A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY OF RETIRED, AWARD WINNING PRINCIPALS IN THE STATE OF HAWAI’I

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ABSTRACT

This research was a multiple case study design that investigated the values, behaviors and beliefs of award winning, retired principals in a western state. The eight individual cases were chosen to represent racial diversity, gender distribution and elementary and secondary school levels of leadership.

Specifically, this research detailed the belief systems that these individual school principals developed during their careers. A more comprehensive understanding of these values and belief systems could lead to more a more focused approach in developing exceptional school leaders. In addition, these findings could support the successful evolution of the Educational Administration field so that the demands created by the current environment of high stakes accountability and evaluation can be successfully addressed.

This research used a framework developed by Jerome T. Murphy’s explained in his article printed in The Jossey-Bass Reader on Educational Leadership titled, “The Unheroic Side Of Leadership.” This framework assisted me in exploring the uncommon, less documented aspects of excellence in leadership.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Several years ago, while working at a school as a counselor, I was walking across the school campus and I was hit from above and behind in the head by a large golf-ball sized rock thrown from a second floor lanai. Two eighth-grade boys were laughing and pointing at me on the lanai. No one else was around and I knew they had done it. Head bleeding, I took them into the vice principals’ office and told them what had happened. The vice principal laughed at me and asked, “What do you want me to do?”

This unfortunate situation made me feel powerless and angry due to the lack of administrative support and it made a lasting impression on me. It was clear to me why so many teachers chose to leave the profession.

It was this incident that caused me to reflect on the need for good leadership. But what was good leadership? What is exceptional leadership? At this point in time, I was pretty clear on what it wasn’t. I reflected on my childhood experiences in Boy Scouts, Intermediate School and High School. Several Boy Scout leaders and school administrators stood out in my memory as possessing high-quality leadership skills. When I thought of difficult situations, like when I broke my arm falling on the ice while camping with the Scouts or when we were all scared on the band bus because the loosing team threw rocks at our bus windows, there were leaders present taking care of business.

This rock throwing situation at school and several others that followed, created a desire in me to add to the base of knowledge concerning excellence in school administration. I eventually went on to pursue my administrative credential and become a vice principal. I enrolled in courses and studied theory and best practice, but in observing
the senior principals, often retired, who mentored me in my preparation program, I felt there was more to excellent leadership than one could learn in a book.

Not all excellent leaders win awards or honorable mention, but often they do. I have chosen to study those retired school administrators that have received at least one leadership award in the field of School Administration in Hawaii.

**Significance of Study**

This study investigates the characteristics of eight retired, award winning principals within the state of Hawaii. To date, there has been scant research conducted upon this group of people. This research details the untold story of eight exceptional retired school principals. Typical research concerning educational administration does not disclose the emotional and personal beliefs of exceptional school leaders. Although not comprehensive, this research offers a brief view and insight into experiences and people shaped their values and beliefs.

Retirement offers school principals time to reflect upon their careers. It also enables them the opportunity to be candid regarding the conditions, challenges and atmosphere in which they worked without the political repercussions they might have faced while still working, making them potentially open and forth coming research participants. The field of educational administration is changing rapidly. Principals’ behaviors, beliefs and values in the past that could have lead to exemplary, award winning results might no longer be effective and rewarded. Principals across the nation, like their worldwide counterparts are increasingly being evaluated and held accountable for student academic growth in the classroom, something largely unheard of in the past. “The focus on accountability for school leaders is not unique to the United States.”
(Fuller & Hollingsworth, 2013, p. 3) This research will investigate the behaviors, beliefs and values of retired, award winning principals so that the findings can be of use in shaping leadership education efforts and supporting the success of Hawaii public schools.

Research that examines the knowledge, ideas and reflections of those principals who have won awards for their performance within the State of Hawaii has the potential to offer a unique perspective for understanding leadership. Their experiences, although now part of history, are valuable and worth documenting, particularly since they devoted their lives to the field of education and ended extensive careers as recognized and successful leaders. The knowledge experiences documented in this research can allow comparison to others’ current experiences. This could also assist contemporary administrators reflect on the behaviors that exceptional leaders demonstrate that transcend time and social change.

A qualitative study design was selected for this research to develop and document a thick and rich description of the ideas, beliefs and experiences of these retired, award winning principals.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to create a clearer, more cogent image of what behaviors, beliefs, award winning, retired principals in the study possess. It will focus on award winning, retired school principals who were acknowledged by their peers as being outstanding leaders within the public school system. The record of the knowledge, skill-base and insights of these individuals could be helpful to future, less-seasoned developing administrators. In best case scenarios, retired school administrators become involved in
the new administrator training program as mentors or advisors for several years before permanently retiring, however even in that capacity, their influence is limited to the individuals participating in a particular program.

**Research Questions**

The study will address three research questions.

1. What are the values, behaviors and beliefs of award winning, retired principals in Hawaii?
2. What motivated them to enter and then remain in educational leadership?
3. Which commonalities of the participants are the most valuable, and why, when producing award winning results?

**Possible Limitations Of Study**

There are some inherent limitations to this study. This research will be conducted in one state. The sample group includes only retirees from Hawaii Department of Education. No school principals from private schools were included. This could possibly limit generalizability or comparison to administrators outside the state of Hawaii or within the private sector.

This research also has limitations regarding the award process itself. The award or commendation process in any field has potential political and personal motives and repercussions. Sometimes, individuals are awarded a commendation who frankly are undeserving of its honor, or those who since being awarded, have fallen from good stead and demonstrated poor decision-making. This study’s design will attempt to deal with this by including individuals who continued to be principals for at least (5) years after winning an award, and who retired still being recognized as outstanding leaders.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Yin stated, “The purpose of a literature review is not to determine answers about what is known about a topic, but to develop sharper and more insightful questions about the topic” (Yin, 2009, p. 14). This literature review has been structured to achieve this and, as such, will investigate the following questions. First, how have schools been assessed for effectiveness? Second, what are the results of effective principals research? Third, how have school principals been evaluated for proficiency? Finally, what are the effects and impacts of principal leadership on school success?

Effective Schools Research

Effective schools research has evolved over the past forty years. Several factors have contributed to this evolution, most notably are political interest and the increased involvement in public school performance. Along with this came the need for the advancement of statistical models investigating principal performance. As political interest in educational outcomes increased so has the drive to measure school performance and hold school principals accountable for student performance and growth. Understanding effective schools research and its results are valuable when investigating award winning principal beliefs and behaviors.

Uline, Miller and Tschannen-Moran (1998) explored two underlying dimensions of school effectiveness. They were categorized as expressive and instrumental functions. The authors also proposed and tested a theoretical framework that accounts for both of these categories when evaluating a school’s effectiveness.
They began this research by discussing the change in the theoretical underpinnings of school effectiveness research. The eventual shift in ideology to a more multifaceted effects model necessitated a more complex analysis method capable of separating and evaluating the different possible influences upon school outcomes. Hierarchical linear modeling was developed, which suited these particular needs adequately because this method of analysis is able to measure change over time and isolate individual and group variables.

One finding of this research was that a teacher’s trust in the principal, had the lowest correlation with effectiveness. In an added cautionary note, the authors stated that they felt their model was two dimensional only measuring teacher perception and student outcomes. To get a more multifaceted picture of school effectiveness, they suggested that other constituencies such as parents, administrators, board members, and the community at large, might be used in the study of school effectiveness.

In 2000, Heck investigated and reported upon the value of school quality on student outcomes. His motivation for this study, as reported by the author was the, “recent state level emphasis on monitoring student outcomes to develop comprehensive school accountability” (Heck, 2000, p. 513). The study sought to answer two questions. First, “What characteristics of schools help explain why some schools have higher adjusted outcomes than others? Second, “What characteristics of schools help explain why some schools have greater academic improvement that others?” (Heck, 2000, p. 523). Heck also investigated the partial effects of school conditions.

This article reviewed three possible existing approaches to evaluating school outcomes. The first and most common method would be to focus on the average
performance of students in a specific geographic area. (Heck, 2000) This method creates a biased, misleading description of student performance that does not take student composition variable and previous learning.

The second was to compare schools that have similar demographics and student backgrounds. This method of school evaluation does not achieve an accurate representation according to the author because he felt that comparison groups often use statistical methods that do not address the full range of data that are embedded within in all of the different layers of data. (Heck, 2000)

The third approach, which used a value-added stance takes into account and, “adjusts the academic outcomes statistically for key indicators known to affect student achievement before making school comparisons” (Heck, 2000, p. 516). The premise to this method was that, the value that a school adds to a child’s educational experience is expressed by a regression residual. A regression residual is the difference between a achievement score and a predicted score created by evaluating the contextual information. A possible downfall to this approach was the complexity of implementing such a tool, explaining and making the results meaningful and useful to lay people who would need to understand the results.

In summary, Heck found that there was a pattern to schools performing better when there is a strong educational culture existing within the school environment. Schools with this educational culture could be associated with more rapid gains of educational improvement. Another feature of these higher performing schools was that they had principal leadership that was supportive and focused upon instructional excellence. The SES of the community had moderate effects on school outcomes and
improvement. Another result was that school size and percentage of special needs students also had a negative impact upon school performance.

Heck (2006) compared three alternative approaches to estimate student progress with respect to their accuracy, equity, and usefulness in making inferences about school effectiveness. This research proposed and tested three alternatives to the cut scores-(AYP) created by each state to meet the requirements put forth by the No Child Left Behind Act. Part of the rationale against simple cut scores of groups of students determining a schools’ proficiency was the idea that individual student learning or academic performance is lost in the mass of data used to evaluate an individual school.

The research used two different multilevel models to estimate student outcomes. There was a successive-cohort model and a longitudinal-cohort model. The first model was an “Unadjusted Proficiency Level” (Heck, 2006, p. 681). This model, the most basic, used scores from three separate testing occasions to determine school proficiency. The second model, Adjusted Proficiency Level, used, “Adjustments to scores for the presence of within-school clustering and measurement error on estimates of outcomes both within and between schools.” (Heck, 2006, p. 681) It evaluated intra-class correlations- a value that describes total variance within the sample of schools using SEM-structural equation modeling. “Latent variables” are used during the SEM process to correct for, “Measurement errors associated with individual tests and clustering effects.” (Heck, 2006, p. 682)

The last model was, Adjusted Proficiency Level and Growth. (Heck, 2006) This method evaluated student growth by measuring three separate testing events between
third and sixth grade. Student growth was then evaluated by measuring an intercept factor, and a slope factor.

The second research question, “To what extent does each approach increase the equity of school comparisons?” (Heck, 2006, p. 685) To understand the influence, “student composition variables (i.e. gender, race and/or ethnicity) and school-level context and process variables were added to the models.” (Heck, 2006, p. 685) The author felt that community SES demonstrated a strong influence in school outcome levels. Factors such as school size held little reported influence. “School quality was positively related to school proficiency levels, but its influence was small compared with community SES.” (Heck, 2006, p. 685)

Model 3 by design, was able to give the researcher growth rate information. This information indicated that, “low SES students had significantly steeper growth trajectories in reading, math, and language on average than did their higher SES counterparts.” (Heck, 2006, p. 687) This should be valuable information necessary used to evaluate how a school, or how its administrator is functioning.

The third research question, “To what extent can we integrate proficiency levels and growth in evaluating schools?” (Heck, 2006, p. 687) To answer this question, the author made a case for the necessity of being able to determine which schools demonstrate a high academic growth rate from those that do not. To investigate the differences between the data produced by these schools, the author used a, follow-up discriminate analysis, a multivariate technique that used a set of predictors to explain differences between groups, revealed significant functions representing a school contextual dimension and school process dimension. (Heck, 2006, p. 688)
In summary, the growth model (model 3) increased the researchers’ ability to investigate growth rate and trajectory; it produced a more equitable indicator of student growth. Researchers can also critique the influence process and context conditions upon student academic performance. This growth data could be used to help assist in the accurate evaluation of teacher and school performance. Heck also felt that overall, none of the models used in this research produced similar results or compatible estimates of school effectiveness. A suggestion from this researcher was that there was a need to, “continue seeking and refining approaches that may be more accurate and effective.” (Heck, 2006, p.692)

Effective Principal Research

A factor to consider in examining effective principals is whether or not and to what degree, do principals influence school or student performance? Hallinger and Heck (1998) did a meta-analysis of past empirical literature from 1980 to 1995 that investigated the relationship between principals and school effectiveness. They also reported that there are those who believe that there is no relationship between principal behavior and school performance, citing research conducted in the Netherlands that also reaffirmed the lack of relationship between principal effects and school performance.

In this research, (Hallinger & Heck, 1998, p.162) stated that they utilized research by a previous scholar (Pitner, 1989) who conceived this three-part model that categorize the relationship:

1. **Direct Effects Model** - exactly what it implies, the leaders behaviors have a direct measurable effect on outcomes.
2. Mediated Effect Model- School principals influence their school through other people, organizational factors or events.

3. Reciprocal Effect Model- the nature of the relationship between the School principal and the school is dynamic and influences each other.

Hallinger and Heck used these categories to investigate the relationship between principal and school effectiveness in forty different studies.

The outcomes section of principal leadership behavior discussed the limitations and conceptions of previous research conducted in this area. One drawback is the inherent difficulty of teasing out individual student or teacher perceptions of principal influence on school outcomes. A challenge that earlier researchers faced was a lack of analytic techniques to investigate the effects across the different organizational levels.

This meta-analysis of principal research not only discussed past limitations and challenges that previous researchers faced, it also explored advancement in analytic techniques that now aid researchers in creating a more detailed picture of principal influence on school performance.

Gantner, Daresh, Dunlap and Newsom (1999) investigated effective school leader attributes. The authors identified the desirable traits of school leaders as perceived by community members and local school boards. Data were collected in focus groups and semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews were reserved for the school board members, as the authors felt that focus groups would yield inaccurate data due to disclosure and confidentiality issues. The perceived desirable traits held by each group were different. Local school boards valued effective communication skills, managerial skills and the ability to strengthen bonds and relationships amongst all stakeholders.
Parents, students and community members valued the ability of principals to form relationships. Principals also were perceived by students, parents and community stakeholders to need to be able to display the following characteristics; visibility, compassion, trustworthiness, respect and integrity. These stakeholders believed that exhibiting these characteristics would foster effective relationships within schools. The perception was also that principals should also be able to lead through inspirational behavior.

In summary, this research did a basic overview of some common elements such as communication, integrity, respect, visibility that are often associated with effective principals. These perceptions of desirable traits were different for both stakeholder groups.

Mark Goldberg (2001) reported on an ideal held by educational demographer Harold Hodgkins, who felt that predicting who will make an excellent leader is not possible and that leadership qualities do not include predetermined set of characteristics. He posited that excellence in leadership could be a situational condition, based on past performances by political leaders, educational leaders and others. He theorized that some world leaders were famous and successful due to the conditional needs matching their particular skill set, and when the need changed, their performance faltered. Based on this, Goldberg (2001) recommended that prospective leaders need to develop the skills they possess and establish a match between what they know and are good at and what the school requires.

