complete an entrance interview or take either the GRE or MAT entrance examination.

School C requires candidates to complete an end-of-program project that consists of a thesis, professional portfolio, and action research project. According to program documentation, School C strives to graduate candidates that can produce scholarly writing contributing to the field of education. According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2007), effective principal preparation programs require candidates to engage in problem-based learning and action research. Although School C’s Master’s of Education
candidates are required to complete a thesis for graduation, candidates matriculating in
the principal certification only track are not required to produce a thesis for graduation.

**Program philosophy.**

School C’s principal preparation program is grounded in the ideals of ethical
leadership, as Reeves (2006) described ethical leadership to be a critical skill that
effective principals must master in order to successfully lead schools. According to
program documentation, School C prepares its school leaders to be reflective
practitioners, capable of making mindful-decisions about their actions, as well as
instructional leaders, capable of advancing student growth and development within their
schools. Research into effective principal preparation programs calls for ethical
leadership training to be incorporated into principal preparation programs preparing
future school leaders (Rooney, 2008).

A major criticism of current principal preparation programs is that they fail to
effectively prepare urban principals for the real-life, day-to-day demands of the job
(Fenwick, 2000; Hess, 2003; Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2003). School C’s principal
preparation program is unique among other PASSHE schools, as it is committed to
preparing school principals for the challenges of urban education. Preparing effective
school principals to lead urban schools is of particular concern in the state of
Pennsylvania, as two of the largest school districts in the state serving over half of all the
students are considered urban school districts

**Internship/field experiences.**

According to School C’s program documentation, field experiences and
internships are designed to equip candidates with marketable leadership skills upon
graduation. Both Master’s of Education candidates as well as principal certification candidates are required to take three courses, a total of nine credits of supervised internships. School C’s field experiences are unique in that seven core courses, a total of 21 credits, have a field placement component embedded into the course content allowing candidates to be fully immersed in their field prior to graduation. Research shows that effective principal preparation programs integrate high-quality, authentic field experiences into their programs to provide principal candidates ample opportunities to practice their craft prior to graduation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Gray et al., 2007).

21st century leadership skills.

According to Murphy (2001), 21st century school leaders require preparation programs that seamlessly connect the training between educational theory and the practical demands of the job. School C’s leadership program is built upon the foundation of ethical leadership; however, several other dimensions of leadership are present. Schools in the 21st century require principals well trained in several areas of leadership such as instructional leadership, community leadership, and visionary leadership (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000; Tracy & Weaver, 2000).

The core coursework in school C’s educational leadership program is comprised of eleven courses, which are required of both certification and master’s plus certification candidates. However, master’s degree candidates are required to take an additional three courses to fulfill the master’s plus certification requirement. As stated previously, both programs require three courses, nine credits in total, for the internship component. Of the eleven courses required in School C’s principal certification program, a total of nine courses, or 82% of the course load, have components addressing the many leadership
roles and responsibilities of the 21st century school principal, seven of which specifically address the principal as instructional leader.

Instructional leadership courses require candidates to work directly with school data and participate in case studies and in instructional leadership simulations. The other two courses offer opportunities for principal candidates to develop 21st century visionary and distributed leadership skills. Course outcomes associated with visionary leadership such as having principal candidates practice long-term planning or developing skills of motivation are included. Candidates also train for distributed leadership by enhancing their communication and collaboration skills through performance-based program activities. Thus, 82% of School C’s program curriculum is dedicated to training principals in all four leadership roles outlined in this study: instructional leadership, ethical leadership, visionary leadership, and distributed leadership.

School D

The principal preparation program at School D is of a traditional nature with classes being taught through lecture format. There are two routes for candidates attending School D’s principal preparation program. Route one consists of a Master’s of Education degree with a principal certification add-on. Candidates pursuing Route one must complete 36 credit hours for completion. Route two candidates pursue the principal certification only and are required to complete 18 credit hours. In addition, candidates pursuing principal certification at School D are also required to complete three field placements in the areas of educational leadership, school management, and curriculum design.
**Program entry and exit requirements.**

Entry into School D’s principal certification program is obtained through the general graduate application process for the university. Candidates are required to possess a bachelor’s degree and a teaching certification. Additional requirements consist of candidates submitting two professional references, a one-page professional resume and a 250-300-word essay addressing a current issue in education. There was no evidence in School D’s program documentation that showed candidates were required to complete an entrance interview or take either the GRE or MAT entrance examination.

Candidates graduating from School D’s principal preparation program are required to complete an end-of-program capstone project. In addition to demonstrating skill mastery in each of the three field placements, candidates must also successfully pass an oral examination and portfolio review. According to Darling-Hammond et al. (2007), effective principal training programs incorporate portfolio assessment as part of their ongoing requirements.

**Program philosophy.**

The crux of School D’s educational leadership program is the preparation of school leaders to become reflective practitioners and decisive decision makers out in the field. Heathfield (2011) asserts that successful leaders employ reflective practices as one way to assess their everyday actions and decisions towards the goal of high-quality student achievement. Although not explicitly stated in School D’s program documentation, an argument can be made that the program’s underlying philosophy is ethical leadership as reflective practice, a tenet of ethical leadership, is heavily embedded throughout program requirements. According to Reeves (2006), reflective practice is a
skill that effective principals need to master in order to successfully lead schools (Reeves, 2006).

