A Descriptive Study Of The Skills And Attributes Of Principals Who Have Become Effective Change Agents In Their Schools

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ABSTRACT

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES OF PRINCIPALS WHO HAVE BECOME EFFECTIVE CHANGE AGENTS IN THEIR SCHOOLS

More than one third of the principals of public schools in this country lose their jobs involuntarily before they ever achieve tenure or get the opportunity to make positive changes in their schools. Many studies have been undertaken over the last 100 years to try to determine what factors create effective principals and what skills and attributes should these principals possess in order to be effective change agents. Very little research however exists on the self-perceived skills and attributes needed by principals by principals themselves. The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of principals who have been identified as successful with respect to the skills and attributes that they perceive as important to their success as change agents in their schools. Other issues to be explored include any difference that the socio-economic context of the school; the gender, male or female, of the principal; and the role the demographic composition of the student population might make in what successful principals perceive as important skills and attributes needed to be a successful change agent.

Utilizing a quantitative design the researcher surveyed 240 principals of elementary and middle schools in three New Jersey counties. The survey was comprised of four sections focusing on demographic information about the principals and their schools, skills and attributes rated on a Likert Scale and school wide changes initiated by the principals.

Frequency statistics, the Mann Whitney U test and Mean Ranks were utilized to determine significance and trends. Several of the areas being investigated provided
statistical significance at the $p \leq 0.05$ level. Among the areas providing significant results were principal gender, socioeconomic context of the school and schools with varied demographic compositions.

This research provides a look at the skills and attributes identified by principals deemed successful based on set criteria. This might be of great interest to school boards and superintendents seeking to employ principals as well as colleges and universities formulating programs to train administrators for school positions.
A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES OF PRINCIPALS WHO HAVE BECOME EFFECTIVE CHANGE AGENTS IN THEIR SCHOOLS

BY

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Education
Seton Hall University

2004
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A journey that began as a venture into unchartered territory culminated in my making countless new friends and learning more than I dreamed I could. It came about with some pain, trepidation and anxiety. The journey culminated in my completion of the requirements for the Ed.D. degree. I could not have done it alone nor could I have received better counsel and guidance from so many.

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Finally but most importantly my heartfelt gratitude and thanks to my colleague, confidant and dear friend, Dr. Adunni Slackman Anderson for her wisdom, support not allowing me to quit and always being there as my statistician, a member of my committee and my conscience.
DEDICATION

This dissertation and the completion of my doctoral program are dedicated to Ina and Irving Katz my late parents. I can finally say that mom and dad you have had your wish come true. You can now rest knowing that you have your son “the doctor”.

I would like to pay special mention to the late Patricia LiSanti a lady who provided a spiritual uplift to myself and the other members of the Executive Ed.D. cohort program. All who knew her will remember her with fondness and love.

I would like to complete this dedication by giving credit to my family for standing behind me in this journey. My wife Paula and my daughter Gail as well as my sons David and Steven and daughter in law Melissa and son in law Richard were all supportive and inspiring and lived without me for these three years. I trust that my grandsons Benjamin, Joshua and Eitan will have an easier time getting their doctoral degrees. This degree is shared by all of you.
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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Background

What makes a principal an effective change agent? This researcher believes that at a minimum, principals who are effective change agents must satisfy three criteria: (a) they must engage in innovation; (b) they must hold their jobs long enough to see the innovation through from inception to the point where there are visible results; and (c) the visible results must include a positive change in student outcomes. Although this particular definition has the virtue of empirical verifiability, it raises numerous questions about the necessary skills employed by successful principals to instigate change that affects student outcomes.

The literature is replete with advice to principals on how to instigate and maintain change (Cordiero, 1999), develop effective schools (Brookover & Lezotte, 1982; Edmonds, 1979), exercise transformational leadership (Ubben, Hughes, & Norris, 2001), work effectively with various stakeholder groups (Goldhammer & Becker, 1971), and survive in their position (Chapko & Butchko, 2001; Matthews, 2002; Rooney, 2000). There is also a large body of literature dealing with the principal as an educational leader from the early work of Stogdill (1948) to the present emphasis on transformational leadership (Bass, 1996).

Principals are charged with the responsibility of creating a building climate that is conducive to providing students with the best possible education. Principals are the
educational leaders of their buildings (Gross & Herriot, 1965). To be an educational leader is to engage in a variety of activities and deal with several different stakeholder constituencies whose goals may vary widely. According to Daresh (2001), effective principals provide a sense of mission to their schools, engage in participative management, provide support for instruction, monitor instruction, and are resourceful. Bennis and Nanus (1985) have suggested that successful leaders develop a vision for the organization, engage in effective communication, cultivate trust within their organization, engage in self renewal, and focus on success. Goldhammer and Becker (1971) noted that successful principals express their faith in children, have an ability to work effectively with people, work aggressively in securing the resources for their schools, are enthusiastic about their jobs, are committed to education, can distinguish between long-term and short-term educational goals, are adaptable, and are able to engage in long-term strategies.

The above leadership variables have very little overlap, yet there is little a professional educator can disagree with in terms of the characteristics of successful leadership. What one can say about these skills, attributes, and others like them in the literature, is that none of them are exhaustive. It is less a case of inadequate theorizing than it is trying to conceptualize a very complex job. Therefore, this study will focus on one aspect of the principalship: the role of change agent.

This researcher, in his personal experience, has found that every high achieving school has as its instructional leader a principal who is both effective and skilled in moving a school, staff and community to a higher level. These personal observations are
confirmed by effective schools research (Brookover & Lezotte, 1982; Cuban, 1984; Edmonds, 1979).

As anyone who has attempted to institute change in an organization understands, change brings conflict. Bennis (1966) noted that the most common form of formal human organization is the bureaucracy, which is conservative, depends on a hierarchical power structure, and is resistant to change. Officeholders and bureaucracies tend to have vested interests in the maintenance of the status quo, even if the organization is failing. People resist change because it brings uncertainty. Often people would rather deal with an unsatisfying present than with an uncertain future, even if that future presents the possibility of an improved life (Hoffer, 1963).

Current research indicates that although principal success cannot be directly attributed to longevity, it is generally indicated that in order to implement programs, and philosophies that are new and innovative, it will take a minimum of five years for substantive change to occur (Bennis, 1966; Brookover & Lezotte, 1982). This period generally includes the attainment of tenure and its inherent vote of confidence by the superintendent and the school board.

As the educational leader of the school, the principal is responsible for the implementation of school improvement and change (Davis, 1997, 1998). A successful principal is necessarily a successful change agent. As change agents, what are the skills and attributes principals need to enable them to generate positive change? That is the focus of this study.
Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to determine what, if any, types of specific skills and attributes perceived by successful principals are associated with creating positive change in their school communities. Factors may include but not be limited to: personal attributes, educational background, experience, political skills, ability to navigate the system, personal and interpersonal relationships, philosophies, vision, and ability to plan a well-conceived course of action to implement a new design. The researcher is aware of the dichotomy of those who believe in the trait theory of leadership espoused, by many, who believed that leaders had innate qualities and characteristics which formed the "great man" theory (Northouse, 2001). While others were steadfast in the belief that leadership traits were situational and relevant to a leader in different situations. Perhaps in this field there was no better spokesman than Stogdill whose two major surveys created the situational trait theories "which argued that both personality and situational actions were determinants of leadership" (Northouse, 2001, p.17). This researcher, based on personal experience and extensive review of the literature, takes the position, for purposes of this particular research project, that skills are acquired, honed and sharpened through learning and environmental experiences, and are not innate.

Significance of the Study

The knowledge of the skills and attributes that principals perceive as important to becoming a successful educational change agent would be of great value to candidates for the position as well as those beginning to enter school programs designed to certify students as administrators. It would provide superintendents and school boards with a realistic profile of skills and attributes needed by candidates for principal in their districts.
It would also provide universities with a guide for their educational administration programs.

Limitations of the Study

The sample size was comprised of districts in three New Jersey Counties whose demographic characteristics were representative of the state as a whole. The Principals selected were from elementary and middle schools who had five years of experience in the same school and who had created a positive change that contributed to increased student achievement. The letter of solicitation/participation states clearly that the researcher assumes that the increased student achievement was due in part to the innovation instituted by the principal. In section three of the survey instrument respondents are asked to select innovations that they had made and add any made but not listed. This serves as a filter or screening process as described by Rea and Parker (1997). Completion of the survey and the text of the solicitation letter presume along with answering page three of the survey instrument that the principal respondents agree that a change they instituted was in part responsible for the elevation in their schools reading scores. High school principals were not included in the sample thereby confining results to elementary and middle schools. The researcher chose to arbitrarily utilize one year of reading scores of the ESPA and GEPA tests administered during the 2001 – 2002 school year to ascertain improvement. The results were available, accessible and provided an adequate sample size.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this research is to examine the perceptions of principals who have been identified as successful with respect to the skills and attributes that they perceive as
important to their success as change agents in their schools. Other issues to be explored include any difference that the socioeconomic context of the school; the gender, male or female, of the principal; and the role of the demographic composition of the student population might make in what successful principals perceive as important skills and attributes needed for being a successful change agent.

Research Questions

The study will be guided by one research question, and three subsidiary questions.

The primary research question is:

1. What skills and attributes do successful principals identify as important to being a successful change agent?

The three subsidiary questions are:

2. Do male and female successful principals identify similar skills and attributes as important to being a successful change agent?

3. Does the socioeconomic context of the school make a difference in what successful principals perceive as important skills and attributes for being a successful change agent?

4. What role does the demographic composition of the student population play in the overall perception of successful principals of the skills and attributes necessary for being a successful change agent?

Definitions

*Principal* - The educator who has executive authority for a school.
Skill - A learned behavior or ability that can be applied to leadership. An example of leadership skills might include: conflict management, developing goals, organizing personnel, or consolidating political support.

Personal attribute - An attribute is a personal characteristic with which an individual is identified. Attributes include: confidence, optimism, affability, obsessiveness, consistency, stubbornness, and intelligence.

Successful Principal - A principal who has had a minimum of five years in the present position and whose students' achievement scores are higher in the present year than they were five years before.

Change Agent - A change agent is a principal who has been able to plan and execute a specific change that has been associated with an increase in student achievement in the school.

Theoretical Rationale

The fundamental question that underlies this study is what constitutes a successful agent of change? This question presupposes two theoretical issues: the first issue is what is leadership? The second issue is what is the relationship between leadership and being an agent of change? Between these two issues arises the issue of organization, since principals must engage in organizational change. Organizational change refers to the bureaucracy in schools, which often times coalesce to resist change. The principal must deal with this coalition when implementing any school wide change.

What is Leadership?

The literature is replete with definitions of leadership going back to Chester Barnard's definition in his classic work, The Functions of the Executive (1938), which
focuses on the leader as a decision maker. Most definitions found in textbooks on the principalship focus on leadership as something the principal does. Typical is the work of Sergiovanni (2001), who views the principal as engaging in the following leadership behaviors: demonstrating vision, making moral and ethical judgments, and evincing creativity and innovative thinking. Similarly, one of the major theorists of leadership, Bernard Bass (1996) conceptualizes leadership as engaging in transactional and transformational behaviors. Transactional behaviors are conceptualized as offering rewards to subordinates based upon performance, monitoring the actions of subordinates, correcting mistakes and infractions, and intervening into problem situations when necessary. Transformational behaviors include exerting influence by example, demonstrating a strong sense of purpose, motivating subordinates, encouraging subordinates to offer their opinions on organizational strategy, and engaging in positive staff development.

Leadership, however, is fundamentally a position in a hierarchy in which a certain amount of power is invested (Weber, 1978). It is impossible to think about leadership without followership. According to Weber (1978), within an organization, such as a bureaucracy, officeholders in leadership positions are provided a certain amount of power in order to fulfill their organizational functions. Power, according to Weber (1978), is the ability to get somebody to perform an act regardless of whether or not that person desires to engage in that particular kind of behavior. In short, power is the ability to coerce.

Blau and Scott (1962) noted that the exercise of coercion engenders ill will and resistance and is a costly expenditure of political capital. The continued use of force creates a dysfunctional organization, invites sabotage, high turnover among subordinates,
business employees, other staff members, other administrators in the building, and the
district office.

Within every formal organization there is an informal set of relationships that are
every bit as influential in the operation of the organization as are formal relationships
between role occupants (Blau & Scott, 1962). Within the formal structure of an
organization, informal systems of influence and exchange develop. The informal
structure contains friendships, rivalries, coalitions, love interests, hatreds, and
relationships of mutual convenience. The informal system can sometimes be quite at
variance with the formal system; for example, in education apocryphal stories exist about
schools that are run by the head custodian and the principal is just the figurehead. In
schools that have high principal turnover, the chances are that the school may be run
informally by a group of tenured teachers who have been in the school for a long period
of time.

A principal cannot assume that the authority that comes with the position is
sufficient to institute change. According to Blau (1986), a leader must engage in social
exchange with subordinates and stakeholder groups in order to mobilize them into a
concerted effort. That is, the effective leader, in order to move the organization in a
given direction, must take into consideration the informal relationships within an
organization as well as between the organization and other elements in its environment.

As Thompson (1967) noted, organizations exist in a dynamic "task environment".
That is, there is always a certain amount of uncertainty because the context of an
organization is continually changing. Therefore, organizational leaders need to adapt to
continuously changing conditions. For schools, such conditions include but are not limited
to changing curricular emphases, changes in the demographics of the student population, altered political climates, faculty turnover, technological innovation, aging of the facilities, personnel changes in the district office, and budgetary crises. The task environment constitutes the context in which school change takes place.

The Principal as a Change Agent

Because the task environment of the school is continually changing, the principal, as educational leader, must necessarily occupy the role of change agent. However, as Ianniruberto (1999) found in his study of school improvement plans in a major urban district, many changes implemented at the school level were ephemeral and had nothing to do with improving student achievement, such as buying computers or photocopy machines for office staff. Even such changes as purchasing science equipment, new textbooks, establishing tutoring programs, homework institutes, and providing for staff development in a variety of curricular areas did not guarantee increases in student achievement.