He recommended that school leaders pursuing excellence visit exceptional performing schools to learn as much as possible from them and apply appropriate
strategies in their own schools. He cautioned that school leaders should give the reach for excellence time, and rely heavily on teachers. This reliance upon teachers for their experience and skills to move a school towards excellence is mirrored in the literature of other researchers. Goldberg also suggested that lack of exposure to excellence could drive resistance to change, and that well-intentioned, intelligent, and experienced school staff and board members may not have strong beliefs about improvement programs because of lack of sustained exposure to excellence over their careers.

Several other authors have also investigated the relationship of principal leadership and school performance. Marks and Printy (2003) investigated this relationship. This research investigated the relationship between principals and teachers and how some principals actively collaborate on instructional matters to better student performance and improve teaching.

The authors investigated three questions involving principal leadership:

“1. What is the relationship between transformational and shared instructional leadership in restructuring elementary, middle and high schools? 2. How do schools with varying approaches to leadership differ according to demographic, organization and performance? and 3. What is the effect of transformational and shared instructional leadership on school performance as measured by the quality of pedagogy and the achievement of students?” (Marks & Printy, 2003, p. 378)

Mark and Printy relied upon previous work of (Conley & Goldman, 1994) and (Leithwood, 1994) to frame their two ideals concerning principal leadership for their research. The first ideal concerns transformational leadership. It focuses on a principal,
“providing intellectual direction and aims at innovating within the organization, while empowering and supporting teachers as partners in decision making.” (Marks & Printy, 2003, p. 371) Later in the article, authors Marks and Printy also referred to a citation from (Hallinger, 1992) to further develop the readers understanding of transformational leadership. Hallinger stated, “transformational leadership focuses on problem finding, problem solving, and collaboration with stakeholders with the goal of improving organizational performance.” (Marks & Printy, 2003, p. 372)

The second ideal was the authors’ conceptualization of instructional leadership as shared instructional leadership rather than hierarchal relationship. Their concept of shared instructional leadership focused on active collaboration between administration and teachers concerning instruction, curriculum matters and assessment.

Marks and Printy (2003, p. 373) also cited Murphy (1990) as a basis to their discussion concerning instructional leadership. Murphy reported that, “Principals in productive schools—that is, schools where the quality of teaching and learning were strong, demonstrated instructional leadership both directly and indirectly. Although these principals practiced a conventional rather than a shared form of instructional leadership, they emphasized four sets of activities with implications for instruction: (a) developing school mission and goals; (b) coordinating, monitoring and evaluating curriculum, instruction, and assessment; (c) promoting a climate for learning; and (d) creating a supportive work environment.” (Murphy, 1990, pp.163-200) They also found that, “Transformational leadership builds organizational capacity whereas instructional leadership builds individual and collective competence.” (Marks and Printy, 2003, p. 377) This statement reflects the difference between the two leadership philosophies.
In this research, the authors found that, “Transformational leadership with the behaviors it implies are a necessary although insufficient, condition for shared instructional leadership.” (Marks & Printy, 2003, p. 385)

They also reported that if principals had difficulty displaying transformational leadership behavior, they would also most likely also struggle to share instructional leadership responsibility. Schools that elicit strong performance display “integrated leadership mobilizing the collective actions of individuals to produce high-quality teaching and learning.” (Marks & Printy, 2003, p. 388) The term, “integrated leadership” is used by the authors to describe a successful combination of both transformational and instructional leadership practices.

They also found that, “Low leadership tended to be found in smaller schools where students were poor, minority, and lower achieving. Integrated leadership, in contrast, typified larger schools enrolling the lowest proportions of poor, minority, and lower achieving students, whereas limited leadership schools occupied a middle ground in relation to these schools and the student characteristics.” (Marks & Printy, 2003, p.388)

In 2008, Leithwood and Jantzi did a study that surveyed 96 principals and 2,764 teachers, focused on the indirect effects of principal efficacy and its relationship or influence upon student learning, classroom conditions and principal behavior. The authors categorized efficacy into two subgroups. The first type, “LSE” focuses on one’s ability to effectively influence student academics. The second type, “LCE”, focuses on the collective whole of self and colleagues ability to positively influence student achievement.
The findings indicated that there was a strong, indirect influence of district leadership on school leader efficacy. This sense of efficacy was also influenced by the, “aligned and supportive nature of their working conditions.” (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008, p. 521) Second, there was a weak association of districts’ investment in developing instructional leadership within school leaders and their sense of efficacy as an individual. This effort made more of a difference as a collective whole to the organization. Last, the researchers found a weak but significant relationship of leader efficacy and student achievement. Leader efficacy influenced the amount of students learning reaching or exceeding a state’s proficiency expectations.

**Principal Performance Evaluations**

Performance evaluations of principals are a growing and controversial phenomenon in the United States. Politically, it is very popular however at this point I have been unable to find clear empirical evidence that directly link principal evaluations to significant school improvement. Currently there is no universal principal preparation or evaluation process within the United States. There are however, standards set by several associations and evaluations available to measure principal performance.

The ISLLC- (Interstate School Leader’s Licensure Consortium) sets a standard for school administration across the United States. There are six standards, and they have three definitive sub-categories for each standard. The sub-categories are Knowledge, Dispositions and Performances. These standards are often used as the basis of crafting principal evaluations. The ISLLC Standards address six major areas of emphasis. The principal must have a clear, shared, effective vision of learning; create a school culture that promotes learning, manage a school effectively to support a learning environment,
collaborate with families and the community; behave in an ethical manner and understand and navigate the political and social context of their position as principal.

These standards are used as the structural basis for many districts and states framework for evaluating, promoting and retaining school principals.

Heck and Marcoulides (1992) studied the topic of principal assessment. Their research had three purposes, “(a) To raise conceptual and methodological issues that must be addressed in the process of developing a model of principal assessment that is theoretically grounded, empirically validated, and easily utilized; (b) to provide data from several studies we have completed to address some of these issues leading toward the development of evaluation models for principal assessment; and (c) to present a basic model for principal performance evaluation.” (Heck & Marcoulides, 1992, pp. 124-125)

The author’s began by outlining the challenge of understanding the extent of the influence that a principal has upon school context, student performance and the organizational process and relationships at the school level.

They also divided principal evaluative efforts into two separate categories, the first one formative, focusing on individual improvement as the goal, the second summative, including retention, tenure and merit pay as goals. (Heck and Marcoulides 1992)

Their major finding was that a more democratic type of organizational governance that involved staff in input decision using teamwork appears to predict higher performance in both business and education. They suggested that higher performing organizations tend to have more cohesive social relations and better task organization, and that the principal is not sole cause of high or low achieving schools.
In summary, this article reviewed several conceptual and methodological issues that occur when developing an instrument to assess principal performance. The authors reviewed data, and the resulting questions and concerns that were created by their research. Lastly, the authors proposed a basic model for subsequent principal performance evaluation.

Louden and Wildy (1999) conducted research in Australia. They described an alternative method of developing a standards framework by measuring qualitative vignettes that provide essential or ideal qualities of principal performance. The authors felt that one of the concerns with current standards, such as the ISLLC standards adopted in the United States, is that they attempt to capture ideal behavior, not a range of possible performance. Issues arise when a principals’ performance or behavior is assessed, and one needs to consider the range or the spectrum of performance against the ideal.

The authors used a three stage methodology in their research to create data. First, they collected “vignettes to illustrate the duties identified in the job description of a principal.” (Louden & Wildy, 1999, p. 401) Next, they distributed these vignettes to school principals to elicit a two part reaction; first, rate how well the principal in the vignette did dealing with the issue. The researchers then described the principals’ performance in dealing with each vignette. Next, the vignettes were evaluated by the researchers using a technique called Extended Logistic Model of Rasch. This provided the researchers with a rating of poor, good or excellent performance. The researchers then conducted a three stage pilot study.

They found that six qualities emerged among more than seven hundred different words and phrases written in response to the vignettes. These six principal qualities were,
supportive, decisive, fair, innovative, collaborative, and flexible. The authors stated that these words or phrases, “accounted for more than one third of almost 4,000 words or phrases written in by school administrators in response to the vignettes.” (Louden & Wildy, 1999, p. 417)

Another finding was the importance of the perception of support among teachers, with nearly ten percent of all responses including synonyms and antonyms for the word supportive. (Louden & Wildy, 1999) The authors found that, regardless of geographic location of school, gender or experience their ratings stayed consistent. (Louden & Wildy, 1999)

Porter, Polikoff, Goldring, Murphy, Elliot and May (2010) wrote a case study about the Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education. This principal assessment tool was originally created because the researchers felt there was a need to have a psychometrically sound instrument that had a conceptual framework that was linked to current literature on effective principal leadership. The case study is a follow up to report on the instrument, how it was created and modified across its many revisions.

The researchers explained VAL-ED as, “a paper and online assessment that uses a multi-rater, evidence based approach to measure the effectiveness of school leadership behaviors known to influence teacher performance and student learning.” (Porter et al., 2010, p. 137) It required teachers, the principal and their supervisor to complete a behavior inventory that evaluated six core components and six key processes. The core components of the framework were, schools that support student learning and the ability of teachers to teach. Specifically, they are: high standards for student learning, rigorous curriculum (content), quality instruction (pedagogy), culture of learning and professional
behavior, connections to external communities and finally, performance accountability. (Porter et al., 2010) Key processes focus on how leaders create and manage core components and include planning, implementing, supporting, advocating, communicating and monitoring. (Porter, et. al., 2011)

This model evaluated the direct effect of principals, and did not measure indirect or mediated effects of principal behavior. This could be a major drawback to creating comprehensive picture of how a principal performs. As other contemporary researchers, have found, mediated effects and indirect effect of principal behavior can have a influence on the performance and the overall culture of a school. Whitaker stated, “Our impact is significant; our focus becomes the school’s focus.” (Whitaker, 2003, p.30) This statement not only to the direct but the indirect, cultural influence on a school a principal exudes.

The authors felt that differences in school contexts do not alter the desirable leadership behaviors, but they could alter how the results of the assessment should be interpreted for the evaluation of an individual principal. This could lead to questionable reliability of the instrument and possible second-level legal issues if an evaluation was used for merit pay or dismissal. Just mentioning that there are outside influences (contexts) does not address the issue of how to account for them.

In summary, this article reviewed the creation and implementation process for the VAL-ED as a principal evaluation tool. It also discussed possible limitations and drawbacks in using the VAL-ED as an evaluation tool.

Mattson-Almanzan (2011) conducted a comparative overview of how Delaware, Iowa, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio and South Carolina are implementing school
principal evaluations. The authors noted that principal evaluation to improve performance has gained popularity across the United States. Some states with federal support have energetically pursued the creation or adoption of administrative evaluation programs. The federal government has encouraged these pursuits financially through programs such as School Improvement Grants (SIG) and Race To The Top (RTTT). The RTTT initiative specifically states that there are two core areas of importance, one of which is directed at, “Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals.” (Mattson-Almanzan, et al., 2011, p. 1) Hawaii is one of the states that has been awarded funding through the Race To the Top Grant and has begun implementing a principal evaluation program.

The authors’ purpose was to provide an overview of data that will inform policy deliberation and improve communications among states and districts seeking to develop programs to evaluate principals. The article presented a basic case review of each of the six selected states, beginning with Delaware. This state focused on student growth as the determining factor when considering principal effectiveness. Delaware’s system was called the DPASII (Delaware Performance Appraisal System for Administrators) and was mandated for all school districts. The focus of implementing this evaluation system was as stated: professional growth, continuous improvement and quality assurance. This system evaluated a school leader on five domains: Vision and Goals, Culture of Learning, Management, Professional Responsibilities and Student Improvement and is reportedly aligned to ISLLC standards. Under this rating system, an administrator could be assigned either a satisfactory or unsatisfactory performance rating on the Summative Evaluation. An administrator could score four different ratings during the summative
evaluation. They were ineffective, needs improvement, effective and highly effective. The Delaware Department of Education recognized that administrators score differently at different points in their tenure, and make supportive allowance for fostering improvement.

The paper then reviewed the final five states, discussing their logic in evaluation approach and expected outcomes. In summary, this paper provided a snapshot view of several states and how they were approaching the issue of principal evaluations for performance, growth and development.

Principal Leadership:

Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) conducted in research in Canada. This study used two surveys to investigate the effects of principal and teacher leadership on student engagement with their school. The studies they used were, The Organizational Conditions and School Leadership Survey, and The Student Engagement and Family Culture Survey.

The findings reinforced results from other researchers concerning the nature of a principals’ influence on others. “With student engagement in school as the dependent variable, results of the study indicate that teacher leadership effects are statistically insignificant, whereas principal leadership effects, although not strong, do reach statistical significance.” (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999, p. 697)

Witziers, Bosker & Kruger (2003) published research that addresses whether school leadership really matters. The authors discussed opposing views of the topic concerning effects or lack of effects that principals have on student achievement. Given the claims by both parties, they felt the matter was yet unresolved, thus bore further
investigation. The authors felt that there were difficulties in earlier research in clearly assessing the relationship between school leadership and student achievement. “The lack of conceptual congruence provides an empirical caution to the study of school leadership regardless of statistical models or other methodology.” (Witziers, et al. 2003, p. 402)

Other researchers, such as (Hallinger, 1994) further defined the conceptualization of educational leadership by his creation of the (PIRMS). The Principal Instructional Management Rating Scale enabled evaluators to measure principals’ instructional management with a standardized instrument. This widely used instrument focused on three dimensions; defining the school mission, managing the instructional climate and promoting a positive school-learning climate. (Hallinger, 1994)

Witziers, Bosker & Kruger (2003) conducted a meta-analysis of research conducted in the international community that used at the time, current direct effect models. The authors state that they used the PIMRS as a framework to categorize the subject’s behavior. Witziers et al. (2003) found that, school leadership does have a small, positive and statistically significant effect on student achievement. There was variation of effect within the cases that were studied. These researchers also wanted to understand which variables were possible influencing these effects. The variation span was larger for the international cases than the studies conducted within the United States.

Another findings was that, when researchers used an instrument capable of only one dimension of analysis, the results produced indicate an insignificant relationship of principal effects on student outcomes. (Witziers et al., 2003) However, when the multi-dimensional aspect of effect of leadership is considered, as in the previously mentioned sub-dimensions of PIMRS, some effects are considerable and significant. The following
leadership behaviors then become significant: supervision and evaluation, monitoring, visibility and defining and communicating a mission. The strongest relationship between leadership behavior and student achievement appeared in the defining and communicating mission sub-dimension. The authors suggested however, that once the outliers- international data from the sample were removed, the value is moved to .08 relationship, thus keeping its score similar to other sub-dimensions.

Another finding was that, one-third of studies conducted in high schools produced significantly smaller sized effects than those conducted in elementary schools. The authors’ felt that this could indicate a diminished opportunity for administrators in secondary schools to directly influence student academic outcomes.

In summary, the authors of this piece of research felt that the correlation between leadership behavior and student achievement was relatively small (.10) and suggest that other research investigating the indirect effects of educational leadership bears different results.

Witziers & Sleegers (2005) studied the effects that principals have on school level outcomes. The purpose of this research was to investigate the chain of variables that exist between principal leadership behavior and student and school outcomes. The authors examined theoretical models of principal effects on school and student outcomes, a summary of research on gender and its link/ effects on principal leadership behaviors, a path analysis of the chain of variables effecting the relationship of principal leadership behavior and outcomes and finally, a secondary analysis of principals’ influence on school and student outcomes.
They described how the perception of a principal’s limited influence has evolved throughout the past two decades from a direct into a more indirect influence.