**Internship/field experiences.**

According to research, high quality leadership preparation programs provide candidates with supervised administrative internships over an extended period of time (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Gray et al., 2007). However, examination of School D’s program documentation revealed no formalized internship requirement, supervised or unsupervised, for its graduates. As stated previously, School D’s candidates are required to participate in three specialized field placements in the areas of educational leadership, school management, and curriculum. However, much of School D’s field placements consist of specialized seminars, followed by some practical experience in a school setting and the completion of exit portfolios at the end of the field placement.

**21st century leadership skills.**

Marzano et al. (2010) assert that effective leadership is a necessary component to successful school operation. Both the ISLLC standards (2008) and the Pennsylvania’s Framework and Guidelines for Principal Preparation (2008) outline several leadership standards and performance expectations of school principals, one of which is ethical leadership. Although School D’s leadership philosophy is grounded in the tenets of ethical leadership, 21st century school principals require several different leadership skills and characteristics, in addition to ethical leadership, to be successful (Reeves, 2006).

The coursework in school D’s program is comprised of seven courses, 21 hours, for principal certification and 12 courses, 36 hours for master’s plus certification. Of the 21 core credits required for principal certification, a total of three, or 43%, have courses
addressing instructional leadership and distributed leadership. The two instructional leadership courses address issues of curriculum as well as the quantitative and qualitative data school leaders grapple with in their daily roles. The distributed leadership course addresses the school principal’s role in modern school supervision.

According to program documentation, several courses were based on the ISLLC (2008) standards and recommendations for school leaders. Research conducted by Darling-Hammond et al. (2007) found that effective leadership programs align their curriculums to state and professional standards, such as the ISLLC standards, when preparing future school principals. Thus, 43% of School D’s program curriculum is dedicated to training principals in three of the four leadership roles outlined in this study: ethical leadership, instructional leadership, and distributed leadership.

**School E**

School E’s leadership program is conducted fully online. There are two routes for principal certification at School E. Route one principal candidates matriculate towards a Master’s of Education degree with a principal certification add-on, completing a total of 45 hours. Route two principal candidates seek the principal certification only and are required to complete 27 credit hours. In both programs, six of the required credits encompass the mandated internship component.

**Program entry and exit requirements.**

School E’s candidates gain entry into the principal certification program by submitting a general application to the Master’s of Education department. Candidates are required to possess a teaching certification and have completed a degree; a master’s degree is required for the principal certification route. The only other requirement for
Admittance into School E’s principal certification program is an essay detailing an understanding of the candidate’s role in promoting student achievement and success for all students. Principal candidates in School E’s program are not required to complete an entrance interview, submit recommendation letters, or take either the GRE or MAT entrance examination.

According to School E’s program documentation, the school leadership program strives to graduate instructional leaders experienced in advancing student achievement. School E requires principal candidates to successfully complete several program outcomes as a requirement of graduation. The capstone projects range from the production of scholarly writings and development of action plans to candidate-generated audio and videotapes submitted for evaluation.

Program philosophy.

School E’s educational leadership program is firmly grounded in the ideals of instructional leadership. Researchers DiPaola and Tschannen-Moran (2003) assert that the job responsibilities of principals have expanded to include significantly more instructional leadership responsibilities. Thus, 21st century principals must be knowledgeable instructional leaders, as they are ultimately responsible for overall student achievement and the success of every student in their school building (Marzano et al., 2005).

Internship/field experiences.

According to School E’s program documentation, its leadership program incorporates authentic learning in the form of simulations, field experiences, and internships into its curriculum. Principal candidates participate in a full-year internship;
half the year in a Kindergarten-Grade 6 school setting, the other half of the year in a Grade 7-Grade 12 setting. According to research, authentic internships better prepare principal candidates for the day-to-day realities of the school principal’s job (Hale & Moorman, 2003).

**21st century leadership skills.**

As stated previously, School E’s program curriculum is heavily grounded in instructional leadership. According to research, exemplary principal preparation programs form their curriculums around the best practices of instructional leadership (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007). Schools in the 21st century require instructional leaders capable of leading schools and improving student achievement and graduates from School E’s program are provided with a strong instructional leadership foundation.

The core coursework required for school E’s principal certification program is comprised of eleven courses; two of the eleven courses are the internship component. Of the eleven courses required in School E’s principal certification program, a total of six courses, or 54% of the course load, have components addressing the many leadership roles and responsibilities of the 21st century school principals.

Four courses are specifically designed around the idea of preparing principals for the role of instructional leader, as candidates participate in authentic experiences involving school data, case studies, and simulations. The other two courses offer courses associated with visionary leadership, such as having principal candidates develop a leadership vision. The distributed leadership course provides candidates opportunities to work on their collaborative leadership skills through the use of simulations and peer interactions. Research shows that successful principals utilize distributed leadership to
collaborate with their faculty and empower teachers to work together towards the common school goal of improved student achievement (Spillane, 2005). Fifty-four percent of School E’s program curriculum is dedicated to training principals in three of the four leadership roles outlined in this study: instructional leadership, visionary leadership, and distributed leadership.

**School F**

School F can be classified as an online program; however, candidates are required to attend one lecture class. School F’s program is unique among the other PASSHE programs in this study, as it is completely performance-based and requires only one three-credit course and two six-credit internships for successful completion. According to program documentation, School F was developed to align with the core standards of the Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership Initiative (PIL), a standards-based, leadership-training program for novice principals in the state of Pennsylvania.