From a theoretical perspective, the principal must mobilize people, resources, and sentiment in order to institute change. Because school improvement is part of a principals job description, the institution of educational change is a legitimate activity. How principals conceptualize the problem, involve and organize constituencies, implement innovations, monitor progress, provide resources, and evaluate outcomes will determine the success of change (Ubben et al., 2001).

Yet the problem persists concerning the skills and attributes that principals need to engage in school improvement. Among those principals who have successfully engaged in school improvement, to what do they attribute their success? What skills do
they perceive as essential to being a change agent? What personal attributes do they see as critical to successfully moving a school in a desired direction? It is these questions that this study seeks to answer.
CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

The Principal as a Change Agent

In this literature review, several issues will be explored around the topic of the principal as a change agent. At the beginning of the 1990's, Mahaney (1991) suggested that an emerging role of the principal would be to become an agent of change. Fullan (2001) recently noted that principals have had increased expectations placed on them in their roles as principals, and have been identified as critical components in successful educational innovation. Hall and Hord (1987) stated "throughout our years of research and experience, we have never seen a situation in which the principal was not a significant factor in the efforts of schools to improve" (p. 1). This supports a body of research that indicates that the principal is the critical factor in making change happen. The literature will be reviewed in three sections: first, theories of change and change agency will be reviewed; second, research examining the roles of principals in the change process will be examined; and third, findings on the skills that principals need to implement change will be compiled, analyzed, and evaluated.

Theories of Change Agency

Principal leadership in an era in which schools are under substantial pressure to change has resulted in a great deal of research-based theory about what skills and characteristics are required to successfully implement change. In this section, researchers who have synthesized the literature and who have promulgated theories about change
agency will be reviewed. Although the principal will be the main focus of this review, it is apparent from the theories in education that there are commonalities which transcend the role of the principal and may also apply to other change agents, such as teachers and superintendents.

*Principals*

Gresso and Robertson (1992) suggested that principals must rely more on the faculty and staff as primary consultants rather than them being dependent on the principal as the sole catalyst for change. Change requires a combination of effort on the part of the facilitator and stakeholder constituencies. Three important group process skills must be activated during the change process: (a) open communication and trust; (b) consensus building; and (c) problem solving and decision-making. Open communication and trust requires that teachers cannot be isolated but must feel a sense of ownership of their school. Consensus building is actualized through the staff opening up their unified voices and developing skills in order to solve problems generated by the need for school improvement. The authors believe that problem solving and decision-making are two different skills. They point out that when faculties know that they share in the process to determine problems and seek solutions that they are far more willing to participate positively. In a change situation, agendas take on special significance. In order to effectuate change, items for the agenda must come from both the principal and the staff. Effective principals create a process for change rather than deal with individual crises that exclude groups within the organization.

Ornstien (1993) discussed why some principals succeed and others fail in the change process. He asks the question, “Can a principal be an instructional leader?” His
research suggests that elementary school principals have more time to spend on curriculum while middle school principals are much more involved with crisis management. He contends that there is no clear definition of an instructional leader. Previous studies conducted in urban and inner-city schools list eight strategies for implementing change and improving academic success. They are: (a) adaptive problem solving; (b) skill level focus; (c) compatibility; (d) principal leadership; (e) teacher involvement; (f) top down or bottom up leadership; (g) staff development; and (h) cooperation with businesses. He noted that major corporations engaged in change insist that leaders must influence change but must develop a process whereby participants are active as change agents. Employees and teachers must see their bosses or principals as trustworthy and caring. Principals must enlist the support, provide the impetus, develop the strategies, and provide staff development in order to successfully implement change.

Because education can no longer adhere to the bureaucratic model, Conley and Goldman (1994) have indicated that emphasizing the command-and-control structure and top-down authority is inimical to the change process. Principals must lead through their personal, interpersonal, and professional competencies. They need to establish an environment built upon collegiality, cooperation, and shared commitments. Principals must deal with increasing expectations for accountability in an environment where they have less control. The solution to this problem is in the development of skills called "facilitative leadership." That is, principals must engage in a model of leadership in which the power to coerce is supplanted by the authority of expertise. Facilitative leadership requires the following abilities: (a) to overcome constraints of time, funds, and
information; (b) to develop teams that have diverse skills and work well together; (c) to provide coordination, feedback, and conflict management; (d) to create intra-school and community networks; (e) to develop collaborative politics that emphasize one-on-one communication rather than large meetings; and (f) to model and embody the vision of the school. The principal as change agent needs to develop the following skills: consistency, authenticity, flexibility, and the ability to observe opportunities for change. Facilitative leadership, because of its collaborative style, can generate ambiguities. It requires a great deal of skill and sensitivity so that it does not descend into manipulation and paternalism. Although it can generate high expectations, it can also create a great deal of anxiety because of the risky nature of change.

Facilitative leaders need to know how to manage tensions and move faculty toward collective goals; they need to know how to negotiate a collective vision of the school and to keep the vision at the forefront of change in order to prevent fractionalization and factionalism (Conley & Goldman, 1994). Facilitative leaders are on the continual lookout for others who have leadership capabilities, and encourage them to take leadership roles. They continually expand networks beyond the boundaries of the school, and are always cultivating readiness for change in their organizations. They must be able to balance process and product so that processes are driven to achieve goals and do not become ends in themselves. Accountability needs to be built into the change process. Facilitative leaders are always looking for allies and supporters, and engage in exchange processes with them.

Hart (1995) suggested that change can only come when the faculty is included in the change plan. She suggested that effective change can only come from the bottom up.
She contended that leadership is an interactive as opposed to a one dimensional process dominated by leadership. In light of the above perspectives, Hart's view is simplistic; certainly the faculty has to be included in all critical aspects of the innovation process. However, it is incumbent upon the principal to provide leadership and support in that process.

Ellsworth (2000), borrowing on the work of Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991), discussed 10 principles that principals should keep in mind when engaging in change. He noted that the principal occupies a middle management role. If change is going to occur in a school, the faculty has to support it as well as the principal, because they are the ones who will be implementing the changes. If there is no support for an innovation by the faculty or the principal, it will not occur. Therefore, the role of the principal must be to lead the faculty in the change process. The skills that are required of a principal must be primarily in the area of human management. The 10 principles are: (a) engage in brainstorming possibilities; (b) think big, but start small; (c) focus on something tangible, such as curriculum and instruction; (d) work on fundamentals, such as the professional culture of your school; (e) practice responsible risk taking; (f) empower your staff by supporting and encouraging them; (g) establish and communicate a clear vision; (h) develop a sense of priorities and follow them; (i) build alliances with those who can help you; and (j) encourage and solicit feedback. Serious educational change involves changing the culture and structure of the school. Such change requires a vision and a concerted effort to implement that vision. Principals need to manage the time directed towards routine administrative functions.
Fullan (2001) described the role of the principal in educational innovation as critical to the success of the change. Nearly every study of school effectiveness has shown that leadership is a key factor. Successful principals are those who have an inclusive, facilitative orientation. That is, they view the organizational change process as one that includes all stakeholding groups. It is the responsibility of the principal to organize and move these groups in the same direction. Successful principals are those who focus on student learning. The innovation process has to be directed toward improving the way in which teachers teach and students learn. Successful principals are efficient managers. They know how to organize themselves, delegate authority, and focus on what is important. The principal's job is one that tends to have role overload; therefore, they must develop priorities and focus on those that are highest on the list. Successful principals know how to combine pressure and support. Although educational change is an organizational process, the principal must be able to judge what individual members need and engage in a process by which support is given to those activities that lead to improved schooling and pressure for persons to change if what they are doing is inimical to the improvement process. It is the role of the principal to help teachers to improve their knowledge, skills, and dispositions, develop a cohesive professional community, create and maintain a coherent program, and obtain and distribute technical resources.

The District

As noted above, principals are middle level managers that must coordinate the innovation process between the school and the district. Therefore, the principal must
have the cooperation of the district superintendent. This subsection will examine that relationship.

Mullin and Keedy (1998) examined the influence that school superintendents have on second order change, that is, efforts at restructuring the delivery of educational services. Second order change is not possible without support from the district office. The relationship between district and school is one of co-management and coordination with a consensus among all staff members about the desired educational goals. The authors suggest that in order to support second order change, the superintendent must engage in transformational leadership, an observation that has been made about the role of the principal in the school. Therefore, the superintendent and the principal must engage in parallel behaviors, one at the district level and the other at the building level. The authors conducted a qualitative single case study analysis of change in one district. They interviewed the superintendent, principals, and teachers in the district, conducted direct observations, and collected and analyzed documents as the district attempted to restructure its curriculum. This study focused on three classes of superintendent behaviors: the articulation of professional values and beliefs, the development of problem-solving skills, and the creation of a collaborative professional culture. The values articulated by the superintendent were: (a) public education must change; (b) people are good and capable of effective professional practice; (c) educational practice must be research-based; (d) educational practice must be child-focused; and (e) those unwilling or unable to participate in the change process will not be employed by the school district. The problem-solving skills evinced by the superintendent included: (a) supporting change efforts; (b) using data as feedback to evaluate the success of
innovations, district programs, and personnel; (c) providing learning opportunities for those engaged in the change process; and (d) encouraging professional growth through mentoring and the delegation of authority. The superintendent attempted to build a collaborative culture by engaging in the following behaviors: (a) building the learning capacity of the schools through the institution of school improvement teams; (b) developing formal and informal communication channels; and (c) developing an organizational perspective among teachers and principals. The latter was done within the articulation of the district-wide vision, the promotion of cooperation rather than competitive relationships within the district, the articulation of district expectations, the establishment of a district-wide accountability system, and the development of district policies.

In addition, the superintendent strove to include the larger community in the organizational change process by including parents, and utilizing the local educational channel and PTA meetings to communicate to the wide community the nature of the changes occurring in the schools (Mullin & Keedy, 1998). Data indicated that the superintendent engaged in transformational leadership behavior; there is a high level of consistency among respondents about the nature of the superintendent behaviors. Although the superintendent could be described as a transformational leader who also engaged in contingent reward, there is no evidence presented by the authors that significant change took place in the school district. No attempt was made to evaluate any outcomes of the innovation process, limiting the ability to generalize the results.

Boekhoff (2002) conducted a case study at an innovative elementary school that was paired with a museum in which the school's curriculum was organized around the
content of the museum. The pedagogy of the school was developed over a 10-year period with input from the stakeholders. The curriculum was characterized by a child-centered approach; subject matter areas were integrated; activities focused on long-term, multi-age, and cooperative projects; student assessment was based on portfolios and a variety of other indicators; and the students were able to create museum displays. The founding principal of the school helped to create the new curriculum and was described as a person who had a broad range of educational leadership skills, encouraged leadership qualities in the teachers, and served as a buffer between the school and the district. The founding principal, when promoted, was replaced by a person who did not share the vision of the school nor had the leadership skills of the founding principal. Sadly, the district hired a new superintendent who considered himself a change agent and began instituting innovation from above, imposing it on the schools, focusing on a controlled curriculum and high-stakes testing. This resulted in a restriction of the options that the students could pursue as part of the curriculum and as a result, instruction became less student centered.

Sulla (1998) conducted two case studies of the roles of consultants in facilitating educational change. Consultants have been used increasingly as change agents in educational systems because of their expertise and the fact that they are outside the school bureaucracy. The use of outside consultants increases the probability of successful implementation of innovations. Sulla investigated several site-specific factors and their relationship to successful innovation in schools: the clarity of organization reform goals, the organizational culture, the role of the principal, knowledge of the reform process, and the role of the internal facilitator. A shared set of values was critical
to the success of the innovation process. If those who are expected to implement the
process do not believe in the value of the innovation, it will fail. In each case, the
principal was the internal facilitator of the innovation. The effectiveness of the
consultants was based on two critical factors: the ability of the consultants to develop
structures that make sense to the participants; and the support of the principals. The
consultant, in order to be successful must maximize the positive aspects of the site and
overcome the negative aspects. The data from this study suggests that change agents,
whether they are principals, superintendents, or outside consultants, need to be problem-
solvers who are sensitive to feedback and use it to find solutions to unique, context-based
problems in the innovation process. A second implication is that educational innovators
must begin with a plan of action that provides them with a direction toward an achievable
goal. Within the innovation process, such plans will need to be altered based upon
feedback. However, the plan gives structure and direction to the innovation process and
is necessary in order to focus on the goal.

Two of the studies document the importance of the superintendent in maintaining
innovation. In the case of Mullin and Keedy (1998), even though there was no evidence
of widespread change in the school district, the superintendent acted to support the
innovation. In the Boekhoff (2002) study, the superintendent acted in ways that were
inimical to the change implemented in the school, subverting the change process despite
the intentions of the school staff. In many cases, especially when change is conducted at
the district level, consultants are used to ensure the success of the innovation process.
The use of consultants is usually made at the district level and can be helpful to the
principal who is responsible for implementing the change. However, as noted above,
there must be a consensus between the superintendent, the consultant, and the principal on the means and goals of the change process.

Teachers

If educational innovations are directed at improving students learning, teachers must be involved in the change process because they are the ones who are expected to change the way in which they teach students. Hart (1995) suggested that change can only occur when the faculty is included in the change plan. The author indicates that effective change can only come from the bottom up. She contends that leadership is an interactive as opposed to a one dimensional process dominated by the leader. Therefore, teacher cooperation and involvement are necessary conditions for the implementation of educational change.