The research methods of this study included path analysis of the chain of variables and a LISREL program to evaluate the path analysis. The authors initially used five variables to do a factor analysis. The five variables were, “Related to the school’s composition (percentage of students with low socioeconomic status (SES), percentage of “middle class” students, percentage of students with high economic status, percentage of female students, percentage of minority students.” (Kruger, et al., 2005, p. 8)

A finding from this effort was that, the schools organizational and cultural characteristics have a positive impact on student commitment. (Kruger et al., 2005)

The authors answered their research question, “Does a principals behavior have an impact upon school organization and culture?” They found that, it is only true for the school’s organization and it does influence a teachers’ perception of the schools’ organization. The authors also felt that, instructional leadership and educational leadership has a non-significant influence on teacher perception of the school culture.” (Kruger et al., 2005)

In summary, the research also revealed that principals who highly value educational leadership are more involved with the educational system of their school, through both direct instructional leadership and strategic educational leadership. They also had found statistically insignificant effects of instructional and strategic leadership on student commitment. (Kruger et al. 2005)

Leithwood and Mascall (2008) studied the impact of collective shared leadership on teacher variables and student achievement. They found that collective leadership has
significant direct effects on all teacher variables, its’ strongest effect was on teachers work setting, followed closely by teacher capacity and then motivation.

The authors found that collective leadership had statistically significant indirect effects on student achievement. They authors also found that this style of leadership does effect teacher capacity. They also found that reported that teachers with designated leadership roles were perceived to have the strongest influence on teacher capacity. (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008) They found that this influence however, did not extend into the parameters of student achievement.
CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

This chapter presents the research methods that will be used to study award-winning principals. It presents the study’s design, including the sampling, data collection and analysis and the role of the researcher.

Design of the Study

This study is a qualitative, multiple case study design inquiring about the characteristics of retired, award-winning principals within the state of Hawaii. This research strives to provide a rich contextual, belief and values investigation of each of the case study participants.

(Creswell, 2007, p. 73) stated that a case study research, “Involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system.” The topic being investigated is principals. The systems that provide boundaries to the study are the criteria receiving an award, and past employment within the public schools system in the state of Hawaii.

Qualitative inquiry was chosen for the following reasons. First, the purpose of this study is to detail the characteristics, beliefs, values and experiences of retired, award winning school principals in the State of Hawaii for the purpose of understanding and knowledge. Stake (2006) suggests that qualitative inquiry was developed to study the experiences of real people operating or struggling in real situations. This, in inquiry, would allow for such a rich description of each participating case. Second, the theoretical lens of this study is; Murphy’s six dimensions outlined in the article, The Unheroic Side of Leadership-Notes from the Swamp. This model was selected to use in analyzing the
reports of the participants to determine whether and how the dimensions were present. Murphy’s dimensions of leadership are best examined on a case-by-case basis using a path of qualitative inquiry. Finally, qualitative case inquiry is the optimal method to answer the substantive research questions in this study that focus on relationships of principals, their characteristics, beliefs and values.

**Multiple Case Study Features**

According to Stake (2006) the researcher needs to create a picture of each case and then develop it for others to see. This picture should dynamic and purposive in nature. (Stake, 2006 p. vi) stated, “The multi case study is a special effort to examine something having lots of cases, parts or members.... and each case studied has its own problems and relationships.” This special set of relationships can describe a phenomenon, characteristics of an individual principal, or contextual circumstances of a work environment created by that individual. Another feature of the case study design is to further the understanding of a phenomenon. The multiple case study design is distinct research approach. This design is flexible and able to adapt many sources of data collection, capturing the relationships of these participating retired, award-winning principals.

A key feature of qualitative investigation is delineating or creating a bounding of the cases to be investigated. In this research, each individual retired, award winning principal, is a case, and each case is nested within the public school system in the state of Hawaii. The number of cases within the qualitative investigation will be relatively small (N=12 or less).
Yin (2009) identified another feature of case study as, offering the opportunity to understand complex social phenomenon. Investigating the characteristics and values of retired public school principals could be considered an investigation of a complex social phenomenon. Furthermore, detailing the experiences that led to value and belief systems of retired principals in a case study design allows readers to assimilate these experiences with their own. This act of knowledge assimilation can support growth, understanding and build professional leadership capacity.

**Descriptive Case Study**

A descriptive case study focuses on describing a phenomenon. The investigation is an in-depth exploration within a specific bounded system. The exploration occurs through an array of data collection and observation to create a detail-rich image of the phenomenon being investigated. This phenomenon is characteristics, values and beliefs of retired, award winning public school principals within the state of Hawaii.

There are 287 public schools within the state of Hawaii. There are 252 regular schools, 32 charter schools and 10 adult schools. The participating principals are selected from the 252 regular schools. This educational environment is unique because it is the only statewide public school district in the United States. This feature provides both advantages and disadvantages to the participants. One of the advantages is that an administrator can interview to transfer to another school level or advance to a district leadership position, should a position become available. Being a school administrator is a condition of employment in Hawaii. Currently, only vice principals and principals can apply for principal positions within the Hawaii Department of Education. To become eligible for any administration position within the department, regardless of other
credentials or experience, one must be accepted into and pass the administrator preparation program—a two-year process, currently called “CISL”. In order to be considered for the administrator training program, an educator must serve within the department in some level of instructional capacity for a minimum of three years.

Sampling and Participants

The sample participating in this study will consist of retired, award winning, public school principals from elementary, middle and high school backgrounds. Another selection criteria will be that the participant must have served in an administrative capacity (principal or vice-principal) for at least 15 years. This means only individuals who have spent a good portion of their careers in some administrative capacity. In addition, the sampling will include as even a gender distribution as possible, and participants must have remained administrators for at least five years after receiving the award. This non-random method of selecting cases study participants is viewed as purposive sampling. This purposeful sampling technique is outline by Merriam, who states, “Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). This selection method will allow for the most control over the characteristics of the selected participants. Participants will be identified by; asking known award-winning principals if they have knowledge of any retired principals whom meet the study criteria, and they would recommend for involvement in the study. From these contacts, other possible participants will be identified, and involvement secured, until an even gender distribution of primary and
secondary administrators has been created. This sampling method could be considered a snowball sampling technique.

Initial contact with possible participants in the study will be accomplished by means of a direct telephone conversation. A follow-up communication to verify and confirm interest, arrange times for participation and send consent forms will be accomplished through email and when applicable, mail service.

**Data Collection**

I will cite Yin’s (2009) process concerning data collection. Yin suggested using three steps. First, use multiple sources of evidence. This research will use principal interviews, school data from the period in which the principal served and relevant media information concerning the school and the circumstances for the award. Second, create a case study database, and finally maintain a chain of evidence. These three steps will assist me in ensuring procedural fitness. I will also develop a protocol to be implemented for each individual case. The protocol will assist in maintaining consistency what data is sought in each of the cases.

The primary source of data will be from structured, individual, face to face interviews. These interviews will be approximately one hour in duration, and when needed a follow-up interview scheduled to increase clarity and understanding. The interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed using I Mac speech to text function. These transcripts will be given to the participants to be member checked to ensure accuracy.

Yin felt that the structured interview could allow the researcher to specifically target the topic of interest within the case study. The specific, targeted nature of the
structured interview can also allow the researcher to make comparative inferences about beliefs, values and characteristics of individual and multiple cases. Individual transcripts will be analyzed and compared to the previous cases for possible reoccurring thematic content. The information will be managed by a simple index card system, noting each characteristic by each participant. This will enable the researcher to identify trends or possible unique traits disclosed by participants in the study.

In order to produce a research design framework that is structurally sound and reinforceable, I will follow Yin’s (2009) suggestions to maximize the case study design. This will be accomplished by ensuring that four conditions related to design quality are present. These conditions are, construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability.

To ensure construct validity, multiple sources of evidence will be secured; a chain of evidence created, and then have the draft reviewed by the key informants. Multiple sources of evidence include transcribed interviews, press and archival data, test scores, school recognitions and staff questionnaires. All data received will be carefully labeled and catalogued by particular case, source, date and time.

To address internal validity, Yin (2009) suggested that a researcher should undertake the analytic tactic of pattern matching and when applicable addressing rival explanations. I will use these two strategies to strengthen internal validity.

Reliability will be supported by: using a case study protocol and developing a database for the interview transcription, staff questionnaires, researcher observations and anecdotal archival evidence. The case study protocol will be the same for each case being investigated. This case study protocol is included in the Appendix.
According to (Creswell, 2007, p.75) “When multiple cases are chosen, a typical format is to first provide a detailed description of each case and themes within the case, called a within-case analysis, followed by a thematic analysis across the cases, called a cross-case analysis, as well as assertions or an interpretation of the meaning of the case.” In this piece of research I will follow this overall format when structuring the body of research data.

**Interview Questions for Participants**

The problem statement for the research is investigatory in nature, what are the values and characteristics of award-winning, retired School Principals in Hawaii? Second, with the expectations being placed on school principals changing so rapidly, do the characteristics, values and behaviors and beliefs of past award winning principals translate into successful leadership skill sets for the future? Finally, to what extent do Hawaii’s retired, award winning principals’, values, characteristics and behaviors reflect Jerome T. Murphy’s (2007) framework cited in “The Unheroic side of Leadership: Notes from the Swamp”. The following open-ended questions were constructed to guide the interviews of selected, retired award winning school principals.
Interview Questions

Introduction
Q1 What led you to become a school principal?
Q2 What values or beliefs must be present to create exceptional school principal performance?

Shared Vision
Q1 What is the most effective manner a vision is developed, articulated and then put into action?
Q2 Explain what shared vision has in creating exceptional results?
Q3 To what extent (if any) does a shared vision influence a school culture?

Asking Questions
Q1 Explain the influence that asking questions of quality plays in developing exceptional results.
Q2 What questions do you ask prospective faculty during the interview process? Why do you feel this is important?
Q3 How did you gather information as a school principal?

Coping with Weakness
Q1 How did your school improve during your tenure as the principal?
Q2 In what manner did you overcome/ address professional shortcomings or challenges?
Q3 What led you to persist as a school principal?

Listening and Acknowledging
Q1 To what extent does listening and acknowledging influence principal performance?
Q2 Please explain influences that have led you to this belief.
Q3 What influence (if any) does listening and acknowledging create on organizational climate and exceptional results?

**Depending on Others**

Q1 How did you build your school culture? What were some of the challenges?
Q2 In what manner have relationships supported your performance as a school principal?
Q3 What influence does interpersonal trust play in achieving exceptional results?

**Letting Go/ Taking Charge**

Q1 Explain your leadership style and its’ influence upon school results? Why did you feel this to be the most effective approach?
Q2 To what extent does building capacity influence your leadership style?
Q3 How do you ascertain when to distribute leadership and when to take charge?

**Problem Solving**

Q1 Explain the process you routinely use to solve challenging problems.
Q2 How do you feel your problem solving abilities influence your performance as a school principal?

**Persistence**

Q1 What role if any does persistence play in leadership performance?
Q2 What has led you to develop this belief?

**Conclusion**
Q1 Please share anything else that you feel would benefit this body of research

**Advantages of Case Study Design**

A case study design offers many advantages to the researcher. It offers flexibility to allow for coverage of large spans of time or large numbers of participants. This flexibility can also be used for targeted, investigation of an individual characteristic or belief, enabling the researcher to investigate a particular value or belief held by participating principals. Another positive feature is that this method incorporates multiple sources of data, producing many facets to the description of a particular subject.

**Limitations**

A limitation of this design is the possible selection bias created by the sampling procedures. Participants were recommended for involvement in the study by other award-winning principals. This reliance upon the recommendations of others could create a selection bias. All participants’ volunteered involvement in the study, this could also create a bias of participants and what they disclose during the study. The purposive, snow-ball sampling technique of individuals who meet all of the selection criteria is a limited measure to reduce this election bias.

Trustworthiness is another important factor. Data sources can be inaccurate, such as reflexivity, which is when a participant tells the interviewer what they wish to hear. It is also possible that participants for self-aggrandizement purposes could misrepresent data. Another factor to consider is that recall of events are an individual’s perception of
the event, this being an individual’s interpretation or construction of reality. Poor quality of recall of events can also lead to inaccuracies in reporting.

The award commendation criteria could be a politically influenced process. This factor could also create a limitation upon the objectivity of who was selected for an award.

Another drawback to this method is the necessity of preserving the anonymity of the participants. Knowledge of the individual case identity and their past results could substantiate the accuracy of the data being disclosed. This however, is unethical, unprofessional and possibly personally damaging to the participants and researcher. All identities of participants will remain strictly confidential.

Another distinct disadvantage is that the process can be very costly and time consuming, especially if the scope of the research is large, involving many cases. There was one researcher working on this project, therefore the cost and time outlay were borne exclusively by one person.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this research will rely upon Jerome T. Murphy’s view reported in, *The Unheroic Side of Leadership, Notes from the Swamp*. Murphy posits that today’s view of leadership is askew, that the definition of an exceptional leadership falls short of completely describing the true multifaceted nature of leadership. Murphy stated, of today’s concept of leadership, “In a word, the leader is a lion. Those who lionize leadership miss important behind-the-scenes aspects of day-to-day leadership. They depict the grand designs without the niggling problems.” (Murphy, 2007, p.53) Murphy also suggests, that “Those who lionize leadership set unrealistic
standards for measuring administrative success” (Murphy, 2007, p.53). This inaccurate standard also undermines conscientious administrators who feel their own performance is substandard.

Murphy (2007) postulates six dimensions of leadership that describe exceptional leadership.

1. Developing a Shared Vision- (as well as defining a personal vision) this dimension defines the leaders’ ability to share the framework and direction for organizations with staff.

2. Asking Questions of Quality- this particular leadership quality includes possessing “local” knowledge-informal history of organization, who are the key individuals, who are the power brokers and what are the sacred rituals. This dimension also entails having “people” knowledge, which is the staff’s thoughts, perceptions of reality and the meaning which they affix to these perceptions. Another key component to this dimension is the presence of an informal information gathering system. Finally, it is also crucial for an administrator to know when it is time for action.

3. Coping with Weakness-this portion of the framework defines a leaders ability recognize their weaknesses and build a system to augment it. Murphy (2007) describes four coping strategies; Matching, Compensation, Candor and Acceptance. Matching entails finding an Administrative position that dovetails your unique set of skills. Compensation relates the quality that Administrators surround themselves with those individuals who are more proficient at a particular task than they are. Candor is the ability to acknowledge to your “inner circle” of colleagues your genuine feelings regarding particular weaknesses or significant job-related issues. Acceptance belies the particular
ability for an Administrator to accept their personal shortcomings or issues and move on in a more positive manner.

4. Listening and Acknowledging-this component is the most anti-theoretical portion of the Lion as a Leader image. Effective listening and acknowledging relates that the leader does not always have all of the right answers or solutions to problems.

5. Depending on Others- this dimension relates the importance of mutual interdependence of an educational leader and the staff that work with him or her.

6. Letting Go-this dimension belies the characteristic of knowing when and how to build capacity within others by disseminating the ownership and task of resolving problems within the organization.

