THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRINCIPAL CHARACTERISTICS AND CURRICULUM LEADERSHIP SELF-EFFICACY

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A Thesis
Submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

December 2010

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to explore the possible relationships between school principals’ educational and professional experiences and perceived self-efficacy on Ohio’s principalship instructional standard two. The instructional standard has increased the job responsibilities of Ohio’s principals and led to criticisms of educational leadership programs. Regression analysis revealed relationships between several principal characteristics and curricular and instruction self-efficacy, including gender (female), years of principal experience, prior teaching experience, and school-wide committee service. Twenty-first century skills and curriculum have brought an even greater emphasis for principals to be proficient curriculum and instructional leaders. Findings suggest that school districts need to recruit, prepare, and retain school principals, generally, but may want to recruit females, who tend to have longer careers as teachers, and are historically under-represented in the principal ranks. Colleges, universities and credentialing organizations may need to add additional courses or modify courses to more adequately prepare principals as instructional leaders.
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this document to my parents, Maryann and Norman Bucher, who have always shared their values and beliefs for a good education, a meaningful and enjoyable career, and taking time for interests and activities outside of work and studies. I thank you for your never-ending love and support, wisdom, patience, and encouragement.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank the members of my thesis committee, which included Dr. William Kyle Ingle, Dr. Pat Pauken, and Dr. Paul Johnson. As I reflect back over the past two years, this project was seen through to its completion due to the support, patience, and guidance of these committee members. Dr. Ingle took on this project with a willingness to share his knowledge and expertise in both curricular and instructional leadership and statistical methodology. Dr. Pauken helped set the groundwork for this project and helped instill confidence in me to bring this project to fruition. Dr. Johnson was always available for practical and meaningful advice. I appreciate how the committee allowed me to explore the boundaries of this topic and be creative while keeping me true to the purpose of this research and focused on the necessary parameters of this project. I would also like to thank the Graduate College for their support and assistance.

I also want to give sincere thanks to family, friends, and colleagues who have not only had to listen to me share concerns and frustrations, but have helped so much along the way. Every encouraging word and every inspiring thought shared with me has helped me see this project through to the end. There were times when I was ready to give it up. Thanks Mom, Dad, Lisa, Steve, Jim, Cheryl, Delores, David and Ardath, and Elida teacher teammates. This has truly been an amazing academic “journey” and you have all played a meaningful part in it.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In 2004 the state of Ohio formed a commission to develop high level quality job performance standards for the state’s teachers and principals (Educator Standards Board, 2007). The Commission on Teaching Success declared “The absence of standards that provide principles of professional practice for all teachers and school leaders must be addressed if we are serious about ensuring quality teaching in every Ohio classroom” (Educator Standards Board, 2007, p. 5). As a result of the commission’s findings, the Ohio legislature passed Senate Bill 2 in 2004 in which an Educator Standards Board was established to write the standards that are in use today. “Education was and is a dynamic institution and thus requires continual attention to standards” (Hunkins & Ornstein, 2003, p. 393). Ohio’s school leaders are expected to perform, at a minimum, proficiently or adequately in all five principalship standards developed by the 2004 Educator Standards Board, mandated by Ohio Senate Bill 2 (2004). Ohio’s principal standards include:

1. Principals help create a shared vision and clear goals for their schools and ensure continuous progress toward achieving the goals.

2. Principals support the implementation of high-quality standards based instruction that results in higher levels of achievement for all students.

3. Principals establish and sustain collaborative learning and shared leadership to promote learning and achievement of all students.

4. Principals engage parents and community members in the educational process and create an environment where resources support student learning, achievement and well-being.

5. Principals allocate resources and manage school operations in order to ensure a safe and productive learning environment (Educator Standards Board, 2007, p. 40).
School administrators are to use the standards and their elements for self-assessing their performance in the varied responsibilities and plan for professional development to enhance future performance. Copland (2001) asserts that “principals are now commonly portrayed as the key actors in school-level reform and face an audience of multiple constituencies who are ever more critical of their craft” (p. 529). Nevertheless, Halawah (2005), Harris and Willower (1998), Guskey (2003), and Korir and Karr-Kidwell (2000) reveal building administrators influence school effectiveness through effective leadership behavior, communication, establishment of positive school climate, optimism, teacher development, and increased student achievement. Fenwick and Pierce (2002) believe principals’ professional development, just like professional development for teachers, must be planned, long-termed, embedded in their jobs, focused on student achievement, and supportive of reflective practice. These five standards, while forming the job description for Ohio’s principals, also lend credence to the belief that the job description has grown to “gargantuan proportions” (Copland, 2001, p. 530). The standards may be viewed as creating additional duties for school leaders to focus upon while already serving in a rigorous environment with demanding workloads, constant interruptions and ever-changing priorities. The school leader has the primary accountability to the schools’ stakeholders for ensuring that standards for students, staff, and oneself are implemented and utilized to create an atmosphere of academic excellence that will result with an excellent rating on the school’s report card.

According to Hunkins and Ornstein (2004), “when principals are surveyed, they often consider curriculum and instruction as top priority work areas and recognize the need to spend more time on jobs related to these two technical areas of development” (p. 26). Involvement with daily operations of the school can lead to a wide discrepancy between actual and desirable time spent on curriculum and instructional activities. In the past, typically principals spent 15 to 20 percent of their time on coordinating curricular and instructional activities and 3 to 10 percent
of their time observing in classrooms (Hunkins & Ornstein, 2004). Schiff (2002) has found research shows that most principals spend one-third or less of the average work week of 62 hours participating in curriculum and instruction. Most principals agree that instructional leadership should be a top priority; however, management chores are hard to ignore and often take precedence, thereby causing role conflict (Lashway, 2003). Also, principals’ dialogue reveals they are considered worthy of rewards if they focus on management detail, discipline, and evaluation (Drake & Roe, 2003).

Ideally, many principals would like to devote much more time to curriculum and instruction based upon Drake and Roe’s (2003) finding that principals rate curriculum development as the second most important of 14 common tasks. The other tasks include preparing reports, writing communications, telephoning, handling teacher concerns, student supervision/counseling, supervision of noncertified employees, discipline, attending staff and central office meetings, special education conferences and extracurricular activities, contract management, teacher evaluation, and professional growth activities (p. 194).

Statement of the Problem

The many facets encompassing the role of the school principal have continually evolved over the years to become increasingly complex, comprehensive, and time consuming activities. Arguably, these prevent many principals from being the effective, visionary, and influential instructional and curriculum leaders that they are expected to be in this technical standards educational era. Generally, this myriad of principal activities falls under one of two categories: building manager or curriculum-instructional leader. Through the years, much of the principalship has focused on the auspices of building manager rather than curriculum-instructional leader (Hunkins & Ornstein, 2003). Wong and Nicotera (2007) convey the general focus for school level leaders “has been on procedural and programmatic managerial compliance
Shipps and Firestone (2003) have found public school leaders face multiple simultaneous obligations that often conflict and Archer (2003) believes this conflict of obligations creates an impossible role for educational leaders. Shellard (2003) exclaims principals must find a way for managerial and instructional responsibilities to complement and support each other instead of being in constant competition.

Wong and Nicotera (2007) believe “the knowledge and skills necessary to improve the processes of teaching and learning may be unfamiliar to many educational leaders” (p. 45). Hunkins and Ornstein (2004) report that the principal as curriculum leader is more an ideal idea rather “than absolute fact because many principals are still go-betweens from the central office to parents and the school staff. Additionally, many school principals are sorely lacking in curricular expertise, as well as instructional expertise” (p. 227). Stiggins (2000) believes few principals are capable of assisting teachers with sound assessment practices because they themselves lack understanding of sound assessment practices and the related appropriate, ethical implementation standards for assessments. Elmore (2000) finds “direct involvement in instruction is among the least frequent activities performed by administrators of any kind at any level” (p. 7).

Instructionally oriented principals continue to be a rarity because college- and university-based graduate programs continue a traditional academic model of organization whereby students learn to fulfill managerial and political principalship roles (Murphy & Forsyth, 1999, NGA for Best Practices, 2003). Hess and Kelly (2005) share that “educational leadership scholars have noted the wide gaps between the skills that are taught in educational leadership programs and the new demands on school leaders” (p. 156). Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2005) contend that “Coursework in educational programs gives curriculum short attention (at best, one required course)” (p. 297). Tucker and Codd (2002) conclude it is
unsurprising “that when principals who are successful in leading their school to substantial gains in student achievement are asked to identify some connection between their capacity and the way they were initially prepared for the job, they are unable to do so” (p. 14).

Orr (2006) states “leadership preparation matters, especially when striving to improve hard-to-serve schools such as those with higher percentages of poor students” (p. 32). While adequate studies on principal quality are lacking, a 2001 report issued by Public Agenda casts a doubt on current and future principal quality (Farkas, Johnson, Duffett, & Foleno, 2001). The report revealed 36 percent of superintendents perceived principal quality had remained level while 29 percent perceived principal quality had deteriorated. Farkas et al. (2001) found one in three superintendents believed the quality of their principals had increased in recent years.

Quality referred to such factors, although not all inclusive, as recruiting and developing talented teachers, communicating a clear educational vision and priorities, and motivating and inspiring staff. Superintendents satisfaction with principals’ curriculum and instructional leadership was not cited in the listing of quality factors in the Public Agenda article.

It is possible that gender issues and cultural issues may play a part in preventing a wider array of educators from participating in educational leadership careers. Coleman (2003) has presented data that indicate secondary school leadership roles are naturally male roles and women who fill secondary school leadership positions face prejudice. Coleman suggests “women are still at a disadvantage in becoming leaders. Women leaders face stereotypical presumptions about their abilities from staff, governors, parents and students” (pp 17-18). Coleman argues that the trite and outdated authoritarian model of leadership can be harmful for male and female leaders. Educational leaders from ethnic groups most likely encounter the same types of stereotypes, according to Coleman.
Research Questions

The study will attempt to address the following questions:

1. Is there a relationship between principal’s years of teaching experiences and perceptions of self-efficacy in instructional and curricular leadership?

2. Is there a relationship between a principal’s gender and perceptions of self-efficacy in instructional and curricular leadership?

3. Is there a relationship between principals’ ethnicity and perceptions of self-efficacy in instructional and curricular leadership?

4. Is there a relationship between prior career experiences and perceptions of self-efficacy in instructional and curricular leadership?

5. Is there a relationship between principals’ earned degree(s) and license(s) and perceptions of self-efficacy in instructional and curricular leadership?

6. Is there a relationship between principals’ former teacher related duties (i.e. committees) and perceptions of self-efficacy in instructional and curricular leadership?

7. Is there a relationship between principals’ current principalship settings and perceptions of self-efficacy in instructional and curricular leadership?

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between an Ohio elementary, middle, and secondary public school administrators’ prior professional and academic experiences brought to the job and principal self-efficacy on the elements of Ohio’s principalship instructional standard 2, which states “Principals support the implementation of high-quality standards-based instruction that results in higher levels of achievement for all students” (Educator Standards Board, 2007, p. 46). The essential question asks administrators “Are you the instructional leader for your school?” (Regional Local Professional Development Committee
Support Team, 2008, p. 15). For purposes of this study, professional experiences will include principals’ number of years of teaching experience, school setting and related teacher duties (i.e. committees) as well as any other career experiences prior to educational leadership. Academic experiences will include principals’ earned degrees and teaching licensure. Principals’ gender and ethnicity are additional variables as well as the school site of the current principalship. It is the intent of this study to analyze the aforementioned criteria in search of findings that may lead to new truths or reconfirm previous thoughts concerning effective practices of competent and compassionate school leaders.

Since the inception of the Ohio principalship standards in the fall of 2005, educational stakeholders are better able to define the multiple tasks and acceptable performance levels for school leaders. The standards allow educational stakeholders to formulate answers to questions such as: “What are the core components of effective instructional leadership?” and “How can a principal improve teaching?” Blase and Blase (2001) stated that there were few practical guides for leaders to improve upon their leadership effectiveness. The adoption of the Ohio principalship standards may be viewed as a starting point for principals to become better equipped for curriculum and instructional leadership, among other roles. However, to perform a standard’s tasks to a level that evokes inspiration and commitment from all staff members to buy into a vision and mission that leads to academic excellence for all students may not simply occur with the completion of an advanced degree in administration and supervision along with a standards guide. In light of competing responsibilities for principals, it may be helpful in advancing effective curricular and instructional leadership by utilizing data about principals’ past teaching and other work experiences along with data of principals’ academic preparation and self-perceptions of current principalship practices. Character education professor Marvin Berkowitz (2005) shares:
One of the things I have learned is that being a principal is quite like being a teacher. Only your students are adults who work for you. The parallels between what I teach teachers about classroom management and what I have found I need to teach principals about staff management are surprisingly frequent and powerful. (p. 1)

Is it possible for a principal to increase his or her effectiveness as a leader by spending more time in the classroom prior to becoming an administrator? Possibly the confidence that comes along with classroom experience may help an administrator to have a more realistic and valid self-awareness of his or her abilities in regard to the five standards that are the guiding force of school leadership reform. Is it possible that a leader’s self-awareness of leadership effectiveness can influence teachers to be more effective instructors and leaders within their classrooms? Tekleab, Sims, Yun, Tesluk, and Cox (2008) state that, “In general, research on leader self-awareness is relatively rare in the leadership literature” (p. 186).

Ohio instructional standard two states “principals support the implementation of high-quality standards-based instruction that results in higher levels of achievement for all students” (Educator Standards Board, p. 40, 2007). Ross and Gray (2006) found evidence that “principals contribute to student achievement indirectly through teacher commitment and beliefs about their collective capacity” (p. 798). The Gallup Organization’s Education Division [GOED] (2003) also finds that principals indirectly affect student achievement through influencing not only teachers and staff members but also the school’s organization and climate. Transformational leadership is a style of leadership that may be conducive to inspiring a staff towards attainment of higher student achievement goals within a supportive and collaborative environment (Howell & Avolio, 1993). Just as a teacher establishes a learning vision for students and helps students buy into the vision, it may be assumed the principal establishes an achievement vision for the teachers and helps those teachers buy into that vision. Data from principals’ past teaching
experiences and self-awareness of one’s own current abilities may help to establish effective strategies for influencing principal teacher relationships that result in teachers believing in themselves as change agents and viewing their principal as a trusted and viable resource person. Transformational leadership has certain moral and ethical obligations and is more than simply providing opportunities for teachers to make and carry out decisions (Tekleab et al., 2008). There are previously few studies that compare transformational leadership with empowering leadership (Tekleab et al., 2008). Findings from this study may suggest practices that may be more potent in affecting implementation of the instructional standard’s elements.