Fasold (1992) found that administrators were more open to change than their teaching colleagues. Although her study was of teachers, the implications could be generalized to all change agents: the most critical skills in change agency are the motivation and organization of people into the change process. Although there are many specific skills that could be outlined under these rubrics, such as knowing how to negotiate, coping with individual differences, developing consensus, and so forth, the findings indicated that educational change is a social process more than a technical process that involves the maintenance and support of human relationships directed toward a common goal. Although knowledge of the innovation and management of the change process are important, people skills are critical. In her study of four teacher-leaders in three Oregon high schools, she used questionnaires, observations, documents, and semi-structured interviews to gather data on their roles as innovators. Results
indicated that they participated in the following roles: energizing and motivating staff; developing communication links between teachers and administrator; including students in the change process; and enhancing their own personal and professional growth. The main barriers they found to the innovation process were teachers' and administrators' resistance to change, insufficient time, lack of group process training, and teacher and administrator role uncertainty.

Mellencamp (1992) conducted a qualitative study of 40 teachers in a small rural school district about their receptiveness to educational change. The teachers viewed the school district that they were in as hostile to change. They also reported that the internal climates of their schools were not conducive to change because there was a lack of communication among their colleagues and the faculties split into conflicting factions. Teachers cited numerous barriers to change including lack of resources and time, ineffectual staff development, and feeling overwhelmed with students' problems. The teachers thought that in order for change to take place, they needed support, especially from the administration. They suggested that when change took place in their school, it was despite the principals rather than because of them. Teachers said that they would not engage in school change as long as principals were unwilling to be more responsive to teachers' needs. A serious problem was lack of collaboration among teachers who felt isolated from each other even though they had common issues.

Many teachers thought that top-down efforts to change robbed them of their voice (Mellencamp, 1992). That is, administration did not include them in the planning process; however, they were required to implement the changes. This lack of consultation alienated them and disempowered them, creating resistance to change
regardless of its value. Teachers were very wary about becoming involved in school-wide change for several reasons: there always seemed to be a faction of teachers who opposed it, undermining the probability of success; they did not want to stick their necks out in a failing enterprise; and many perceived it as a waste of time.

Most teachers, when they thought about change, conceptualized it as occurring within the realm of their own classrooms, where they had power and efficacy (Mellencamp, 1992). They wanted to see meaningful change in their own classrooms that helped their students. Some teachers felt that they had efficacy in their own classrooms but were relatively powerless outside them. Other teachers felt that school-wide change would ultimately lead to better teaching environments within their own classrooms. The kinds of changes instituted by the teachers tended to be narrowly focused and incremental. They would try a new program here, a slightly different approach there, but rarely did they overhaul their entire classrooms and embark upon a new method of teaching. Such incrementalism would be expected to happen if teachers were left to their own devices to institute change. Without a supportive school system and an energized principal to organize, inspire, and support school-wide change, innovation will always be piecemeal and directed toward surface change.

If a principal has an unwilling and resistant staff, it is highly unlikely that significant change can take place. Teachers perceive themselves, often quite correctly, as pawns in the innovation process. Proactive administrators, often with the best intentions, fail to include the faculty at the outset and try to sell the innovation to the teaching staff. This effort proved to be futile, and to further damage relationships. Too often teachers became tertiary considerations. On the one hand, they were expected to implement the
innovations; on the other hand, initiating innovators failed to take their needs into consideration in the process. If teachers were going to be involved in the innovation, they needed training, time, support, and rewards for their efforts. If these were not forthcoming, then the teaching staff could subvert the process. One of the most critical skills principals need is the ability to organize, inspire, and move the staff in a positive direction towards the innovation process. In the next section, research will be reviewed on principal behaviors that support the innovation process.

The Role of the Principal

Several researchers have explored the role of the principal in the process of innovation. As noted above, the principal is responsible for innovation within the school and occupies a position between the district office and the teaching staff. This position is critical to the innovation process. Therefore, one must ask, What is the role of the principal in the school improvement process? The research reviewed in this section attempts to answer that question.

Kelly (1992) used ethnographic methods to explore the dynamics of the change process and factors important to successful implementation of an innovative language arts curriculum in a newly established, suburban elementary school. The following characteristics were associated with the success of the implementation: ongoing staff development, on-site assistance from multiple groups of individuals including school personnel and external consultants, broad-based commitment to the instructional philosophy, implementation on the part of the staff, and effective leadership from the building principal. In addition, the school contained teams of teachers willing to grow, change, and participate in a larger project with a partnership of support and assistance.
The role of the principal was to provide a clear sense of direction and purpose, facilitate commitment to and support for the innovation from multiple groups of personnel, and sponsor a learning environment that fosters communication, shared-decision making, and ongoing staff development. In order to fulfill this role, the principal must have a clear vision of the innovation and its relationship to the mission of the school, communicate it to all those involved in the change process, open up the decision-making process to those involved in creating change, and provide support and training to change agents so that they could engage in the change process in a positive manner.

Edington (1996) conducted a qualitative analysis of the successful implementation of block scheduling in five Indiana high schools. Data was obtained through interviews with each of the participating principals. Success was based upon the following factors: (a) block scheduling was perceived to be a quality innovation for the studied high schools; (b) research into the innovation was provided by study committees, workshops; and site visitations; (c) the principal advocated for the change; (d) teachers were involved as advocates in the change process; (e) external grant stipends facilitated initiation efforts for the change; (f) community stakeholder participation on study committees was important for generating widespread support for the innovation; (g) funding levels for initiation and implementation efforts were adequate to support the change; and (h) the school culture at the initiating schools was supportive of the change to block scheduling. One could argue that part of the reason for the success of the change is that it was primarily administrative and did not deal with the way in which students and teachers interact in the classroom. Therefore, diverse stakeholding groups could sign onto the change without concern about their interests being threatened. It could also be
argued that any kind of change engenders the potential for resistance and that such factors as inclusion of all parties (with the possible exception of students) that had a potential stake in the change helped to legitimize the change process, leading to the success of the change. As can be seen, the coalescence of support at all levels (state, community, school district, and school) was important to the success of the innovation. It was noted that the cooperation of the principal as an advocate and an organizer of the staff was an important factor in the implementation process. This implies that principals must be able to engage their staffs positively in the change process. Such characteristics have been outlined in the transformational leadership literature: inspirational leadership, individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, and charisma.

Bryk, Sebring, Kerbow, Rollow, and Easton (1998) examined change in the Chicago city schools that were introduced in 1988 as part of a district-wide mandate to reorganize the governance structure and accountability of the school system. Each school was to be run by an elected board of governors that had a majority of parents. The principal served at the pleasure of the board on a performance contract that was renewable every three years. The board was responsible for evaluating the principal on the basis of the school improvement plan developed cooperatively by the Board, the principal, parents and community representatives, and the school staff. In their evaluation, approximately one third of the 473 elementary schools in the city had successfully implemented school improvement programs; they reported that the principal worked together with a supportive group of parents, teachers, and community members to mobilize their initiatives.
Principals reached out to parents and community to strengthen the ties between professionals in the school and the community from which they needed support (Bryk et al., 1998). They also worked on staff development to expand the professional capacities of the teaching staff. In addition, they worked to generate a coherent professional community that supported the change process. Finally, they cultivated and directed resources toward enhancing the quality of instruction. The findings support the observation that in order to successfully improve schools, principals must have a clear vision of where their schools want to go; the skills to organize and direct the organizational change effort; the ability to engage in organizational development so that there is consensus on the change process; and the ability to reach out beyond the school to recruit support and resources.

Smith (1998) examined the process of leadership development in eight urban school principals. Interviews revealed that principals regarded the following characteristics as important to successfully improving schools: to adopt a caring ethic, a belief in human agency, and a desire to support the empowerment of others. Participants also thought it was important to focus on assets perspective, that is, to concentrate on the positive rather than the negative, such as attending to what can be changed rather than what cannot. They viewed themselves as social activists and change agents creating democratic school environments and communities.

Ronneberg (2000) analyzed the leadership qualities of and strategies employed by three urban school principals who successfully facilitated change in their schools. Each principal was selected through a nomination process that indicated that they were an outstanding school principal. In each school, the teaching staff was surveyed, teachers
and principals were interviewed, documents were examined, and observations were made. Seven critical dimensions of leadership were derived from the literature and included in the theoretical framework. Principals were charged with (a) inspiring a shared vision in the school, (b) focusing on improving the school culture, (c) challenging existing practices, (d) acting as a model of integrity, (e) providing support to all persons involved in the change process, (f) fostering dialogue and learning as part of the change process, and (g) developing leadership capacities within the staff. Each of the seven dimensions was found to be a critical factor in the leadership of each principal and revealed successful practices within each dimension. In addition, an emergent critical dimension was discovered: building external support, which focuses on the ability of the leader to establish partnerships which provide additional resources that create, support and sustain change. It was concluded that a strong commitment to a personal vision drives school visions and facilitates change. In addition, Ronneberg concluded that despite differences in personality and leadership style, each principal demonstrated successful practices within each critical dimension of leadership.

The literature demonstrates that the major role of the principal in the innovation process is to provide leadership within the building to ensure the implementation of the innovation. It is commonly said that the principal is the educational leader of the school. Part of that role is to lead the faculty and staff in a process whereby school improvement takes place. As a leader who is committed to a particular innovation, it is incumbent upon that principal to motivate faculty, obtain resources, provide support and encouragement, and help to solve problems that arise during the change process. Researchers have suggested that innovating principals demonstrate "transformational
leadership," a term developed by Bass (1996, 1997) that is identified by the following characteristics: (a) charisma, which is the ability to instill a sense of mission, pride, and trust in ones subordinates; (b) inspiration, which refers to behavior that communicates high expectations, uses symbols to focus staff efforts, and expresses important purposes in simple ways; (c) intellectual stimulation, which refers to behaviors that promotes intelligence, rationality, and problem solving; and (d) individualized consideration, which refers to behavior directed at giving personal attention, treating each employee individually, coaching, and advising. In the next section, research will be examined that attempts to relate specific principal leadership behaviors that lead to the success of an innovation.

Principal Skills and Behaviors

Thus far, the literature has demonstrated that (a) the principal, more than any other single person, is critical to the success of an educational innovation; (b) the principal occupies a middle management position that is strategically located between the district office and the building faculty; and (c) the principal is the leader of the implementation process of any innovation in the school. Now that the position and roles of the principal have been delineated in the innovation process, the skills and the behaviors that need to be in engaged in by a principal will be examined.

Hall and Hord (1987) looked at principal behaviors in each of four stages of implementation. In the first stage, planning and initiation, the principal had to agree with the project, provide input, and communicate support and enthusiasm for the project to others. In the second stage, building a temporary operating system for the project, the principal took an active positive role and sold the project to the superintendent, and
provided all necessary materials and personnel resources. In the third stage, development and implementation, the principal acted primarily as a problem solver, overseeing the project, but turning over the operation to other personnel such as teachers. In the fourth stage, ending and institutionalizing, the principal continued commitment to the project and provided resources necessary for the continuation of the innovation.

The research of Hall and Hord (1987) indicates that when a principal acts as an initiator of change, there is a much higher probability of successful implementation than when change comes from some other source and they are expected to respond and manage the change process. Therefore, when principals take initiative, change is much more likely to be successful. Initiator behaviors include the following: establishing a framework of expectations for self and others in the change process; setting standards and expecting high performance levels; establishing the instructional program as the first priority; and communicating that priority to others; sacrificing short-term feelings of the staff for long-term success in achieving school goals; directing the change process toward effective innovations used by all teachers; seeking out information to understand the innovation and its demands; developing sufficient knowledge about the innovation to make specific suggestions and troubleshoot problems; monitoring the change in classroom observations, review of lesson plans, and assessment of student performance; establishing which responsibilities will be delegated and monitoring the completion of tasks; making decisions on what is best for the school as a whole, especially learning outcomes and long-term goals, inclusion of others in participation in the decision-making process and allocating decision-making to others within carefully establish parameters; anticipating the need for assistance and resources and providing support when needed;
taking the lead in identifying when teachers have a need for increased knowledge and skills and seeing that those needs are provided for; directing the ongoing operations; responding to others with concern; and placing student priorities above all. In addition, Hall and Hord found that principals needed someone within the school to be their lieutenants and oversee the process with them, usually a teacher or an assistant principal. The principal usually took over the overall guidance of the innovation process; the second facilitator was more involved in the day-to-day operation of the program.

Mahaney (1991) investigated the formal criteria for hiring principals in Arizona school districts using a mailed survey ($N = 152$), nine focus group interviews, and content analysis of 116 job descriptions. In addition to certification requirements, skill dimensions were leadership, judgment, educational values, organizational ability, problem analysis, and sensitivity. Personal motivation and oral communication skills were also judged important. The focus group participants suggested that decisiveness was also essential. The perceived primary role of the principal was that of instructional leader followed by manager of staff and student personnel. The major new job role for principals in the 1990s was perceived to be that of change agent.

Navaratnam (1992) described a province-wide curricular innovation implemented in Queensland, Australia. The major focus of the innovation was to reinvigorate secondary school curricula by eliminating overlapping course content, changing teaching methodologies from content-based to inquiry-based, altering the way students interact with course content to focus on a variety of approaches including independent research, problem-solving, essay writing, and reports in addition to lectures and tests, and changing the certification system from three levels to a single graduation certificate. Because the
innovation was top down from the Ministry of Education, the role of the principal in the innovation process was highly circumscribed. The focus of the innovation was to empower teachers to institute change in the classrooms. The principal was supposed to provide support and guidance for such changes, and was supposed to be the chairperson of the leadership team that would oversee the innovation process. The principal was also responsible for organizing teachers into groups that would plan and conduct professional development designed to provide skills that would be required in changing the curriculum. The teachers, under the guidance of the principal, would develop a system of accountability for evaluating the outcomes of the innovation. The findings of this study suggest that principals need organization and management skills in order to shepherd stakeholders through the innovation process. As a mid-level administrator, the principals were not expected to engage in transformational behaviors, such as inspiring the teaching staff to make changes, providing them with a rationale for such changes, leading by example, or taking into consideration the individual needs of the teaching staff.