This framework or working definition will be used to compare the data produced by the participant interviews.

**Role of the Researcher**

The interpretation and analysis of data bears the unique perspective of the researcher. This factor can be perceived as an advantage or limitation. The researcher is a 42 year old, married, Caucasian male of middle class origin, being born and raised in continental United States, (12 years ago) relocating to Hawaii. The researcher is employed and has served as a Vice Principal within the Hawaii Department Of Education for the past eight years. For the past six years the researcher has worked with a principal who was commended with a Matsayuki Tokioka award early in his career.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

This section will present the discussions with the eight participants in the study. It begins with the participants’ formative personal experiences that later in life, influenced personal values and beliefs as award winning school principals. The participants’ professional pathways and career milestones as it is related to their administrative performance are discussed next. The relationship between these individuals’ beliefs and values in comparison to the theoretical framework is then explored. Finally, these findings will be compared to research contained within literature review of this research.

Mary

The first participant, “Mary” is a female of Japanese ancestry who grew up on the Big Island of Hawaii. Mary’s parents were Japanese language instructors at a language school in a small town. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the language school shut down, causing both parents to lose their employment. Mary’s parents both struggled to find multiple random odd jobs to support the family. This strong work ethic and providing for the family influenced Mary’s later beliefs and values. Mary stated in the interview that, “My parents really believed education was important and therefore…they lived by example actually, we really never needed money for excursions and school… no questions, you can have it, so they plunked their money on education for us…” Mary also referenced a document that was recently created by an academic sorority to honor her professionalism and life accomplishments. This document noted that Mary’s beliefs are
aligned with the traditional Japanese values of Gaman (quiet endurance), Oya-koko (love of family), Shimbo (try hard and exert much energy) and Benkyo (to study). Mary’s belief system, which was influenced by her parents and the community members helped form her perspectives on many key administrative issues contained within this research.

Mary developed into a strong student advocate during the twenty-four years she served in the classroom. She entered school administration training with the purpose of fulfilling a requirement of the DOE to become a curriculum specialist. Mary’s first assignment however, was as a vice principal at a local youth detention center. Within a year, she was promoted to her first principal position at a nearby elementary school. Mary remained a principal there for almost five years before being asked to fulfill the role as a Complex Area Superintendent. Mary continued in this position for the remainder of her career.

Unlike most of the participants in this study, Mary was married, remained married and shared that she had several children. She was clear that being an administrator and a mother would have been impossible unless she had the continuous support of her parents living with her.

During the interview on several occasions, Mary made mention of her beliefs of what must be present in an administrator to produce exceptional results. As she stated, “A school principal has to have…to be exceptional, they have to possess knowledge and skills, and I just don’t mean, you know to go to a book, but you have to have that…knowledge and skill that enables you to be self-sufficient and to have positive self-esteem.” Mary made reference to this belief later in the interview when she also said, “The self-esteem of a principal, how he or she looks at herself, the competencies he or
she has, is really important. Because, if you want to please people, and be nice to everybody, so you have everybody like you, you are charging up the wrong road, believe me, you are going to end up in a lot of hot water.”

Mary also felt that organization was critical, “Being a principal is so, so time consuming that you have to …if you are not organized on paper, that’s fine, but you have to be organized in your head.”

Mary also revealed how she felt about the ultimate role of a principal when she disclosed, “I truly believe that everybody wants to be better, and you as a principal got to help them to be better. Whether it is students or parents or teachers…that’s your job.”

**Shared Vision**

Mary’s interview revealed strong beliefs about developing and articulating a shared vision and what influence that has in creating exceptional results. She also disclosed her feelings on how a shared vision affects a school’s culture. Mary stated, “I am a proponent of school community-based management, because I believe that the stakeholders of those people who do the implementation closest to where it should happen, and that is the school.” This statement is in alignment with how she developed the vision at the school she was serving as principal. As she stated, “Before the year was over, I sent home key questions. The questions were, as a parent, as a teacher, as a classified person when our kids leave “Aloha” school at grade six, what do you want the students to possess, in knowledge, in skills, understanding…behavior. Okay? Those four major things, academic, social relationships…okay? So all the response come back, so we have a big school meeting. Close the school you know, on the first day that teachers have meetings okay? Every custodian, cafeteria workers, they all come to big meeting we
had off campus… We talked about exactly what do we wish our kids to be like?” Mary’s inclusive group had the direct input of parents, students, teachers and staff to form a vision that represented everyone. Mary’s meeting produced, “Ten huge things and it was directly related to the Department of Education’s foundation program objectives. It was incredible.”

Mary used this collaborative school vision to focus on, “Making sure that every student learns, every student is happy, so when they go home…their parents are…know that they are learning and they’re happy also.” Mary felt that the indicators that showed this change occurred was the reduction of students that are, exempted out of her school and the existence of proper alignment of scope and sequence of Kindergarten through sixth grade curriculum.

**Asking Questions**

When asked the question, “Explain the influence that asking questions of quality plays in developing exceptional results?” Mary disclosed her thoughts and said, “If you don’t ask quality questions, you are not going to have quality answers, plus there’s no yes or no answers, you don’t ask questions that are dead-ended. You have to ask open-ended questions for the students as well as the teachers so that you demonstrate that whatever you have to share, is credible and if you see it this way, tell me why so you can begin to understand where a person comes from.”

When discussing the interview process, and what Mary looks for in prospective candidates during the interview, she replied, “I invite the grade level chair to sit in. The grade level chair does not make the decision, but I allow that person to sit in and I have them ask questions or explain, you know, about what the grade level is like, activities
they have and then my thing would be...how could you as a teacher who were selected, how could you contribute to that activity?” In reference to specific types of questions, Mary stated, “The questions that you ask, yeah... and I saw and read between the lines because, what do I look for in a teacher, that...I say I know my staff, I know how this person will fit in or not fit in, you know what I am saying? So you have to select somebody that will be able to blend in and be able to work as a team member of the grade level.” Mary also shared that, “By asking them, give me an example of how you have to discipline a child, you really learn a lot, about things, scenarios and how to read in between the lines, and see if what that person does, agrees with your school culture.”

Coping with Weakness

Mary was asked, “How did your school improve during your tenure as principal?” She casually responded, “oh anyway...we got the National Blue Ribbon School...but I will say that is a tribute to the school, not me. And I’ll say that our student counsel president was the one that received the award, and it was just such an exciting thing, for the school to be commended for a job well done, for working so hard and hanging in there.” Mary also commented, “A school award is not about the principal. The principal is one part of it, but you have ninety-nine parts to make a good school. And people need to remember that. I also feel that principals should when they have awards, to cut... to say...that I came to the school that the Principal of school “Y”...I would give credence to the principal before me.”

Mary indicated that her focus during her tenure was to reduce Geographic Exceptions leaving the school, fully align the Kindergarten through sixth grade curriculum, and create a school that students were happy and learning. Mary reported that
she felt good about return of many of the Geographic Exceptions, accomplished curriculum alignment, and drastically increased family and community involvement.

When Mary was questioned about how she overcame areas of weakness or any shortcomings, she replied, “As you build capacity, you go to workshops, you talk to people, you want to improve you look at things…you have to have those…you know yourself, if you are weak in this area, then do something about it.”

In discussing how she persisted as a principal, she stated, “If you believe you are on the right track and you know it is good for kids you continue doing it…as long as and hard as you can, but you got to know that…that target, the vision is so important, you got to believe that target is real.” Mary also shared, “It is a renewal system, yeah the positive feedback from faculty, parents and especially kids. Yeah? Really…it will keep you persistent, keep you driving and singing the same song because hopefully, then some time or another everybody will buy in. Yeah? So you need to have a renewal system for yourself you know, otherwise you get burnt out.”

**Listening and Acknowledging**

When asked, “To what extent does listening and acknowledging influence principal performance?” Mary shared a story about listening to several parents concern about a not wanting their child in a particular teacher’s class and how she responded. This experience detailed how she listened to the concerns, listened to the teacher, and involved the teacher in a plan of support. This example denoted a marked degree of listening and responding to teacher needs. Mary shared another situation when she made an off-hand comment that deeply offended one of her teachers. Mary worked towards fixing the situation by speaking with her. Mary shared, “And I thanked her…I thanked her for
giving me the opportunity to straighten myself and allow me to communicate with her and give me a second chance. I really appreciate it. So you know...you not perfect…”

Mary’s belief in communicating openly with her staff indicates a strong belief in the value of developing interpersonal trust through honest, open communication.

In a different situation, Mary shared her initial challenge of getting the faculty to trust her with open, honest feedback during faculty meetings. This was made apparent to her when she conducted her first faculty meetings and no one spoke or responded. Mary needed to teach the faculty that it was safe to communicate with her. She did this by printing nametags for everyone, moving their seating arrangements and having them work on separate issues and present the solutions in a group to her. Mary confided, “I had to redo and give them sort of information that it’s okay to disagree with me, you know… but tell me what you think and why you disagree.”

Mary summarized her beliefs regarding communicating when she shared, “I am for the most part, a collaborative and team oriented leader...so I have to build relationships. Hopefully, I establish stretch goals. I inspire and motivate others. Hopefully I communicate effectively.”

**Depending on Others**

Mary shared that she built her school culture by providing developmental support and making certain that her teachers felt valued. She explained, “If you are willing to try, I will get you in service. We will have session one, faculty meetings...called in a district resource teacher, we do sessions on teaching heterogeneously. What do we have to do? What are the kinds of things we need to do? And how can we help you?”
Mary shared, “And you as the principal have to know, and be aware of what is available around here…state or district or whatever so you can pull in the resources to help your people. And that is why you go to meetings…make networking… you know what I mean? That’s important…resources! You cannot do it yourself but you can do it through others.”

When Mary was asked about interpersonal trust and what role it plays in achieving exceptional results, Mary shared, “And you know…trust, your trust is something that is built over itty bitty things.”

**Letting go/ Taking charge**

Mary explained her leadership style as collaborative and referenced several examples when her intention was to build capacity in her staff, parents and school community. Mary also stated, “You cannot…you cannot be somebody else. You have to be yourself. And you have to do what you say you are going to do, otherwise don’t say it.” When asked, “To what degree does building capacity influence your leadership style? Mary responded, “delegation, that’s important that they have…that you know you’re allowing them to develop their leadership style also, and I think all teachers are leaders.”

**Problem Solving**

Mary referenced the value of creating a system to address problems, saying, “Also, the experiences that one has…enables you to have a multitude of ways to solve problems that you did before. What worked, what didn’t work, it is a similar situation here but something is a little different here, what is it? So you have a repertoire of all the case scenarios you have had and they are all up here (pointing to her head). Mary also
mentioned the value of networking and mentorships to support the growth of school principals. “I think mentorships are a big piece that is important as far as principalships are concerned. And, then it’s not so much giving you the answers, but it is asking the questions…and helping you see…is there a systematic way of that we can do this.”

Mary also placed value in finding workable solutions for everyone. This is reflected in her statement, “And given enough time, I truly believe that you are going to find a solution to a problem that would be okay for all concerned…that is saying a lot.”

Several times during the interview Mary referenced involving and depending on others to find workable solutions to challenges. One such instance involved Mary purposefully engaging parents attending a principal’s coffee hour, scheduled before an awards assembly. “Congratulations parents, and you are here! Because you are doing a terrific job! Your child or children are citizens of the month. What did they do? What kind of behavior did they exhibit? Our thing is respect...” These actions reflect the value of forming parent relationships to support school, student staff growth.

**Persistence**

When asked, “What role if any does persistence play in leadership performance?”, Mary responded, “You have to be persistent if you want to get results over time.” Mary felt that, “persistence is a good quality if how you are going about it, and where you’re headed are in agreement with your vision, right? You’re not persistent just to be persistent, you’re persistent because there is a goal to accomplish.” Mary also shared that, “Experience has taught me that as a leader you need followers. If your staff is not seen the vision, not understanding the rationale, then you should go back to the drawing board.”
When asked if she had anything else she wished to share, Mary confided, “I didn’t take it that our school is only for kids, no. I wanted every adult to be challenged, I wanted every adult to be successful, as well as all the kids be successful. Then we are all a learning community, right?” Mary’s sense of humility was apparent when she reported, “As a leader you have to be the first to admit that I do not know everything, but together we can make a difference.”

John

The second participant, John a male of Hawaiian ancestry grew up under hardscrabble conditions on rural Big Island during World War II. John did not know his father, and was left to his own devises and to fend for himself a majority of the time. John’s clothing was from local thrift shops. John established many friendships with coaches and local military volunteers. These friendships enabled John to physically survive and shaped his strong value base that carried him through his career. These childhood experiences created a desire for John to help others and become a coach.

Like many of the other of the participants in this study, John suffered a divorce early within his educational career. He did not disclose if he had children or not.

Initially, John did not want to become a school administrator, feeling that it would take him away from the kids and his first offers to enter the program were really insulting. He was approached to enter the Administration program because of his non-Japanese ancestry and it how it could possibly give him an advantage or preferential selection at the time. John stated he was offended by this offer. At the time, he felt little respect for his surrounding administrators due to their quick departure from his school
and what appeared to be their singular desire for upward career mobility. He stated, “The principal’s office was a swinging door, every three years we had a new principal.”

John was long-standing, loyal staff member at his school. “I stayed at the school for thirty-eight years, wearing different hats. I was a classroom teacher, I was a counselor, they slipped me into a VP position. I left to train as an administrator, they brought me back as a VP and then within two years I was the principal. John shared that, “I didn’t want to be an administrator. But as I got older I realized if I really wanted to help kids, you have to start at the top. So when I got to the top, everything was about the kids.”

John was clear when he stated what factors shaped beliefs that must be present to create exceptional school principal performance. John confided, “The exposure I had in business, the exposure I had in coaching, the mentoring I had in education, from fellow principals is what helped me as an administrator.” John also believes that leadership is, “Something you learn, if you listen and you have good mentors, you get better.”

**Shared Vision**

John was very clear regarding the importance and timeframe for implementing a shared vision. “Number one is what I learned in business. You have to have a shared vision. And when you share that vision, then people can identify and people can buy in. So, I think initially when you come to the school, what you need to do is, the first thing you need to do is, make sure you respect and honor everything that is in place. And a good time to share your vision, not any policy changes…just your vision you know, and by the second year you can start working on the school’s vision because everybody
knows what your vision is, and then you sit down, maybe begin to share ideas about what the vision should be.”

**Asking Questions**

John explained the importance of understanding the needs of his schools’ clientele that was approximately seventy-five percent military. He felt that this understanding was a prerequisite to asking focused questions that enable him to hire faculty that could effectively meet the needs of his students. When asked to talk about how he asked questions, he shared his interview process. “So what we do is…I try to look for people that are aware of the military transiency and the impact it has on children. And when I interview for teachers, say for teachers coming in…I ask about six or seven questions, but I ask two questions to everybody, you know one question I ask, and you can answer this if you like. I want to hire you for a teacher, and this is what I present to you. You are instructor of a History class. You presented your first unit. You have given an exam on the first unit. You set up the exam and you are proctoring the exam and in the course of proctoring the exam you catch a kid cheating. What would you do?” John’s preferred thematic answer would be framed around the belief that, what did I do as a teacher to make this student feel as if he needed to cheat to pass my class? John strived to evaluate how much heart a teacher possessed. “If a teacher had heart, they can be a good teacher. You know, you can teach a teacher to teach, but you know, if they do not have heart, they not going to do it.”