Therefore, this thesis examines principals’ self-perceptions of implementing the elements for the curriculum and instructional standard. Prior educational advancement will be examined as “many influences shape the principalship, including preparation programs (Drake & Roe, 2003, p. 31). Former teaching experiences and other occupational experiences will be examined as Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, and Meyerson (2005) state:

Ideas for increasing the quality of administrative candidates range considerably and sometimes conflict. For example, some reformers advocate the recruitment of talented leaders outside of education while others advocate the cultivation of strong teachers who understand instruction deeply and demonstrate leadership potential. (p. 20)

An important aspect to be determined is the relationship, to the extent one exists, between past teaching experience of principals and its relationship with the self-efficacy of school leaders. Berkowitz (2005) believes that principals have a lot to handle on their respective plates. Therefore, if principals could effectively manage the behaviors of their staff then they could afford themselves more time to deal with all aspects of the principalship. Berkowitz compares this idea to a teacher effectively managing the students’ behaviors in the classroom so as to provide quality classroom instruction. If a teacher skillfully uses classroom management for
optimal learning time, then the principal can skillfully use those same management skills within the school, obviously adjusted for working with professional adults, for optimum curriculum and instruction leadership. Principal Susan Charrier writes in her Supervisory Platform that “one cannot move a school forward if they are not keenly aware of what is happening in the classroom” (n.d., p. 3). She proposes that activities such as walkthroughs allow her to be in tune with school wide patterns concerning instructional quality and substance and student attentiveness. These observations allow Charrier to ensure that every child in her building is receiving the best educational experience possible. It is possible that educational leaders with multiple years of classroom experience may be more adept at gauging instructional quality and substance and modeling quality instructional practices with teachers.

Definitions of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms and definitions will be employed:

**Administrative Specialist Licenses:** Students having completed graduate coursework in educational administration and supervision may apply coursework toward licensure by the Ohio State Department of Education in the following areas: Curriculum & Instruction and Professional Development, Education Staff Personnel Administration, Educational Research, Pupil Services Administration, or School-Community Relations.

**Building Level:** School building such as elementary, middle or high school.

**Course:** Academic subject or discipline taught

**Curriculum:** a plan for action and a written document that includes strategies for achieving desired goals or outcomes (Hunkins & Ornstein, 2003).

**Elements:** “The Elements are the statements of what educators should know, think and do to be effective. In the case of the Ohio Standards for Professional Development, the Elements are the
statements of the characteristics of effective professional development” (Educator Standards Board, 2007, p. 6).

**Indicators:** The Indicators show the knowledge and skills of each element in practice. They are observable and measurable statements that provide evidence of effectiveness in practice. Indicators include the labels proficient, accomplished, and distinguished (Educator Standards Board, 2007).

**Instructional leader:** One who creates a school culture that makes student learning a top priority, and provides necessary resources to advocate teachers’ efforts to increase student learning (Willison, 2008).

**Licensure:** The granting of licenses especially to practice a profession

**Principal Self-Assessment Tool:** Guiding questions related to effective instructional practices as part of “Organizing for High Quality Professional Development” released by ODE in 2008.

**Prior Career Experiences:** Occupational experiences prior to entering the field of education.

**Public Schools:** Any tax supported school in Ohio that students may attend without paying tuition.

**School Demographics:** The statistical characteristics of a school building’s student make up, such as ethnic groups and number of students on free or reduced lunches.

**Self-Awareness:** A term similar to the idea of self-evaluation. If we know our self, then our self-evaluation is likely to be correct. This includes self rating and how one would view oneself as a leader (Tekleab et al., 2008).

**Self-Efficacy:** People’s beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave (Bandura, 1994).

**Self-Perception:** Perception of oneself; self-concept.
Standards: Conceptual or factual criteria representing knowledge, skills, or attitudes that are established by an authority (Horn, 2004, p. 1).

Teaching Experience: Number of years teaching, related school committees, and school setting.

Teaching Experience Level: Teaching a particular age group or level of students.

Transformational Leadership: The process of cultivating followers’ commitment to organizational objectives and shaping the culture in ways consistent with the organizational strategy (Yukl, 2002).

Parameters of the Study

This study seeks to examine the relationships (to the extent that they exist) between principals’ past professional/academic experiences and curricular and instructional leadership self efficacy. The findings will be collected from Ohio licensed (or dual licensed) principals and assistant principals who lead schools within Ohio’s borders. The principals’ responses will be gathered from a computer survey. As the researcher compiled and analyzed the data, he was aware of the importance of bias as a teacher of twenty-one years and having worked with several administrators. Furthermore, these findings are only generalizable to the cross-sectional survey data collected from respondents during April 2010.

Summary and Overview

Chapter 1 introduces the problem and offer a brief discussion on the standards whereby principals may self-assess their abilities. It also contains an introduction to the problem. Chapter 2 discusses the scholarly literature pertaining to theories and issues within the curricular and instructional leadership arena. Chapter 2 also examines the importance of principals’ self-efficacy and its effects on student achievement and staff relationships. Chapter 3 explains the research methodology of this study. Chapter 4 discusses the study’s findings. Chapter 5
summarizes the study’s findings as applicable towards the research focus and all educational stakeholders.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

As the dynamics of the school principalship have evolved over the years from “bureaucratic executive” to “humanistic facilitator” to the current standards-based era of accountability “instructional leaders,” educational researchers have analyzed and developed theories about the varying roles and responsibilities encompassing school leadership (Beck & Murphy, 1993). Daresh (2001) has found that attitudes about schools, teachers, and students have shifted through the years and therefore so has ideas about school supervisors and what they should do. According to Lashway (2003) “educators have struggled to define a distinctive role for the position” (p. 3).

As principals have struggled in the past and continue to struggle to balance time between managerial tasks and instructional-curricular leader tasks, the belief remains that student achievement is the core focus for principal activities within the larger social and educational context of school leadership. According to the GOED, (2003) the importance of the principal’s authority on student acquirement goes back to studies in the early 1970’s and early 1980’s. Focusing on effective schools, this research found school administrators who were stalwart instructional leaders to be one of the correlates to school performance. This research theorized that particular actions by principals could directly influence pupil achievement. This idea describes the principal as the “master teacher,” or the curriculum authority in the school. The principal’s work included teacher observations, making proposals for improvements, and enforcing particular instructional techniques. Even though this assumption still underlies the majority of teacher appraisal programs, there is little evidence to bolster the idea that student academic growth has increased as a result of principals’ firsthand deeds in instructional supervision (GOED, 2003).
Hallinger and Heck (1996) found evidence of relationships between student achievement and the principals’ indirect influences upon contextual factors such as policy formation, goal development, and teacher practices. Marzano (2003) indicates that research evinces a strong relationship between leadership and schools’ curriculum and instruction organization and students’ learning opportunities. Schnur and Gearson (2005) contend that principals need to portray good instruction in an organized adult learning style so teachers are provided the professional development and coaching that will enable them to provide quality instruction because teachers are the single greatest determinant of student achievement. Glickman et al. (2005) believe the school supervisor’s role is to help teachers delineate school and classroom instructional goals, formulate multiple instructional strategies that will help all students learn, and assess the outcomes of instruction for the purpose of continuous improvement.

In the multiplicity of demands encountered by school leaders there needs to be a prioritizing process in the daily demands to allow administrators to function effectively in their capacity as instructional-curricular leader. The Institute for Educational Leadership’s [IEL] (2000) Task Force on the principalship states “the top priority of the principalship must be leadership for learning” (p. 2). The IEL Task Force focuses on the key roles of instructional and visionary leadership which includes promoting professional development, data-driven decision making, accountability, commitment, entrepreneurial spirit, values and conviction, among others, to promote individualized maximum learning for all school community stakeholders. The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium [ISLLC] standards place an emphasis on high expectations for student success through school leadership focused on teaching and learning (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996). The National Association Of Elementary School Principals [NAESP] (2001) believes principals should center their efforts on student and adult learning. Principals need to demonstrate through dialogue and actions that they are completely
meshed with classroom instruction. Du Four (2002) believes there should be a transition from watching what teachers are doing to paying attention to what students are learning.

Hurley (2001) and DiPaola and Tschannen-Moran (2003) believe that effective school leadership can only be accomplished by a few “superleaders.” Some analysts and theoreticians believe the principalship workload has become undoable (Pounder & Merrill, 2001). There exists growing concerns over excessive accountability and expectations derived from central, state, and national offices, and parents that prevent many administrators from being able to perform all required tasks at a proficient or exemplary level (Lashway, 2003). This is a cause for concern due to the fact that many administrators may leave the profession in the coming years. Hess and Kelly (2005) assert there is a shortage of desirable candidates rather than a shortage of candidates. Also, many teachers earn advanced degrees in school leadership yet few decide to take a seat at the principal’s desk. With a higher salary in hand teachers decide to stay put in their classrooms. According to Roza (2003) 80% of superintendents report that finding a qualified school principal is a moderate or major problem. With concerns about potential shortages of qualified principals for whatever reason, some districts have developed “growing their own leaders” programs. Districts identify potential leaders from their staffs and provide these teachers with structured opportunities to develop the skills required to become qualified principals. Mentoring with on the job leaders is a crucial component. “Grow their own leaders” allow teachers to prepare for the principalship in large part without having to spend large amounts of money and time outside their school building (North Central Regional Educational Lab [NCREL], 2004).

The amount of time spent teaching in a classroom may be a factor to help practicing or aspiring principals and potential leaders to acquire pre-service skills and experiences that can help hone the instructional, transformation, moral, participative, managerial, and contingent
conceptions of leadership (Lashway, 2003). Most states require administrative degree candidates to have 3 to 5 years of teaching experience before receiving licensure. With new accountability standards for principals as instructional leaders, a real need exists for a personal and extensive awareness and comprehension for teaching pedagogy.

Doud and Keller (2000) found that over 90% of elementary principals surveyed by NAESP consider their teaching experience to be of great value in carrying out their duties. According to the IEL (2000) “overwhelming majorities of elementary school principals say the factors that add the greatest value to their success are on-the-job experiences as principal (97%) and experience as a teacher (89%), according to a 1998 study by the NAESP” (p. 10). In the midst of developing school leaders that will function as the instructional and curriculum leader and be evaluated by student performance as well as maintain the duties of middle level management, entrance into an educational administration program and eventual licensure is still contingent upon prior teaching experience in 41 states.

The notion of finding school administrators outside the educational arena is taking hold as observers wonder where an ample supply of qualified leaders will not only be found but also willing to accept the role. With administrative attrition rates high and staggering numbers of educators unwilling to lead, the concern for finding highly qualified leadership is a valid one. Some analysts believe that people who have never taught, yet abound with energy, resourcefulness, focus, and political savvy have what it takes to lead schools. They reject the notion that school leaders need classroom experience and a thorough knowledge of curriculum and instruction because they would be supervising teachers who supposedly are familiar with the curriculum and have the instructional know how. This idea, in part, results from criticism of administration preparation programs. Along with the aforementioned qualities, some would
believe educational regulations are emphasized at the expense of instructional methodology and coaching techniques. According to the NCREL (2004):

School leadership is a multidimensional job. One of the major criticisms of the current preparation programs is that they emphasize management rather than instructional and school improvement issues. Further, preparation often fails to expose students to the realities of the job. (p. 3)

Research suggests that “two-thirds of principals (66%) agree that typical leadership programs are out of touch with the realities of schools today. Even more (78%) say the requirements for certifying administrators should focus more on practical, hands-on experiences” (Johnson, 2008, p. 74). With most states and universities requiring some teaching experience, it’s difficult to determine if highly qualified leaders exist without any prior teaching experience. New Jersey was the first state to drop teaching experience as a factor for principalship. The state required principals to take part in a residency program and teach while learning the skills of the principalship. Supporters of the approach adopted by New Jersey concluded that administrators perform many jobs outside of instructional leadership (Guthrie, 1988).

A majority of states consider competency in class work, prior teaching experience, and assessment scores as validity for licensure. However, a lack of teaching experience may deter promising leaders outside of the educational arena from entering the field of educational administration. People with prior experiences in fields such as social work, youth development organizations, the military or recreational management may be ripe for the picking, notwithstanding the assumption additional training would have to be completed in curriculum and instruction (Mazzeo, 2003). By removing prior teaching experience, which some consider a barrier to filling future principal openings, there may be a diverse field of applicants that would hone in on school leadership careers. Hess (2003) notes that educational leadership reformers:
seek to expand the talent pipeline by reducing the gatekeeping role of state certification processes, welcoming diverse new providers capable of offering more targeted and accessible training, and by importing management lessons from the broader world of public administration. These reformers argue that accountability, information technology and broader changes in management and organization have fundamentally changed the principalship such that schools should cast a wide net in seeking individuals with useful skills, experiences, and training. (pp. 156-157)

Some state legislatures along with other professional organizations are pushing to allow universities to utilize portfolios or alternative assessments that emulate typical principal tasks to identify and evaluate potential leaders outside the field of education. According to the NGA for Best Practices (2003), Ohio developed a tiered licensure system through which candidates could earn a preliminary certificate before receiving full licensure after a 1-year to 2-year investiture. However, alternative licensure programs are rarely used and requirements for licensure are similar to traditional pathways so Ohio’s alternative principal licensure provision is not used (Feistritzer, 2003). Ohio implemented two programs to reform principal preparation but the Southern Regional Educational Board [SREB], (2003) questions weather actual changes in principal recruitment and training have occurred. SREB believes that reform efforts usually result in institutions taking old course titles and content and matching these elements to new expectations (Hess & Kelly, 2005). The Ohio Principals Leadership Academy, a joint venture between Ohio State University and the Ohio Department of Education [ODE] was aimed to help practicing principals enhance the academic and student achievement facets of the principalship. Classes were offered regionally and the curriculum was based upon leadership models from the business, nonprofit, and government sectors (Bell, 2000). The Urban Leadership Development Program, based in Toledo, Ohio allowed traditional educational administration graduate students
to graduate from the University of Toledo with an emphasis on urban educational leadership. Graduates then served a 3-year period with Toledo Public Schools (Hess & Kelly, 2005).