**Program entry and exit requirements.**

School F’s principal preparation program is designed for experienced educators and a Master’s degree is required for admittance into the program. Principal candidates are required to provide two letters of recommendation from an immediate supervisor, and the candidate’s supervisor is also requested to submit a confidential leadership evaluation on the viability of the candidate to be an effective school principal. A two-page scholarly writing sample is also required for acceptance into School F’s program. Candidates seeking admittance to School F are not required to complete an entrance interview or take either the GRE or MAT entrance examination.
Program philosophy.

School F’s principal certification program is solidly grounded in the precepts of instructional leadership. According to School F’s program documentation, graduates of the program enter Pennsylvania schools as instructional leaders capable of improving teaching and learning. School F is unique in the PASSHE system of schools, as the program is constructed around performance-based outcomes candidates must successfully master during field experiences rather than the set of sequential courses found in other traditional programs. According to SREB (2002), the infusion of performance-based standards into leadership programs is critical for universities attempting to re-structure their principal certification program for coherency.

Internship/field experiences.

As previously stated, School F is a performance-based program with the internship component serving as the foundation of its principal preparation program. Principal candidates matriculating at School F are required to master performance-based outcomes in all four leadership areas outlined in this study: instructional, visionary, distributed, and ethical leadership. According to the research conducted by NASSP (2010), ten skills are critical to the successful leadership of 21st century schools. Many of the ten skills found by NASSP’s (2010) research are firmly embedded in School F’s internship component.

21st century leadership skills.

Research shows that 21st century schools require principals experienced in several areas of educational leadership (NASSP, 2010). An analysis of School F’s curriculum could not be conducted, as only one course is required for principal certification from this
university. However, an analysis of School F’s internship component and performance expectations, via the internship handbook, revealed additional information about the inner workings of its principal preparation program. All four leadership dimensions outlined in this study are fully embedded in School F’s program with performance expectations in data analysis, vision planning, communication and collaboration, as well as promoting student success through ethical leadership.

**School G**

School G is another online principal preparation program within the PASSHE system of schools. The program is designed for working educational professionals who desire to pursue principal certification and other school leadership positions. Students in school G’s principal certification program are required to matriculate towards a Master’s of Education degree and are granted a principal certification after successfully completing a total of 36 credit hours. According to program documentation, School G is aligned with the core standards of the Pennsylvania Inspired Leadership Initiative (PIL).

**Program entry and exit requirements.**

School G’s principal preparation program is designed for educators seeking a master’s degree along with principal certification. Candidates seeking admission into School G’s program are required to provide three letters of recommendation and two writing examples. A 300-word scholarly writing in the form of an article critique is required of School G candidates in addition to an essay on the reason the candidate desires principal certification. Candidates seeking admittance to School G are not required to complete an entrance interview or take either the GRE or MAT entrance examination.
Program philosophy.

School G’s principal certification program is firmly grounded in the ideals of instructional leadership, with particular emphasis placed on the development of school leaders as curriculum experts. According to School G’s program documentation, graduates of the program are curriculum leaders equipped with the skills necessary to promote high student achievement in their school buildings. Research shows that exemplary principal preparation programs are formed around instructional leadership and provide ample opportunities for candidates to develop and evaluate school curriculums (Darling Hammond et al., 2007).

Internship/field experiences.

School G’s field experiences are an important part of its principal preparation program. According to program documentation, the field experiences component of its principal preparation program far exceeds the state-mandated requirements. School G’s principal candidates participate in a yearlong field experience as part of their program. As a result, principal candidates matriculating at School G receive practical training from their field experiences in all four leadership areas outlined in this study: instructional leadership, visionary leadership, distributed leadership, and ethical leadership.

21st century leadership skills.

An analysis of School G’s principal preparation program curriculum emphasizes a sound commitment to providing its candidates with a strong foundation in instructional leadership. The coursework in school G’s program is comprised of 12 courses, 36 hours for master’s plus certification. Of the 12 courses required for principal certification in school G’s principal preparation program, a total of six courses, or 50% of the caseload,
comprise instructional leadership. A sampling of instructional leadership themes found in the courses pertains to curriculum development and evaluation, data analysis and student achievement, and an overview of specific instructional best practices utilized in 21st century schools.

Four additional courses provide principal candidates with opportunities to master the art of reflective practice in ethical leadership as well as develop visionary leadership experience. Principal candidates develop long-term strategic plans, practice skills necessary for education reform as well as identify and practice the skills needed to serve as the lead change agent in their school building. Research shows that principals lead the reform efforts in schools and serve as the lead change agent (Lezotte, 2001). Thus, 83% of School G’s program curriculum is dedicated to training principals in the leadership roles outlined in this study: instructional leadership, ethical leadership, and visionary leadership.

**School H**

School H is a traditional, face-to-face program with all courses taught on campus through lecture format. School H provides principal candidates two routes towards principal certification; a Master’s of Education degree with principal certification or principal certification only route. Principal certification is granted after successfully completing a total of 36 credits for the Master’s of Education route and 27 credits for the principal certification only route.

School H’s principal preparation program is unique among the other PASSHE programs in this study, as it is the only program that is cohort-based. According to Darling-Hammond (2009), cohort-based programs promote collaboration, networking,
and teamwork in addition to providing natural opportunities for group projects, reflection, and leadership development of participants. Twenty students are admitted into School H’s cohort-based program each year. According to Hale and Moorman (2003), university-based programs that get the highest marks for preparing principals for the demands of 21st century schools are typically cohort-based.