**Coping With Weakness**

John shared several areas that his school improved during his tenure. The first area was the creation of a school to work program with Hale Koa Hotel and the military.
John created a program called the “MYAC” Military Youth Advisory Counsel. “You know, whenever we had a policy issue, dress code, behavior on the bus, issues in school about racism or anything, it was put to the MYAC.” This program was duplicated under the title, Joint Venture Educational Forum in many other school districts around the country. This program was heavily funded which channeled millions of dollars into John’s school. The MYAC partnership provided the students opportunity, support and a structured decision-making model. John also relied upon the relationship created by the military partnership to have his school completed wired for internet access. This process took over a year to complete. Within the school, John and his staff created a culinary academy, furthering student opportunities with Hale Koa Hotel.

Another improvement John proudly shared was that in 1996-97 his entire complex became WASC accredited during his tenure, an unusual feat at the time. John felt that the accreditation provided incoming military transfers a sense of security in the quality of education their child receives. “It validates our commitment to education.”

John was asked, “In what manner did you overcome or address professional shortcomings or challenges?” He responded, “For me, what I learned as a coach was, you surround yourself with knowledgeable people, dependable, reliable people you can turn your back on.” John also shared, “I had a curriculum coordinator and I let her pick six people she felt that she could depend on. I said, you know Jane, if you call a meeting on three-thirty on a Friday, these six people will show up. You got to trust them. You got to believe in them and they got to believe in you. Boom, got together, that was my leadership team. They were loyal to Jane, that was all I needed.” He also shared how
projects were developed with reliance on others. “I surrounded myself with good people, I put stuff on the table, this is what I want…they would make it better.”

When asked, “What led you to persist as a principal? ironically, even after dedicating thirty-eight years to a single school, John felt he didn’t necessarily have that quality. “You know I am not sure I am good with persistence.” He interpreted the question to refer to specific programs and not a holistic view of a career in education. John also replied, “So whatever I did in the school, I did because I wanted to help kids, and I knew that if I wanted to help kids, there was certain things I had to do.” In his discussion of the concept of a servant leader, he seemed mildly offended reminding the interviewer, “You understand these children’s parents are serving their country right?”

**Listening and Acknowledging**

John was asked about a principal listening and acknowledging and replied, “From what I learned in coaching, everything is collaborative, you know I don’t make arbitrary decisions, not unless we have to have a lockdown, because of a crisis.” One system that John created was a budget committee. “It wasn’t made of department chairs, it was made of people from departments. I didn’t want the department chairs on this, I wanted the regular teachers on it. And I put the budget on the table and we set up priorities for where this money was going.”

John shared an experience about listening and acknowledging community concerns. During a meeting, a colonel expressed dissatisfaction that children of military families that transfer into Hawaii are required to take an additional state history credit, even if it was fulfilled in a previous school in another state. John had foreseen this as an
issue and changed the requirements at his school. Other surrounding high schools had not
done so and needed to be directed to alter their state history requirements.

**Depending on Others**

John related how much he valued teamwork and interpersonal trust by sharing an
experience he had. During a training John had to attend, he explained to the presenter and
the class that the concept of team and how they were describing it was inadequate and
lacked substance. He explained, “Look at those five teachers, they came in with the same
T-shirts, they call themselves a team. I said, those T-shirts don’t make them a team, the
sacrifices they make for each other make them a team. The values that they share, make
them a team. You know, the things that they come together for, the strengths that they
bring and to make…you know, to make people better. That’s a team.”

John was asked, “What influence does interpersonal trust play in achieving
exceptional results?” John responded, “I know my personnel. I know who I can count on,
I know who brings talent in curriculum, different areas, I know all of that. And I learned
that from coaching. And I form my teams in a school, you know, using that background.”

**Letting Go/ Taking Charge**

John was asked to explain his leadership style. He shared that his leadership style
and beliefs had four primary influences, military, coaching, business and the mentorship
and support from fellow principals. John shared what he believed to be the most effective
manner to lead the school, “Leadership was by collaboration, but the bottom line was it
was on me.”

John was posed the question, “How do you ascertain when to distribute leadership
and when to take charge?” John believed strongly that what each person is doing and how
they are doing it must compliment and be in line with the both the leadership team and school’s direction. He also believed that knowing your personnel and their limitations is critical. “You can teach a kid to dribble a basketball, you can teach a kid to shoot a basketball, but you cannot teach a kid to be six foot five.” Later in the interview John also shared, “You look at your personnel, you know your personnel, you bring in the people that can best support you, you know I think as much as possible, I want to delegate responsibility. But, they don’t run free and easy. They have to be accountable so when they come back to the leadership team, they can sit and talk about the direction and about what is going on, the results they are having and what they would like to share.”

**Problem Solving**

John spoke of his problem solving process by telling a story about the creation of the MYAC, Military Youth Advisory Counsel. This system involved all the principals from the complex, a representative from each armed services branch, parents, faculty and students. This inclusive council was posed many complex problems such as; uniform policy, student racism and gang issues, graffiti, even the creation of other support systems such as the creation of the transition center. This system of decision-making was dovetailed with the school leadership team. John explained in the interview that he rarely made unilateral decisions unless it was an emergency involving school safety such as lock down or fire.

Another example of John’s belief in dispersed decision-making was the creation of the school’s budget committee, comprised of teachers that were in no other leadership roles such as leadership team or grade level chairperson. This shared model of decision
making accomplished several points; buy in, acceptance of decisions, empowerment and inclusion of all faculty.

**Persistence**

At the end of the interview, he reflected on his career in education as a leader. “How many guys can get up every day and be excited about work? They are getting paid for doing what they love doing, you know? It’s a crime...you know, I feel like I cheated the government, I would have been doing it for free if I could. You know, just to work with kids and watch them grow and working with parents and help them problem solve, you know, so it was a great life. We are really lucky, so for me I feel like I was blessed with the opportunity I had to make life better.” It does not seem like John had to “persist” at anything, he loved the challenges that being a principal offered, and felt blessed with the opportunities to help others, especially kids.

**Shannon**

Shannon is a Caucasian female who stated she grew up in the Navy. This meant that she traveled many places before she arrived in Hawaii when she was seventeen. Shannon described that she grew up in a white, middle-class environment. She fell in love with Hawaii and later transferred during her sophomore year from a mainland college to attend University of Hawaii. She said that she always wanted to be a teacher, and decided that Hawaii would be her home when she began her first teaching practicum experience. Teaching positions within the DOE were scarce in the early1970’s and she felt lucky to get a teaching position in rural Leeward Oahu. Although she admittedly knew nothing about Hawaiian culture, Shannon shared that she felt blessed to be given an opportunity to experience real, indigenous Hawaiian culture. Ironically, given Shannon’s
ethnic background and lack of previous exposure, in her first year, she was assigned to teaching Hawaiian culture. Shannon felt very humbled. Shannon stayed in this rural Leeward Oahu community for nine years and became a vice principal at one of the high schools there. Soon after, she accepted a position a school that serves detained, incarcerated youth on the other side of the island. Shannon served in that facility for nine years. Shannon then became a principal in an urban area high school on Oahu for fifteen years, her last position before retirement.

Shannon did not embark on family life and remained single though out her career. Shannon explained that she feels really happy about the career she had and does not feel depressed about any of the sacrifices she made. She considers herself a shy and introverted person and consciously worked to overcome these challenges when functioning in a leadership position.

Shannon stated that she values serving the students and the community, and feels that leadership really matters. Her two greatest joys are seeing young people develop into successful adults and teachers who have, “really grown from good to greatness.” As she put it, “The job of a leader is to see the potential of others.”

Shared Vision

Shannon was asked, “What is the most effective manner a vision is developed, articulated and then put into action?” She shared, “You really have to pause, and see how you connect with what culture is there, because if you come in… even if you are assigned to the school, and you may be, because I certainly was, “this place is a mess, your job is to fix it.” But, there are still a lot of really great things happening. So, you come in with the approach that I am going to fix all this mess, you are not going to have people support
you, no matter what your vision is, so you come in and really assess how you can be a servant to this school.”

Shannon explained that having a mission and vision wasn’t the challenge at the high school she was assigned, having the three hundred plus staff and two-thousand five hundred students coherently understand and believe in it was. Shannon and her staff created a strategic plan that was better aligned with their school’s vision. “It took us a couple of years to put in place, and changing…huge changes with our bell schedule and with the kind of ways we organized into academies.”

A reflection that she often pondered was, “Is what we are doing best for our kids? And does it fit our long-term outcomes?” This assisted her in her strategic vision alignment and maintaining focus on her mission.

**Asking Questions**

When she was asked, to explain the influence that asking questions of quality plays in developing exceptional results?” Shannon explained, “I think that, I remember going all the way back to Blooms’ taxonomy and the kinds of the levels of questioning that you want to get into, it’s the same with children as it is with adults. You just start with, you know, “tell me what you know about this?” and, “What is your understanding of the issue?” And then, even then you go deeper dependent upon the kinds of answers you get. But really deep questioning is very important.”

Shannon discussed her beliefs regarding the fitness of teachers and how she felt it was her mission to find the right teachers for the students. Shannon explained, “Because you know, you find teachers many times I’m sure in these areas who are really not well-
suited, because they don’t believe that the child can do much better.” “Then, what are they doing? And when a teacher does not believe that, they are of no use at all.”

Shannon pondered, “An administrator has to be able to be able to see something beyond the person sitting in front of you, and gut feeling is really important, even though we are all into metrics right now, but it really is finding the person who can be the right fit for the children being taught. And if you make a mistake, you effect lives for a very long time.”

She also shared that faculty and even vice principal selection was a group decision. When a vice principal would leave to become a principal, “We would all sort of just pick the person that took their place. We would all be involved in making the decision of who was coming in and training the next person.”

Coping with Weakness

Shannon disclosed that her school improved during her tenure. She cited her schools’ improved test scores as one measure of the change, but she believed that more important than test scores, a good measure would be to examine and track their students’ life trajectory after they graduate their high school. This directly resulted in the creation of academies focused on a post-secondary program connecting to colleges and training programs. The high school where Shannon served adopted the High Schools That Work Program. Shannon said, “High Schools That Work tried to bring rigor to the programs that had a vocational focus or a college prep focus, because we wanted both. For our kids, that relevance piece was so, so critical. So we had a culinary academy that connected to Aloha Community College.”
Shannon explained how she overcame and addressed any professional shortcomings and challenges. “I hired vice principals that had skills that were different than me, and because I am certainly not great at somethings, I am not a techie person…I can manage it, but I am not super good with you know, budgets.” “But it is important to know on the big picture, but I don’t want to be the one to audit the books, because I will make some mistakes.” “You got to have people that can do different things that surround you, and then you are stronger for that.”

She shared her beliefs on what led her to persist as a school principal. “I don’t really think it is persisting, I think it’s just, each day you do what you have to do.” Shannon attributed her success to “I think I was able to do as well as I did, because I had the right people around me.”

**Listening and Acknowledging**

Shannon was asked, “To what extent does listening and acknowledging influence principal performance?” Shannon replied, “I had teacher leaders that did not have any hesitation to tell me that I was running in the wrong direction here, and I needed to back off and people were feeling a certain way.” She clearly valued authentic communication and her strong relationships based on interpersonal trust, and shared that her faculty would, “Come and let me know. So I knew I could trust people to be honest with me and you just get…I never, I stayed long times at all my schools except for my VP position because, I was only there two years. But, other than that I stayed a really long time because I think you have to embed yourself in the culture and with the people to fully understand what needs to be done and how you can support them.”
Shannon explained further, “When you are in a people business you have to take into account the people that are in your system and so I think, positive relationships, and not just everybody’s happy and gets donuts in the morning, but real meaningful connections to people is one of the key parts of being a leader.”

When Shannon was asked about what experience shaped her beliefs on listening and acknowledging, she replied that, “It was part of my personality you know, I am not…so I think it was how I was a teacher too.” She also spoke of how she believed in being a facilitator and how that shaped her behaviors as a principal.

**Depending on Others**

Throughout her tenure as a school principal, Shannon she several personal medical emergencies that required her to be away from school for extended periods of time. This instilled in her the need to have her vice principals and other key staff to be independent and able to fulfill others responsibilities. “One of the things I always said was, “I don’t want anybody in the school to ever say, I don’t want any of the leaders to say, that’s not my job. I don’t deal with facilities, I don’t deal with special ed, or whatever.” You have your main areas, but I really wanted all of us to be able to step into the other ones shoes at any time. And that is why it was easy for me to step out when I had to.”

When discussing problem-solving strategies, Shannon mentioned the need to communicate with the involved parties. “People need to know that they are part of the solution so that they don’t just come in with their wheelbarrow and dump their problem at your feet.”
Shannon also shared during the interview that she teaches and mentors school principals. “When I talk to classes and stuff or I talk and mentor people, I say, the relationship piece is probably the most important thing.” Shannon felt that relationships played a critical role in her performance as a principal. She explained her belief in interpersonal trust by saying, “Part of what you really have to spend time doing is building trusting relationships with people so that they’re willing to trust you to lead them.”

**Letting Go/ Taking Charge**

Shannon described that her leadership style as really based on setting the example and building relationships. “You have to show that you’re working as hard or harder than anybody else, because nobody wants a leader that sort of says, “This is what I want, everybody do it and I’ll be back to check on you to see if you’ve done it in awhile. You got to be in the trenches, at the workshops with them. You know, just…and that is how you build relationships with people.”

Shannon explained that she expected the vice principals to be constant communication with each other. She facilitated and encouraged this by devoting time every day to discussion and debriefing. Each of them were able to set into each others roles if necessary. This capacity building expectation created a stream of vice principals leaving the school to be promoted as principals.

In explaining her beliefs regarding distributing leadership responsibilities, Shannon stated, “You got to have people that can do different things that surround you and you are stronger for that. And there again, you can give away… and you put those people out in front and they can take the leads. And you don’t have to micro-manage
them. But getting those right people…” Shannon summarized her beliefs concerning distributing responsibility by saying, “I just think you get good people and you trust them to do their jobs.”

**Problem Solving**

Shannon clarified the process she routinely used to solve problems. “Try to get more information from people who are there so you bring in all the diverse people connected with the issue. And questions you know, are part of reflection, and we have so little time now to reflect on yourself. And so, some of the questions to ask yourself even before you go in…you really think things through and where do I need to get help on this problem.”

She used deeper questioning techniques to not only involve others in the decisions, but also to have a greater potential for positive outcomes. Shannon admitted that she needed to model these expectations so that faculty would not dump their problems on her and then expect solutions. Jokingly, she shared that sometimes she had an image of people with a wheelbarrow unloading the problem at her feet, and then trying to leave. She would then envision herself telling them they needed to stay to be involved in the problem solving process.