Similar programs have emerged in Ohio institutions such as the University of Cincinnati.

Studies have suggested that a quality leader with vision, compassion, and understanding for curriculum and instruction will garner support and respect from staff members (NGA for Best Practices, 2003). Kolb and Boyatzis (1999) explain studies on experiential learning demonstrate exposure to concrete elements of real-world practice can increase a leader’s ability to contemplate, analyze, and systematically plan strategies for action. The situations teachers encounter in the classroom may be applicable to experiential learning that can be transferred to the principalship. Prior teaching experience may help new and experienced leaders with the instructional leadership component that some policy experts say is not addressed in academic preparation programs. Prior teaching experience may also augment time management skills to accommodate all aspects of the job. Lashway (2003) asserts “today’s leaders must define themselves as learners, not just doers, constantly scanning the environment for new ideas, tools, and solutions, and reflecting on the implications” (p. 9). Today’s teachers who implement best teaching practices amid well managed classrooms may be a reliable source for developing future instructional-curriculum principals capable of working harmoniously with teachers.

**The Importance of Professional Standards Boards**

Standards are overarching goals and themes that provide a framework for the knowledge, skills, or performance for the effective implementation of the standards’ elements. Elements are statements that specify to educators what they should be able to do to be effective in their capacity. Elements can also guide an educator’s professional development plans. Elements allow practicing principals to observe and measure their knowledge and skills associated with each standard’s elements, using their perceptions and self-awareness to provide for improvement
and professional development (Educator Standards Board, 2007). Previous research on leader self-awareness is relatively rare in the leadership literature. However, a study found that a leader’s self-awareness of transformational leadership was associated with leader effectiveness (Tekleab et al., 2008). Also, leader effectiveness led to higher levels of supervisory satisfaction among teachers (Tekleab et al.). Practicing principals are expected to be performing at a proficient or adequate level, as competent building leaders and should be incorporating theories and practices that would lead to the accomplished level (Educator Standards Board, 2007).

Principals at this level lead their buildings with a consistent and reliable level of leadership that allows for monitored change and growth that helps all stakeholders stay on a purposeful pathway towards meeting the school’s mission statement. All principals are expected to reach the accomplished level at some point in their career. The distinguished, or exemplary, principal is an influential leader who has demonstrated the artful use of skills and knowledge to anticipate change and allows for the development of collaborative changes that bring out the best in all the school’s stakeholders. At this point, the standards board believes that not every principal will reach the distinguished level (Educator Standards Board, 2007).

Along with the standards has come the need for principals to be both efficient and effective building managers and also skilled curriculum and instructional leaders. In this era of reform and accountability, administrators are believed to be an important part of the betterment of curriculum implementation and instructional practices. Daresh (2001) declares “the educational leader must, above all, be a practitioner of curriculum” (p. 263). Marzano (2003) believes that school leadership can be the most important piece of the puzzle of the school reform movement. School leadership has strong ties to (among others) “the organization of curriculum, and instruction; the classroom practices of teachers, and students’ opportunities to learn” (p. 172). With the standards in place, it begs to be asked how principals performing at a
standards’ proficient or adequate level may effectively and in the least amount of time progress to the accomplished, distinguished, or exemplary level? At this point, the standards are not meant to be used for evaluative purposes, but rather as a personal reflection and awareness of one’s professional abilities. The expected outcome from self-assessment is the development of a plan of action for professional growth and development. How does a principal maintain a level of proficiency or adequacy in curriculum and instructional leadership while at the same time pursuing a course of action to lead to a higher indicator level? Could the answer possibly lie with the administrator’s past teaching experiences? Could the number of years of teaching experience along with other careers and earned degrees help a principal move beyond the standards’ proficient or adequate level to the distinguished level? School environmental conditions such as the quantity of leadership members available, administrative hours devoted to daily student supervision activities, school and community cultures, staff size, and central office demands become issues when there are five principal standards and only one of the five relate directly to higher student achievement through curriculum and instructional leadership.

When an individual earns a principalship license, it is expected that the individual has the skills and knowledge to work effectively with all five standards. Horn (2004) makes the following assertion on credentials and licensure:

However, on another level, the expertise, professionalism, and specialized knowledge of the validated individual may vary in relation to the type of standard that is the focus of the validation process. The different types of standards tell us different things about what an individual has learned and what that individual can do. (p. 12)

Does prior teaching experience and academic preparation help a principal to work beyond the proficient or adequate level in the curriculum and instruction standard without sacrificing quality in regard to the other standards? The curriculum and instructional accountability factors that
play a prominent part in teaching may be transitioned from an educator’s role change from classroom teacher to school building leader. The affective factors that teachers acquire from relationships with students, parents, and colleagues may allow for the transition to a transformational building leader.

The Importance of Standards in Education

Helm (2010) shares that, “perhaps no single occurrence in the last twenty years in American Education has had a greater impact on American Education as the standards movement” (p. 3). School leaders, teachers, and students are greatly impacted by a plethora of leadership, instructional, and testing standards. Educational standards are categorized as both technical and levels of complexity and vary philosophically in regard to curriculum, instruction, and assessment (Horn, 2004). According to Horn:

Most public school educators and the general public understand standards to be objective, value-neutral, and uncontroversial statements of agreed-upon knowledge and skills. Standards are promoted as essential knowledge and skills that have a direct effect on the national economy, national competitiveness, in a global marketplace, and a students’ future vocational and academic success. (p. 2)

Accountability for mastering standards is permeating more aspects of the school administrator’s duties (Horn, 2004). The infusion of accountability for student learning came about in the early 1980’s as a result of students’ poor math test scores from the Second International Mathematics Study and the subsequent printing of a report entitled A Nation at Risk (Wong & Nicotera, 2007). The report portrayed a failing educational system that was producing students who would not be able to compete mathematically or scientifically with students from other nations. As a result of the report’s suggestions for improvement, there were changes in curriculum standards and instructional practices along with mandatory student assessments. In
2001, the No Child Left Behind Act reinforced high academic standards for all student populations and introduced consequences for schools that failed to make yearly improvements. The accountability factor quickly made its presence known in school districts from coast to coast (Wong & Nicotera, 2007).

If a principal is not analyzing a teacher or oneself against a professional standard, then that leader is analyzing student achievement against academic standards. Since the early part of this decade, standards have become relevant statements by which educational leaders self evaluate their skills and are evaluated by others. Some principals will manipulate academic standards in ways they believe will better meet their students’ academic needs. This can be a risky proposition as core national academic standards are infused into states’ curriculums. School leaders are held accountable primarily by their building’s test scores which reflect their state and national curriculum. Power standards are a prioritization process in which school administrators decides which academic standards bear the greatest value and thereby becomes the implemented curriculum, thus allowing local educational leaders to have a say in adding input and value to a state imposed curriculum. Another standard that some administrators employ is referred to as a “maverick” standard. This academic standard evolves when educational leaders develop new standards or change existing ones so that educational benchmarks can better meet the local students’ and community’s needs. Maverick leaders believe personalized, internally developed standards are of greater help to their student body than externally imposed decontextualized standards (Horn, 2004).

Perhaps as important as academic standards are credentialing and licensure standards that set minimal requirements by a regulator agency, providing access to specific positions. Professionals are viewed as competent, knowledgeable and effective when they hold credentials and a license that are granted by a government entity and by professional organizations.
Licenses also serve as a signal to employers. Just as a patient would seek out the most qualified, licensed medical doctor, today’s parents seek those schools that are rated excellent, in part, by highly qualified teachers and principals. Professionals receive initial credentials when successfully completing the requirements for an academic program of one’s choice. A license allows one to perform duties within a designated area with certain authority based upon permission from a government body. Standards of certification, also granted by a governmental body or other professional organization, allow an individual to have a particular title or designation and perform duties within that designated area. In Ohio, all educator certificates and licenses are granted through the Ohio Department of Education’s Office of Educator Licensure. Duties can vary widely depending upon a school administrator’s position or label. By holding a principalship license, it is assumed the principal has demonstrated the ability to comply with all the elements and indicators for the five principal standards. However, notwithstanding the value of an administrator’s license, it may be assumed principals bring varied amounts of experiences to school offices and this can have an effect upon building leadership and ultimately student achievement. Those who have earned certification and licensure in administration will not necessarily be proficient or perform adequately on all the standard’s elements. Therefore, it may be beneficial to find amounts and types of experience one has gained prior to undertaking a school leadership role that will help the principal perform duties in a satisfactory manner while at the same time allowing for professional development for attaining future higher levels of performance.

Elements of Instructional and Curriculum Leadership

Leadership for learning is the theme that should motivate principals to provide maximum learning opportunities for all students within a school. This theme should be the driving force for literally all principalship activities. The 2001 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act’s emphasis
on high student achievement for all has forced all public schools to focus on 21st-century skills and a 21st-century curriculum. With this enhanced focus on curriculum, instruction, and assessment, principals theoretically have had to become strong curriculum and instructional leaders (Glatthorn & Jailall, 2009). The Stanford Educational Leadership Institute recently analyzed research on essential elements of good leadership, and three aspects of the principal’s job emerged:

1) developing a deep understanding of how to support teachers
2) managing the curriculum in ways that promote student learning and
3) developing the ability to transform schools into more effective organizations that foster powerful teaching and learning for all students. (Davis, Darling-Hammond, Lapointe & Meyerson, 2005, p. 12).

In many respects, the demands on principals mirror those on teachers who are attempting to become facilitators of children’s learning and are always refining their instructional content, pedagogy, and assessment (Neufield, 1997). Teachers have a more “micro” view of curriculum and instruction as they focus on their grade level content for their classroom of students, while principals have a more “macro” view as they coordinate the school’s activities with multiple sets of student learning experiences. Principals need to know what’s occurring in each classroom as well as understand the learning relationship between teachers, students, and content throughout the school (Marlow & Minehira, 1996). Principals with an understanding of these complex relationships can function more effectively as a curriculum leader (Marlow & Minehira, 1996).

According to Blase and Blase (2001), teachers have found principals to be effective instructional leaders when principals talk with teachers to promote reflection and promote professional growth. Principals need to utilize dialogue rich in teaching pedagogical terminology. Instructional design and delivery methods, assessment methods, and learning styles
should be natural discourse in principal and teacher conversations and writings (Willison, 2008). Blase and Blase (2001) have found teachers appreciate being encouraged to reflect on their classroom instructional experiences as principals share their experiences and propose examples during post-observations and during informal conversations. Principals need to model positive interactions with students and demonstrate teaching strategies in classrooms and during conferences as teachers have found these techniques to be impressive examples (Blasé and Blasé, 2001). As principals spend lots of time in the classroom, they can learn about their staff’s instructional practices, pinpoint exceptional teachers, and recognize those teachers in need of assistance. Beneficial results from time spent in classrooms may include providing instructional, curricular, and behavioral feedback to teachers and parents, matching experienced, quality teachers as mentors with new teachers and providing time for exceptional teachers to share with their colleagues, as well as providing helpful resources to those teachers needing improvement. Principals need to be able to talk the talk and walk the walk (Willison, 2008). Blase and Blase (2001) believe principals who are viewed as effective by their staffs initiate professional development opportunities within a supportive, collaborative atmosphere where an appreciation for adult learning, growth, and development techniques are emphasized in relationship with students’ emergent learning needs. Principals who use professional development opportunities to initiate and encourage small and large scale action research projects utilizing classroom or school data may help teachers determine causes for achievement gains and losses based upon what they do in their classrooms. In these situations, teachers and principals work together as learning and study teams within non-threatening environments and collegial investigations may lead to discussions of alternative means to improve student learning while at the same time having positive effects with teachers’ motivation, self-efficacy, and self-esteem. Peer coaching,
when properly conducted between teachers, can also be beneficial in professional development (Blase & Blase 2001).

Principals may influence student achievement indirectly through supporting teachers within the frameworks of the school team, climate, and provision of resources (GOED, 2003). As teachers work in collaborative and coordinated efforts, new teaching methods emerge that may prevent a school from becoming stagnant. Teachers working together in planning, authorizing, and assessing new schemes for instructional designs often experience satisfaction, confidence-building and encouragement. The school atmosphere conducive to inclusiveness and teamwork may be attributed to the following actions by the administrator:

1. Involve teachers in instructional decisions.
2. Provide opportunities for staff members and parents to assume leadership roles in charting instructional improvement.
3. Protect staff members from the community and central office.
4. Act as facilitators for the instructional staff, helping staff members succeed.
5. Serve as an instructional resource for staff members.
6. Create feelings of trust through cooperative working relationships among the staff in the school.

(Andrews & Soder, 1987; Bender, Sebring, & Byrk, 2000; Heck & Marcoulides; 1993)

The GOED (2003) also reveals student achievement is influenced indirectly as principals establish a focused learning climate through:

1. providing clarity to the school’s mission, which influences everyone’s expectations;
2. have a vision that they allow staff and parents to shape;
3. hold teachers and themselves to high standards;
4. recognize student achievement;
5. communicate academic achievements to the community;
6. encourage teachers to take risks in trying new methods and programs (p. 3).

Finally, GOED (2003) shares that principals who take seriously their role of being a resource person for both students and staff have a major impact on freeing up teachers to teach and students to learn as the following strategies are employed:

1. get things done;
2. assume the role of providing the resources that teachers ask;
3. provide staff development to support the staff’s efforts to improve;
4. are visible in classrooms, departmental or grade-level meetings, and in the building;
5. provide the social support needed by students so that class time is devoted to learning.

(p. 3)

Principals can provide for more fruitful learning experiences for both instructors and students when they assure required material goods are readily available for classroom usage. According to Mazzeo (2003), “Quality school leaders, the evidence suggests, understand teaching and are respected by their staff. School leaders provide focus and direction to curriculum and teaching and manage the organization efficiently to support student and adult learning” (p. 2).