McGhee (1992) examined temperament characteristics of principals and assistant principals who had attended the Leadership Assessment Center in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Texas at Austin. They were rated on a continuum from most effective to least effective change agents based upon faculty responses on the Change Facilitator Style Questionnaire. Each was assessed on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and the four Kiersey-Bates Leadership Temperaments. Findings suggested that successful change leaders were predominantly of visionary or traditionalist temperaments; extroversion-introversion was not related to change agent effectiveness. Leaders with more formal-collegial relationships with staff members,
compared to informal-social, were generally more effective in change facilitation, suggesting that principals and assistant principals who see themselves as "buddies" with their staff may have difficulty organizing them around a common task. The findings also suggest that when relationships between administrators and staff are "cozy," it may signal a school climate that is satisfied with the status quo and resistant to change. A number of the most effective change agents in the study were serving in the role of assistant principal, suggesting that change may be more successful when there is more than one administrator in the building pushing for change.

Warren (1992) conducted a content analysis of 393 theme statements taken from 43 articles describing secondary school principal leadership behaviors that were deleterious to the implementation of change in schools. The theme statements indicated that the lack of positive affective behaviors such as personality, style traits, and skills and abilities that allow an individual to influence others to change was the major factor blocking change. Fourteen secondary school experts categorized the theme statements into one of four categories: affective behaviors (66.3%), knowledge (25.7%), related conditions (4.7%), and other (3.3%). The findings suggested that the foremost barrier to being an effective change agent, on the part of secondary school principals, was their inability to motivate and inspire their faculty to engage in the change process. In addition, lack of personal affective resources prevented them from moving the change process forward. Lack of knowledge was much less of a barrier than affective inadequacies. Although the literature was limited to secondary school principals, these findings are likely to be applicable to elementary and middle school principals as well.
Osterman, Crow, and Rosen (1993) surveyed 158 principals employed in the New York City public schools on their leadership behaviors. The principals participated in a leadership training program designed to help them become innovative leaders in their schools, emphasizing their roles as change agents. Study participants viewed themselves as curricular leaders in their schools and thought that they should have a strong background in curriculum and instruction. The following management skills were deemed to be important by the principals: ability to communicate; maintenance of high visibility and access; and allocation of resources. Approximately 20% of the participants mentioned the importance of human relations skills, specifically caring, sensitivity, supporting, praising, and establishing a positive climate in the school. Although a majority of participants responded to a forced-choice question positively to including teachers in the decision-making process, on an open-ended question only three respondents mentioned such inclusion. The personal characteristics deemed most important were consistency and fairness. Others mentioned the value of humor and hard work. Principals viewed their staff as most influential in the school followed by parents and community members. Principals noted that superintendents expected them to have strong management skills and conform to Board of Education guidelines; parents expected good communication skills and visibility; teachers had the most comprehensive expectations, with human relations skills mentioned most often, followed by leadership behaviors and management skills. The highest priorities among the principals were developing good relationships with teachers, parents, and students; ensuring school safety; promoting a sense of caring respect in the school; providing instructional supervision; and motivating staff to become involved in school improvement. When
asked about obstacles they faced in their job, the primary one was lack of resources followed by staff problems and lack of support by super-ordinates (district office and the Board of Education). They found the greatest amount of support from parents, teachers, and the district superintendent. The authors concluded that the principals tended to take a circumscribed view of their own roles and focused on leadership within their own building. They failed to develop strategies that dealt with the school’s external environment, limiting the likelihood of their success as change agents. They concluded that within a highly bureaucratized educational system such as New York City, political skills are critical for becoming agents of change. It is these very skills that the principals in the sample devalued and lacked.

Schmieder and Cairns (1996) reported on a study that surveyed 450 California principals and 206 superintendents on their perceptions of the most critical skills needed by beginning principals. One of the major findings was that superintendents (most of whom had been principals at one time) and principals agreed on the most important skills for a principal. From a list of 24 skills grouped under the rubrics of technical (nine items), socialization (five items), and self-awareness (10 items), 10 skills were identified as most critical to the success of the beginning principal. Of the nine technical skills, two were deemed of critical importance: knowing how to evaluate staff and knowing how to facilitate group meetings. Of the five socialization skills, knowing how to encourage involvement by all participants in the educational community was deemed of critical importance. Of the 10 self-awareness variables, seven were of critical importance: (a) knowing ethical boundaries and balancing that knowledge with one's own professional values; (b) self-confidence; (c) understanding the steps required to achieve
relevant goals; (d) having a desire to make a significant difference in the lives of staff and students; (e) being aware of one's biases, strengths, and weaknesses; (f) being able to cope with change, and changing the vision of the principalship in light of those changes; (g) knowing how to assess job responsibilities in terms of the real role of the principalship.

Scannell (1996) examined the effects of The Association of California School Administrators (ACSA)/Harvard Principals' Center Summer Institute on its effects of helping principals develop reflective decision-making. The Institute is an intensive, two-week professional development program that encourages reflection by facilitating discussions and activities that relate relevant research to practical applications. Primary data sources were semi-structured interviews of the three principals, their key teachers, and their superintendents. Findings indicated that the participating principals began releasing control, restructuring their time, and changing decision making processes. By engaging in more participative decision-making processes, principals could become more effective change agents.

Ames-Debraux (1999) conducted a case study of a principal who engaged in a successful school improvement program in a school serving a low income population. The Effective Schools Model of Comer and Ziegler was implemented to improve the quality of the school. The principal promoted the following aspects of the Effective Schools Model: (a) collaborative school climate; (b) strong parental involvement; (c) involvement of teachers, parents and community in problem-solving; (d) opportunities for teachers, parents and other constituents to share in decision-making; (e) a sense of family; (f) a climate of expectations that students would learn; and (g) a participatory
style of school operation with the principal providing leadership as a transformational leader. In addition, the principal evinced the following characteristics: (a) he sought spiritual guidance; (b) he became a visionary leader; (c) he took risks; (d) he acted as a change agent; (e) he provided transformational leadership; and (f) there was no division between his personality, his theory of change, and the services he provided - it was a unity organized around his vision for the school. Ames-Debraux suggested that the principal's approach to school change and being a people-person while implementing school reform programs added to the effectiveness of the school.

Turk (2001) conducted a study of 114 principals of distinguished and underperforming high schools, comparing them on leadership qualities, behaviors, and characteristics, under the assumption that these factors could distinguish between principals of successful and unsuccessful schools. The Leadership Profile, which measure transactional and transformational leadership behaviors, was used. Principals of distinguished schools scored higher than those from underperforming schools on the transactional variable of management capabilities and the transformational variable of communication. Although no other differences were found between the two groups of principals, and no data were produced that indicated that principals of distinguished schools were responsible for their schools being designated as distinguished, or that principals of underachieving schools were responsible for their schools being classified as underachieving, the data did indicate that management and communication skills are important in principals' success.

Mongon (2001) examined perceptions of middle school principals on the attributes of effective middle school principals. He examined the perceptions of
principals in relation to five characteristics common to effective schools: (a) strong administrative and instructional leadership; (b) high expectations for student achievement; (c) a school climate that stimulates learning without being oppressive; (d) an emphasis on the acquisition of basic skills; and (e) continuous monitoring of student progress. In general, the study participants endorsed the five characteristics listed above. However, the principals in this study did not endorse cultivation of a climate of trust as a descriptor of the instructional climate; however, they thought that middle school principals must address the social needs of middle school students as well as their academic needs. Several study participants mentioned maintaining a safe and secure environment. Participants thought that middle school principals needed to make large schools feel small and to create small group cohesion within a larger school community. Study participants did not mention the necessity for principals to participate in a larger network. Specific to middle schools were the following principal characteristics that were endorsed by the study participants: (a) a knowledge and liking of middle school students; (b) an understanding of the middle school design, mission, vision, and philosophy; (c) leadership skills in the implementation of the middle school curriculum and instructional practices; and (d) the need to be a people person, a skilled communicator, team collaborator, and have the ability to maintain positive relationships with all stakeholding groups.

To change a school is an awesome process. It requires a large number of skills and behaviors in order to actualize innovation. Even then, after implementation, there is no guarantee that the change will provide the results anticipated. However, there is a large body of research that indicates that above all, principals who are change agents
must know how to deal with people: they need to motivate them, inspire them, support them, negotiate with them, prevent them from subverting the process, teach them, and otherwise engage with them in the process of change. Research also indicates that principals need to have a loyal lieutenant who oversees the change process on a day-to-day basis whereas the principal, who has other responsibilities and is the only one in a position to deal with stakeholders outside of the building, such as community leaders, parents, and central administration, must be less hands-on. Although principals may not have to be involved in the daily operations of the implementation process, they are responsible for organizing support from a variety of constituencies. Other skills they need include emotional sensitivities so that they do not undermine the innovation process by inadvertently alienating others involved. They also need cognitive skills so that they understand how a particular innovation fits into the larger process of education, and understand the nuances of the innovation they are planning. They also need the ability to communicate these to others. Finally, school principals need organizational skills - they need to know how to organize people and get them moving in the change process, how to allocate personnel, funds, and other resources, and how to manage the change process so that ownership is spread throughout all those participating in the innovation.

The studies reviewed herein provide tantalizing clues about the skills and attributes principals who are successful change agents need in order to actualize school improvement. Although there have been studies, such as Mongon (2001) and Osterman et al. (1993), that have involved the assessment of self perceptions of change agents, there is a need to assess what those self perceptions are among elementary and middle school principals in order to see whether those skills and attributes deemed important by
such principals vary by the demographic characteristics of the student population of the school.
CHAPTER III

Research Methods

In this section, a brief overview of the prospective methods of research will be described. The methods section will contain five major topics: the population and sample, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis.

Population and Sample

The population for this study is delimited to elementary and middle school principals in Bergen, Essex and Union counties New Jersey who have been identified as successful change agents using the criteria described previously. To reiterate: the principals included in this study must have been in their positions for a minimum of five years, must have instituted an innovative change in their school, and the school reading scores for the year 2002 must higher than in the previous year. 240 schools in the three counties listed above demonstrated improved reading achievement as a proxy for successful change.

Instrumentation

The instrument to be used in this study will be a researcher-constructed self administered survey that will consist of four sections: (a) personal and school demographics; (b) description of changes made in the school over the past five years; (c) essential skills of a change agent; and (d) personal attributes needed to be an effective change agent. Personal demographic variables include: age, gender, racial/ethnic background, highest degree, years of experience as a principal, and years as principal in
their present school. School demographics include percentage of students who are free or reduced lunch eligible, and racial/ethnic makeup of the student body.

The second part of the survey instrument requests the participants to indicate from a list of several alternatives the types of innovations that they have initiated in their present school. In addition, spaces are provided for them to describe their innovations in their own words.

The third part of the survey instrument provides a list of 28 skills derived from a review of the research on educational change and innovation and leadership studies that are associated with being a successful change agent. Participants are requested to indicate the importance of each skill on a five-point scale, with 1 indicating that the skill was not at all important to 5, indicating extreme importance, based upon their experience in implementing an innovative program described in the previous section. Typical skills include abilities to make decisions, communicate orally and in written form, and inspire others.

The fourth part of the survey provides a list of 27 personal attributes derived from the same sources as the skills. Participants are asked to rate the importance of each attribute using the same five-point scale as when rating skills. Personal attributes included such aspects as intelligence, decisiveness, sense of humor, and ability to organize others. In the lists of skills and attributes are blank spaces in which participants can mention additional important criteria. A copy of the research instrument is in Appendix A. In consonance with survey research validity (Rea & Parker, 1997), a draft of the researcher-constructed survey was given to a Jury of Experts for their assessment and feedback. The Jury of Experts included middle and elementary school principals, a
Professor Emeritus of Literary Studies from a New Jersey University, and a Department Chair of Statistical Research at a New York University. To establish the reliability of the survey instrument, it was necessary to pretest the survey on a representative sample of principals under actual survey conditions. According to Rea and Parker (1997), the pretest will be further used to refine the overall quality of the survey and to receive constructive feedback from the pretest respondents. The reliability of the pretest was analyzed using the SPSS based system statistical program with the following results. The coefficient of alpha equaling .8469 was obtained for skills, and the coefficient of alpha equaling .8571 was obtained for attributes. In the actual study, the alpha for the 28 skills equaled .89571 and the alpha for the 27 attributes was .8981. According to SPSS for Windows (George & Mallery, 2001), the rule of thumb of a value of .8 to .9 is considered good to excellent.

Data Collection

The Department of Education of the State of New Jersey makes available to the public lists of every school in the state, their addresses, and the names of the schools’ principals. In addition, they publish report cards on each school that contain data on the proportion of students meeting or exceeding state standards. These databases will be used to select the research sample for the study. Each school that meets the criteria established to be eligible to be included in the sample (i.e., an elementary or middle school that demonstrates evidence of achievement growth over the prior five years) will be sent a survey instrument.

Each instrument will have a school code on it. The school code will be matched to addresses in a separate database in order to track incoming questionnaires. In order to
maximize response rate, a second set of surveys will be sent to schools not returning
surveys during the first round of data collection, approximately one month following the
initial distribution of questionnaires. Each survey instrument will be accompanied by a
cover letter that explains why that particular school was included in the survey, the
general thrust of the study, a guarantee of the rights of study participants and the
telephone number to call if the potential participant wishes to know more about the study.
A copy of the cover letter is in Appendix B.

Data Analysis

Preliminary analyses will include the presentation of descriptive statistics on the
demographic backgrounds of the principals and their schools. These demographics will
be able to be compared to the demographics of the population to establish the
representativeness of the research sample. The analysis of the data in pages three and four
of the survey instrument which deals with skills and attributes listed for the respondents
on a five point Likert scale will be analyzed using the Mann Whitney U test. The Mann
Whitney U tests will be utilized in order to analyze principal respondent responses to
research questions two, three and four. The Mann Whitney U test was utilized by this
researcher as it most clearly identifies significance or lack of significance in ordinal data.
Further the Mann Whitney U test will give us the mean rank which will allow us to
determine which group scored higher than the other.