**Program entry and exit requirements.**

The application process into School H’s principal certification program is obtained through the general requirements for acceptance into the graduate program. Candidates must have a teaching certification and possess five years of teaching experience by the end of their program. Candidates are also required to provide three letters of recommendation, take a written examination, and provide an academic and professional goals statement in addition to completing a structured interview. The GRE or MAT entrance examination is also required for admittance into School H’s program; however, a minimum score for entrance for the test was not provided for either assessment.

School H requires principal candidates to complete an end-of-program project that consists of a professional portfolio. According to program documentation, the candidate’s portfolio will be utilized as a form of formative and summative assessment, and successful completion of the program is contingent upon passing the portfolio review. Research has found that effective principal preparation programs incorporate performance-based systems of assessment and evaluation for school leaders, such as candidate portfolios, and link learning activities and outcomes to effective administrative
practice (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Davis et al., 2005).

**Program philosophy.**

School H’s leadership program is grounded in the doctrines of ethical leadership. School H strives to produce leaders who can transform schools into learning communities that meet the needs of all stakeholders. Graduates of School H’s principal program enter Pennsylvania schools skilled in the art of reflective practice and collaboration with a focus on student achievement. According to Heathfield (2011), ethical leaders employ reflective practices as one way to assess their actions and decision towards the goal of improved student achievement.

**Internship/field experiences.**

According to School H’s program documentation, field experiences and internships are essential to their leadership program, as they allow principal candidates to bridge the gap between educational theory and professional practice. During field experiences, principal candidates participate in authentic learning activities such as student data analysis, curriculum analysis, classroom observations, case studies, and action research projects. Research found that problem-based learning activities, such as action research, are common elements among effective leadership training programs (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

**21st century leadership skills.**

The philosophy of School H’s principal preparation program is equally grounded in ethical and instructional leadership. According to School H’s program documentation, the conceptual framework guiding its leadership program is designed around the ideals of
training leaders to be student-focused professionals experienced in the art of building equitable learning communities within their schools. Research shows that 21st century school leaders need to be leaders of instruction (Hale & Moorman, 2003) as well as experienced in the art of creating positive and equitable learning environments for all stakeholders (Whitaker, 2003).

There are nine core courses required in school H’s educational leadership program. Of those nine courses required for principal certification, a total of seven courses, or 78% of the course load, have components addressing leadership roles and responsibilities of 21st century school principals. Five courses are designed around the idea of preparing principals in their role of instructional leader. Instructional leadership courses encompass opportunities for analysis of school data, development and analysis of school curriculums, classroom observations, and participation in instructional leadership simulations. The other two courses offer opportunities for principal candidates to develop a long-term school and community vision and master alternative assessment practices that are deemed inclusive and equitable for all students. Thus, 78% of School H’s program curriculum is dedicated to training principals in at least three of the leadership roles outlined in this study: instructional leadership, ethical leadership, and visionary leadership.

School I

School I’s leadership program is considered a traditional, face-to-face program with courses taught on-campus through lecture style. School I provides principal candidates two routes towards principal certification; a Master’s of Education degree with principal certification or principal certification only route. There are 15 credit hours,
five core courses, required for principal certification and six additional credits for the field experience practicum.

**Program entry and exit requirements.**

The application process into School I’s principal certification program is obtained through the general requirements for acceptance into the graduate program. Candidates are required to possess a bachelor’s degree and a teaching certification. Two letters of recommendation from an immediate supervisor and an essay describing why the candidate desires principal certification is also required for application. There was no evidence in School I’s program documentation detailing whether candidates are required to complete an end-of-program assessment or capstone project other than end-of-program practicums. Candidates matriculating in School I’s leadership program are not required to complete an entrance interview or take either the GRE or MAT entrance examination.

**Program philosophy.**

According to this researcher, the program philosophy of School I’s principal certification program is in the developmental stage and loosely grounded in instructional leadership. Examination of School I’s program documentation failed to uncover the underlying vision and mission for the graduates of School I’s principal certification program. Further examination of School I’s course descriptions revealed limited to no clear program expectations or outcomes aligning with the four leadership roles outlined in this study. Research shows that school leadership programs that incorporate clear and consistent standards and expectations into its program are found to be most successful (Officers, 2008).
Internship/field experiences.

Graduates of School I’s principal certification program are required to participate in two field practicums totaling 360 field hours. According to School I’s program documentation, candidates in Practicum I participate in leadership activities, shadow school leaders and participate in seminars focusing on leadership best practices. During Practicum II, candidates focus on instructional leadership, student learning, and complete a capstone project. According to program documentation, both practicums prepare principal candidates for the role of school leader as agent of change and school reformer.

21st century leadership skills.

In Pennsylvania, principals are called upon to demonstrate several types of leadership skills to facilitate the success of the schools in which they lead (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2006). However, as stated previously, School I’s principal preparation program is loosely grounded in instructional leadership and does not fully incorporate any of the other important leadership roles outlined in this study. In addition, most of the courses appear to be based on educational theory and not actual practice.

There are seven courses, two of which are field practicums, required for principal certification in School I’s program. Of the seven courses, four courses, or 57%, offer a sampling of instructional leadership training; however, the requirements are geared towards more theory-based instruction than actual practice. Research shows that exemplary principal preparation programs bridge educational theory with the practical demands of the job (Darling Hammond et al., 2007; Murphy, 2001), thus allowing principal candidates to master important leadership skills before fully assuming
leadership roles in their schools. Although 57% of school I’s program curriculum is based on instructional leadership, it should be noted that the courses are more theory-based and do not offer principal candidates authentic learning opportunities.