Administrators of high performing schools use student data for school improvement by turning data into information that can be discussed and used for curriculum development and instructional planning (Cotton, 2003). A basic, broad definition of curriculum involves a plan for action or a written document that includes strategies for mastering coveted outcomes (Hunkins & Ornstein, p. 10). One may think back to technical standards and standards of complexity to gain understanding of the depth and breadth of curriculum. The view of curriculum from a technical standards viewpoint lacks discipline interaction in the sense
learnable facts and skills can be individualized units or chunks that are separated from the original subject or topic. Characteristics of a technical standards curriculum include curricular fragmentation and curriculum alignment. The curriculum is subject-centered rather than child-centered and content and skills are aligned to particular grade levels as a result of scientific management of schools (Horn, 2004). Administrators functioning as instructional leaders within a technical standards curriculum are limited with implementing and facilitating the curriculum. Educational philosophies are imposed by federal and state disciplinary experts who’ve written content supposedly reflective of the valued skills and knowledge of the dominant culture (Horn, 2004). The problem for the administrator is the management of an overwhelming amount of material that’s to be taught by teachers and learned by students at each grade level. The important test scores reflect not only student learning but also administrative oversight of the curriculum.

As previously stated, there is a growing consensus of educators honing their observations more so on what’s being learned by students rather than what’s being taught by the teachers. This approach allows principals and staff to rationalize if students have not learned the material than the material has not yet been taught. Administrators monitor the staff’s use of state standards, benchmarks, and grade level indicators rather than textbook and workbook pages. Principals impress upon teachers the importance of understanding expected student learning outcomes in regard to standards, benchmarks, and grade level indicators. Principals should help their teaching staffs realize that textbooks and workbooks do not drive the curriculum; rather, they are resources to help meet the learned outcomes. Textbooks and workbooks should be scrutinized by principals and teachers to ensure alignment with the standard’s benchmarks and grade level indicators before deciding upon its use (Jessup, 2007). Principals may create the structures and expectations that are crucial to collaborative teamwork through the
implementation of suggestions by Defour (1999) that include: (a) “principals must do more than delegate, empower, and then hope for the best; (b) they must provide staff members with relevant background information and research findings; (c) they must ensure that teachers receive the training and coaching to master skills that make them more effective in achieving the goals of the school; (d) they must provide time and create structures for the staff to engage in reflection and discussion; and (e) they must develop monitoring procedures that supply teams with the data, information, and feedback that enable them to make the necessary course corrections and improvements to achieve team objectives” (pp. 12-17). It is critical that a school’s staff work together toward meeting one crucial goal at a time. Teachers and principals must work as teams to make the intended curriculum the taught and learned curriculum whereby each school community member may take ownership in student achievement.

Within the accountability structures of a technical standards curriculum, Shipps and Firestone (2003) reveal that public school leaders face multiple, simultaneous obligations that often conflict. Archer (2003) argues that this creates an impossible role for educational leaders. Many principals report feeling helpless in their efforts to affect student achievement beyond the traditional middle level management situations and classroom teacher observations. Managerial activities can often swamp the principal’s workload. Some researchers report principals’ attitudes of helplessness may actually impede the efforts to advance greater levels of scholastic acquirement in their schools. Johnston (2004) asserts “Strong principals who believe that they are directly responsible for and involved in their students’ learning do produce higher levels of achievement than principals who believe that they can do little to produce strong results among students in their schools.” Of course, principals with the belief they do make a difference in student achievement engage in actions that are widely accepted to promote academic growth.
Acknowledging the importance of the principal’s role in curriculum management, we must revisit the standards and take a look at curricular issues from the standards of complexity sidelines. Technical standards curriculum is reductionist and an outcome of scientific management of schools. Curriculums containing standards of complexity view knowledge and skills “as socially constructed information that is connected to the students’ own experience” (Horn, 2004, p. 93). Kincheloe (2001) asserts:

Curriculum is viewed as a dynamic ever-changing process as students critically interrogate the information and the assumptions upon which the information is based. The purpose of curriculum based upon standards of complexity is to facilitate student identification and critical interrogation of the complex context of phenomena through the employment of higher-order thinking skills. Instead of memorizing facts and demonstrating skills in a restricted context, standards of complexity focus on holistic processes involved in all past and present human activity such as social change, technological innovation, democratic participation, identity construction, knowledge production, and learning to teach oneself. (p. 287)

Key outcomes include developing students’ critical thinking skills, self-management, goal setting, and behavior management. Within the standards of complexity curriculum, as youngsters are trained to be “democratically literate, participatory, and responsive citizens of society, the relationship between administrators and teachers is reproduced in the relationship between teachers and students” (Horn, 2004, p. 109). It is paramount for the teacher and principal relationship to be the leading force in the building’s operations. Principals and teachers work together in collegial and informal relationships with a shared set of values and a common vision. By doing so, the shared values of all stakeholders can be accomplished without the authoritarian top down hierarchy leadership style. Some leadership experts believe the only way
schools can meet the multi demands placed upon them is through sharing all aspects of the school’s workload and equalizing everyone’s position on the school team. Thomas Sergiovanni (1992) suggests principals’ moral leadership and stewardship enable administrators and teachers to collegially build just and caring school communities that effectively meet the societal demands placed on them.

There are advantageous and essential instructional and curricular elements in technical standards and standards of complexity. Best teaching practices in technical standards are often regimented and script written for the instructor to teach a particular skill or concept depending on the grade level and the curriculum alignment map correlated with state achievement testing, whereas, standards of complexity allows for more small group and self learning instruction. In both systems, standards are tested and both curricular systems should be grounded in teaching through best instructional practices” (Horn, p. 97). Therefore, it is essential that principals be familiar with sound instructional practices and the means to successfully implement them in classrooms.

**Elements of Curricular Leadership**

Marzano (2003) ranks a “guaranteed and viable curriculum” (p. 22) as the foremost school-level-factor that impacts student achievement. Marzano describes a “guaranteed and viable curriculum” as a combination of opportunities to learn during uninterrupted leaning times (p. 22). Marzano believes it’s nearly impossible for today’s students to learn everything in an adequate manner within the current standards movement. “Thus, schools should provide clear delineation of content that is essential versus that which is supplemental or intended for those seeking postsecondary education only” (Marzano, 2003, p. 28). To help all students learn the curricular big ideas, schools need to “identify the essential instructional concepts, organize these into “big ideas” or “topics,” and finally establish a sequence for the topics or big ideas”
The administrator’s role is to “monitor the coverage of the essential content” (Marzano, p. 30) and use reflective supervision whereby school leaders help instructors think back and reflect upon their instructional methodologies through questioning strategies (Marzano, p. 31).

The principal has important work to do with developing a deep understanding of how to support teachers and manage the curriculum in ways that promote student learning. Along with the aforementioned, the principal is to transform the school into a more effective organization that fosters powerful teaching and learning for all students (Davis et al., 2005). Some concerned educators would believe that generic leaders from other backgrounds are capable of successfully fulfilling the duties of the principalship including the aspects of curricular and instructional leadership. However, Lashway (2003) points out that “Many school reformers have emphasized the need for leaders to have a deep understanding of instructional dynamics” (p. 6). Jamentz (2002) notes that simply having a list of essential teaching skills is not enough. Instructional leaders must internalize exemplars of effective classroom practice so that they can make accurate judgments about, and give useful feedback to, the teachers with whom they work. At the moment, most practitioners seem to regard their classroom background as a crucial qualification; over 90% of elementary principals surveyed by NAESP consider their teaching experience to be of great value in carrying out their duties (Doud & Keller, 2000). Efforts to recruit women to enter educational administration are bolstered, in part, by the years of experience acquired in the classroom (Drake and Roe, 2003).

Curriculum-based pedagogy is a professional discipline “that comes from within each person as a result of their professional calling and intentions” (Henderson & Slattery, 2008, p. 1). Curriculum pedagogy’s three disciplinary dimensions include deliberative artistry, diversified inquiry and democratic fidelity. Henderson and Gornik (2007) argue that educators’ deliberative
artistry should, as much as possible, be “systemic” by addressing the interrelationships between designing, planning, teaching, evaluating, and organizing decisions. Diversified inquiry can be attributed to John Dewey’s philosophical scholarship “that is informed by a “love of wisdom” and that is directed toward the democratization of educational experience” (p. 3). Democratic fidelity looks to Alain Badiou’s philosophy in which individuals can experience an event in a particular situation that inspires them to voice a universal truth for all humanity (Henderson & Slattery, 2008). “Without educators who can sustain inclusive, “for all” ethical commitments, there doesn’t seem to be much hope for the future of democracy in education” (Henderson & Slattery, p. 5). Fostering the three ranges of curriculum pedagogy can be a useful leadership scheme (Henderson & Slattery, p. 5). Whitson encourages educators to think of curriculum in terms of its textuality, or interweaving, layered elements. Whitson thinks the curriculum should not be allowed to decompose, or be put into distinct components such as instruction and pedagogy. “Such decomposition occurs when educators lose sight of the formative experiences embedded in their educational activities and, focus only on their planned programs of study” (Henderson & Slattery, p. 8).

The Importance of Self-Awareness

The famed Lao-Tzu stated that, “It is wisdom to know others; it is enlightenment to know one’s self.” Self-awareness goes hand in hand with self-evaluation (Tekleab et al., 2008). The better we know our self, the more likely we are to accurately self-evaluate our speech, thoughts and actions. Zigarmi, Blanchard, O’Connor and Edeburn (2004) have found:

To be self-aware, you must compare your behavior to either an existing standard or new information. If you are self-aware, you can incorporate the standards and/or new information into future self-evaluations and, ultimately, your behavior. To be self-aware, you must also consider others’ perceptions of you and incorporate those perceptions into
your own. Consequently, you become more self-aware when you are cognizant of how others perceive you. (p. 90)

Self-assessment is important for the educational leader because it allows one to view oneself within the leadership role. Tekleab et al. (2008) suggest that self-awareness about one’s leadership is likely to produce enhanced effectiveness and satisfaction at work. This can lead to followers’ supervisory satisfaction, as well. Emotional intelligence, or emotional self-awareness, is also a viable aspect of one’s life and career efficacy (Bar-On, 2000; Gross, 1998). People who are in touch with their emotions are better equipped to handle day to day stress and life changing situations while maintaining a sense of control and normalcy. The ability to handle major and minor life stresses and continue to function in the workplace is a necessity for leaders. Krishnamurti (1964) suggests that self-knowledge is the beginning of wisdom and therefore understanding. Knowing and understanding one’s self allows one to be a genuine communicator. Genuine communicators can remove impediments that hinder personal meaning and understanding between people. The power of perception can allow one to be connected with one’s self and able to understand the rational for others’ thoughts and ideas. Comprehending and making use of perception’s power is a result of self-discovery for the scholarly communicator (Ershler, 2007). Perception is a process that enables a person to make sense of and attach meaning to experience.

The Role of Self

Knowing and reflecting on one’s leadership characteristics, tolerance for compassion, and emotional intelligence are three areas that may impact the principal’s ability to transform schools into powerful teaching and learning centers. As stated in Chapter One, there is little research on leader self-awareness. However, Tekleab et al. (2008) suggest “self-awareness about one’s own leadership is likely to produce enhanced effectiveness and satisfaction at work” (page 1). Escabi
(1988) asserts “principals that perceive themselves as being more participating leaders manage more effective schools” (p. 1). Davis et al. (2005) note “there is a sizable body of research that suggests most adult learners learn best when exposed to situations requiring the application of acquired skills, knowledge, and problem-solving strategies within authentic settings, and when guided by critical self-reflection” (p. 16). Rallis and Goldring (2000) find that reflective leaders “question and process and learn from their experiences” as well as “examine their situations, make choices, and work with others to enable goals to be reached” (p. 132). Ershler (2007) believes that successful communication, an important aspect of an effective leader, relies on the notion of perception. Haney (1967) shares that perception is the process of making sense out of the experience. It is the imputing of meaning to experience. Quality communicators are not only aware of others’ perceptions but also to the various roadblocks to effective communication between themselves and others. Self-knowledge can lead to wisdom and understanding that may alleviate distractions that would prevent sincere communication between leader and subordinate. As one goes through the process of self-discovery, one can find meaning in and use the power of perception to listen to others and oneself. As leaders discover their own identity and their stances on issues, they impart an environment conducive to accepting varying viewpoints, crucial to leading others. Meaningful self-reflection on the part of the leader can inspire and encourage staff to communicate new missions, strategies, and structures that may lead to paradigm transitions that allow for powerful transformations in the school (Ershler, 2007). According to Principal Susan Charrier, “self-perception of the supervisor must align with staff perception. Open channels of communication will include staff climate and perception surveys, open forum meetings and availability for personal conversations” (p. 3). Charrier’s ideology agrees with that of Glickman, Gordon, and Ross-Gordon (2005) who assert “after assessing your own approach to individuals and groups, you need to make sure that how you perceive yourself is consistent
with how others perceive you” (p. 100). Principals who compare their self-perceived behaviors with objective data such as teachers opinions’ of the principal’s supervision behaviors are able to modify or polish self identified supervisory skills in need of improvement (Glickman et al., 2005). Tekleab et al. (2008) found self-awareness to include a leader’s agreement with followers about his or her own transformation leadership and this leadership was associated with leader effectiveness. Self-awareness may have an effect on staff members’ emotional and social responses to various situations and may encourage self-leadership within the workplace. The leader’s interactions with the certified and classified staff may increase the satisfaction followers have toward their supervisors and overall job satisfaction. Conger, Kanungo, and Menon (2000) showed that transformational leadership was positively correlated with supervisory satisfaction.