Research Question One, which asks, What skills and attributes do successful
principals identify as important to being a successful change agent? will be answered
using descriptive statistics on the rankings of the various skills and attributes needed for
being a successful change agent.
Research Question Two, which asks, Do male and female successful principals identify similar skills and attributes as important to being a successful change agent? This question will rely on the Mann-Whitney U tests to look for significance in the responses offered by male and female respondent principals as they rate the skills and attributes listed.

Research Question Three, which asks, Does the socioeconomic context of the school make a difference in what successful principals perceive as important attributes and skills for being a successful change agent? The researcher will utilize the Mann Whitney U tests to look for significance between the responses of respondent principals who head schools that are considered to be high socioeconomic schools compared to schools which are considered low socioeconomic schools based on free and reduced lunch eligible students.

Research Question Four, which asks, What role does the demographic composition of the student population play in the overall perception of successful principals of the attributes and skills necessary for being a successful change agent? This question will once again rely on the Mann Whitney U tests to look for significance in the responses of schools that had 50% or more children of color compared with schools that reported having 51% or more Caucasian students.
CHAPTER IV

The Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine what, if any, types of specific skills and attributes perceived by successful principals could be associated with having created positive change in their school communities. The knowledge of the skills and attributes that principals perceived as important to becoming a successful change agent would be of great value for candidates, for the position of principal as well as for those about to enter school programs designed to certify students as administrators. It would also provide superintendents and school boards with a realistic profile of skills and attributes needed by candidates for principal in their districts.

This study was guided by one primary question and three subsidiary questions. The primary question was: What skills and attributes do successful principals identify as important to being a successful change agent? The three subsidiary questions were: 2) Do male and female successful principals identify similar skills and attributes as important to being a successful change agent? 3) Does the socioeconomic context of the school make a difference in what successful principals perceive as important skills and attributes for being a successful change agent? 4) What role does the demographic composition of the student population play in the overall perception of successful principals of the skills and attributes necessary for being a successful change agent?
Following the methodology outlined in Chapter III, the researcher mailed 240 surveys to elementary and middle school principals in the counties of Bergen, Essex, and Union, New Jersey. The survey and cover letter were mailed, along with a stamped, self-addressed envelope, to the 240 principals as listed on a data sheet provided by the New Jersey School Boards Association web site. These counties provided a diverse sampling of school districts and schools in the state of New Jersey. 78 of the 240 surveys were completed and returned. This represented a return rate of 33%.

The survey, Elementary and Middle School Principal Survey on Change Agency, was divided into four distinct sections. Section One was designed to provide demographic background about the respondent principals and the schools under their administration. Section Two was designed to elicit from the respondent principals innovations described in the literature as potentially helpful in improving their schools. These eleven innovations were provided with a check off to be utilized by respondents to indicate whether they had made the innovations. An area for listing innovations, not among the eleven, was provided for principal respondents to add innovative programs that they may have engineered for their schools. Section Three provided a listing of 28 skills, described in the literature as important for principals to have in order to effectuate change in their schools. These skills were to be rated on a Likert Scale from 1 – Not at all Important, 2 – Of Little Importance, 3 – Moderately Important, 4 – Very Important, to 5 – Extremely Important. Section Four included 27 attributes to be rated on the same Likert Scale as being described in the literature as important for principals to utilize when effectuating change in their schools.
This chapter will provide the results of the Elementary and Middle School Principal Survey on Change Agency. It includes demographic background of each principal and school; a listing of major changes and innovative programs initiated by the principal respondents; Likert Scale responses to various skills, and attributes identified as important in the literature to principals when initiating change in their schools. These responses will answer the primary and subsidiary questions.

Presentation of Data for the Analysis of Principal as Change Agent

The demographic background of the principal respondents was determined through six identifying characteristics. The six characteristics were age; gender; racial/ethnic background; highest degree earned; years of experience as a principal; and years as principal of the current school. The demographic background of the schools provided insight into the percentage of students on free or reduced lunch; and the ethnoracial makeup of the student population.

Age

The respondents were asked to indicate their age according to the following categories: less than 30 years of age; 30 – 39 years of age; 40 – 49 years of age; 50 – 59 years of age; and 60 years of age and above. 79% (60) of the respondents were 50 years of age or above, and (16) 21% of the respondents were 49 years of age or less. Table 1 shows the reported ages of the principal respondents.
Table 1

*Respondent Principals' Ages*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 30 years old</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 – 39 years of age</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 – 49 years of age</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 – 59 years of age</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 years and above</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Gender*

The respondents were asked to indicate their gender in Section One of the survey instrument. Of those who responded 56% (44) of the respondents were male, and 44% (34) were female. Table 2 shows the gender of the principal respondents.

Table 2

*Respondent Principals' Gender*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Racial/Ethnic Background of the Principal*

The respondents were asked to identify their racial/ethnic background based on one of four categories. Of those who responded, 76% (58) indicated Caucasian; 20% (15) indicated Black; 1% (1) indicated Hispanic; and 3% (2) indicated Other. Table 3 shows the racial/ethnic background of the respondents.
Table 3

Racial/Ethnic Background of Respondent Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial/Ethnic Background</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Highest Degree Earned by Respondents

The respondents were asked to identify their earned highest degree. Of those who responded; 63% (48) indicated a Masters degree; 36% (27) indicated a Doctorate degree; and 1% (1) gave no response. Table 4 shows the level of highest degree earned of the responding principals.

Table 4

Highest Degree Earned by Respondent Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Degree Earned</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Years as Principal / Years as Principal in Current School

The respondents were asked to indicate the number of years of experience as a principal in general, and the number of years as principal in their present school. Table 5 indicates the number of years of experience for each respondent principal.

Table 5

Years of Experience of Respondent Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
<th>5-10 years</th>
<th>11-15 years</th>
<th>16-20 years</th>
<th>More than 20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal Experience</td>
<td>41% (31)</td>
<td>25% (19)</td>
<td>16% (11)</td>
<td>18% (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Position</td>
<td>67% (51)</td>
<td>17% (13)</td>
<td>9% (7)</td>
<td>6% (4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Level of Free / Reduced Lunch

For purposes of this study, the researcher categorized the free/reduced lunch status of the schools into two distinct levels. The two levels were schools having 50% or more students on free/reduced lunch, and schools having less than 50% of its student body receiving free/reduced lunch. Table 6 shows that of the respondents 15% of the schools had 50% or more students on free/reduced lunch, and 85% of the schools had less than 50% of its student body on free/reduced lunch.

Table 6

Free and Reduced Lunch Status of Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Free/Reduced Lunch</th>
<th>Free/Reduced Lunch</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50% or more</td>
<td>Less than 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responding Schools</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Racial/Ethnic Makeup of Student Population

For purposes of this study, the researcher categorized the racial/ethnic makeup of the schools into two distinct groups. Principals reporting schools made up of student bodies of 50% or more of students of color constituted one group (Of Color), and schools made up of student bodies of less than 50% of students of color constituted the second group (Caucasian). Of Color populations varied, and consisted of, but were not limited to Black (African American, Caribbean American, or sub-Saharan African), Hispanic, Asian, and Others. 26% of the schools had student populations categorized as predominantly Of Color, and 74% of the schools had student populations categorized as predominantly Caucasian.

Innovations

Respondent principals indicated on the survey those innovative programs described in the literature as potentially helpful in improving schools. Respondents were asked to select only those innovations made during their tenure as principal. They could select as few or as many as were applicable. Technological upgrade received the largest number of responses by the respondent principals at a rate of 87% which represents 68 respondent principals. Staff Development was acknowledged as an innovation by 82% which corresponds to 64 respondent principals. Staff Reorganization was acknowledged as an innovative strategy by only 31% which corresponds to 24 principals. Table 7 shows the frequency of innovative practices utilized by the respondent principals and the percentage represented.
Table 7

*Innovative Practices of Respondent Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INNOVATIONS</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent Involvement Programs</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-based management/Shared Decision-making</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Reform</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technological Upgrade</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework Support</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Development</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Reorganization</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Reorganization</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement of Plant and Facilities</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs that Improve School Climate</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Outreach Programs</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This segment provided an opportunity for respondent principals to describe innovative programs that had been initiated by them and were in place for a minimum of five years under their leadership. Out of the 78 respondent principals, 19 (24%) did not offer additional innovations that met the requirement of having been in place for five years. 59 (76%) respondent principals who responded to the open-ended segment of the survey, offered a wide range of innovative responses which by the very nature of the responses indicated a thoughtful, contemplative and serious consideration of the survey. This researcher categorized the responses into several categories ranging from school reform to specific curriculum areas. Five principals (6%) indicated writing process; seven principals (9%) indicated balanced literacy; two principals (3%) indicated special student
courses; four principals (5%) indicated student mentor programs; six principals (8%) indicated connected math programs; nine principals (12%) indicated student social action programs; two principals (3%) indicated whole school reform; two principals (3%) indicated micro-society; one principal (1%) indicated multiple intelligences; 6 principals (8%) indicated technology-specific programs for classrooms; one principal (1%) indicated reading/writing rooms; two principals (3%) indicated parent book groups; three principals (4%) indicated small learning communities; and two principals (3%) indicated bilingual classes.

Presentation of Data for Question One

What skills and attributes do successful principals identify as important to being a successful change agent?

The survey design elicited principals’ self-perceptions of skills and attributes that they considered as important in order to achieve the status of successful principal. That is, one who has served as a principal in the same school for five or more years, has achieved tenure, and has instituted a positive change in the school. The principals rated each skill and attribute using a Likert Scale with the following indicators: 5 – Extremely Important; 4 – Very Important; 3 – Moderately Important; 2 – Of Little Importance, and 1 – Not At All Important. This researcher determined that any skill or attribute that 95% of the respondents rated as either, in combination, 5 - Extremely Important or 4 - Very Important would be considered as a self-perceived needed skill or attribute for a successful principal to effectuate change.

The following 28 skills were listed on the survey: Identify and Analyze Problems; Make Decisions; Communicate Orally; Communicate in Written Form; Perceive the
Needs and Concerns of Others; Perform under Pressure; Know Educational Theory and Principles; Conceptualize New Avenues of Change; Empowering Others; Conflict Management; Generate A Clear Vision; Motivate Others; Change Attitudes of Others; Generate Trust; Organize Others; Build Teams; Manage Finances; Interpersonal Skills; Manage Resources; Develop Staff; Deal With Central Office; Develop a Collaborative Model; Inspire Others; Be A Role Model; Reward Good Work; Monitor Progress; Evaluate Progress; and Build Coalitions. Of these 28 skills, nine were rated as either 5-Extremely Important or 4-Very Important by 95% or more of the respondents. These included: Identify and Analyze Problems; Make Decisions; Communicate Orally; Generate A Clear Vision; Motivate Others; Generate Trust; Interpersonal Skills; Monitor Progress; and Evaluate Progress. The mid point of the Likert Scale from 1 – Not at all Important to 5 – Extremely Important was 3.0. For the nine skills that received a rating of 4 – Very Important or 5 – Extremely Important by 95% of the respondent principals, the mean scores ranged from a low 4.46 (Monitor Progress) to a high 4.76 (Make Decisions). Of the 28 skills, five (Empowering Others, Generate a Clear Vision, Manage Finances, Develop a Collaborative Model, and Build Coalitions), received the lowest indicator of as 1 – Not At All Important by one- two of the respondent principals. The remaining skills received various rating combinations of 5-Extremely Important, 4- Very Important, 3-Moderately Important, and 2 – Of Little Importance by the remaining respondents.

Table 8 shows the self-perceived skills that were rated, in combination, as either 5-Extremely Important or 4-Very Important by 95% or more of the respondents as well as the corresponding mean scores.
Table 8

*Highest Rated Self-Perceived Skills by Respondent Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SELF-PERCEIVED SKILLS</th>
<th>COMBINED FREQUENCY</th>
<th>COMBINED PERCENT</th>
<th>MEAN SCORES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify / Analyze Problems</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>98.7%</td>
<td>4.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make Decisions</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>97.4%</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate Orally</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>97.4%</td>
<td>4.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generate A Clear Vision</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>96.2%</td>
<td>4.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivate Others</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>96.2%</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generate Trust</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>97.5%</td>
<td>4.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Skills</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>97.5%</td>
<td>4.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor Progress</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>96.2%</td>
<td>4.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate Progress</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>97.4%</td>
<td>4.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following 27 attributes were listed on the survey: Likable; Intelligent; Committed; Decisive; Respectful of Others; Culturally Sensitive; Confident; Optimistic; Strong Sense of Purpose; Behavior Consistent with Values; Courageous; Tolerate Ambiguity; Has High Standards; Articulate; Determined; Enthusiastic; Emotionally Intelligent; Thoughtful; Sense of Humor; Patient; Pro-active; Logical; Self-aware; Sensitivity to Feelings of Others; Strategic Thinker; Professional; and Exude a Sense of Power. Of these 27 attributes, seven were rated as either 5-Extremely Important or 4-Very Important by 95% or more of the respondents. These included: Committed; Respectful of Others; Strong Sense of Purpose; Behavior Consistent With Values; Has High Standards; Articulate; and Professional. The mid point of the Likert Scale from 1 – Not at all Important to 5 – Extremely Important was 3.0. For the seven attributes that received a rating of 4 – Very Important or 5 – Extremely Important by 95% of the respondent principals, the mean scores ranged from a low 4.44 (Articulate) to a high 4.78 (Committed). Eight of the responding principals rated two of the 27 Attributes – Tolerate
Ambiguity and Exude A Sense of Power, as 1 – Not At All Important. The remaining attributes received various rating combinations of 5- Extremely Important, 4- Very Important, 3- Moderately Important, and 2 – Of Little Importance by the remaining respondents.