**Cross-Case Analysis**

According to research conducted in this study, exemplary principal preparation programs were found to include four common criteria: (1) admission/selection requirements, (2) cohort model, (3) field experiences/internships, and (4) program curriculums (Darling Hammond et al., 2007).

**Targeted Admission and/or Selection Requirements**

Exemplary principal preparation programs utilize targeted admission and selection requirements for program participants. One such targeted admission criteria found to be a vital selection component in highly effective principal preparation programs was the requirement of candidate recommendation letters. Recommendation letters from former supervisors attesting to a candidates’ stellar teaching ability as well as proven leadership abilities (Darling Hammond et al., 2007; Orr, 2006) is one way principal preparation programs could better screen their candidates for future leadership success.

Of the nine schools investigated for this study, seven programs out of the nine, or 78% of the programs, required recommendation letters as a criterion for admittance into their principal preparation program. The number of recommendation letters required for each program ranged between one to three letters. In addition, only one program out of the nine, or 11% of the schools in the study, required an additional leadership evaluation. The leadership evaluation required by School F is a five-point confidential rating of the principal candidate’s current leadership competencies in the areas of (a) problem
analysis, (b) judgment/decisiveness, (c) leadership/sensitivity, and (d) oral/written communication.

**Cohort Model**

According to research, the cohort model is a highly effective adult learning technique. Researchers assert that cohort models promote group and individual knowledge, collaboration, networking, and teamwork in addition to providing natural opportunities for practice-oriented situations, reflection, and leadership development (Darling-Hammond 2009; Meyerson, 2005). According to Hale and Moorman (2003), university-based programs that get the highest marks for preparing principals for the demands of 21st century schools are typically cohort-based.

Of the nine schools investigated for this study, only one program out of the nine, or 11% of the schools in the study, documented use of the cohort model in their principal preparation program. School H recognizes the strength of the cohort model to allow principal candidates the opportunity to advance through the program with a group of peers as a source of personal support and a professional resource. According to Hale and Moorman (2003), cohort-based programs are the preferred models to better train principals for the demands of 21st century leadership.

**Field Experiences**

According to the results from research uncovered in this study, highly effective principal preparation programs utilize an array of authentic field experiences as an opportunity to bridge the gap between theory and practice among their candidates. Authentic, embedded field experiences which provide quality mentoring over a continued period of time and which connect the academic coursework with the practical demands of
the job are found to most effectively prepare future school leaders (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Gray et al., 2007; Hale & Moorman, 2003).

Of the nine schools investigated in this study, eight schools, or 89% of the schools in the study, required some sort of field component. The field experiences included mentored internships, field placements, and practicums. Several programs in the study had extensive field components that included targeted leadership internships, embedded field components into many courses, and required diversity of field placements. Table 3 summarizes the admission criteria, field experiences, and end-of-program outcomes for each program.

Table 3
**Summary of Program Criteria**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Availability of Information</th>
<th>Delivery Format</th>
<th>Admission Requirements</th>
<th>Field Experiences</th>
<th>Capstone/Action Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>TRADITIONAL</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>Mentored Internship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>ONLINE</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>Mentored Internship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>TRADITIONAL</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES - 1</td>
<td>Experienced Internships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Limited</td>
<td>TRADITIONAL</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES - 2</td>
<td>Targeted Field Placements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>ONLINE</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES - 3</td>
<td>Performance BASED - making of entire program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>ONLINE</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES - 3 Leaders' Writing Samples</td>
<td>YES - 5 page scholarly writing sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>ONLINE</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES - 3</td>
<td>Yes - making of entire program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>TRADITIONAL / COHORT BASED</td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>YES - 3</td>
<td>Authentic learning activities data analysis, classroom observations, case studies, and action research projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>TRADITIONAL</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES - 2</td>
<td>Yes - 2 practicums with specific targets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Program Curriculum

Twenty-first century principals must be experienced in multiple areas of educational leadership (NASSP, 2010) in order to successfully lead schools. The research uncovered in this study found that exemplary principal preparation programs base their curriculums on several dimensions of school leadership, such as the four leadership roles highlighted in this study: instructional leadership, visionary leadership, ethical leadership and distributed leadership.

Instructional Leadership Curriculum

Instructional leadership was found to be the dominant leadership component incorporated into many of the program’s leadership curriculums within the PASSHE system of schools. Five of the nine schools, or about 56% of the programs in the study, adopted an instructional leadership framework as the guiding philosophy of their principal certification program. The collective coursework of the schools in the study were also heavily geared towards producing principal candidates capable of promoting the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth (ISLLC, 2008).

The majority of instructional leadership courses were heavily focused on data analysis, curriculum development, and curriculum analysis. Practice-oriented activities provided ample opportunities for principal candidates to work with authentic student and school data as well as work with revising instructional curriculums. Other pertinent instructional leadership activities focused on the 21st century principal as an expert in instructional strategies and teacher evaluation. Several programs provided principal
candidates with opportunities to develop their instructional expertise and teacher evaluative skills through classroom observations, simulation, mentor and peer critiques, as well as long-term, supervised internships.