The Role of Transformational Leadership

As teachers deal with mounting accountability issues and evolving instructional and assessment criteria, support and guidance from the administrator is crucial for the success of the organization. If the organization’s vision is to be carried through from top to bottom, then the administrative characteristics may need to be in the realms of transformational leadership. Northouse (2004) states, “Transformational leadership involves an exceptional form of influence that moves followers to accomplish more than what is usually expected of them” (p. 169). This form of leadership has had few studies within the educational realm yet some evidence does suggest similar benefits in both business and education (Hoover and others, 1991, Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990, & Leithwood, 1992). Research began three decades ago has brought support for transformation leadership as being the cause of additional effort, commitment, and satisfaction put forth from those led (Avolio & Bass, 2002). Avolio and Bass (2002) have identified the four components of transformational leadership as:
First, leadership is idealized when followers seek to identify with their leaders and emulate them. Second, the leadership inspires the followers with challenge and persuasion that provide meaning and understanding. Third, the leadership is intellectually stimulating, expanding the followers use of their abilities. Finally, the leadership is individually considerate, providing the followers with support, mentoring, and coaching. (p. 2)

The goals for transformational leaders within the school setting may be summarized by referring to the leadership elements contained in the Stanford Leadership Institute’s findings by Davis et al. (2005). They include: (a) helping staff develop and maintain a collaborative, professional school culture; (b) helping teachers solve problems more effectively; and (c) fostering teacher development (Leithwood, 1992). This model has leaders building commitment, confidence, and buy-ins to garner staff support. Leaders’ actions may seem manipulative therefore shared leadership is thought to counteract manipulation (Wong & Nicotera, 2007). Although this study has focused on the curricular and instructional standard, it is important to note the other four principalship standards contain elements of transformational leadership. Any institution’s long term goals and accompanying vision to reach those goals is a key component of transformational leadership (Tekleab et al., 2008). Transformational leaders may be crucial in helping their staffs to accepting and implement challenging accountability and reform practices. And these practices can change often and quickly (Wong & Nicotera, 2007). The ability to rally the troops around the school’s goals and allow all stakeholders to play a part in bringing the vision to fruition is a desired outcome for transformational leaders. Such leaders may not only get higher achievement performances from those they lead but may also convert those they lead into new leaders (Avolio & Bass, 2000).
To this point, most well known transformational leaders have come from politics or business (Birla, 2009). The spiritual leader Dalai Lama successfully established a powerful Tibetan base in India and other countries. Singapore’s leader, Lee Kuan Yew, turned the small colonial outpost into a prosperous economic hub. By transplanting and utilizing best practices from business and government, school leaders may help make schools the powerful learning institutions society has called them to be. Birla (2009) has identified seven lessons that are commonalities in the transformational leadership style. There is a great, yet simplistic vision for an organization and the leader is able to promote that vision to the organization’s people. The leader leads by example and action and in doing so connects with the people’s cognitive and affective abilities to help that vision become one for all and all for one. There is also concern and understanding for the organization’s people and their situations yet caring about people does not hinder the organization’s vision. Transformational leaders have sound minds and their humble actions demonstrate they’re not afraid to admit mistakes and act on corrective behaviors. The leader listens to the people’s ideas and allows for constructive criticism among peers and chooses great ideas and gives credit to the thinkers’ ideas. The institution’s place in society is kept at the forefront as the leader always looks to the organization’s future and keeps the mission and its impact on stakeholders as the driving force. Finally, a leader who dons the cap of grace and wisdom isn’t afraid to manipulate his role as needed, even to the point of taking another post in the organization or leaving, if need be.

Transformational leaders often gather their knowledge and ability from past experiences and circumstances. Classroom teacher experience would be the experience to help the principal with curricular and leadership duties. Rarely is sincere and purposeful teaching and leadership an easy time. Rarely is sincere and purposeful teaching in which a difference is made in students’ lives an easy experience. Rarely is sincere and purposeful leadership in which a
difference is made is students’ lives and teachers’ careers an easy experience. However, the aforementioned ideas about leadership may be one large piece of the puzzle for bringing about powerful teaching and learning institutions.

**The Importance of Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy is a derivative of Bandura’s social cognitive theory. Bandura (1995) defined self-efficacy as:

> The belief in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action to manage prospective situations. It influences the choices we make, the effort we put forth, how long we persist when we confront obstacles and in the face of failure, and how we feel. (p. 2)

Pajares (2002) explains self-efficacy occurs when a person uses self-reflection and self-monitoring to make sense of an experience, explores their thoughts and beliefs about it, evaluates their actions and the outcomes that result, and modifies their thinking and behavior accordingly so that they are likely to experience greater success on their next attempt. Hunzicker, Lukowiak, Huffman, and Johnson (2009) purport “the more opportunities both children and adults have to engage in this reflective process, the more self-efficacious they will become.” The sources of self-efficacy include mastery experiences, social modeling, social persuasion, and psychological responses. Putting forth effort to overcome an obstacle or learning a new activity is the best way to develop an efficacious attitude. As people pursue new opportunities it is normal to have setbacks and this builds resiliency and confidence to meet new challenges. Social models possess capabilities that allow them to succeed in meeting goals and along the way inspire people with similar traits to do the same for themselves. Social models would be good mentors. If a social model fails at something then this could lead to the observer failing as well. Social persuasion involves efficacious people telling others about their realistic capabilities and then
providing encouraging situations and settings where they will experience success. The perceptions and interpretations people have about their emotional states have an effect on efficacious beliefs. The way a person feels affectively also impacts the physiological feelings. Tiredness and pain as a result of trying to meet a goal or overcome an obstacle can result in feelings of failure and reinforce feelings of low self-efficacy. People with higher levels of self-efficacy can use feelings of stress to motivate and encourage themselves to persevere towards higher levels of achievement (Bandura, 1994).

People cognizant of their efficacious perceptions tend to view challenging situations as a force to be conquered rather than feared and ignored. Self-efficacy offers an explanation for how people think, behave and feel based upon their beliefs in their ability to be successful in specific situations. Self-efficacy plays a significant function in the approach people take to obtain goals, complete tasks, and overcome obstacles (Wagner, 2008). The development of self-efficacy begins in the earliest years of childhood and continues to unfold throughout the lifespan as one acquires new skills, experiences, and knowledge. Self-efficacy is related to psychological states and motivation (Wagner, 2008). Self-efficacy has long been an important construct in education; however research has primarily focused on teacher self-efficacy rather than the construct’s use to understand behaviors of principals (McCollum & Kajs, 2009).

**Self-Efficacy and the Principalship**

Self-efficacy is one’s belief in one’s ability to succeed in specific situations (Wagner, 2008). Helm (2010) asserts:

The things leaders do comes from a strong knowledge base of the leadership position, confidence they can get the job done, shared vision with the people who are needed to accomplish the feat, and finally the patience and fortitude to keep from giving up. (para. 9).
McCollum, Kajs, and Minter (2006), along with McCollum and Kajs (2007) have aligned Bandura’s classic definition with the school leadership occupation to form a school administrator’s self-efficacy as “a school administrator’s self-referent judgments of his/her capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required” (p. 396) for successful school leadership and reaching desired school outcomes” (2009, p.30). The eight dimensions of principals’ efficacy include: (a) instructional leadership and staff development, (b) school climate development, (c) community collaboration, (d) data-based decision making aligned with legal and ethical principles, (e) resources and facility management, (f) use of community resources, (g) communication in a diverse environment, and (h) development of a school vision (McCollum & Kajs, p. 30). Research into the self-efficacy beliefs of educational leaders’ competence to generate adequate instructional environments has not received as much attention as self-efficacy of teachers and students. However, work by Oplatka (2004) reveals middle and later career administrators have higher self-efficacy for instructional leadership. More recent work by Smith, Guarino, Strom, and Adams (2006) found these principals with higher self-efficacy in regard to instructional leadership tended to work in larger schools or in schools with higher proportions of free/reduced lunch students. Interestingly, principals working in schools with higher proportions of free/reduced lunch populations had higher levels of self-efficacy in management skills. Principals working with higher populations of free/reduced lunch students reported spending more time working with instructional issues. Female principals also reported spending more time on instructional leadership issues as well as expressively higher self-efficacy for instructional leadership. In general, the study’s findings reported that as the complexity of the principal’s jobs increased, so did the levels of the principals’ self-efficacy. An encouraging finding was that even though principals reported they spent greater amounts of time on management issues, their efforts at creating an academic environment conducive to meeting high
stakes testing requirements were leading to productive outcomes (Smith et al., 2006). Principals’ self-efficacy beliefs and the relationship with day-to-day leadership practices is an important aspect of the leadership arena and additional knowledge may impact the career’s future.

**Summary of Literature Review Findings**

Citing data from the National Center for Education Statistics, Johnson (2008) states that “nearly all school principals have significant teaching experience…Clearly, the vast majority of principals bring strong teaching experience to the table” (Johnson, 2008, p. 7526). The challenges facing today’s educational leaders are time consuming and require a multitude of abilities. Instructional and curricular leadership compose one of five Ohio principalship standards. Within this standard, there are twenty elements describing what is expected in the principalship. Within the scope of the principalship, daily activities need to be prioritized so to allow the building to operate as one cohesive unit working to achieve learning goals that will bring forth the benefits of a powerful, yet achievable vision. Principals need to meld together the requirements of middle level management and the requirements of chief instructional and curricular manager for all school stakeholders. The school leader must put to rest the school’s past failures and mistakes while keeping alive the lessons learned; maintain the present operations within a continuum of highly effective teachers and individualized student achievement; all the while keeping at the forefront the school’s future will be affected by changes in which the principal has control over some and no control over others. With many current administrators citing the need for more curricular and instructional leadership training along with teacher coaching strategies to be embedded in administrative preparation programs, it may be helpful to determine if those teachers with more years of classroom experience are better prepared to meet the demands of the instructional standard (Johnson, 2008). Knowledge is coming forth to demonstrate the benefits of transformational leadership, critical self-reflection,
and compassion for students and staff as being beneficial to the administrator’s self-efficacy.

Teachers who demonstrate transformational leadership along with compassion for students may very well have high self-efficacy for teaching that when coupled with an educational leadership study would allow for a natural transition from the classroom to the administrator’s office.
CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationships (to the extent they exist) between school principals’ educational/professional experiences and perceived self-efficacy on Ohio’s Principalship Instruction Standard Two. The focus on experience gained both in the classroom and other career endeavors may provide for valuable curricular and leadership characteristics that lead to a heightened sense of self-efficacy in principals. Specific self perceived leadership characteristics of interest in this study included the 20 elements under Ohio’s Principalship Instruction Standard Two. Other important principal considerations included prior experience as well as academic preparation and school setting where presently serving.

This quantitative study will involve a cross-sectional survey of practicing principals in Ohio public schools. Four particular factors helped set the stage for this study. First, Kells (1993) believes elementary principals “occupy a unique vantage point from which to perceive the influence of conditions which affect the academic achievement of their students” (p. 617). Second, principals need to be master “diagnosticians” rather than have experience in all leadership areas. However, instructional leadership is unique and set apart from the other leadership areas and principals cannot simply delegate instructional leadership duties to others (Glanz, 2006). Third, recent data indicate “a significant, positive correlation between effective school leadership and student achievement. An effect size of .25 between leadership and student achievement indicates that as leadership improves, so does student achievement” (Glanz, p. 4). Finally, self-awareness about one’s own leadership practices likely leads to better productivity and gratification in the workplace (Tekleab et al., 2008).

This chapter discusses data sources, the sample and the conceptual framework that guides the design of this study. This chapter illustrates and rationalizes the statistical models used in
determining the relationship between specific variables and principal self-efficacy in instructional and curricular leadership. A description of how variables were operationalized is provided, giving particular attention to how the measure of instructional and curricular leadership self-efficacy was calculated. There is also a brief summary on how the results of multiple regression are interpreted.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions guide the design of this study:

1. Is there a relationship between principal’s years of teaching experiences and perceptions of self-efficacy in instructional and curricular leadership?
2. Is there a relationship between a principal’s gender and perceptions of self-efficacy in instructional and curricular leadership?
3. Is there a relationship between principals’ ethnicity and perceptions of self-efficacy in instructional and curricular leadership?
4. Is there a relationship between prior career experiences and perceptions of self-efficacy in instructional and curriculum leadership?
5. Is there a relationship between principals’ earned degree(s) and license(s) and perceptions of self-efficacy in instructional and curricular leadership?
6. Is there a relationship between principals’ former teacher related duties (i.e. committees) and perceptions of self-efficacy in instructional and curricular leadership?
7. Is there a relationship between principals’ current principalship settings and perceptions of self-efficacy in instructional and curricular leadership?

**Research Design and Method**

Thoughtful, practical educational research is limited in itself because “research takes place within particular social and political formations, its impact will, in turn, be shaped by the
ideas and values that prevail. Educational research, like all educational activity, is politically driven and value-saturated” (Nixon, Walker, & Clough, 2003). The goal of educational research should be to increase and embellish the democratic knowledge-making and public education within a practical method (Nixon et al., 2003). According to Paechter (2003), good educational research is rigorous in planning, execution, and reporting; good research is transparent in its methods; and good research should be done within a context of being explicitly ethically justifiable. What follows is a discussion of this study’s population and sample, instrumentation, data collection processes, potential threats to internal validity, data analysis, assumptions, and how results were interpreted.

**Population and Sample**

Ohio had approximately 5,171 principals in its public schools during the fall 2007 school year, according to the most recent statistics available from the National Center for Education Statistics (2009). Ohio’s public school administrators constituted the accessible population for this study. The sample consisted of those administrators of Ohio’s Pre-K-12 public schools who choose to respond to the computer survey. Administrators included both head and assistant principals in elementary, middle and junior high, and secondary schools.

**Instrumentation**

A cross-sectional survey consisting of 33 closed-structured questions along with seven short-answer questions were available for self-administration for the target population (see Appendix A). The 20 demographic questions were written by the researcher, whereas the 20 questions related to Standard 2 were developed by the Ohio Department of Education for use by educators for personal evaluation (ODE, 2008). The 20 questions exploring principals’ knowledge and skills related to Standard 2 are Likert style questions scaled 0 through 4 with 0 representing “Never” and 1 representing “Rarely,” 2 representing “Sometimes,” 3 representing
“Frequently” and 4 representing “Always” for each element. Cronbach's alpha analysis of the items yielded a .928, suggesting adequate internal consistency (McMillan, 2004). Principals conducted a self-analysis in accordance with each element to determine an indicator ranking of never, rarely, sometimes, frequently, or always. All Standard 2 questions were selection item type questions. The self-perceived performances on the 20 items making up the Standards for Principals evaluation tool were aggregated and served as the dependent variable in this study.