Table 9 shows the self-perceived attributes that were rated, in combination, as either 5-Extremely Important or 4-Very Important by 95% or more of the respondents as well as the corresponding mean scores.

Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SELF-PERCEIVED ATTRIBUTES</th>
<th>COMBINED FREQUENCY</th>
<th>COMBINED PERCENT</th>
<th>MEAN SCORES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Committed</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>96.2%</td>
<td>4.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respectful of Others</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>97.4%</td>
<td>4.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Sense of Purpose</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>97.4%</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior with Values</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>97.4%</td>
<td>4.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has High Standards</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>97.4%</td>
<td>4.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulate</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>97.4%</td>
<td>4.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>97.4%</td>
<td>4.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Presentation of Data for Question Two

Do male and female successful principals identify similar skills and attributes as important to being a successful change agent?

Of the 78 surveys returned to the researcher, 44 were from male principals, and 34 were from female principals. Using the Likert Scale, all 28 skills were rated as having some degree of importance by both male and female principal respondents. Utilizing the
Mann Whitney U test for ordinal numbers, five of the skills were identified as having a level of significant difference between the male respondents and female respondents. Significance had been established as a p value of less than .05. The five skills were: Conceptualize New Avenues of Change (p = .028); Manage Finances (p = .030); Develop Staff (p = .023); Develop A Collaborative Model (p = .002); and Inspire Others (p = .044). Table 10 shows the test statistics for significance (p < .05) utilizing the Mann-Whitney U test.

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Mann-Whitney U</th>
<th>Z</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conceptualize New Avenues of Change</td>
<td>553.500</td>
<td>-2.204</td>
<td>.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manage Finances</td>
<td>548.500</td>
<td>-2.164</td>
<td>.030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop Staff</td>
<td>553.000</td>
<td>-2.271</td>
<td>.023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop A Collaborative Model</td>
<td>466.500</td>
<td>-3.095</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspire Others</td>
<td>572.000</td>
<td>-2.014</td>
<td>.044</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To further establish the perceptual difference between the male and female successful principal respondents, the mean rank for each skill was examined. It was found, in each case, the mean rank for female principal respondents was higher than the male counterpart. A skill by skill analysis shows us a female mean rank 45.22 and the male mean rank was 34.08 for Conceptualize New Avenues of Change; a female mean rank of 45.37 and a male mean rank of 34.97 for Manage Finances; a female mean rank
of 45.24 and a male mean rank of 35.07 for Develop Staff; a female mean rank of 47.78 and male mean rank of 33.10 for Develop A Collaborative Model; and a female mean rank of 44.68 male mean rank of 35.50 for Inspire Others. Of these five skills, the widest spread in mean rank between female and male respondents was noted in Develop a Collaborative Model with a 14.68 spread. Table 11 shows the mean ranks of each of the five skills found to be significant through the Mann-Whitney U test.

Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SKILL</th>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>MEAN RANK</th>
<th>SUM OF RANKS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conceptualize New Avenues of Change</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>35.08</td>
<td>1543.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>45.22</td>
<td>1537.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manage Finances</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>34.97</td>
<td>1538.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>45.37</td>
<td>1542.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop Staff</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>35.07</td>
<td>1543.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>45.24</td>
<td>1538.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a Collaborative Model</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>33.10</td>
<td>1456.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>47.78</td>
<td>1624.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspire Others</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>35.50</td>
<td>1562.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>44.68</td>
<td>1519.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using the Likert Scale, all 27 attributes were rated as having some degree of importance by both male and female principal respondents. Utilizing the Mann Whitney U test for ordinal numbers, four of the attributes were identified as having a level of significant difference between the male respondents and female respondents.

Significance had been established as a p value of less than .05. The four attributes were:

Courageous (p = .005); Has High Standards (p = .049); Emotionally Intelligent (p = .029)
and Proactive (p = .012). Table 12 shows the test statistics for significance (p < .05) utilizing the Mann-Whitney U test.

Table 12

**Significant Attributes of Male and Female Principal Respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ATTRIBUTE</th>
<th>MANN-WHITNEY U</th>
<th>Z</th>
<th>ASYMP. SIG. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Courageous</td>
<td>490.000</td>
<td>-2.792</td>
<td>.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has High Standards</td>
<td>589.000</td>
<td>-1.971</td>
<td>.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotionally</td>
<td>556.000</td>
<td>-2.178</td>
<td>.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proactive</td>
<td>528.000</td>
<td>-2.506</td>
<td>.012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To further establish the perceptual difference between the male and female successful principal respondents, the mean rank for each attribute was examined. It was found, in each case, the mean rank for female principal respondents was higher than the male counterpart. An attribute by attribute analysis shows a female mean rank of 47.09 and the male mean rank was 33.64 for Courageous; a female mean rank of 44.18 and a male mean rank of 35.89 for Has High Standards; a female mean rank of 45.13 and a male mean rank of 35.15 for Emotionally Intelligent; and a female mean rank of 45.97 and male mean rank of 34.50 for Proactive. Of these four attributes, the widest spread in mean rank between female and male respondents was noted in Courageous with a 13.45 spread. Table 13 shows the mean ranks of each of the four attributes found to be significant through the Mann-Whitney U test.
Table 13.

Mean Ranks of Significant Attributes of Male and Female Principal Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ATTRIBUTE</th>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>MEAN RANK</th>
<th>SUM OF RANKS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Courageous</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>33.64</td>
<td>1480.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>47.09</td>
<td>1601.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has High Standards</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>35.89</td>
<td>1579.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>44.18</td>
<td>1502.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotionally Intelligent</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>35.15</td>
<td>1546.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>45.13</td>
<td>1534.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proactive</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>34.50</td>
<td>1518.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>45.97</td>
<td>1563.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Presentation of Data for Question Three

Does the socioeconomic context of the school make a difference in what successful principals perceive as important skills and attributes for being a successful change agent?

Of the 78 surveys returned to the researcher, 74 of the respondents replied to the question about the socioeconomic context of the school, and all rated the skills as having some degree of importance. 12 of the respondent principals described the context of their schools as being low socioeconomic schools; and 62 of the respondent principals described the context of their school as being high socioeconomic schools. Using the Likert Scale, all 28 skills were rated as having some degree of importance regardless of the socioeconomic context of the school. The output of the Mann-Whitney U test for ordinal numbers reported no degree of significance in any of the 27 skills based on the
reported socioeconomic context of the school. Again, significance was established at the p value of less than .05.

Of the 78 surveys returned to the researcher, all 74 of the respondents rated the attributes as having some degree of importance. Utilizing the Mann Whitney U test for ordinal numbers, one attribute was identified as having a level of significant difference based on the socioeconomic context of the school. Significance had been established as a p value of less than .05. The attribute that was identified as having a level of significance less than .05 was Respectful of Other with a p value of .028. The mean rank for Respectful of Others was 47.00 for the low socioeconomic schools and 35.66 for the high socioeconomic schools. The low socioeconomic schools as determined by the Mann-Whitney U test had a higher mean rank than the high socioeconomic schools. Table 14 shows the significance as presented by the Mann-Whitney U test as well as a comparison of the mean rank for the attribute, Respectful of Others.

Table 14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ATTRIBUTE</th>
<th>MANN-WHITNEY U</th>
<th>Z</th>
<th>ASYMP. SIG. (2-TAILED)</th>
<th>FREE/REDUCED LUNCH</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>MEAN RANK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respectful of Others</td>
<td>258.000</td>
<td>-2.200</td>
<td>.028</td>
<td>Low SES</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>47.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>High SES</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>35.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Presentation of Data for Question Four

What role does the demographic composition of the student population play in the overall perception of successful principals of the skills and attributes necessary for being a successful change agent?
Of the 78 surveys returned to the researcher, 75 of the respondents replied to the demographic question about the racial/ethnic makeup of the student population, and all rated the skills as having some degree of importance. 31 (41%) of the respondent principals indicated that the racial/ethnic makeup of their schools included 50% or more children of Color while 44 (59%) of the respondent principals indicated that the racial/ethnic composition of their schools was 51% or more Caucasian. Schools categorized as Of Color based on the percent of the student population included Black, Hispanic, Asian, and Others. Utilizing the Mann Whitney U test for ordinal numbers, three of the skills were identified as having a level of significant difference (p < .05) between those schools identified by the principal respondents, as predominantly Of Color and Caucasian. The three skills were: Build Teams (p = .030); Develop a Collaborative Model (p = .014); and Build Coalitions (p = .020). Table 15 shows the test statistics for significance (p < .05) utilizing the Mann-Whitney U test.

Table 15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SKILL</th>
<th>MANN-WHITNEY U</th>
<th>Z</th>
<th>ASYMP. SIG (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Build Teams</td>
<td>497.000</td>
<td>-2.171</td>
<td>.030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a Collaborative Model</td>
<td>473.000</td>
<td>-2.453</td>
<td>.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build Coalitions</td>
<td>483.000</td>
<td>-2.319</td>
<td>.020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To further establish the perceptual difference between the respondent principals of schools described as Of Color and Caucasian, the mean rank for each skill was examined. It was found, in each case, the mean rank for schools Of Color was higher than the mean
rank for schools described as Caucasian. A skill by skill analysis shows us a mean rank of 43.97 for schools Of Color and 33.80 for Caucasian schools for Build Teams; a mean rank of 44.74 for schools Of Color and 33.25 for Caucasian schools for Develop a Collaborative Model; and a mean rank of 44.42 for schools Of Color and 33.48 for Caucasian schools for Build Coalitions. Table 16 shows the mean ranks of each of the three skills found to be significant through the Mann-Whitney U test.

Table 16

Mean Ranks of Significant Skills by School Makeup

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SKILL</th>
<th>SCHOOL MAKEUP</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>MEAN RANK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Build Teams</td>
<td>Of Color</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>43.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>33.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a Collaborative Model</td>
<td>Of Color</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>44.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>33.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build Coalitions</td>
<td>Of Color</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>44.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>33.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using the Likert Scale, all 27 attributes were rated as having some degree of importance by the principal respondents of schools described as predominantly Of Color and as predominantly Caucasian. Utilizing the Mann Whitney U test for ordinal numbers, three of the attributes were identified as having a level of significant difference (p < .05) between those schools identified, by the principal respondents, as predominantly Of Color and Caucasian. The three attributes were: Likeable (p = .003); Intelligent (p = .029); and Sensitivity to Feelings of Others (p = .036). Table 17 shows the test statistics for significance (p < .05) utilizing the Mann-Whitney U test.
Table 17

*Significant Attributes by School Makeup*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ATTRIBUTES</th>
<th>MANN-WHITNEY U</th>
<th>Z</th>
<th>ASYMP. SIG (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Likeable</td>
<td>426.000</td>
<td>-2.986</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td>500.500</td>
<td>-2.178</td>
<td>.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity to Feelings of Others</td>
<td>506.500</td>
<td>-2.094</td>
<td>.036</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To further establish the perceptual difference between respondent principals of schools described as predominantly Of Color and predominantly Caucasian, the mean rank for each attribute was examined. The mean ranks for Likeable and Sensitive to the Feelings of Others were higher in schools described as predominantly Caucasian and those predominantly Of Color. The mean rank for Intelligent was higher in schools described as predominantly Of Color than predominantly Caucasian. Table 18 shows the mean ranks for each of the three attributes found to be significant through the Mann-Whitney U test.

Table 18

*Mean Ranks of Significant Attributes by School Makeup*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ATTRIBUTE</th>
<th>SCHOOL MAKEUP</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>MEAN RANK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Likeable</td>
<td>Of Color</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>29.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>43.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td>Of Color</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>43.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>33.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity to Feelings of Others</td>
<td>Of Color</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>32.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>41.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Summary

Chapter IV provided an analysis of the data that was secured through a four-page survey entitled Elementary and Middle School Principal Survey on Change Agency. The results were compiled from the 78 responses generated from the 240 surveys that were mailed to principals within three New Jersey counties. These counties were Bergen, Essex, and Union. The surveys were sent to those counties because they represented a range of affluent, middle income, low income, suburban and urban communities. They also represented a diverse demographic continuum of white, African American, Hispanic, Asian, and all other racial/ethnic possibilities. The survey was sent to male and female principals, and the returns represented a cross section of principals in schools essential to the efficacy of the results. The 78 returned surveys represented a 33% response rate. The vast majority of returned surveys were fully completed allowing for the disaggregation of the data presented in this chapter.
CHAPTER V

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The issue of change in schools has long been debated by educators, business persons, tax payers, and concerned citizens. The literature is replete with various essential climatic conditions necessary for change in education.

The one overriding necessity has always been the positive involvement of the principal (Fullan, 2001). The role of the principal is critical to the success of any change in a school (Goldman, 1994). The connection between the principal and the success of the school was clearly defined by Brookover & Lezotte (1994) whose research led to the direct correlation between instructional leadership and effective schools. What makes a principal an effective agent of change in a school while others are often impotent in creating change or so unsuccessful that they do not even survive the three years necessary for tenure? This leads one to the theoretical rationale of this study which centers on the constitutionality of a successful agent of change, the definition of leadership, and the relationship between leadership and change age.

This study in its initial design was going to delve into the factors that create successful principals. The evolution of the research process focused this researcher on a much narrower field. The study ultimately grew into a design format which was to determine, what, if any, types of specific skills and attributes perceived by successful principals could be associated with having created positive change in their school communities. The study was guided by one primary question and three subsidiary
questions. The primary question was: What skills and attributes do successful principals identify as important to being a successful change agent? The three subsidiary questions were: 1) Do male and female successful principals identify similar skills and attributes as important to being a successful change agent? 2) Does the socioeconomic context of the school make a difference in what successful principals perceive as important skills and attributes for being a successful change agent?; and 3) What role does the demographic composition of the student population play in the overall perception of successful principals of the skills and attributes necessary for being a successful change agent?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the perception of principals who have been identified as successful with respect to the skills and attributes they perceive as important to their success as change agents in their schools. Other issues to be explored included any difference that the socioeconomic context of the school, the gender – male or female – of the principal, and the role of the demographic composition of the student population might make in what successful principals perceive as important skills and attributes for being a successful change agent.