**Ethical Leadership Curriculum**

Ethical leadership was found to be the second most central leadership role incorporated into many of the program’s leadership curriculums. Four of the nine schools, or about 44% of the programs in the study, adopted an ethical leadership framework as the guiding philosophy of their principal certification program. The collective coursework of the schools in the study were also heavily geared towards producing education leaders capable of promoting the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner (ISLLC, 2008).

The majority of ethical leadership courses were heavily focused on reflective practice and ethical decision making for all students. Activities provided principal candidates opportunities to develop a personal leadership mission and reflect on authentic leadership decisions during simulations. Reflection journals, dissecting case studies, and simulations in which principal candidates evaluate the potential moral and legal consequences of decision-making featured heavily in ethical leadership courses.

**Visionary Leadership Curriculum**

None of the programs were found to have incorporated visionary leadership as a guiding philosophy of its principal certification program. However, five of the programs each incorporated at least one course around the ideals of visionary leadership. The visionary leadership courses were heavily geared towards ISLLC standards that called for principal candidates capable of developing and implementing a vision of learning that is
shared and supported by all stakeholders (ISLLC, 2008).

Additional visionary leadership courses focused on candidates’ mastery of strategic and long-term planning skills. Visionary leadership training activities provided opportunities to further a candidates’ ability to work with mentors and peers on long-term planning through simulations and with specific school data. Several capstone projects required principal candidates to develop five-year academic plans as well as community plans in addition to completing action research projects.

**Distributed Leadership Curriculum**

None of the programs were found to have incorporated distributed leadership as a guiding philosophy of its principal certification program. However, four of the programs each incorporated one course incorporating the ideals of distributed leadership. The distributed leadership courses were primarily geared towards producing principal candidates capable of effectively communicating and collaborating with faculty and community members (ISLLC, 2008).

Distributed leadership was the least prevalent leadership role found in the program curriculums. The four courses that were found to incorporate distributed leadership centered on a candidate’s mastery of sharing of power and communication and collaboration with the various stakeholders. The majority of the training was conducted in simulations and through internships and field experiences. Table 4 outlines the leadership roles found in each principal preparation program.
Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the current status of leadership training in each of the nine principal preparation programs within the PASSHE system of schools. The results of the data analysis were presented in narrative form. The data pertaining to each single case was presented followed by the emerging themes resulting from the cross-case data.
analysis. Additional data from documents were also included to support the common and emerging themes.

According to Davis et al. (2005), current principal preparation programs fail to address the myriad roles required of principals to become effective leaders. However, according to findings in this study, eight out of the nine programs are geared toward current principal preparation program best practices as well as incorporating several leadership training courses into their programs, with the most prominent focus being instructional leadership. According to the Pennsylvania Department of Education, (2006), school principals must master important leadership roles in order to successfully lead 21st century schools in this current era of accountability.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This qualitative case study sought to determine the degree to which the principal preparation programs (N= 9) within Pennsylvania state system of higher education schools (PASSHE) were structured in a way that would equip principal candidates with the four leadership roles outlined in the literature review as well as with the practical skills deemed essential for 21st century school leadership. This review included an examination of university program documentation to ascertain if each program was based on the latest research, theory, and best practices found in exemplary principal preparation programs. Through document analysis, I collected qualitative data that principal preparation programs can utilize to implement many of the reform initiatives outlined in this study.

In this chapter, I present a summary of the research study and discussion of the findings drawn from an analysis of the data detailed in Chapter IV. The summary and findings are followed by implications for future policy and practice as well as my views and recommendations for further study. The study findings are also presented as they relate to the research questions. Findings are based on analysis of data and information that was framed around one research question and two subsidiary research questions. For organizational clarity, I presented the findings as they related to the four leadership roles identified in this study and with regard to the research questions posed. The research questions that guided this study include the following:

1. To what extent are principal preparation programs at the nine approved Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) schools structured
in a way that would imbue principal candidates with the leadership roles and practical skills needed to successfully function as principals in 21st century schools?

2. How do the course content and program design of each of the nine principal preparation programs in the PASSHE system of schools support the acquisition of the four leadership roles identified in the literature: instructional leadership, visionary leadership, distributed leadership, and ethical leadership?

3. What are the opportunities in each principal preparation program for candidates to develop the four leadership roles identified in the literature through provided internships and field experiences?

**Summary of Existing Research**

According to Senge (1996), in order to create successful learning organizations, one first needs effective leadership (Senge, 1996). The findings from this study support current research conclusions that principals play a vital role in creating effective schools (Darling-Hammond, 2009) and that student achievement does not occur in schools without effective leadership (Davis et al., 2005). Additional researchers suggest that school principals not only influence student achievement (Hallinger et al., 1996; Leithwood et al., 2004; Murphy et al., 2006) but also produce significant gains in student achievement (Marzano et al., 2010) through the daily interactions and communications with teachers. National and state legislation such as NCLB (2002) and Pennsylvania’s Accountability Plan (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2006) also acknowledge the vital role effective school leadership plays in school success and declared that school administrators alone are solely responsible for student achievement in their school
buildings. Given what the research suggests about the correlation between student achievement and effective school leadership, principal preparation programs must ensure school principals are well prepared (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Levine, 2005) and sufficiently trained for the rigors of 21st century school administration.