Categorical independent variables include gender, ethnicity, building level for principalship, grade level(s) and academic discipline(s) taught, non-educational professional experience(s), teaching certificate and licensure, types of bachelors and master’s degrees, types of administrative and doctorate specialists degrees, and teaching duties lying outside the classroom (See Table 1). Quantitative continuous variables include years of experience for teaching and principalship and number of earned bachelors and masters degrees.

Table 1. Independent Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
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<td>Academic Content Taught</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-educational Professional Experience</td>
<td>Categorical</td>
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<tr>
<td>Certification/Licensure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Type(s) of Masters Degree(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Type of Doctoral Degree</td>
<td>Categorical</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Categorical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Setting</td>
<td>Categorical</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Years in the Principalship</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Earned Bachelors</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Earned Masters</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Collection

The survey was administered to the accessible population via the Survey Monkey computer application. The survey was available to respondents for three weeks. According to Garson (2008), Survey Monkey is widely used in survey methods, including dissertation research. Although difficult to obtain samples due to biases related to using the web, with the target population for this study it is assumed that all principals have computer and web access. Principals’ emails were obtained from ODE data as well as the researcher gathering principals’ emails from urban and rural districts’ web sites from all areas of Ohio to ensure adequate representation on the survey. The researcher had concerns that not all principals’ emails were accurately listed on ODE data.

Threats to Internal Validity

Bias is of great concern with survey research. There may be unconscious bias on the part of the researcher (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). Bias may be found in the wording of particular questions or it may be written into conclusions and findings. Systematic bias may occur with instrument errors (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). To help prevent bias and other ambiguities on the survey, it is important to pretest the survey (Garson, 2008). The instrument was pilot tested by 12 current/former educators (principals and teachers) via Survey Monkey before distribution to Ohio principals. Only slight revisions were made to the instrument after pilot testing.

Computers themselves are vulnerable as is the location and time in which the respondent is answering questions. Unfortunately, some respondents may have found the survey cumbersome and did not want to be burdened; therefore some principals chose not to respond. Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) assert:

In addition to doing as much as possible to reduce nonresponse, researchers should obtain during the survey or in other ways, as much demographic information as they can on the
respondents. This not only permits a more complete description of the sample, but also may support an argument for representativeness—"if it turns out that the sample is very similar to the population with regard to those demographics that are pertinent to the study. (p. 409)

Data Analysis

Gravetter and Wallnau (1999) state that, “the general goal of descriptive statistics is to summarize and describe a set of data (p. 100). A composite score was computed by adding the Standard 2 responses. Also, the sample size along with the overall percentage of survey returns will be reported in Chapter 4. Categorical and continuous data were reported as percentages as the frequency of occurrence was of interest. “It is common for more than one factor to influence an outcome. Fitting regression models to data involving two or more predictor models is one of the most widely used statistical procedures” (Sheather, 2009, p. 125). Multiple regression, according to Fraenkel and Wallen (2006), is a technique that enables researchers to determine a correlation between a criterion variable and the best combination of two or more predictor variables (pp. 338-339). Multiple regression is appropriate for this study as there are a large number of independent, or predictor variables. Also, the researcher’s intent is to ascertain possible relationships between the independent variables in the model and a continuous dependent variable.

Assumptions

The use of multiple regression to ascertain relationships between the dependent variable and independent variables in a data set rely upon certain assumptions concerning the study’s variables. Osborne and Waters (2002) exert the following assumptions: variables have normal distribution, variables are linear in nature, and the variance of residuals is uniform across the levels of the independent variables.
Interpreting Results from Multiple Regression

Multiple regression uses the general equation: \( Y_i = b_1x_{1i} + b_2x_{2i} + \ldots + b_nx_{ni} + c \), such that \( Y \) represents the dependent variable. The b’s are regression coefficients, the amount the dependent variable \( Y \) changes when the corresponding independent changes by one unit. The c represents the constant, which is where the regression line intercepts the Y axis, representing the amount the dependent \( Y \) will be when all the independent variables are 0. If a correlation is discovered, the scores within a certain range of the dependent variable are in alliance with scores within a certain range of an independent variable. Multiple regression output includes a model summary measuring how well the overall model, made up of predictor, or independent variables, is able to predict the criterion variable. \( R^2 \) and Adjusted \( R^2 \) range between 0 and 1 and indicate the proportion of \( Y \) variability as explained by the model. The latter of these—the Adjusted \( R^2 \)—is a more conservative estimate that adjusts for potential biases in the model.

With regard to regression coefficients, Bs represent the unstandardized values for predicting the dependent variable from the independent variable. Regression coefficients can be interpreted a number of ways, depending on the type of independent variable. For example, a continuous independent variable’s regression coefficient would be interpreted such that for every unit change in the continuous independent variable, one would expect X increase in the dependent variable, holding all other variables constant. For categorical independent variables, say gender, one would expect unit change in the dependent variable for one gender in comparison to the other, holding all other variables constant.

Limitations of the Study

A major limitation to correlational research is the inability to establish causation. When a researcher is using multiple variables to establish significant relationships with another variable of interest, there is a much greater possibility of finding some significant relationships based
upon the capitalization of chance. This problem can be made worse if there is a low response rate. Redundant variables can be an issue in correlational research when many variables are involved.
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

The data resulting from the principalship survey were summarized through descriptive statistics and quantitative analysis. Survey responses given by Ohio principals have allowed for a collective look at the broad expanse of experiences and situations that help to define current principals’ self-perceptions of their curricular and instructional leadership abilities. Specifically, the exploratory study gathered principals’ self-efficacious perceptions about 20 curricular and instructional elements that are meant to “result in higher levels of achievement for all students” (ODE, 2008, p. 15). The first section of this chapter will reveal demographic characteristics of the Ohio public school principals responding to the Principalship survey. This will be followed by a closer look at findings that may help to establish possible relationships between the variables in the seven research questions. It is important to clarify that this research is not aimed at identifying specific cause and effect relationships, rather to establish that certain behaviors may be associated with particular outcomes. In this case the outcome is the principal’s self-perceptions of his or her abilities to lead instructional and curricular activities. An individual may then come to the conclusion that if a principal perceives him or herself as frequently or always completing the required tasks, then that principal exhibits ideal curricular leadership traits. Perceived self-efficacy, when strong, allows people to attain greater results (Bandura, 1994). Escabi (1988) asserts principals that perceive themselves as being more participating leaders conduct more productive schools. The survey asked principals to identify their gender and ethnicity. They were asked to share their current principalship experience and prior teaching experience along with other career activities. Other demographic questions centered on earned educational degrees. The instructional and curriculum portion of the survey asked principals to rate themselves on 20 elements of practice that form Ohio’s Principal’s Self-Assessment Tool: Standards-Based Guiding Questions. Principals rated themselves according to a scale of
“never,” “rarely,” “sometimes,” “frequently,” or “always.” Ratings of never, rarely, or sometimes are to be considered areas for growth, according to the ODE (2008). For purposes of this study, a composite score was formed for each principal based upon their responses to the twenty questions. This composite score of curricular and instructional leadership is the dependent variable of interest.

**Description of the Participants**

Ohio’s public school principals were the respondents in this study. This included public community and charter schools as well as career centers. All principals whose emails were listed in the ODE’s database as well as principals whose emails were listed on the district’s web pages were invited to participate in the survey. Knowing that the state’s database lacked many principals’ emails, the researcher visited districts’ web pages from northeastern, southeastern, southwestern, northwestern, and central Ohio’s rural, local and urban schools to broaden the opportunity for as many principals as possible to participate. Principals overseeing elementary, middle/junior high and secondary schools were included. The Principalship survey was sent via email to 3104 principals. Three hundred and fifty principals responded and 334 principals completed the entire survey for a completion rate of 95.4%.

**Descriptive Statistics for Principalship Personal Demographics**

Males and females responding to the survey were 55.4% and 44.6%, respectively. The ethnicity responses seem to coincide with the national trend as an overwhelming number of responses indicated Caucasian at 94.1% followed by African American at 5%. While 50.4% of respondents are currently principals of elementary schools, 17.3% lead middle/junior highs and 25.2% are leading secondary schools. Seven percent reported a principalship at a multilevel facility. Responding principals have from one to 38 years of principal experience (N=321), with
a mean number of 10.69 years of experience and multiple modal numbers with 3 years of principalship as the lowest modal value.

**Descriptive Statistics for Instructional Standard 2 Elements**

Principal respondents perceived themselves as frequently or always performing the duties required on eighteen of the twenty curricular and instructional elements. According to the Educator Standards Board (2007) “All Ohio teachers and principals are expected to meet the Proficient level” (p. 8). The element with the highest percentage of proficient self-efficacy, at approximately 85%, was “I ensure the curriculum, instruction and assessments are aligned with the academic content standards.” The element with the lowest percentage of proficient self-efficacy, at approximately 47%, was “I understand effective acceleration process and work with teachers to establish structures that meet student needs and support state and local policies.” Proficient self-efficacious beliefs seem to run consistently through a majority of the elements.

**Descriptive Statistics for Prior Teaching Experiences and Licensure**

Current principals’ teaching experiences range from zero to 47 years (N=320), with a mean number of 14.02 years teaching and a modal number of 10 years teaching. The first quartile is eight years of experience while the median is 12 years experience, and the third quartile is 19 years of experience. With respect to district type, 42.5% reported teaching in a rural location, 22.6% taught at an urban location, 32.6% taught at a suburban location, and 3.3% taught at either private or charter schools. With respect to curricular and instructional duties alongside teaching, 71.3% of the respondents reported participating on a school wide committee that suggested policies and strategies to move the school forward with its improvement plan and mission statement. With respect to teacher observations, 26% reported that while teaching they were involved with observing peers and providing feedback as part of a teacher evaluation program. A majority of principals reported their most recent teaching licenses consisted of either
a permanent at 36.4% or professional at 58.7%. About 5% possessed a two-year provisional or some other type of license.

**Descriptive Statistics for Coursework and Earned Degrees**

In regard to degrees earned, 91.5% earned one bachelor’s degree while 8.5% earned two bachelor’s degrees. In regard to type of bachelor degree, 85% possess an education bachelor’s degree while about 8% possess a liberal arts bachelor’s degree. The remaining bachelor’s degrees are business, social services, science, or some other area. A majority (83.9%) possess one master’s degree and 16.1% possess two master’s degrees. As one would expect, 66.3% of principals reported an earned master’s degree in educational administration and supervision and 9.1% have a masters in curriculum and instruction. Only 27.3% have earned an administrative specialist license with a majority being held in curriculum/instructional/professional development or education staff personnel administration. Surprisingly, 23.2% or 79 of the principal respondents have started post masters work or earned an educational specialists degree (Ed.S.), and 10.6%, or 36 principals have earned a doctorate degree (Ed.D. or Ph.D.). A majority of the doctoral or educational specialist coursework is in educational leadership or curriculum and instruction.

**Descriptive Statistics for Careers Prior To Education Career**

Participants were asked to share prior career experiences before entering the field of education. Interestingly, sixty-one percent responded they did not have a prior career experience and it is assumed their entire professional career has been in education. The business realm garnered the largest percentage at 19.9% for educational leaders with prior career experience. The area of youth development organizations employed 7.9% of respondents before they became principals. The military had the efforts and talents of 4.1% of respondents before they entered the education arena; 2.6% of current principals worked in the social services. Finally, 4.7%
reported working in some other occupation before becoming an educator. These occupations were varied and included professional musician, professional athlete, police dispatcher, furniture refinisher, and underground coal miner, among others.

**Descriptive Statistics for Composite Score on Curriculum and Instruction Standard 2**

A composite score for each respondent (N=341) was achieved through aggregating responses from the 20 curricular and instructional survey questions. It was possible to earn a score between zero and 80. This study’s data revealed a range of 18-80 with a mean score of 58 and a standard deviation of 10.8 points.
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<th>Max.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
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</table>

Valid N (listwise) 305

*Serves as the dependent variable in this study*
Multiple Regression Analysis

Teacher Experience and Curricular/Instructional Efficacy

If researchers are able to put all the different variables they have measured into one analysis, and make sure that any measurement of the effect of one variable on the criterion variable takes account of the fact that other variables may also relate to the criterion variable, then multiple linear regression is being utilized (Muijs, 2004). The first research question explores whether a relationship exists between principals’ years of teaching experience and self-perceptions of their curricular and instructional leadership. A multiple linear regression was calculated with the enter method predicting principals’ curricular/instructional composite scores (CIS composite score) based on the 34 predictor values. Four values were excluded as a result of a .000 tolerance. The regression equation was significant \((p > .05)\) with an adjusted \(R^2\) of .080. Current principalship at the elementary level was an excluded variable due to a tolerance of .000. Years of teaching experience was not a significant predictor for the CIS composite score (see Table 3). However, the multiple regression suggests principals who had taught at suburban public schools are predictors for higher CIS composite scores \((p = .36)\). Field (2009) teaches “the smaller the value of Sig. (and the larger the value of \(t\)) the greater the contribution of that predictor” (p. 8).
Table 3. Multiple Regression Analysis

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<tr>
<th>Variables in the Model</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>t</th>
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<td>Multilevel Principal</td>
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<td>2.546</td>
<td>.812</td>
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</table>

*Notes.* Valid N= 305  
Adj. R²  = .080  
*Significant at .10; **Significant at .05; ***Significant at .01

Gender and Curricular and Instructional Efficacy

The multiple linear regression was calculated with the enter method predicting principals’ CIS composite scores with gender serving as one of the 34 independent variables. Gender was found to be a significant variable with (p<.01), such that for female principals, there is a 7.080 increase in the predicted CIS composite score, holding all other variables constant.
Ethnicity and Curricular and Instructional Efficacy

Ethnicity was not found to be a significant predictor of CIS composite scores within this study. The Caucasian variable served as the referent group. However, there were very few respondents representing the other ethnic groups. Considering these low numbers of minority groups represented in the sample (and in educational administration in general), this may explain that lack of significance for this set of variables.