Statement of the Problem

Some principals are appointed to their position and find themselves unable to cope with the demanding responsibilities fostered upon them. Pressure from within the school, staff, students and parents creates situations which often present conflicting demands that some principals are unable to either cope with and bring into harmonic balance. Often principals are torn between the demands of their superintendents, and school boards, and the practical realities inherent in their position. Many principals who
subscribe to top-down management cannot communicate with their constituencies. They try to coerce their constituents into accepting a philosophy or plan which is often looked upon with suspicion and doubt (Blau & Scott, 1962). In many instances, these initial actions undertaken by new principals seal their fate to a loss of position and/or tenure. It has been estimated that one-third of all principals who leave their jobs, do so involuntarily (Matthews, 2002). One may be shocked by this statistic but when one looks at the changing responsibilities of public school principals, one understands that special skills and a vast knowledge base are essential to being successful.

This study seeks to provide insight into what successful, tenured principals, who have made positive changes in their schools, value as the necessary skills and attributes needed to gain this mantle. These principals as described by Fullan (2001) know how to combine pressure and support. In order to determine what skills and attributes are perceived by successful principals as being key elements to their success, this researcher focused on these elements when surveying a sample of successful principals who had in fact made a positive change in their schools. These principals received tenure, and have been in their present schools for at least five years.

Description of the Study’s Participants

A survey, developed by this researcher was mailed to 240 principals in three counties located in New Jersey. The counties of Bergen, Essex, and Union were selected because they contained a wide variety of schools and communities. The counties selected contained schools, which are in urban settings as well as in suburban, and even rural, environments. Abbott districts as well as those of affluence and means are also present in these districts. Principals who were sent the surveys were instructed not to complete and
participants to respond in an open-ended way by listing innovations initiated by them that led to change within their current schools. Section three provided 28 skills described in the literature as important for principals to have when changing their schools. A five-point Likert Scale was used by the respondent principals to indicate the importance to them of the identified skills utilized in changing their schools. The degrees of importance ranged from 1-Not at all important to 5-Extremely important. Section Four of the survey provided 27 attributes described in the literature as important for principals to have when changing their schools. The same 5-point Likert Scale described for Section Three was utilized in rating the importance of each listed attribute. The survey instrument was designed to be able to be completed in its entirety in 10 - 15 minutes. The data, once collected and recorded, was analyzed for interpretation. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was utilized by the researcher to analyze the data.

Several different methods were utilized to analyze, summarize, and represent the findings. The data obtained in section one was tabulated in table form using frequencies, and means as vehicles to interpret demographic profiles of the respondents and their schools. Frequencies and tables were utilized to tabulate responses in Section Two. These responses dealt with innovations implemented by principal respondents when changing their schools. Literature-based responses and newly identified innovations were analyzed in this section. The Mann Whitney U Test for Ordinal Numbers was utilized to analyze the data in sections three and four in the survey. The use of the mean rank and significance were the two basic statistical elements utilized to analyze the responses generated through the Likert Scale. In every case data were represented in tables, and narratives accompanied the tables to describe the findings.
Summary of the Findings in Relationship to the Research Questions

Research Question #1: What skills and attributes do successful principals identify as important to being a successful change agent?

Nine skills – Identify and Analyze Problems; Make Decisions; Communicate Orally; Generate a Clear Vision; Motivate Others; Generate Trust; Interpersonal Skills; Monitor Progress; and Evaluate Progress - were given a 4 or 5 rating by 96.2% - 98.7% of the respondent principals, which met the researcher’s minimum criteria of a response rate of a 4 or 5 on the Likert Scale by 95% or more of the respondent principals. This percentage translates into 75 - 77 principals giving these nine skills a 4 or 5 rating on the Likert Scale. When the researcher assessed and evaluated these nine skills, it was determined that the respondent principals deemed that there were three critical areas of skills necessary to be successful. A blueprint of success for principals considering change in their buildings emerged. This is consistent with the literature when the change process begins with a clear understanding of the proposed change, and ends with the need for principals to build the capacity of their staff to implement staff needs and to appropriate staff development opportunities (Covey, 1998). Internet references: http://www.mdk12.org/process/leading/pindicators.html). Within the context of the blueprint for successful change, the first area seems to focus on determining a course of action. In this vein, Identify and Analyze Problems, Generate a Clear Vision, and Make Decisions seem compatible with this focus. The second area is one which heavily relies on the perception of trust and communication by the principal initiating a change. The skills of Communicate Orally, Generate Trust, and Interpersonal Skills are all skills, which indicate the importance of believing in the leadership of the change agent
principal. Conley and Goldman (1994) concurs when he concludes that principals must lead through personal and interpersonal competencies. The literature supports this view as indicated by the work of Gresso and Robertson (1992) where they suggest that principals must rely more heavily on faculty and staff and utilize all the stake holders in the change process. The third area, critical to success as indicated by the survey results, is in the area of assessment. The two skills heavily endorsed by the respondent principals in this area are Monitor Progress, and Evaluate Progress. Indications here are that it is essential for the principal as a change agent to assess on an on-going basis so that changes can be made to insure success. It would seem that these nine skills are overwhelmingly endorsed by respondent principals as necessary and critical in the process of implementing a change in the school.

The 27 attributes that were rated by the 78 respondent principals produced seven, which received ratings of 5-Extremely important or 4-Very important on the Likert Scale by the vast majority of respondents. These seven attributes were Committed, Respectful of Others, Strong Sense of Purpose, Behavior Consistent With Values, Has High Standards, Articulate and Professional. These seven attributes were selected by 76 or in one case by 75 of the 78 respondent principals. This translates into 97.4%, or in one case 96.2%, of the total responses which satisfies the criteria of a 4–5 Likert Scale rating by 96% or more of the respondent principals. In evaluating these seven attributes, the researcher believes that the respondent principals have found that in order to successfully implement change it is imperative to be able to have constituencies believe in three areas. The principal must be sure of the need for change and believe in its efficacy as indicated by the overwhelming selection of the attributes of Committed; Respectful of Others; and
Strong Sense of Purpose. The principal must be perceived by the constituency as being a person of high integrity as indicated by the attributes of Behavior Consistent With Values and Has High Standards. Finally, the principal must be seen as a person who is able to carry out the leadership responsibilities in an open and efficient manner. This is indicated by the selection of Articulate and Professional as necessary attributes for agents of change to process. The literature concurs greatly with the self-perception of the principal respondents in this study. The image of the principal as a leader, a visionary, and a person who communicates with honesty and integrity is a theme constantly in the literature (Davis, 1998a).

*Research Question #2:* Do male and female successful principals identify similar skills and attributes as important to being a successful change agent?

The 78 returned surveys showed a gender composite of 44 males and 34 females. The ratio of male to female principal respondents differs widely from the normal male to female ratio in the business world. “In 1998 women comprised 46.2% of the labor force but only 11% of managers in large organizations” (Northouse, 2001, p. 243). This indicates that in education the percentages of women in administrative and supervisory roles is higher than the percentage in business. The literature further indicates that meta-analysis has shown that only one major difference in leadership style exists between men and women. It has been found that women are far more democratic in their approach to leadership while men have traditionally been more autocratic and dictatorial (Northouse, 2001). This meta-analysis finding is consistent with the findings of this study in looking at the skills and attributes that showed significant differences between the responses of men and women respondents. The Likert Scale ratings revealed that although all 28
skills were rated by the combined men and women respondents as having some degree of importance, five skills were found to have a significant difference between the male and female principal respondents. The Mann Whitney U Test for Ordinal Numbers was utilized to ascertain significance in responses of male and female principals. The five skills identified as having a significant difference between male and female respondent principals were Conceptualize New Avenues of Change; Manage Finances; Develop Staff; Develop a Collaborative Model; and Inspire Others. The mean ranks for female respondent principals was for each of the skills higher than the mean ranks for male respondent principals. This indicates that female respondent principals felt more strongly about these five skills than the male respondents.

When looking at these five skills the researcher observed a notable connection. Four of the significant differences showing a higher degree of importance for females rather than males were skills that had human relations implications. Conceptualize New Change, Develop Staff, Develop a Collaborative Model, and Inspire Others are skills that are important when one wishes to have a constituency that works together and is part of a team that is in accord with the change process and feels part of the design. This finding is consistent with the literature as noted in previous paragraphs regarding the democratic leanings of women in supervisory positions. Inspiring Others and Develop Staff along with create a Collaborative model are on target to this philosophical viewpoint. It is also clear that female respondent principals were more concerned with having adequate funding for a project than their male counterparts. These five skills seem to indicate a relative conservative bent on the part of female respondent principals. Collegiality and
deference to fiscal responsibility seem to be prevalent necessities for the female principals.

When analyzing the attributes of male and female respondent principals the researcher found that there were four attributes that had a significant response difference between male and female respondent principals. Once again the female respondent principals felt more strongly about the four attributes than their male counterparts. The four attributes with significant differences were Courageous, Has High Standards, Emotionally Intelligent, and Proactive. Three of these attributes seem to fit into a category that can be described as character values. Courageous, Has High Standards and Emotionally Intelligent are attributes this researcher looks at as character aspects. They deal with the perception issues of constituencies that look upon the leaders as people with strength of character and with the inner ability to manage and deal with issues calmly and rationally. The attribute of Proactive is one that clearly suggests that one is willing to take the initiative and enter into a commitment of change.

*Research Question # 3:* Does the socioeconomic context of the school make a difference in what successful principals perceive as important skills and attributes for being a successful change agent?

The data analysis of this research question provided by SPSS indicated that of the 74 respondent principals who provided the data for the socioeconomic context of their schools no significant difference in the perception of the importance of the 28 skills was evidenced. It should be noted here that of the 74 respondent principals 12 reported their schools as being low socioeconomic schools while 62 reported their schools to be rated as high socioeconomic schools. It should be noted that in the survey instrument responding
principals were able to indicate the percentage of students on free or reduced lunch. Many different percentages were reported. The aggregate data for free/reduced lunch responses were collapsed into two distinct categories: 50% or more students on free/reduced lunch was designated as a low socioeconomic school; and 49% or fewer students on free/reduced lunch designated a high socioeconomic school. In focusing on the attributes of the 74 respondent principals regarding the socioeconomic context of their school, only one of the 27 attributes was found to have a significant difference in the perception of principals of low socioeconomic schools compared to high socioeconomic schools. The attribute of Respectful of Others was perceived differently by respondent principals of low socioeconomic schools compared to high socioeconomic schools. 

Respondent principals of low socioeconomic schools felt much more strongly about Respectful of Others. The mean rank for low socioeconomic schools was 47.00 compared to 35.66 for high socioeconomic schools. This researcher concludes that in schools where the culture of the school may be much more at or near the poverty level, the need for being Respectful of Others is an attribute which is considered far more important to the constituencies of the school community than it might be for school constituencies in more affluent communities. It would seem to this researcher that in schools located in areas in which there are many families who require and qualify for free or reduced lunch there appears to be an emphasis to Show Respect for the members of the school community.

Research Question 4: What role does the demographic composition of the student population play in the overall perception of successful principals of the skills and attributes necessary for being a successful change agent?
The 75 respondent principals who provided the demographic information for this question established a direct correlation of consensus with regard to the question of what role does the demographic composition of the student population play in the overall perception of successful principals of the skills and attributes necessary for being a successful change agent? Responses to the skills portion of question four revealed three skills that were found by the Mann Whitney U test to be significant (p value of less than .05). The skills of Build teams, Develop a Collaborative Model and Build Coalitions were much more strongly advocated by schools where the student population was composed of a majority of Students of Color. Prior researchers such as Bryk et al. (1998) support this when they discuss the ties between school and communities. The researcher considers these three skills as all part of a process to foster support and build coalitions among and between the schools constituencies. It would appear from the responses from the respondent principals to this question that schools having a higher representation of Color favor a more united effort of all constituencies working harmoniously in order to effectuate change. In the area of self-perceived attributes the respondent principals identified three attributes which were identified by the Mann Whitney U test as being significant (a p value of less than .05). The attributes of Likeable, Intelligent and Sensitive to Feelings of Others were the three attributes found to be significant between schools having a student population greater than 50% Students of Color as compared to those schools having a student body of more than 51% Caucasian. The researcher found that in those schools described as having 51% or more Caucasian students the respondent principals were much more strongly inclined to need to be Likeable and Sensitive to the Feelings of Others compared to their colleagues in schools with student populations
greater than 50% students Of Color. The attribute of Intelligent was however more strongly rated as important by respondent principals in schools with student populations of 50% or more students Of Color. The researcher considers that perhaps the stereotypical perception that people Of Color have to be better than their white counterparts plays a role here. In schools with a predominantly white population principals feel that it is most important to be Likeable and Sensitive to the Feelings of Others and that intelligence is a presumption that is expected.

Conclusions: Discussion and Implications

Creating change in schools has long been an issue relative to business and education with differing perceptions by the public at large as to how and when changes can and should be made. There have been many that argue that education has remained the same since public education began on a formalized basis. Educators themselves have debated the need for change over the past century and one half. There are those whose claim to fame is if it ain’t broke don’t fix it and others who say that with the passage of time and the changing role of principals, educators and schools that change is a necessity of our time. As the age of technology dawned the educational system has had to change with it. Schools are no longer simply responsible for teaching reading writing and arithmetic but they have taken on the roles of caregivers, food providers, teachers of ethics, morality and values, and have undertaken great social responsibility for teaching our children how to exist in modern society. Principals in schools across America today are charged with more responsibility and face more liability than at any time in our nations history. Transformational leadership and managing large schools have become the rule rather than the exception for building administrators. As transformational
leaders, principals must take the lead in implementing change in their buildings so that they can meet the needs of diverse learners in an ever-changing world. The skills and attributes they will need in order to create and implement these changes is clearly an important set of factors for universities, school boards, and individuals to be aware of in order to produce knowledgeable, competent and effective leaders.