Shannon talked about the importance of understanding the boundaries for the problem and the possible solutions. “You need to know what the parameters are for a solution, so that people don’t go completely wild. Their solution might not be legal for one thing.” Shannon also felt that it was important for her staff to be involved in all phases of the solution process and that listening to them was not merely going through the motions of hearing people out.
**Persistence**

Shannon explained her belief persistence plays in leadership performance. Shannon disclosed that she chose the two schools where she was a principal because it was a good fit for her with the understanding that any measure of change would take many years. “I recognized that it took time to any job well.” And that, “You might have a good change but a sustainable change happens only with time and persistence.”

Shannon’s beliefs on persistence are set on the foundational belief of, “If I am growing, am I growing into where I can be of service at another place.” She also felt, persisting not only with the school but also with your self was critical.

Shannon was very clear that she never would leave the school level and wanted to remain at the school level with the kids. “For me, I knew that State, District would not bring me any joy at all. And so, I would rather work as hard as I did and still be around kids and teachers.”

**James**

James is a male of Japanese decent. James’s childhood was spent in a low-income area in Honolulu on the Island of Oahu, which he described as a slum. He added that his family moved into a housing project after they broke everything down during an urban renewal project. He did not grow up with hot running water in his home. He bought the first family car when he was nineteen. Prior to that, he shared that all the traveling his family did was by foot or by bus if available. He disclosed that poverty was the “great equalizer” because everyone around him, regardless of ethnic background, was poor.

James affectionately spoke of a friend he had growing up as a child, and then separated
from around high school age. His friend became involved in organized crime as an
enforcer and eventually ended up dying in prison at a young age. It was a tough
childhood.

In order for James family to survive, at a very young age he was expected to work
and contribute to the family coffers. School was of secondary importance. He took a job
at the local soda bottling company to help support the family. James explained that he
worked six days a week loading glass bottles into crates and trucks. He managed to get
accepted into the University of Hawaii after barely passing the entrance exam. Soon after,
he married and fathered a daughter. James admitted that his focus on education was
renewed and his grades improved once having a child. He graduated, and then spent ten
years teaching. After trying several times to get into a graduate program and being
denied, he was finally accepted at a graduate college in the mid-west on the mainland.
During this time, James went through a divorce. On reflecting on his childhood and
college days, James said, “You know, it has always been a hard road. Never just
okay…you know?”

James became a school principal at an elementary school on the Windward side of
Oahu. Several year later, he became a principal at an elementary school in area
surrounding Honolulu. After many years as a principal at this school, he also remarried.
James remained at the second school for his entire career as a principal.

James believed, “I was always for the underdog, at risk kids, I’ll tell you, I am just
for those kids. You know, Special Ed., ELL, disadvantaged, broken homes, whatever the
case may be, it was certainly an affinity I had with those kids. But, because I knew how it
felt. You know, you just got to give these kids some hope and try an support them as
much as you can.” James believed that as a principal he valued and role modeled; life long learning, hard work, commitment, respect and working together. James school became a Tribes Program school during his tenure as a principal. James was proud that his school was one of the first schools to adopt this respect and values-based communication and behavioral program.

**Shared Vision**

James explained his beliefs concerning the most effective manner a vision is developed, articulated and then put into action. He shared, “Of course for me it had always been a shared vision, collaborative, and no matter what, I always tried to get in my own vision into the shared vision, and students first.”

James school became a Tribes school during his tenure. James felt the ideology of this program really assisted in shaping the school. “Really the foundation so…yeah that was always part of the mission, the culture of the school, it was a lot of caring, working together, collaboration and of course too, for the students to learn and be the best that they could be, so that’s…and I am sure people like “Principal X” and everybody else does this, you always go back to your vision and your beliefs and your values, you know, whenever you are doing something.”

**Asking Questions**

James explained the influence that asking questions of quality plays in developing exceptional results. As he stated, “You have the same thing about being respectful, and asking clarifying questions and probing questions. Questions that will not have that [cause a] person to shut down.”
James asked scenario-based questions when interviewing prospective faculty. John also explained that they looked to, “get the essence of the being, you know, the kind of person they are…yeah, yeah…I think those are so important when it is not the standard question you see on the form.” James also did his background research on prospective teaching candidates. “I call every principal they had, I go back three principals, I have called their student teaching supervisor, and other peers they might have had in their schools.”

**Coping with Weakness**

James used a story to explain how his first school improved while he was there. The story was of his school putting on a theatrical production and inviting all of the parents. Parents were awestruck in disbelief that the kids performing were actually their kids. “And that’s what…that’s what really helped us. It helped us learning to read through the arts. And in the time that we were performing, then we raised…bumped it up so much, from the third from the bottom, and we didn’t go up to…but the growth was just unreal. You know so, and the year after that, our District Superintendent said, “Why don’t you write up what you did?” So that was, I think that was our second or third year of the Frito-Lay sponsored outstanding school.” James also disclosed at his school they also adopted a writing program. “We adopted that program and in three years…that really helped improve our scores.”

It seemed that James was more excited to share that during his tenure, his school adopted full inclusion of special education students. Initially, there were many struggles to overcome. He recalled a situation where a teacher was telling him, “I don’t want to sit in this section of the cafeteria, and I say, “Why?” “Because, those kids are sitting over
“There.” I said, “They are not bothering you…” “But you know, the milk is coming out of their mouth, and blah, blah, blah, blah, and I don’t want my kids to…” I just have to sit down and talk about this…But I knew, I was never going to let the full inclusion program go into her classroom.” He reflected, “You just have to sort of scratch those people out.”

James examples throughout the interview reinforced the belief that he shared about being a champion for underdog.

James expressed a strong belief in being a life-long learner, so that when he needed to increase his knowledge base concerning instructional leadership or different leadership styles in various educational settings he read as much as he could, attended trainings and enrolled in seminars. James valued learning opportunities to hone his skill set.

He shared how he also overcame challenges and shortcomings by creating systems. James believed in building these systems to ensure that nothing was dependent solely upon him. He even compared his belief in these systems to another elementary school principal in the Leeward Oahu coast that is renown for his firm convictions regarding creating and maintaining systems of support.

James’ persistence was driven by his firm convictions in providing what was best for the students. Students were always first. In order to achieve his results, the workload was admittedly immense. “This was a twenty-four seven deal, I mean I used to go in on Saturdays if there was activities, Sundays after church. Ohhh, okay, I might as well go in a get a head start.”

**Listening and Acknowledging**
James shared how his actions at the school were driven by his beliefs of listening and acknowledging. His school incorporated the Tribes program to lay the foundation for respectful talk and listening amongst students and adults. Appropriate discussion and conflict resolution skills were taught and reinforced starting in Kindergarten. James referred to the Tribes program and it’s influence upon the school’s culture and mission on multiple occasions throughout the interview. Its’ impact on the school’s culture was considerable.

**Depending on Others**

James explained that in order to build a community at his first school, he needed to first build trust with the parents and teachers. Previously, principals came and went from the school quickly, it was like a revolving door. “Yeah….and I think what made them trust, trust me when I…Hawaiian community, and in those days, I was paddling canoe, you know…they see the canoe in the back of my car…”Hey! You paddle brah?” “Yeah!” (Laughs)…all those little things. John also communicated that he purposely built and valued each relationship. “Going on about relationships, that’s what it is, building those relationships, one at a time, one at a time, not only with the teachers, and of course with students you know, but the community, the parents, you know…whatever, so after awhile, after the first year, I think we began to come together as a culture because there was a trust, yeah?”

James was asked, “In what manner have relationships supported your performance as a school principal?” James disclosed a scenario that captured the essence of his response. “So our PCNC person, she was one of the pioneers of the program, but she, that really sort of cemented our community, she was so good you know, I would say,
“Aghhhh…you know, I am having problems with this family.” I said, “How can I get in there?” She would say, Don’t worry, don’t worry, the sheriff is going to go.” (laughing and meaning herself) James depended upon the support staff to further solidify his community relationships.

James commented on his level of satisfaction with the school, “Everything just fell into place, so yeah culture, relationships, trust, you know, that made it for me, more so than anything else.” James believed that interpersonal trust was crucial to achieve exceptional results.

**Letting go/ Taking Charge**

James was asked to explain his leadership style and its influence upon school results. James shared, “I guess for myself, because I demonstrated, be always visible, open door policy, you know we were noted for, the cars would drive in and we would open the car doors for the kids, greet every kid, so one, you could just spot the kid who is having trouble.” This one example shows the extraordinary lengths that James went to build relationships with everyone so that he could support the children of his school.

He explained how he knew when to distribute leadership and when to take charge. “My belief is that you empower them, you just got to empower them, and one of my mistakes is that you empower them too much, they think that they are running the show!” (Laughing) “Yeah, so I really believe in empowerment, however one of the things now, you know after, after I am retired, I feel that I should have been a little bit more…I should have monitored a little more. And not only with the leaders, I should have monitored a little more, and at times I just had to be a little more directive.” There were
things that James never delegated, things he felt that he should take care of as the principal. One example of this was his cases that went to hearings.

**Problem Solving**

James shared the process he routinely used to solve challenging problems. “One of the things I make sure that I am there, and I know the case, you know, get prepared. The second thing was, I often knew that you got to develop these relationships with parents or the kids, and even the parent advocate, you cannot be hostile. I mean so developing relationships, getting the information, you know, know what our staff stance is, you know and as you relate to the different people, I mean, no sense getting upset, because once you get upset… and you just got to work at it.”

James elaborated, “As you develop these relationships, and not only this high level case, but all the other cases, it doesn’t only have to be Special Ed, then it just goes smoother, because it solves the problem. It doesn’t solve all of them…” He was quick to add that it was also important to know your resources and keep your Complex Area Superintendent informed. James felt that relationships were instrumental in finding common ground and moving forward for the betterment of the child. These relationships influenced his and the school’s performance.

**Persistence**

Throughout his childhood and even into adulthood, James struggled, working very hard to have a better quality of life. Through these experiences, he developed the belief in persistence out of the necessity of survival. These beliefs stayed with him as he embarked on a career in educational leadership. It, combined with his feelings of supporting and being a champion for the underdog students, undergirded his leadership
perform. When James was specifically asked about his beliefs on persistence he explained, “Ummm… persistence, I think from what I shared with you, I mean, you know it’s all for the kids, don’t give up…you just got to hang in there and don’t give up.”

**Jill**

When Jill was asked to discuss early experiences that might have shaped her beliefs and career choices, she was very selective about what she shared. The earliest experience she described was that when she went to college, she originally wanted to be a chemist. “I was sitting one, slumbering, sunny afternoon, and I…was in the lab trying to figure unknowns, and everybody was…it was the first signs of spring, although it was fifty-five degrees. Everybody was with shorts out there playing and I said, “I do not really want to be in the lab all of my life.” This pivotal point set her on the path of becoming an educator. Jill shared that it was difficult to get a job in teaching at the time, therefore, she enrolled at University of Hawaii for a semester. She credits being enrolled at the University with assisting her in securing a teaching position.

Jill became a resource person for the district. Jill saw this as an advantage because she was able to observe many different principals and their leadership behaviors. She was accepted into the administration training program and became a vice principal at a local high school. She remained at this high school for four years. She credits her early development to her principal and the support of the vice principals surrounding her at the school.

When asked, “What values or beliefs must be present to create exceptional school principal performance?” Jill replied, “I think it is a profound desire to create a worthwhile and enjoyable learning experience for students, parents, faculty and staff.” “When I say, I
mean that when I say, a learning experience, because a principal has to know, they’re the leader of all those people. Not just a student leader.”

**Shared Vision**

Jill explained many examples of how she shared her vision with the school. She clarified, “A shared vision is one thing, but you got to have a principal going in with their vision, they have to be the leader okay?” One of Jill’s methods of getting her teachers to think and reflect on possibilities was to have select teachers read specific and individualized articles to stimulate their thinking. She described the articles as, “not pedantic but exciting ones that talk about teaching algebra to first graders.” She also shared that everybody received different, individually tailored articles. She also brought speakers from the University of Hawaii. Her belief was that, “You have to show the people that something different before you even talk shared vision.”

Jill explained that after showing them something different; you need to assess what exists and why, then seek out a solution. After adopting that solution to your school environment, “you clearly decide what you want to get at the end of this experiment.” The last step is to then implement. Jill used an example to explain this process. Her school, after much teacher debate, moved from consumable workbooks that were frequently wasted due to student transiency, to a more cost efficient expenditure on computers. She showed the faculty how much the consumable workbooks cost every year and how much the initial cost of purchasing ten desktops. The teachers lobbied for the change to occur.
Asking Questions

Jill explained what type of questions she asked prospective faculty during the interview process. “If I am getting people, they got to be the kind of people I want for this kind of environment.” She stated that she asked people what have they done rather than what they would do to get to the core of their being and personality. Jill used the question, “Tell me about the last time you had to dish punishment to a student.” I purposely chose those words now, because I don’t use the word punishment usually.” She asks the prospective faculty member, “Tell me about the situation, tell me about your thinking, and tell me how it was resolved. Now when they tell me that, you can see this expression on their face, because they came in planning on telling me what they would do and now they have to think of an example. I am more likely to get the truth from asking what happened in the past, rather than what you would do.”

Jill also explained her strong interest in finding the qualities in prospective faculty that you cannot teach, but they must already possess. Jill felt these values and beliefs could not be taught, but must be found in suitable applicants; adaptability, how they feel about other human beings, willingness to try new things and integrity.

Coping with Weakness

Jill was asked how her school improved during her tenure as the principal. She shared six main themes of improvement of her school. “What changed in the ten years that I was there? It was a sought after school, okay?” The school improved by; receiving National grants and recognitions, created a comprehensive, school-wide book reading accountability program that received National recognition, implemented Read Across
America, test scores improved for five straight years and implemented a performing arts program that assisted in improving SAT scores.

When asked, “In what manner did you overcoming any professional shortcomings or challenges?” Jill shared that she, “Always tried to be ahead of the game.” She also discussed her views on life long leaning to support personal growth. “When I read, of course I read a lot, and I read things in our line of work, education. But I also read what’s happening in other things, in business, what’s happening in engineering, what’s happening in other parts. What are they looking at, because it will have an impact in education, okay?” So I read a lot, and I didn’t just read for the reading. I always applied it to my role.”

Jill explained what led her to persist as a school principal. “You know, my work wasn’t finished. I don’t think we… I wouldn’t use the word persist as a school principal. I had things I wanted to accomplish and I worked ten years in one school and then I got the call to go to District. (She served as a teacher for ten years then a school administrator for thirty years, vice principal to superintendent). Jill shared, “I don’t know, I never looked for a change in my whole career, changes found me. I was invited to move to another level. I never looked for another level.”

**Listening and Acknowledging**

Jill was asked to what extent does listening and acknowledging influence principal performance? She responded by sharing that she felt that she was her own worst critic, when it came to evaluating her performance. She also expressed that she listened and acknowledged, “but filtered things with my own understanding of the situation.” Jill
explained that when she reflected on her performance, she always had, “A clear compass on what her North is, and what my North is, what is good for the kids.”

Jill explained that she felt that listening and acknowledging is the principal’s system of checks and balances, and it is necessary to keep you focused. One advantage of this monitoring system is that, “The listening tells you if there are any detractors to your leadership, because you have to address it. Because, anything that draws from your leadership, imperils your progress, and you don’t want that to ever happen.”