Prior Career Activities and Curricular and Instruction Efficacy

Concerning prior career experiences (e.g. military experience, etc.) before entering the educational field, multiple regression analysis did not reveal any significant relationship between the predictors and the outcome. It would seem that career experiences prior to entering education did not significantly help or hinder current principals form their efficacious curricular and instructional beliefs. However, there were some significant findings albeit at lower significance levels (p<.10) for prior teaching experience. Using charter schools as the referent group this study found that principals with former teaching experience in urban public schools, rural public schools, and suburban public schools were significantly related to CIS scores in relation to former charter school teachers. In the case of suburban teachers, this finding was significant at the .05 level. Principals who had previous teaching experience in these school types had predicted CIS scores 9-11 points higher than principal counterparts with previous charter school teaching experience.

Earned Degrees and Licensure and Curricular and Instructional Efficacy

The principals’ amassed degrees, teacher licensure, and areas of study were taken into consideration within the multiple regression analysis. A bachelor’s degree in liberal arts and an earned master’s degree in educational administration and supervision served as the referent group for these sets of variables. The number of earned bachelor’s degrees and area of study for
the bachelor’s degree was not a significant factor. A majority of respondents reported earning one masters degree, but there were a small number of respondents (N=55, 16%) who earned two. Interestingly, earning an additional masters was associated with a significant decrease in CIS scores (p<.05). The type of teacher licensure was not a significant factor. Surprisingly, the curriculum and instructional masters degree was also not significant nor was post masters graduate work (see Table 3).

**Former Teacher Related Duties and Curricular and Instructional Leadership**

This study sought to determine if there was a relationship between former teacher duties (not including classroom instructional duties) and their effects upon the principals’ self-perceived curricular leadership abilities. The regression model demonstrated the significance of serving on a school wide community while teaching (p<.05). Teachers observing and evaluating fellow teachers was shown to not be a significant predictor variable for the CIS composite score.

**Current Principalship Settings and Curricular and Instructional Leadership**

Principals currently presiding over middle schools or junior high schools have a relationship with CIS composite scores more so than those presiding over high schools or multilevel campuses. Principals at middle/junior high schools were significantly (p<.05) related to CIS scores, such that for middle/junior high principals the predicted CIS score would be 4.59 points higher than for elementary school principals that served as the referent group.

**Principalship Experience and Curricular and Instructional Leadership**

Years of principalship experience was found to be a significant and important variable in the model (p<.01). This finding suggests that more experience may result in a greater sense of self-efficacy in curriculum and instruction.
Summary

While the proportion of $Y$ variability as explained by the model ($\text{Adj. } R^2 = .080$) is small, this study did find a number of significant relationships. The analyses suggest significant relationships between gender, school-wide committee service as a former teacher, environments in which teaching experience was gained (e.g. rural, suburban, urban), years of principal experience, middle school principalship experience and the CIS composite score. The results may suggest that principals gain confidence in their curricular and leadership abilities during their time as principals. Perhaps not so easy to explain is the significance of prior teaching experience in suburban public schools as well as principals who currently reside as leaders of middle or junior high schools.

The analyses did not suggest significant relationships between academic degrees (except for number of master’s degrees), teacher licensure, and former career experiences and the CIS composite score. About 20% of current principals reported having been in business before entering education while about 8% reported having worked in a youth development organization. Four percent reported to have had military experience prior to starting an educational career. With an average teaching experience of 14 years, the principals’ years of teaching experience did not seem to impact the CIS composite score as much as gender, years of principalship experience, and serving on school committees as a teacher.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between Ohio elementary, middle, and secondary public school administrators’ prior professional and academic experiences brought to the job and principal self-efficacy on the elements of Ohio’s principalship instructional standard. The purpose of this chapter is to define the limits of the collected data as well as integrate the analyses of the data within the contextual theory and practice of educational leadership. Gronn (1991) believes through the years many scholars outside the realm of leadership have fragmented the study of leadership and this “proliferation of contributors has tended to impede fruitful cross-fertilization in the field and hampered a ready diffusion of findings” (p. 2). Gronn (1991) also suggests that scholars within education and educational leadership are making important contributions towards leaders and their capacities and actions, especially with values and moral leadership and institutional theories of leadership. It is important to remember useful research should be quickly applicable in helping schools, helping shape government policy into meaningful and utilizable policy, and furthering knowledge within any of the educational domains (Paechter, 2003). The hope and intent of this exploratory study’s author is to enhance, in one way or another, the understanding of the magnitude of a principal’s influence on students’ learning, teachers’ instruction, and the school’s culture and practice of curriculum delivery.

Before going forth, it would be wise to revisit self-perception and the CIS composite score relationship. As one will recall self-perception is an awareness of oneself; or self-concept. According to Zigarmi et al. (2004) self-perception is dependent upon self-awareness and self-esteem and can be erroneous and may suffer from biases. Zigarmi et al. found “many factors come into play when you evaluate or rate yourself. The accuracy of one’s self-perceptions is dependent on intelligence, self-esteem, ability to self-observe, and capacity to seek and retain
personally relevant information” (p. 90). How principals perceive themselves may be different from how others perceive them. Self-ratings can be pretentious and this needs to be kept in mind during the discussion.

Principals were asked to rate the frequency of what they believe is their ability to complete each of the instructional standard’s elements. According to the ODE (2008), principals perceiving themselves as “never,” “rarely,” or “sometimes” completing an element would consider that element an area for growth. The responses “frequently” or “always” implies proficient capabilities for an element. Eighteen of the twenty instructional and curriculum standard 2 questions had a majority of responses marked frequently or always.

According to the Ohio entry year principal program (2007), “as instructional leaders, effective principals are strong educators, anchoring their work on central issues of learning, teaching and continuous school improvement. Their primary responsibility is delivering results for students.” Also in the Ohio entry year principal program, under instructional standard 2, are the mandates to assess the staff for professional development priorities and to monitor effects of teaching strategies, curricular materials and educational technologies for student achievement of all students. Robbins and Alvy (2004) share “Beginning with their first day on the job, new principals must send a message of instructional support” (p. 89).

It has been suggested throughout this study that the number of years of teaching experience may affect a principal’s curricular instructional composite score (CIS composite score). The rationale was the more years of classroom experience then the higher the CIS score. However, the multiple regression model did not produce a significant correlation between the years of teaching experience and CIS composite score. It is interesting to note the variable of teaching in a suburban public school did have a significance of $p = .036$, with 32% of survey respondents having taught in this setting. Principals’ responses for “I serve as a model for
effective teaching” included about 1% for never, about 8% for rarely, about 39% for sometimes, about 38% for frequently, and about 15% for always. This may be a cause for concern as the importance of the principal as the instructional leader has been established. About half of the study’s principals did not perceive themselves as effective teacher models. Cotton (2003) comments ‘Women tend to have spent more time as teachers before becoming principals as men have” (p. 53). Similarly, to other researchers this study found women to have significantly higher self-efficacy for instructional leadership (Smith et al., 2006). Indeed, it seems teacher experience can help with curricular and instructional leadership. All school leaders, whether an assistant or lead principal, whether rookie or experienced, need to recognize and demonstrate proficient instructional pedagogy. Many experienced principals are asked to mentor new principals. This sampling of Ohio principals would suggest their teaching experience was a positive precursor to their becoming a school leader.

Future studies replicating years of teacher experience prior to a principalship may offer findings that better support a positive correlation with curricular and instructional leadership. Future studies may want to collect teachers’ perceptions of their principals’ instructional and curricular leadership capabilities. It would be interesting to compare principals’ self-perceptions with the teachers’ perceptions of their principal. Zigarmi et al. (2004) assert “others perceptions are usually more reliable than your own” (p. 90). It was the intent of this researcher to collect data on principals’ building test scores through building IRN numbers to observe for possible correlations between higher CIS scores and higher student test scores. This was not possible due to fewer reported IRN numbers than anticipated. Additional studies may want to incorporate independent variables beyond leadership self-perceptions. This would likely have improved the model quality and increase the adjusted $R^2$. 
As previously stated, this study found a significant relationship between the dichotomous variable of serving on a school wide committee while teaching. Often, these committees have obligations to establish visions, goals, and activities that will play a part in fulfilling the school’s improvement plan. A number of these respondents may have worked for principals who modeled the transformative leadership style. Avolio and Bass (2002) believe leaders and followers have a relationship whereby:

New ideas and creative problem solutions are solicited from followers, who are included in the process of addressing problems and finding solutions. Followers are encouraged to try new approaches, and their ideas are not criticized if they differ from the leader’s ideas. (p. 3)

Committee work is often the forum for learning to analyze and utilize data to implement school improvement plans and establish various building goals. Teacher committee members may have to report the committee’s work to grade level colleagues and collect grade level feedback and report back to the committee. In Ohio, building leadership teams, or BLT, are responsible for developing the school’s improvement plan and informing colleagues of their respective roles in meeting the building’s goals for the year. Building committee members are likely to go forth to promote ideas and activities to colleagues in classrooms, hallways and lunchrooms. Often, teachers with a disposition for leadership, those who exhibit positive self-esteem, feelings of significance, competence, and power, and high self-efficacy (Hunzicker, Lukowiak, Huffman, & Johnson, 2009), are important players on building data and leadership committees.

Observing peers was the other teacher related activity measured in this study. Only 26.1% reported participating in this activity while teaching. Observing peers and providing feedback as part of a teacher evaluation program was not a significant variable. Innovative
teacher evaluation programs may include experienced teachers evaluating one another and evaluating new teachers as part of a mentor relationship. The experience of observing colleagues and providing feedback may foreshadow the interest and capacity for a teacher to become an educational leader. A majority of the respondents (about 78%) responded as frequently or always making systematic classroom visits and providing feedback on classroom instruction. Principals in this study seem confident in their observation, evaluation, and monitoring duties as the majority of respondents also responded as frequently or always monitoring the use of various instructional methods and formats to make learning experiences relative and responsive to the needs of students with different abilities and from diverse backgrounds as well as monitoring the identification and instruction of students of diverse abilities, and support teachers and staff in implementing state and local policies. It is possible that principals gained their perceived ability from their principalship tenure.

The number of years of principalship seems to be a significant variable in the relationship with the CIS score. This would seem to be a logical finding as it makes sense the more experience one has the greater the efficacious beliefs, and hopefully more proficient with abilities. This study’s findings are in concurrence with those of Oplatka (2004) who found “middle and later career principals have higher self-efficacy for instructional leadership” (p. 8). The mean years of principal experience is 10.69. The first quartile is four years experience, the median is nine years experience, and the third quartile is 15 years experience. It may be helpful to find strategies encouraging experienced, successful principals to finish their careers in that capacity as they are not only a valuable resource for their schools but also as mentors for Ohio’s entry year principal program. Additional research may be helpful by identifying successful, experienced principals and completing case studies on their careers. There may be wisdom in determining if leadership professionals outside the educational field may be suited for working in
central office administrative posts rather than loosing quality principals to district or county-wide leadership positions. Fuller and Young (2009) refer to 1998 and 2000 studies showing principal shortages resulted from a dramatic increase in retirement. Fuller and Young (2009) also note there has been little research directed toward mobility and attrition of school leaders.

The middle school/junior high level of current principalship was also a significant variable (p<.05). George (2009) characterizes leaders of middle schools as molding the organization and programs to specifically meet the needs of young adolescents through interdisciplinary team organization, flexible block scheduling, and developing instructional styles where groups of teachers and students are together for multiple years. George (2009) shares that middle level leaders have impacted the public school spectrum as they have “transformed the role of school leaders from building managers into instructional leaders” (p. 8). George also relates middle schools and parent and community relations were “radically revised” (p. 8) when:

Middle school educators led the way to a new style of shared decision making in which teachers and administrators sit down with parents, and others to make the decisions that affect the school lives of all who work and study within. (p. 8)

The relationship between principals at the middle school/junior high level and CIS composite scores may be due, in part, to the collaborative nature of leaders who utilize teacher leadership. Beachum and Dentith (2004) believe while definitions of teacher leadership differ, a commonly held notion is the expanded view of leadership beyond traditional classroom boundaries. However, Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) believe the duties of teacher leaders typically have more to do with a focus on teaching and learning, rather than a focus on the management of the school. Barth (2001) believes acknowledging and supporting teacher leaders can ultimately contribute to the success of the principal. In schools that are improving in terms
of student achievement, leadership is fluid and emerging, rather than fixed (Harris, 2002).

Gender was shown to have a relationship with principals’ self-perceptions of their curriculum and instructional abilities. This study’s constituency was 55.4% male and 44.6% female. Half the principals responding to this study’s survey currently lead elementary schools and this may be the reason for the number of female responses. It is a generally accepted fact there are more women principals at the elementary level. It is also a generally accepted fact that while women make up a majority of public education’s workforce, they serve as teachers rather than as leaders. This is disheartening because Smith et al. (2006) reveals “female principals reported significantly higher self-efficacy for instructional leadership” (p. 15) and “females reported spending more time in the area of instructional leadership” (p. 16). Research by Riehl and Byrd (1979) demonstrate women administrators tend to have an average of ten more years of teaching experience than men and thus are older than most men when they enter administrative positions. The higher levels of self-efficacy in instructional leadership may be a result of more years of teaching experience before entering the principalship. A 2004 study conducted in North Carolina found men holding administrative certificates were four times more likely than women holding administrative certificates to directly enter the principalship (Fuller & Young, 2009). An additional insight to this study would be to track individual male and female responses to CIS composite questions such as “I serve as model for effective teaching” and “I monitor the use of various instructional methods and formats to make learning experiences relative and responsive to the needs of students with different abilities.” Ethnicity did not seem to be a contributing variable in a relationship with the CIS composite score.

Teacher Licensure and earned degrees did not seem to be important variables in establishing a relationship with the CIS composite score, excluding the number of masters degree variable ($p = .048$). A majority of respondents earned one masters degree and a majority of those
degrees are in educational administration and supervision. Professional development initiated within the school may be a factor, in addition to years of principal experience, for many of the standard 2 questions receiving frequently or always responses. Evaluating and implementing professional development opportunities are an important aspect of both beginning and experienced principals. Assessing the staff to determine professional development priorities is part of the principal’s entry year program. About 77% of principals responded frequently or always facilitating professional development opportunities that support classroom instruction. Even more important, almost 80% of principals participate in professional development to increase teachers’ knowledge and professional skills. The element of participation would most certainly encourage teachers and help facilitate acceptance and support for the school’s implementation plan for its learning vision. It is possible that teachers perceive principals more so as teachers within professional development activities. About 73% of principals report frequently or always keeping informed about current research and theory on effective curriculum design and instructional strategies. Almost 80% share current research and theory on effective curriculum design and instructional strategies. This suggests many of Ohio’s principals learn professional subject matter through personal readings or through book studies along with participation in instructional and curricular professional development happenings. It will be interesting to observe if the trend in post master’s degree work continues to climb higher as distance education becomes more prevalent. Approximately 34% have earned post masters degrees or are currently working on a post masters degree. Degrees and licenses are certainly important factors in developing professional abilities and attitudes and other studies involving any of the principal standards may demonstrate their importance.