According to Marzano & Waters’ (2009) research, outlined in chapter II, effective leaders must be mindful of three things that matter most to effective schools: “(1) getting the right people to become teachers, (2) developing them into effective instructors, and (3) ensuring that the system is able to deliver the best possible instruction for every child” (p. 21). Several researchers support the assertion that principals are essential to effective schools and that their skills and abilities need to be broad enough to encompass the full range of duties and leadership roles required of effective school leaders (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson 2006). Connecting Marzano & Waters’ (2009) research on the three characteristics of effective leaders to the data revealed in this case study, it can be concluded that 21st century principals require mastery level understanding and experience with all four leadership roles identified in this research.

Commonly accepted is the knowledge that effective school leaders require instructional leadership skills in order to recruit and identify high-quality teachers and teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Wallace Foundation, 2012) and mentor and expand the instructional expertise of those teachers in their school buildings (Peterson, 1999). However, as Marzano and Waters’ (2009) research revealed, effective school leaders also require visionary leadership training and experience in order to identify teachers that will best fit their school’s culture and assist in achieving school improvement goals (Effective Schools, 2001, Marzano & Waters, 2009, Snyder et al., 2008). Additionally, effective
leaders require distributed leadership experience in order to understand the importance of
distributing leaders and leadership throughout the entire school (Spillane et al., 2003) and
empowering all individuals in the organization to contribute their expertise, knowledge,
and skills collectively to ensure the school system as a whole is delivering the best
possible instruction for every child (Marzano & Waters, 2009; Senge, 1990). Finally,
effective leaders require ethical leadership training in order to understand the importance
of reflective practice and ethical decision making with respect to student achievement
(Heathfield, 2011). Consequently, in order for 21st century principals to adequately
perform the full range of duties needed to be effective school leaders, they must first be
adequately trained in their principal preparation programs in the four leadership roles
outlined in this study as correlated by Marzano et al. (2005) research that found the more
effective the school leader in terms of leadership abilities, the greater the gains in student
achievement.

Findings of the Study

This case study examined the content and structure of the nine principal
preparation programs within the PASSHE system of schools in order to ascertain if
Pennsylvania principals are being adequately prepared for the various leadership roles
required in 21st century schools. There was good evidence uncovered to reveal that
PASSHE principal preparation programs were geared towards preparing principals for
the role of instructional leader, as 56% of the programs in the study adopted an
instructional leadership framework as their guiding philosophy. However, limited
evidence was uncovered on the commitment of principal preparation programs in the
PASSHE system of schools to prepare principals for the other leadership roles
recommended from this research, such as ethical leadership, distributed leadership, and visionary leadership. Pennsylvania schools require principals to be knowledgeable in instructional leadership, as well as in community leadership, visionary leadership (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000; Tracy & Weaver, 2000) and ethical leadership.

Another finding of note was the failure of the PASSHE system of schools to function as an actual interconnected, interrelated system of schools. As stated previously, no two schools embraced the same standards or guidelines with respect to principal preparation. Each of the nine schools in this study school functioned as individual or separate entities, with no similarities between them other than being situated in the state of Pennsylvania.

**Recommendations for Policy and Practice**

As outlined by the general systems theory, common principles are needed in order to analyze and think more clearly about any system of study. Systems thinking, as outlined by Senge (1990), provides organizations the ability to see the big picture and to distinguish patterns as they relate to organizational complexity and potential for change. Therefore, the following recommendations for policy and practice are provided to enhance leadership training in the state of Pennsylvania:

- Convene a review committee comprised of the PDE, university leadership professors, principal member organizations (i.e., NASSP, NAESP, PAEESP, and PASA) and novice and veteran principals to conduct a systemic overview of principal preparation in the state of Pennsylvania with the intent of identifying consistencies and inconsistencies among training practices.
• Create an overview board to monitor and enforce Pennsylvania’s Framework and Guidelines for Principal Preparation to ensure that all preparation programs in the state use the guidelines as a foundation for their principal preparation program, as commonalities in the leadership programs have been correlated to higher student outcomes (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2008).

• Construct a survey aimed at novice and veteran principal graduates of PASSHE schools to ascertain their thoughts on how well they were prepared in their principal programs for the current demands of the school principal role. The survey will allow all entities involved to engage in the type of ongoing communication and organizational feedback needed to ensure continued organizational growth (Senge, 1990).

• Construct a survey aimed at novice and veteran principal graduates of PASSHE schools to ascertain in which leadership roles principals felt they had received adequate training in their universities versus the leadership roles most commonly needed in their daily work. This will help to evaluate a common complaint levied at current principal preparation programs that leadership preparation programs fail to adequately prepare principals for the rigors of real practice (Levine, 2005).

• Create Pennsylvania Department of Education leadership seminars around the ideals of instructional leadership, ethical leadership, distributed leadership and visionary leadership that all principal candidates are mandated to complete as a requirement for principal certification. Providing the seminars through the
Department of Education ensures the type of training consistency suggested by the Framework and Guidelines for Principal Preparation Programs (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2008) as well as guarantees all prospective principals will have been exposed to similar leadership training for the betterment of all Pennsylvania students and schools.