**Depending on Others**

When she was asked, “In what manner have relationships supported your performance as a principal?” Jill responded, “You cannot do it by yourself, there’s absolutely no way you can do it by yourself, so you have to have a bunch of good people walking the same path with you. And in order to do that, you have to keep in touch with their needs, and their accomplishments and their feelings of weakness, everything you talked about before.”

To the question, “What influence does interpersonal trust play in achieving exceptional results?” Jill explained, “Interpersonal trust means they don’t question your motivation…they may question your methodology (laughing)…they may question what you said, but they don’t question your motive.”

**Letting Go/ Taking Charge**

Jill described her leadership style and it’s influence upon school results as primarily a student advocate. She explained her capacity building efforts as, “I have to find them, inspire them, support them and nurture them, and nurture them, okay?”
Discussing when to distribute leadership and when to take charge, Jill shared that this is a really critical component for a principal. “You don’t hand off unless you ensure and are assured of that person’s success. You won’t have people volunteering for anything, (laughing) if you don’t set them up for success.” “And that is why I say I support and nurture them, I’m not babysitting anybody. But I picked them for a reason, I give them tasks that I know they can handle a chunk, and then I support them, get them what they need, and I nurture them, and when the time comes, they are ready for a bigger chunk, and a bigger chunk.”

**Problem Solving**

Jill explained her routine problem solving process. She confided that she problem solved based on intuition when she was a novice principal. Jill believed in, “Assessing all sides, you check the details.” She shared a story of how her position working in a certain capacity for the State office taught her many valuable lessons. Jill reiterated her statement and expanded later in the interview, “You got to check things first, physically.” and expanded her explanation to include, “assess all sides, check details, and identify the problem, explore the possible solutions, weigh the solutions, and always look at second, third and fourth level consequences, not just what’s going to happen if I take this one.”

**Persistence**

Jill responded to the question, “What role if any does persistence play in leadership performance?” by stating, “I don’t know that word. I don’t know persistence. I kept saying, I am not finished yet.” Jill felt that when you use the phrase persistence to describe a person’s drive it implies an individual’s certain need to accomplish things. She felt that persistent did not describe her as a principal. Jill shared, “I don’t feel that me,
because as I move along, it changes and looks different as the needs go, so I don’t hammer something, you know?” But, she also explained that persistence could play a valuable role in principal performance if viewed from the perspective of needing to accomplish something. Jill shared, “If you are sincerely trying to accomplish something, you have to be persistence and work out all the kinks in order to get what you want accomplished for the kids.”

She went on to explain what developed this belief. “I’ll tell you this thing has impacted my belief for a long time, because I felt that I have to do goo here, while I am here. This is borrowed time.” Jill further explained why she persisted. “I am temporary at this school, and the kids will change, but if I do good, the teachers, the curriculum, anything we put into place, may have lasting impact, that’s why.”

**Mark**

Mark selectively shared his academic journey; he did not disclose information regarding his childhood, parents or familial influences. Mark did, however, make reference to the extreme difficulty he had with academics when he attended high school. An event that seemingly crafted his beliefs was an experience with his high school counselor. The one instance that the counselor had met with him, the counselor told him not to bother applying to college. “Man, to this day I will never forgive him for that. Because I think, as an educator, we should never discourage a youngster or student, no matter the struggles, the challenges, we are there to inspire and uplift, to guide, not to say Mark…that was 1968.”
Mark applied to University of Hawaii and was accepted. He joked that he didn’t know how he got in and was certain the UH Admissions Department had made a mistake. Nevertheless, he was grateful for the opportunity, and was happy he was not going to be drafted to go to Vietnam. He lasted one semester, then joined the National Guard.

Mark did not share the remainder of his college journey, but did reflect on his lifelong desire to be a teacher. “I always wanted to be a teacher, as crappy as a student I was, I always aspired to be a teacher.” He then shared how he felt about his public high school experience and how it shaped his beliefs as an educator. “I feel like shit in school. Why do I feel unsuccessful? Unmotivated, uncared for, and it’s like, you know I wanted to correct that. I wanted to work with kids like myself, who struggled in school and didn’t have a place. I wanted kids to be successful. I wanted kids to be happy in school, successful in school, engaged, enthusiastic, committed, and enjoy themselves.

Mark became a special education teacher at a local high school. He initially had no intention of becoming a school administrator and expected to live out his teaching career at the high school as a special education teacher, by then though he stated his family and the pay for teachers was “tragic” during that time period, so he decided to either go into counseling or get an administration certificate. To become a school counselor, Mark would have needed to get a Master’s degree, but for administration, he needed only twenty-one credits. Another college program seemed too daunting; therefore the choice was an administration program. Further along in his career, Mark shared that he also endured a divorce, later to remarry.

MARKS’ vision of what beliefs must be present to create exceptional principal performance was well articulated. “We are there to influence in a positive way. That’s
our task, that’s our responsibility, that’s our…we have an authority we can do that, that’s our calling in life. Inspire everyone to get better, as an administrator we don’t stop teaching, because…one quote I love is, “You not ready to teach then you are not ready to lead.” Because we have to teach, in order for us to teach, we have to learn. We got to keep ourselves well versed, and inspire our personnel to get better, because as we get better, we elevate the learning of our kids. Sometimes we stumble upon successes, we hit what we aim at. So it’s got to be a concerted, focused purposeful effort together to help every youngster to get better. And as a principal, that is your ultimate kuleana. You sit in that chair, your decisions, your actions, behaviors influence every facet of that school, every facet.”

Throughout the interview, Mark made reference to his belief in the power of relationships. “That came with developing those strong relationships, and developing that level of trust, they could trust me, I could trust them, that’s part of the culture, and that starts with the leader developing, with communication, with establishing the relationships with people, genuinely caring about people, genuinely servicing them, if people feel safe, they are more likely to be on your team.”

**Shared Vision**

Mark was asked, “What is the most effective manner a vision is developed, articulated and then put into action?” He shared, “That vision and mission, we always believed had to be founded on solid fundamental beliefs system. Because without it anchored in a strong philosophical base that we shared as a school, as a team, as a community, that vision and mission will be shaky at best.”
Mark summarized his beliefs concerning leadership and vision crafting. “A large part of being a leader is the three “M’s”. What do you do as a leader? One of them is marketing, marketing yourself, marketing what you believe in, marketing the school, marketing the kids, your personnel, you are always marketing. Leaders have to manage; you know the system makes you a manager…and you have to monitor how you are doing.”

When asked to explain the utility a shared vision has in creating exceptional results, Mark explained, “If you’re grounded in a philosophical base, what you are working towards no matter what, will stay firm. And I think that is what helped us at Aloha Elementary. Stay rooted in what’s best for kids, we had confidence in ourselves making good decisions for our kids. Because of our fundamental belief, our fundamental thing we believed in as a team, as a school community; every kid can learn, every kid wants to learn, everyone can be successful.

Mark shared to what extent his shared vision influenced the school culture. “If we really believe that every kid wants to learn, why are we doing that? We help every kid be uplifted, not them, theirs, yours…it’s our students, we help every kid. Every single kid on this campus belongs to us, they are like our own.”

**Asking Questions**

When questioned what he asked prospective faculty during the interview process, Mark disclosed that he always asked one particular question at the beginning of the interview. “So one of the questions we always use in our interview, you know Kris if at the end of this interview Kris I offer you the position Kris, what would your response be? That’s normally my first question.” Mark explained if the applicant could not
unreservedly say they would immediately take the job, he would excuse them from the interview. He believed that all applicants should be one hundred percent interested in working at his school, because of the school, what it believes in, not because it is an available job.

Mark also communicated that all interview participants were asked to come thirty minutes early for a writing assessment. The writing assignment usually consisted of questions like, “Write your philosophy of education” or “Describe an effective classroom.” If they were late, the interview was over. Mark revealed, “They had to believe in the worthiness and the capacity of every youngster to learn and get better, and what their classroom would look like, and if they couldn’t write for shit (laughing) or they weren’t grounded in students, a real definitive student focus, we weren’t going to hire them.”

Mark shared his beliefs concerning gathering information. “Gathering information, going back again to us being on campus, and that is absolutely critical. You watch, you listen, keep your mouth shut, if you are talking you are not learning. So if you are listening to what kids say, listening to your personnel, watching behaviors, watching operations, you are collecting information. It may be anecdotal, but it is real, it’s live time, you are getting information, so you got to be out on campus, we are talking about a school leader, you want to be with the kids, with your personnel talking to them, how are things going, you want to be in the classroom.”

Mark also explained that being present and visible is crucial to understanding what is really occurring on campus. Mark also wanted to catch people doing good things so that he could commend them on it.
Coping with Weakness

Mark explained how his school improved during his tenure as the principal. “I took an assignment, eyes wide open, I am going to do the best that I can. Five years, it took me five years. I walked into an accreditation…it was terrible, our school was so bad. We were a junk school. My parents would come to visit, and I’d have to leave them because there would be shit all over the place.” Mark made it his mission to retake the school, get people to buy in and built an exceptional school culture focused on helping all children being successful.

Mark disclosed how he overcame and addressed professional shortcomings. “My thing that I mentioned earlier, that as a leader we have to…our challenge, our responsibility is to keep learning, and even if, I would say, I am not a strong person in area A, B, C, or D. That is not enough, I got to go find out, and I better go learn. It is not to say, I am not that good, so I’m going to let the other person…I am going to learn as much as I can.” Mark shared that it is also important to know who are the people of influence, know your resources such as colleagues and understand clearly who you can depend upon.

Mark explained what led him to persist as a school principal. “I think seventeen and half years at one site speaks to that level of persistence, that level of commitment, of course it was a blast, it was fun. Why would I not want to be at a place I really enjoyed being? Being surrounded by great kids, great faculty and staff, but it goes back to our core values. I learned early on from my family values, my work ethic…no more free rides” Mark shared nothing of worth comes easy. “I am not going to quit. I might get
knocked down, I dust myself off, shake my helmet, and we play, we going to play because we are going to play to help our kids win.”

**Listening and Acknowledging**

Mark revealed his beliefs concerning listening and acknowledging and school principal performance. He said, “You are not going to be able to inspire people without getting to know them. And not knowing them as a custodian, or a math teacher, you got to know them as Kris Phifer, who happens to be a vice principal. You got to know the person, it is developing that personal connection to them as human beings, it’s really important. It is just like what we do with students, get to know them by name, get to know something about them, especially those that are challenged.” From what Mark previously disclosed about himself, it is easy to understand what influenced him believing this. He struggled in school. Making personal connections with others is what helped him persist in his education. He now sees the value in it for others.

Mark explained his perception of listening and acknowledging on organizational climate and exceptional results. “If they know you care, for example you know, if you have an altercation, a lot easier to manage if they know who you are, and what you stand for, so if I say, “Stop!” you stop, versus if they don’t know who I am and take a swing at me, you know same way working with a parent, faculty member, a staff member, we have to know each other. They got to trust that I am here to help them. Whether it is a kid, a personnel, a parent, we are there to help. It is about service, leaders serve people.”

**Depending on Others**

During the interview, Mark communicated how he built the school culture. It took him five years to feel like he had made a difference at the school. He led by example and
by being present and highly visible. “They saw that our administrative team was always out, we weren’t asking them to be on supervision, and we would not be there ahead of them…and after them, so slowly they begun to buy in.”

Mark told a story of how disorganized the school was at one point. “I was sitting at my desk, and how come I hear boom boxes going already? I never heard the bell ring, so I take out my bell schedule, shit it ain’t recess! The front is full of kids! We were so chaotic, there was no order, there was…it was a freaking zoo. Walking past the front, smoking cigarettes…well…that was my mission, my responsibility, restore order and get people to buy in.”

Mark explained his belief in the power of individualized, personal connections to form relationships with his faculty and staff. He shared, “We have to as leaders establish strong, powerful, productive relationships with people, it makes management a lot easier if they know you.”

Mark’s belief in relationships was paramount and it influenced everything else. “So relationships are absolutely critical, that is the horse before the buggy. I mean I could be a great tactician, I might know all this about curriculum and instruction assessment, but if I can’t get along with people, I ain’t worth shit.”

Further into the interview, Mark shared, “It is trusting your people, it really comes from the relationships, knowing your people, who you can really trust, who you got to provide more support to, who you got that you should not turn your back on, because we all have them, and you keep those people face to face with you, close up, always keep those people in direct eyesight (laughing) close range…and always smile at them, but they knew not to fuck up.”
Letting go/ Taking Charge

Mark explained his leadership style and its’ influence upon school results. Mark stated, “I don’t think it was just myself. It was genuinely a team effort. At Aloha High School, we had a strong team of leaders, who were able to work with whether it be their department or their team or their group of people. We all helped to uplift each other, it really was a team effort. No way that the principal or the administrators or department chairs are going to take credit for anything, because it was truly a team effort.” In a statement of extreme modesty, Mark explained, “It was a collection of people putting it all together, so I am not in a position to take credit for anything.”

Mark shared his understanding of distributing leadership. “I don’t know if there is ever going to be a formula to it, but I think it comes with experience, and it really comes with knowing your people, it got to a point with most of our teacher leaders, and our classified leaders, my job was to get out of their way. My job was to make sure I provided them with the means to get better and not micromanage, just get out of their way, don’t stifle people. But that’s again…you got to be out there monitoring to make sure that they are getting results that they say they are going to achieve.”

Problem Solving

Mark communicated his problem solving processes. He explained, “Again it is based on your relationship with your, not only within your school, but your community too. Being able to call upon people, cause they trust in what you are doing. Your community has to trust that your school is doing good work for their kids, your legislatures, your politicians, your clergy, your businesses. For us, the military, they
could trust that Aloha High School is providing a really good learning environment for their sons and daughters, they had confidence in us.”

Another comment Mark made that suggests his casual interpretation of problem solving was, “We would just sit down and laugh and talk…and talk shop and resolve a lot.” He relied heavily upon his relationships to provide the support necessary to resolve issues concerning the school.

**Persistence**

Mark shared his beliefs regarding persistence. “Are you familiar with that two-hundred twelve degrees? Two hundred twelve degrees is the temperature at which water boils. Not at two-hundred eleven, not at two hundred ten, at two hundred twelve. So I equate that to myself at Aloha High School. We were a bad school when I got there. Took me five years to feel that we had made, that we had turned a corner. If I had quit, anytime before, after one semester, one year, two years, three years, four years, five years. I would have not hit that two-hundred twelve if I had quit.”

Mark also shared that he loved what he was doing and misses it dearly since he has retired. “The people I worked with, I served with, what a wonderful, wonderful work experience. I was very fortunate, I was part of a great team, a great team of professionals, extraordinary people.” Mark’s perspective on working as a principal most likely contributed to his ability to remain in the position for seventeen years.

**Jenn**

Jenn is a female of Caucasian and Hawaiian ancestry. She began her interview by explaining how she became a school principal. She did not talk about her childhood,
family influences or previous experiences that could have shaped or influenced her choices. Prior to her coming to Hawaii, she suffered a divorce. Jenn and her children moved to Hawaii during a long teacher strike, so it was very difficult to find a job. She was eventually able to find a job as a counselor and teacher at a local juvenile detention facility, where she remained for five years. She then accepted an offer to be a counselor at a nearby high school. The principal of that high school encouraged her to go into administration. Initially she was resistant but eventually caved to the principal’s repeated coercion to enter the training program. She was placed at high school and worked with principal that she described as, “One of the best principals in the Aloha District. And I give her so much credit because she was really was a great role model for me to learn from in terms of working with people, decision–making, supporting staff and especially developing programs that you know, helped the kids.”