The discovery of teacher licensure and earned degrees lacking predictor significance in forming the CIS score was somewhat anticipated and not a surprising outcome. Mazzeo (2003)
states “although many colleges and universities provide exemplary principal training, many more do not” (p. 4). There is an old adage about the teaching profession that implies teachers learn good teaching pedagogy not through theory and textbook lessons, rather through working in a real classroom with real students. This may be the case for principals as well. An interesting concept shared by Davis et al. (2005) is that “closer links should be made between teacher preparation, administrator preparation, and administrator professional development in order to provide a continuity of learning experiences framed around the principles of effective teaching and instructional leadership” (p. 12). According to Davis et al. most principal preparation programs are akin to one of four types: university based programs, district initiated programs, programs run by third parties, and programs managed through partnerships between stakeholders. An example of a recently developed program managed through a partnership between stakeholders is that of a suburban public school district and a state university. The “Grow Your Own Principal” program, located in Ohio, will be beneficial to both parties. Twenty teachers from the district will take university classes taught by university faculty within their school district’s buildings and through on-line education over a 14-month period. The teachers training to become principals will be immersed within the context of 21st century skills with an emphasis on the district’s unique challenges and drawing upon the experiences of the district’s current administration. The university is planning to implement this program within other districts after the completion of the first cohort. Coursework that may bring about a strong relationship with curricular and instructional efficacy may need to focus on the district’s cultural aspects, norms and values, and socioeconomic demographics and embed these unique aspects within concept driven, cohort based programs.

Approximately 40% of the surveyed principals reported a differing career prior to becoming an educator. This study did not present evidence of a relationship between prior
careers affecting CIS composite scores. Approximately half of the respondents reporting prior careers worked in a business environment. One could surmise certain business practices, especially mirroring transformational leadership components, could positively affect curricular and instructional leadership methodology. It’s not difficult to associate elements of curricular and instructional Standard 2 with Bass’s four components of transformational leadership. For example, school leaders with experience in the intellectual stimulation component may be more likely to perceive as frequently or always the elements pertaining to facilitating and participating in teacher professional development. School leaders with experience in the individualized consideration component may be more likely to perceive as frequently or always the elements pertaining to providing ongoing opportunities for teachers to reflect on their practice and provide feedback from classroom visits. School leaders with experience in the inspirational motivation component may be more likely to perceive as frequently or always the element pertaining to monitoring the identification and instruction of students with diverse abilities, and supporting teachers and staff in implementing state and local policies. Finally, school leaders with experience in the idealized influence component may be more likely to perceive as frequently or always the elements pertaining to serving as a model for effective teaching and modeling the use of data to make decisions. A revealing future study would involve surveying school leaders with prior business leadership and self-perceptions of curricular and instructional practices.

**Recommendations**

The analyses suggest significant relationships, among others, between gender and the CIS composite score, years of principal experience and the CIS composite score, and holding a current principalship at the middle/junior high level. Smith et al. (2006) found “female principals reported significantly higher self-efficacy for instructional leadership” (p. 15) and, “females reported spending more time in the area of instructional leadership than males, and
principals with higher percentages of free and reduced lunch reported similar practices” (p. 16). This would suggest the need to recruit, properly prepare, and retain female school leaders. It may also be useful to recruit leaders of schools with higher percentages of free and reduced price lunches to lecture and have dialogue concerning principalship instructional management with colleagues, especially first year principals because they struggle with providing schools with effective leadership (Adams, 1999). This exploratory study suggests principals with principalship experience have higher CIS composite scores. Therefore retention of principals should be a priority. This study suggests principals should be encouraged to remain as building principals rather than leave for central office administration. It may be fruitful to place administrators outside the field of education who want to become educational leaders into central office roles. Fuller and Young (2009) found “when the race/ethnicity of the principal matched the race/ethnicity of the largest racial/ethnic group in a school, the principal was more likely to remain in the school” (p. 3). It may be helpful to establish mentorship relations between principals found more likely to stay in a school alongside principals of schools with large proportions of minority students as Fuller and Young (1999) found they were more likely to leave the principalship. It is exciting to think about the possibilities that may emerge from dialogue and mentorship between the leadership of inner city schools with the leadership of suburban and rural schools.

This study suggests that colleges and universities and credentialing organizations may need to add additional courses or modify courses involving principals as instructional leaders for reading and writing, math, science, and social studies. Principals in training may benefit from courses on teaching pedagogy found in master’s degree programs for teaching and curriculum. Courses on student cognition development and educational sociology may be beneficial. The practice of using principals with experience, especially currently practicing middle school
principals, to teach courses in management and leadership theory should continue. Practicing master teachers, especially those from suburban public schools, may want to be recruited to teach instructional leadership courses. Integrating hands-on experiences and internships within courses would most likely be valuable. Collaboration techniques should be a continuing theme throughout coursework. Teacher leadership and distributive leadership are concepts “collaborative leaders recognize that in today’s schools, one person cannot adequately address the needs of all members of the school community” (Angelle, 2007, p. 56).

The recruitment of principals should continue to come from classrooms, particularly from suburban public schools. The NGA (2003) suggest “candidates without teaching experience will likely require additional support and coursework on curriculum and instruction” (p. 3). Research suggests that many current principals with teaching experience feel unprepared for instructional and curricular duties and would like additional training in this area. Many teachers study for administrative careers yet abstain from becoming principals. It would seem prudent to make systemic changes that result with administrative degree holders entering the principalship.

Conclusion

Helm (2010) states, “we know that there are hundreds of things a good leader can do, but the real issue is who they are, as people, as teachers, and as good leaders.” Educational leaders accrue responsibilities yearly and many do so with zeal and sacrifice. The continuing core concern for educational leaders is the instructional pedagogy used to deliver the curriculum enabling stakeholders to achieve a vision. As Connors (2004) aptly phrased it, “good teachers are the ones who never forget what it was like being a student and good school leaders are the ones who never forget what it was like to be a teacher” (p. 11).
Dear Principal,

My name is Jeff Bucher. I am a fifth grade teacher for Elida Local Schools and a graduate student at Bowling Green State University. I am writing a thesis as part of my studies in educational administration and supervision. You are invited to be part of a research study designed to identify possible relationships between principal characteristics and curriculum leadership self-efficacy. You were chosen to participate in this study because you are a prek-12 public school leader in the state of Ohio.

This study will ask you to respond to a brief survey regarding your self-perceived performance on Ohio’s Principalship Instructional Standard’s elements. The survey also includes questions about prior experience, education, and school demographics. I would estimate the time to complete this survey to be approximately 10-15 minutes. The anticipated risks to you are no greater than those normally encountered in daily life. As a voluntary participant, you are free to withdraw at anytime.

It is hoped this study will help both current and future school leaders by identifying factors that correlate with principals’ perceptions of good curriculum leadership. It is also hoped the study may provide results that can be used to improve principal recruitment strategies and principal preparation programs. Your school and your identity will not be identified by name. Information you provide on the survey will remain confidential and your identity will not be revealed. Responses will be kept in a secure, password-protected database. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you can refrain from answering any questions without penalty or explanation. By completing and returning this survey you are indicating your consent to participate in this study.

If you have questions or concerns about this study you can contact me at 419-642-3122 or at jbucher@bgsu.edu. You may also contact the chair of the BGSU Human Subject Review Board at 419-372-7716, or hsrb@bgsu.edu with questions or concerns about participant rights. You may also contact Dr. William Ingle of the Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at 419-372-7313.

While no information that we request is of a controversial nature and risk to participants is low, we must note that web-based surveys may not be 100% secure. Depending on the level of internet security in your district, it is possible that someone could intercept your e-mail and have access to your responses. Please remember to clear your browser’s cache and page history after you submit the survey in order to protect your privacy. However, this security risk is minimal.

You are accountable for many events and outcomes as you appropriate your time between building administrator and curriculum leader. I value your input as I attempt a modest search of the development of the successful principal curriculum leader. Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

Jeff Bucher
BGSU Graduate Student

APPENDIX A: SURVEY INSTRUMENT
Questions Theme: Demographics

1) My building’s IRN number is ____________________

2) Gender:
   ______ Male
   ______ Female

3) Ethnicity:
   ______ Caucasian
   ______ African-American
   ______ Hispanic
   ______ Asian
   ______ Native-American
   ______ Multiracial

4) My current principalship is at:
   ______ Elementary Level
   ______ Middle/Junior High Level
   ______ Secondary
   ______ Multi Level (e.g. elementary AND middle levels)

5) My years of principalship experience:

6) My years of teaching experience:

7) My most recent teaching experience was with (check all that apply):
   ______ Art
   ______ Music
   ______ Physical Education
   ______ Library/Media
   ______ Math
   ______ Science
   ______ Reading/English Language Arts
   ______ Social Studies
   ______ Technology or Vocational Trade

8) While teaching, I was part of a school wide committee that suggested policy and strategies to move the school forward with its improvement plan or mission statement?
   ______ Yes
   ______ No

9) While teaching, I observed peers and provided feedback as part of a teacher evaluation program?
   ______ Yes
   ______ No

10) Prior to a career in education, I had professional experience in:
    ______ Military
    ______ Business/Commerce
    ______ Youth Development Organization
    ______ Social Services/Medical
    ______ Not applicable

11) My most recent teaching experience level was:
    ______ Early Childhood (Pre K-3)
Middle Childhood (4-9)
Adolescence/Young Adult (9-12)

12) My most recent teaching experience setting was in:
   Rural District
   Urban District
   Suburban District
   Private School
   Community/Charter School

13) My most recent teaching certificate/licensure is/was:
   2 Year Provisional
   Professional
   Permanent
   Other

14) The number of bachelor’s degrees earned:
   1
   2
   More than 2

15) My most recently earned bachelor’s degree is in:
   Education
   Business
   Social Services/Youth Development
   Science or Science-related Field
   Liberal Arts

16) The number of masters degrees earned:
   1
   2
   More than 2

17) My most recently earned master’s degree is in:
   Educational Administration/Supervision
   Curriculum and Instruction (including Teaching)
   Cross Cultural/International
   Content Area (e.g. history, chemistry)
   Other

18) I have earned an administrative specialists degree?
   Yes (Go to question 20)
   No (Go to question 21)

19) My administrative specialists area is (check all that apply):
   Curriculum/Instructional/Professional Development
   Education Staff Personnel Administration
   Education Research
   Pupil Services Administration
   School-Community Relations
   Career Technical Education Administration

20) I earned a doctorate or educational specialist degree?
   Yes (Go to question 22)
21) My doctorate or educational specialist degree is in:

________ Educational Leadership
________ Curriculum/Instruction
________ Content Area (e.g. history, chemistry)
________ Multicultural/International Education
________ Other

Please go to Standard 2 questions.

Questions Theme: Instructional and Curriculum Standard 2

Standard 2 states “principals support the implementation of high-quality standards-based instruction that results in higher levels of achievement for all students” and asks principals to consider the essential question “Are you the instructional leader for the school.” (ODE, 2008, p. 15)

Consider each of the statements below. Choose the response that most accurately represents your performance.

1) I provide teachers with a basic understanding of the academic content standards.

________ Never
________ Rarely
________ Sometimes
________ Frequently
________ Always

2) I monitor the use of resources aligned to the academic content standards.

________ Never
________ Rarely
________ Sometimes
________ Frequently
________ Always

3) I ensure the curriculum, instruction and assessments are aligned with the academic content standards.

________ Never
________ Rarely
________ Sometimes
________ Frequently
________ Always

4) I monitor implementation of academic content standards in curriculum and instruction.

________ Never
________ Rarely
________ Sometimes
________ Frequently
________ Always

5) I monitor the use of various instructional methods and formats to make learning experiences relevant and responsive to the needs of students with different abilities and from diverse backgrounds.

________ Never
________ Rarely
6) I make systematic classroom visits and provide feedback on classroom instruction.

__________ Sometimes
__________ Frequently
__________ Always

7) I monitor the identification and instruction of students of diverse abilities, and support teachers and staff in implementing state and local policies.

__________ Never
__________ Rarely
__________ Sometimes
__________ Frequently
__________ Always

8) I use disaggregated achievement data to determine the performance and needs of particular students and groups.

__________ Never
__________ Rarely
__________ Sometimes
__________ Frequently
__________ Always

9) I understand effective acceleration process and work with teachers to establish structures that meet student needs and support state and local policies.

__________ Never
__________ Rarely
__________ Sometimes
__________ Frequently
__________ Always

10) I examine school-wide student performance data to determine under- and over-identification of students in gifted and/or special education.

__________ Never
__________ Rarely
__________ Sometimes
__________ Frequently
__________ Always

11) I keep informed about current research and theory on effective curriculum design and instructional strategies.

__________ Never
__________ Rarely
__________ Sometimes
__________ Frequently
__________ Always

12) I share current research and theory on effective curriculum design and instructional strategies.

__________ Never
__________ Rarely
<table>
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<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Always</th>
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<tr>
<td>13)</td>
<td>I serve as a model for effective teaching.</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14)</td>
<td>I model the use of data to inform and make decisions.</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
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<tr>
<td>15)</td>
<td>I communicate data about student progress to the school community.</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
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<td>16)</td>
<td>I monitor staff knowledge and the use of data and the impact of this knowledge on student achievement.</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17)</td>
<td>I participate in professional development to increase teachers’ knowledge and professional skills.</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18)</td>
<td>I facilitate professional development opportunities that support classroom instruction.</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19)</td>
<td>I use staff and student data to identify professional development needs.</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20)</td>
<td>I provide ongoing opportunities for teachers to reflect on their practice.</td>
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(Standard 2 Question and Elements developed by ODE 8/08 for “Organizing For High Quality Professional Development”)
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