- Establish a school district-university partnership to provide principal candidates with a residency program specifically structured around the four leadership roles outlined in this study.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Schools require effective school leadership (NCLB, 2001), and the research shows that principal leadership is vital to improved student achievement and overall student success (Cotton, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Marzano et al., 2005). Maxwell (2005) posits that becoming a good leader is a lifelong learning process, and for many principals the leadership journey formally begins in one’s principal preparation program. Unfortunately, principal preparation programs in Pennsylvania have not embraced the kind of continued learning and systems thinking approach proposed by Senge (1990) as necessary to facilitate continued organizational growth. Based on the findings in this case study, the following recommendations are recommended for future research:

- Conduct a comparative case study of principal preparation programs between PASSHE schools and similar universities in Pennsylvania. Comparisons could then be analyzed for consistencies and inconsistencies among training practices with respect to the program structure, course curriculum, and field opportunity experiences.
• Conduct a quantitative study analyzing all principal preparation programs across the state of Pennsylvania to quantify the degree to which each program reflects the standards outlined in ISLLC, PILS, and the Framework for Principal Preparation Programs as well as the recommendations put forth by experts in the field on the qualities of exemplary principal preparation programs.

• Interview novice and veteran graduates at PASSHE schools to ascertain their thoughts on how well their principal preparation program prepared them for the demands of school leadership. Interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires will provide firsthand accounts on the effectiveness of leadership training within the PASSHE school system.

• This case study could be further replicated to get a broader picture of principal preparation across the nation. Purposeful sampling could be employed to restrict this study to state schools similar in size and scope to the schools within the PASSHE system of schools. Each principal preparation program will then be examined using the design and methods outlined in this study to ascertain the types of leadership training and field opportunities provided to prospective principals from each program.

**Concluding Remarks**

In 2003, the National Center for Educational Leadership noted variations among principal preparation programs with respect to admission requirements, program content, program structure, program duration, and field-based requirements. According to the findings in this study, the same variations are still present in Pennsylvania universities,
today, ten years later. What researchers agree is needed in current principal preparation programs is a consistent structure for developing and organizing a knowledge base capable of producing educational leaders (Achilles, 2005b). In addition, a set of common principles is also needed to allow researchers to think more clearly about the system of study (Chen & Stroup, 1993), and to identify the shortcomings permeating organizational structure (Senge, 1990). However, the findings of my research uncovered that none of the schools in the study had adopted a set of common principles or operated their principal preparation program in the same way. These findings were in spite of Pennsylvania’s Framework and Guidelines for Principal Preparation Program findings that call for commonalities in the leadership programs to be correlated to higher student outcomes (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2008).

In 2007, the Pennsylvania Department of Education established an education goal to create systems and structures for developing academic leadership focused on understanding the ways to boost student achievement (PDE, 2008). The ISLLC (2008) standards as well as Pennsylvania’s Framework and Guidelines for Principal Preparation Programs (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2008) and Pennsylvania’s Accountability Plan (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2006), all aimed at increased student achievement, have incorporated all four leadership roles outlined in this study into their operational doctrines. However, principal preparation programs within the PASSHE system of schools are structured almost exclusively to train prospective principals as instructional leaders only. Ethical leadership, visionary leadership, and distributed leadership, equally important to student achievement and effective schools, have proved to present a greater training challenge.
Twenty-first century school principals cannot be expected to rise to the level of effective school leaders without proper training in their preparation programs in the knowledge, skills, and attitudes (PDE, 2006) needed to be successful. It is my desire that this research will have a twofold effect on principal preparation programs within the PASSHE system of schools: (1) to spear-head an evaluation of PASSHE’s alignment with exemplary principal preparation programs around the nation with a focus on the integration of the four leadership roles into principal program curriculums, and (2) to provide Pennsylvania universities as well as future Pennsylvania principals with a realistic understanding of the practical skills and leadership requirements needed to successfully lead 21st century’s schools.

**Personal Reflections**

My decision to research principal preparation programs within the PASSHE school system was due to personal curiosity. As a former graduate of a PASSHE school and current principal in the state, I was curious to evaluate how effective PASSHE schools were in preparing principals for the demands of 21st century leadership in Pennsylvania. As PASSHE is the largest provider of higher education in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, many of the principals I have encountered throughout my career have received their principal certification from one of the PASSHE schools analyzed in this study.

It was a concern as a Pennsylvania principal, as well as a researcher, to uncover the inconsistencies existing across PASSHE programs and with the level of leadership expertise of PASSHE graduates. It is my belief that the inconsistencies existing in current PASSHE principal preparation programs could account for the disparity between
successful schools and those schools deemed unsuccessful or failing in the state, as it is
typically the failing schools that are plagued by ineffective and inconsistent leadership. It
leads one to extrapolate that perhaps those failing schools are the ones receiving
inadequately trained principals.

Findings from this study have important implications for the future of
Pennsylvania schools, as my research revealed that effective principal leadership is
essential for effective, successful schools. This study also has important implications for
the Pennsylvania Department of Education as the governing body charged with providing
fair and equitable education to all students in the state. The Pennsylvania Department of
Education is also charged with certifying all principals in the state, thus validating a
principal’s ability to effectively lead a school.

It is my belief that all Pennsylvania students and schools deserve great principals.
It is the goal of this researcher that the findings from this case study contribute to a re-
vamping of principal preparation programs within the PASSHE system of schools as well
as across the state of Pennsylvania to a system that provides more equitable and
consistent training of all principals. According to the Southern Regional Education Board
(2006), “Better prepared school leaders are essential to achieving state goals for higher
student achievement and economic progress” (p. 13). It takes more than legislation to
produce successful schools; it requires consistent and comprehensive principal
preparation programs aimed at equipping school leaders with the right combination of
practical skills and leadership training needed to achieve academic success for each and
every student in their charge.
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