It has been noted that more than one-third of the principals in this country lose their positions or are removed before they can implement change, receive tenure or create a positive impact. This researcher believes that there are in fact skills and attributes which are essential for success in today's world as a principal. Davis (1998b) points out that there are “literally thousands of articles and studies [that] have attempted to pinpoint the most effective principal behaviors” (p. 7) but really cannot pinpoint them because “the problem is a lack of consensus within the profession regarding which behaviors lend themselves to effective leadership and under what circumstances such behaviors exert a positive effect on the school” (Ibid. p.8). The respondent principals in this study were all successful which is to say all had been in their present positions for five years, had achieved tenure and had made a positive change in their schools. The results of this study tell this researcher that although there may be a consensus of agreement as to the skills and attributes that are essential for success in being a public school principal, there is a disparity as to which skills and attributes are the most important to enable them to be successful.

The literature review suggested that there are many behaviors and actions that need to be taken or identified which are valuable predictors of principal success or failure. There was, however, a major void in the recognition of what skills and attributes
are necessary to be able to demonstrate certain behaviors or take certain actions. This researcher believes that the skills and attributes that were identified by the respondent principals in this study identified as being extremely or very important are requisites for success for newly appointed and currently serving principals.

In the early part of this research, the researcher stated that the significance of this study would be relevant to three areas, that it would provide great value to candidates seeking an administrative position, that it would provide school boards and superintendents with a realistic profile of skills and attributes important for candidates to possess, and that it would provide universities with a guide for their educational administration programs. The conclusions gleaned from the respondent principals have identified nine skills and seven attributes that they considered highly necessary to be an effective principal.

This researcher believes that school boards and superintendents who are seeking to hire new principals in their districts consider the skills and attributes that were determined by this study to be essential for principal success. University and college professors should consider the same skills and attributes for the courses that they will offer in their administration and supervision curricula. This concept was reaffirmed by Donna Matthews (2002) in her article entitled, Why Principals Fail and What We Can Learn From It. She concludes that, “University administrator preparation programs should include recent research on essential skills needed by today’s principals” (p.40). Although an attribute is thought by some to be an inherent quality, this researcher believes that an awareness and focus can gradually become part of the personality and skill bank that principal candidates possess. When principal candidates apply for
positions as school leaders it is important that they themselves realize that certain skills and attributes have been determined to be essential for them to acquire in order to give them the opportunity to become successful. General areas uncovered by the research of this study seem to revolve around collegiality, credibility, and communication. The study’s respondent principals indicated that the days of top down management, change by coercion, and leadership dominance are not viable philosophies that will enable positive changes to be made in schools. The work of researchers Blasé and Kirby (1992, p. 64) concur stating that “principals lead most effectively when they engage in behaviors that affirm the professionalism of classroom teachers. In other words principals often lead by ‘standing behind’. (Daresh, et al, 2000, p. 71). The respondent principals in this study who were successful principals based on creating successful innovations in their schools indicated strongly that all facets and segments of the school community need to be involved when planning and implementing changes in their schools. The research questions led this researcher to believe that whether a principal is male or female, whether the socioeconomic context of the school is high or low, and whether the school is primarily composed or not of children Of Color or Caucasian, successful change can be implemented and school improvement noted by principals with the proper skills and attributes.

Being politically sensitive or (navigating the system) was one of the elements referred to in the statement of the problem in this research study. Stephen H. Davis (1998) in his article Why Do Principals Get Fired, gives two conclusions that validate this particular skill or ability. He says, “the importance of maintaining positive interpersonal relationships and being politically adept appear to far out-weigh any other
factors related to job survival” (p. 37). This skill or attribute is consistent with the responses obtained from the respondent principals in this research study. Making Decisions, Communicating Orally, Generating a Clear Vision, Motivating Others, Generating Trust, Committed, Strong Sense of Purpose, Articulate, Professional, Respectful of Others, and Behaviors with Values. The skills and attributes which received the highest rating by the principals in this study, are important as factors which enable principals to bring positive inter-personal relationships to the change process and allows them to be politically adept at instituting change.

Principals begin as teachers, counselors, etc. The findings of this study might assist in determining who among them should be appointed principal for the first time. Demonstrating these skills and attributes in the classroom, guidance office, etc. might assist in the selection process.

At the university level, the findings might assist in the selection process for candidates for advanced degrees aimed at preparing administrators for central office positions and the superintendency. The skills and attributes are at least as important in these leadership positions.

Future researchers might wish to expand on this study by creating focus groups and interview sessions with principals of elementary and middle schools. Such would provide an opportunity for respondent principals to further elaborate on critical skills and attributes that they perceive have led them to a successful principalship. Delving into the methodology of the change process utilized by these principals might add greatly to the knowledge base of what skills and attributes are critical to the successful implementation of change in the schools. Future studies might wish to investigate the similarities and
differences between principals of high schools as well as principals of charter, parochial
and/or private schools. Future researchers might be most interested in examining other
performance indicators such as student attendance, mathematics scores, and student
suspensions in order to establish the effectiveness of innovations made by principals who
participate. The most recent federal enactment of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB)
legislation which requires highly qualified teachers will certainly impact on the
certification and licensure of highly qualified principals. The study this researcher
completed goes only a short way in identifying skills and attributes of highly qualified
principals while the future demands under No Child Left Behind (NLCB) may
significantly impact on new skills and attributes needed to survive in the age of
technology, diversity, and issues of various achievement levels within the diverse
segments of our student population.
References


Appendix A

Reliability Analysis
Reliability Analysis

Reliability Coefficients for Skills:

Number of Cases (N) = 78.0
Alpha = .8957

Number of Items (N) = 28

Reliability Coefficients for Attributes:

Number of Cases (N) = 77.0
Alpha = .8981

Number of Items (N) = 27
Appendix B

Letter of Introduction / Solicitation
Dear Successful Principal:

My name is Melvin Katz. In addition to being a middle school principal, I am a doctoral student in the School of Education at Seton Hall University. The data I am collecting are for my doctoral dissertation, which is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Daniel Gutmore.

You have been selected as a successful principal on the basis of an increase in your school's reading scores over the past five years. I am assuming that the increase is due to an innovation that you have overseen from conception to implementation. If you have not been the principal of the school for a minimum of five years, please discard this communication and any subsequent mailings from me.

The attached survey, Elementary and Middle School Survey on Agents of Change, is about the skills and attributes needed to successfully implement change in elementary and middle schools. The survey consists of three parts. Part I requires responses about your and your students demographic information, including the identification of a successful innovative implementation by you as the current principal. Part II and Part III are questionnaire sections that require you to circle the number on the rating scale of 1 to 5, based on importance. With regard to this survey there is no risk or discomfort involved. I am requesting that you please complete the survey, which will take you approximately 10-15 minutes to complete in its entirety, and return it to me in the stamped, self-addressed envelope at your earliest convenience. I hope that you will take the time to complete this survey but please understand that your participation is purely voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study or withdraw at any time without penalty or prejudice. By completing and returning the enclosed survey you indicate your consent to participate in the study.

All data from this study will be reported anonymously or in aggregate form without attribution to any individual. Your name and the address of your school are on a master list that is keyed to the code number at the top of your survey instrument. The list is kept in a locked cabinet; only I have access to the list, which will only be used to track incoming questionnaires. The returned surveys will be kept completely confidential and kept for three years and then destroyed. If you have any questions about the conduct of this study, please feel free to call me at 973-509-4172 or my mentor, Dr. Gutmore at 973-761-2853.

College of Education and Human Services
Executive Ed.D. Program
Tel. 973.275.2728
400 South Orange Avenue • South Orange, New Jersey 07079-2685
This project has been reviewed and approved by the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research. The IRB believes that the research procedures adequately safeguard the subject's privacy, welfare, civil liberties, and rights. The Chairperson of the IRB may be reached at (973)-275-2974.

The information that you provide on the survey instrument will be valuable to other principals who wish to institute change in their schools. It will help them know what skills are needed, and what personal attributes need to be cultivated in order to be a successful change agent in their schools. Thank you very much in advance for participating in my study.

Sincerely,

Melvin Katz, Researcher

Enclosure

APPROVED
SEP 10 2003
IRB
SETON HALL UNIVERSITY

College of Education and Human Services
Executive Ed.D. Program
Tel. 973.275.2728
400 South Orange Avenue • South Orange, New Jersey 07079-2685
Appendix C

Elementary and Middle School Principal Survey on Change Agency
ELEMEHTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL SURVEY ON CHANGE AGENCY

Dear Elementary or Middle School Principal:

If you have not been principal of this school for at least five years, please discard this survey.

If you have been a principal of this school for at least five years, please complete the survey at your earliest convenience; it should take about 10-15 minutes to complete. When completed, please place it in the stamped, self-addressed envelope, and place it in the mail. Thank you very much for your participation.

Demographic Background

1 Your age:
   1) < 30
   2) 30-39
   3) 40-49
   4) 50-59
   5) 60+

2 Your gender:
   1) Male
   2) Female

3 Your racial/ethnic background:
   1) Caucasian
   2) Black
   3) Hispanic
   4) Other

4 Your highest degree:
   1) Bachelors
   2) Masters
   3) Doctorate

5 Years of experience as a principal:
   1) 5-10
   2) 11-15
   3) 16-20
   4) 21 +

6 Years as principal of present school:
   1) 5-10
   2) 11-15
   3) 16-20
   4) 21 +

7 Percentage of students at your school who are on free or reduced lunch program:
   __________\%  

8 Racial/ethnic makeup of the student population at your school (estimate to the nearest 5\%):
   __________\% Caucasian
   __________\% Black (African-American, Caribbean-American, sub-Saharan African)
   __________\% Hispanic
   __________\% Asian
   __________\% Other
   100\% Total
In this section, please describe the major changes that you have sponsored in your school in your efforts to improve the education of the students.

1. Below is a list of innovations that have been described in the literature as potentially helpful in improving schooling in elementary and middle schools. Please indicate those innovations that have been implemented in your school over the past five years. Please check all that apply.

   ____ Parent involvement program
   ____ School-based management/shared decision-making
   ____ Curriculum reform
   ____ Technological upgrade
   ____ Homework support
   ____ Staff development
   ____ School reorganization
   ____ Staff reorganization
   ____ Improvement of plant and facilities
   ____ Programs that improve school climate
   ____ Community outreach programs

2. In a few words, please describe any innovative programs that you helped implement in your school that have been in place for a minimum of five years. Please use the lines below:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Below is a list of skills that have been described in the literature as important for principals to have when changing their schools. Please rate each skill on its importance to you when you engage in school change using the 5-point scale in the box below. If the skill is not at all important, circle 1; if the skill is of little importance, circle 2; if the skill is of moderate importance, circle 3; if the skill is very important, circle 4; if the skill is of extreme importance, circle 5.

Ability to:

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<th>Moderately important 3</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Identify and analyze problems</td>
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<td>2. Make decisions</td>
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<td>3. Communicate orally</td>
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<td>4. Communicate in written form</td>
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<td>5. Perceive the needs and concerns of others</td>
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<td>6. Perform under pressure</td>
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<td>7. Know educational theory and principles</td>
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<td>8. Conceptualize new avenues of change</td>
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<td>9. Empowering others</td>
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<td>10. Conflict management</td>
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<td>11. Generate a clear vision</td>
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<td>12. Motivate others</td>
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<td>13. Change attitudes of others</td>
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<td>14. Generate trust</td>
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<td>15. Organize others</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<td>16. Build teams</td>
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<td>17. Manage finances</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
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<td>18. Interpersonal skills</td>
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<td>19. Manage resources</td>
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<td>20. Develop staff</td>
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<td>21. Deal with central office</td>
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<td>22. Develop a collaborative model</td>
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<td>23. Inspire others</td>
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<td>24. Be a role model</td>
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<td>25. Reward good work</td>
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<td>26. Monitor progress</td>
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<td>27. Evaluate progress</td>
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<td>28. Build coalitions</td>
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Below is a list of personal attributes that have been described in the literature as important for principals to have when changing their schools. Please rate each attribute on its importance to you when you engage in school change using the 5-point scale in the box below. If the attribute is not at all important, circle 1; if the attribute is of little importance, circle 2; if the attribute is of moderate importance, circle 3; if the attribute is very important, circle 4; if the attribute is of extreme importance, circle 5.

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<tr>
<td>1. Likable</td>
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<td>2. Intelligent</td>
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<td>3. Committed</td>
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<td>4. Decisive</td>
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<td>5. Respectful of others</td>
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<td>6. Culturally sensitive</td>
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<td>7. Confident</td>
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<td>8. Optimistic</td>
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<td>9. Strong sense of purpose</td>
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<td>10. Behavior consistent with values</td>
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<td>11. Courageous</td>
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<td>12. Tolerate ambiguity</td>
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<td>13. Has high standards</td>
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<td>14. Articulate</td>
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<td>15. Determined</td>
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<td>16. Enthusiastic</td>
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<td>17. Emotionally intelligent</td>
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<td>18. Thoughtful</td>
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<td>19. Sense of humor</td>
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<td>20. Patient</td>
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<td>21. Proactive</td>
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<td>22. Logical</td>
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<td>23. Self-aware</td>
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<td>24. Sensitivity to feelings of others</td>
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<td>25. Strategic thinker</td>
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<td>26. Professional</td>
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<td>27. Exude a sense of power</td>
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