Later, Jenn was placed at different high school that was in the adjacent complex area. Jenn was a vice principal at this school for six months before the principal had problems and needed to leave. She became the acting principal. The next principal came in the following year, and continued on for two additional years. Jenn credits this principal with contributing to her professional growth to a large degree. Jenn later applied and was granted principalship at an elementary school within the complex. She remained at this elementary school for fourteen years before moving into a District position.

Jenn communicated her view of leadership and what values or beliefs must be present to create exceptional performance. “I have always interpreted my role as, as being a support to the teachers, knowing that it’s through the teachers that learning is going to occur in the classroom. But at the same time, you always understand that you are the
person that’s in charge and you do sometimes have to make decisions that are hard to make. But, if it’s in the best interest of number one, children, and the school itself, and you know, it’s overall functioning effectively, and the community, then you have to make the decision.”

Shared Vision

Jenn shared her vision then explained how it was developed. “And I just love the kids. So I think you know establishing that vision for everybody to believe in was critical and important. And a lot of that was you know…building expectations… higher expectations for the kids. That they were capable of learning, they were capable of achieving and you know, just because they were native Hawaiian or lived in poverty didn’t mean they weren’t very, very capable of you know, doing well and succeeding.”

Jenn communicated how she articulated her vision for the school. “I looked to research and I looked to see you know, what programs were out there, what other schools were doing similar in similar situations and ran across the accelerated school program which had come out of Stanford University.” Jenn felt that this model fit well with school and it provided a unity of purpose, a systematic approach and a philosophical base. “I mean it was such a good fit and people bought into it and then it just carried us through.” She explained that the school used this model to, “adapt everything we did, our governance, our curriculum and instruction.” Jenn believed that the shared vision that the school adopted, heavily influenced the culture and they way that they did business.

Asking Questions

Jenn shared the system the school used for gathering information and decision making, “Part of the governance process was…was the research piece so, before any
proposal was made for a change of any kind…the committee however…the group that was working had to do the research. And so, you know they brought the research along with the proposal and kind of presented that. And people could ask questions, you know if they needed more information they would get more information. So I think, you know that was built into the process, and I mean you just make more informed decisions that way.”

**Coping with Weakness**

Jenn explained how she overcame/ addressed professional shortcomings and challenges. “I strongly believe a principal is only as effective as the people that…you know, the resources that she’s able to or he’s able to gather to support them. So I was fortunate because I was able to hire…like a Hawaiian Studies teacher that was…spoke native Hawaiian and was very, very, good you know, in terms of knowledge and culture. So we would implement things like, which is now the GLO’s but were all based on Hawaiian values.”

Jenn also shared that the school hired a reading specialist that helped implement the program, “Success for All.” A few of her teachers had unique strengths, so following the Accelerated School’s Model; they built upon these strengths to increase their unity of purpose and sense of shared responsibility. “And so it was like…okay whoever was good in a certain area, you know would be given that responsibility to sort of oversee and do.”

Jenn said that she received large amounts of support from a woman she referred to as her “pseudo-vice principal,” a faculty member that who influenced and shaped the teachers behaviors. This person assisted in negotiating many contract-based disagreements during her tenure.
Listening and Acknowledging

Jenn communicated how listening and acknowledging influences principal performance. “Acknowledging you know…everyone for, for the contributions they make and I like to say, their strengths. Just you know, always really work on building that team and cultivating the teamwork, so that everybody feels you know, acknowledged and appreciated.”

During the interview, Jenn shared her beliefs on the influence of listening and acknowledging on organizational climate and exceptional results. Jenn explained, “Well first of all, you have to have the relationships and the trusting relationships, you know people are comfortable to come and really share how they feel about things. If they are not happy, they need to say that and why, and that needs to be addressed. You know as well as, hey this is working great, I mean so it’s always being in communication, communication is the key.” She then shared that she believed to be effective principals need to be constant communication with all teachers and staff. This communication is what can lead to the building of trust build and then people feel safe to communicate openly.

Later in the interview, Jenn shared that listening and acknowledging and keeping an issue open for discussion was a necessary component of her decision making process. Jenn also explained the importance that people needed to feel that their opinions were heard. The pros and cons to the differing views were formulated and then people voted how they felt. She believed that everyone should have the opportunity to be heard. On multiple instances during the interview, Jenn expressed the necessity of successful communication on all aspects of the role of principal.
Depending on Others

Jenn spoke of how she built her school culture and some of the challenges that occurred. “I think to have a school culture, of everybody having as important a say in what happens as anybody else, I think you know, was critical.” Inclusiveness was a core belief that Jenn repeatedly shared during the interview. She explained how she instilled inclusiveness at the school. “As far as bringing people together, to work together well within the school, I mean we had grade level meetings as well as team meetings. In terms of governance of the school, but you know any decisions that were made that affected everybody in the school always were open to the whole school. School as a whole we called it. So you know, the item had to be put on the agenda and then during the faculty meeting, you know it was brought up and discussed. And we had a fist to five method we used, and if anyone didn’t agree to the decision with a three or higher, then they had to declare you know, what it was that bothered them.”

Jenn disclosed how she felt her relationships supported her performance as a school principal. “I think getting the people and in place that have those skills and talents that you really need to help the team work, I think it’s really important, and supporting those people obviously, it’s critical. And supporting them in a way that isn’t like…showing favoritism or, you’re one of the in people.”

Jenn believed in her fellow principals and sought them out for support when the need arose. “You always have the other principals that you rely on, you know, in your complex, or when I started it was actually district wide.” Jen spoke with affection of her long-term relationships with several of her mentoring principals when she first became a school administrator.
Letting go/ Taking Charge

During the interview, Jenn explained contemporary leadership styles and how hers evolved and was different. “When I became a principal, it was sort of around the time when, especially at the elementary level, that teachers were used to…were not part of the decision-making process. They were used to sort of being taken care of by the principal. The principal did all of the decision-making and the budgeting and everything, and they just kind of did their thing in the classroom, and the principal was more of a manager type person that took care of business. And so, to get them to participate in the decision-making was, was one of my goals. And you know, it took some time, but it happened… and again, through the Accelerated Schools Model, where everybody shared responsibility. So I was happy the teachers got empowered.” Jenn built a culture at her school that empowered teachers by having them directly involved in the decision-making and the governance of the school. This direct involvement at every level led to teacher responsibility. Jenn did not speak directly of when she knew to distribute leadership or when to take charge. She did speak of an individual that she supported and referred to them as her pseudo-vice principal. This teacher held a huge amount of political power and sway within the ranks of the teachers, and was responsible for quelling many contract and personal disagreements. When Jenn did distribute leadership, she shared the importance of staying involved and personally monitoring the arrangement. “You can’t walk away and just assume something is automatically going to be okay I think.”

Problem Solving

When asked to share the process she routinely used for solving challenging problems Jenn spoke of her governance model. She used the example of the complex,
multi-year discussion over whether or not to adopt a Hawaiian immersion model for the school. Jenn shared that there was a vocal contingency of parents that wanted this model to be adopted for the school. There was another group of parents and community members that were unsure of what they wanted. There also was a large group of teacher that did not want this to occur. “We kept having discussions, bringing the research, taking votes and it really never came to the point where it was fully agreed upon, that we would implement it. So I think it was through that again, I…I have to give credit to that Accelerated Schools Governance process that I think that really sort of addressed it in sort of a professional way, where all sides were heard, and pros and cons were laid out. And the people voted by consensus again.”

**Persistence**

Jenn was asked what role persistence played in leadership performance, Jenn explained that school was always a priority for her even with the challenge of being a single parent raising three children. She had supportive parents that enabled her to dedicate large portions of her time and energy to the task of being a school principal. Jenn communicated during the interview that her belief in the importance of what she did helped her continue on despite the demands. She spoke of the challenges of being a principal as exciting and, “I loved it and I mean, you know it just really never really seemed like work, it was just so enjoyable.”

**Karen**

Karen is a female of Fillipino ancestry. She disclosed many facets of her personal life that she felt contributed or compromised her performance later as a school principal.
Karen shared that her parents really struggled financially upon arriving from the Phillipines. Her parents instilled in her a strong work ethic and valued education. “We want you to be smart, we want you to work hard. We don’t want you to labor like we labored” Was repeatedly told to Karen as a child.

Karen revealed that she had always had a strong desire to become a teacher. As an elementary age girl, she would play teacher with her dolls and hold her book in imitation of how her teacher read to her and the class. She loved going to elementary school and enjoyed learning. It wasn’t until high school that Karen’s difficulties began. She did not do well on an English placement test and was therefore relegated to the second lowest academic group. Karen continued to do well in her advanced level math classes, but stated that she learned nothing in her English class for several years.

Karen explained that later in her junior year, a teacher advocated for her, and had her moved to a different class. According to Karen, this enabled her to get up to average academic performance. She explained that during her senior year, her high school took a group of students to visit the University of Hawaii. When she asked why she was not invited, a faculty member told her, “Well, you know your test scores are too low to even think of going to UH, and if you wanted to go see UH, you would have to go do it on your own.” Karen stated that this experience made her sad and really hurt her self-esteem. She never she forgot how she was treated.

She did get into the University of Hawaii though, graduated, and became a school resource teacher. Karen explained that she never intended to become a school administrator, but it was because of people’s urging she entered the training program for administration. She stated, “That training was horrible, but yeah…but it was through
people’s urging that I went into leadership. I don’t think I would have done it on my own.”

Karen was asked what values or beliefs must be present to create exceptional school principal performance? She said, “I think exceptional principals have a moral purpose. That they enter the profession knowing that they want to make a difference for schools and for their community…that mission that you have, kind of gives you that energy to continue on and persevere.”

Karen shared a two more beliefs concerning exceptional principals. “The other thing is, I think, relationships are really important, people are really, really important. We need to really honor them and respect them. In as many ways as we can, and…okay, my other thing is that equity in the opportunities that are provided for all of our kids.”

**Shared Vision**

Discussing the most effective manner a vision is developed, articulated and then put into action, Karen explained, “I think you know when you build a vision, make sure that everyone is involved in it, so always try to get engagement of all the stakeholders in it.” She clarified that when she was a principal in the 1980’s vision was something that was mostly relegated to the business world, and the belief had not fully migrated into the education field.

Karen explained what influence a shared vision has in creating exceptional results. “For me, that’s where the shared vision is really critical because it kind of helps you say, okay…yes we are going to do this or no we can’t have this, so…it’s not that easy, although it sounds easy, it is not that easy.” She related a situation during her tenure as the principal. Karen had the classroom teachers spend an entire year on developing
their constructive feedback so that the report cards would be meaningful to both parents and students. She also communicated that the shared vision influenced a shift in extrinsic to intrinsic motivation for the students. Teachers, the school community and administration all agreed that students should be self-motivated and not be reliant upon rewards to excel.

**Asking Questions**

Karen was asked to explain the influence that asking questions of quality plays in developing exceptional results. She exclaimed, “That was my thing…I believe in questions. I am really, when I went to school, I really want to get…to be sure that the culture was in the spirit of inquiry.” I don’t want anyone to think that anyone had…was an expert and knew the answers, that we were all inquirers that we were all trying to find what was best for our kids, and we are in it together.”

Karen disclosed that all of her faculty agendas were in the form of questions. Meetings were focused on encouraging the spirit of inquiry. She also explained that this framework was intended to model questioning for the teachers to use with the students, so that the spirit of inquiry would be unilateral. “So I wanted them to want this culture where we were always asking questions…not only me, but everyone else asks questions so that we get better, the school gets better, the kids get better.”

Karen discussed the questions she asks when interviewing for prospective faculty. She shared, “I always looked for someone who had good relationships, the relationships are really important because I think if you don’t show that…the caring piece, than that’s really hard to do.”
Karen explained that she usually didn’t interview people in the traditional sense—she had conversations with them. Some of the qualities she was looking for was; innovation, willing to take risks, and have supportive relationships. Even when Karen was looking to fill a custodial position she said, “I want people who are willing to explain, you know if a child says… “What are you doing?” I want the custodian or the cafeteria person to say… to explain and stop their work and actually teach the child.”

**Coping with Weakness**

Discussing how she felt her school improved during her tenure, Karen mentioned that one of her major efforts was to have no special education due process cases. She acknowledged that she created a major culture shift within the school. The previous administration had not valued or encouraged collegial group thinking of the faculty, but Karen expected open group discussion that was safe for everyone participating.

During her tenure, she encouraged community relationships like a partnership with Hawaii Opera Theatre. This opportunity brought performing arts back into the classroom and many children flourished because of this arrangement.

Karen shared how she overcame or addressed professional shortcomings and challenges. “I think being surrounded by good people, like people you can…like my vice principal and counselor, people that I can depend on and bounce ideas off of. So when I went back to Aloha Elementary after about ten years, so it was a steep learning… it was like straight up.”

Karen relied upon professional reading to support her growth. “Every day you are just reading…just trying to keep up with the latest, especially in areas that I didn’t know, because I actually…when I went to Aloha Elementary, I walked into three hearings.”
When asked what led her to persist as a school principal, Karen shared “If it is going to help the school, or the children again…you have to persist.” She also disclosed, “You know, sometimes it’s a give an take but, you just got to persist in you know, your values that the community or the school believes in and you have to dangle it in front of them every once in awhile and say, you know let’s look… you know what do we really believe in? You know, and bring that philosophy back, I know they got tired of me doing that a lot, but it calibrates you.”

**Listening and Acknowledging**

Karen explained the extent listening and acknowledging influences principal performance. She shared that a majority of the faculty at Aloha Elementary was of the younger age and just entering the profession. She was perceived to be a mother figure but tried to steer away from this perception.” I don’t really want to be a mother figure, but sometimes it came right down to that, because they were young people getting married, so in a year I might have eight people out on maternity leave.”

Karen did she that she enjoyed talking to people, especially the teachers because that gave her a sense of where they were coming from and what they are thinking. Karen was very mindful of the influence her relationship played on others. “I think language is really important, how you say things, so try not to use “buts”, and if there are differences of opinion, how can you use ideas from both sides, so that no one feels like they lost.”

**Depending on Others**

Karen was asked how she built her school culture and what were some of the challenges? She divulged, “I wanted everyone to own the school…it wasn’t my school. I felt like you know, for me as a principal, I dared to…to bring my talents to the school,
and to look at the school from one perspective and try to move the school forward. And then someone else comes, and they bring their talents and perspectives and think that might be…and I think the vision stays the same, but you really clean up pieces.”

When posed the question, “In what manner have relationships supported your performance as a principal?” She discussed the challenge of getting her faculty to make decisions. The previous administration did not encourage that behavior, so to accomplish dispersement of problem solving ownership, interpersonal trust had to be established. Karen shared that this took deliberate, purposeful modeling to accomplish this feat. Even small things perceived to be of minor significance matter and are noticed. “Just being cognizant of the language you use if you want to not polarize people. You always want them to be together, and you want them to feel like it was a win, for each of the parties, or whomever was part of that decision.”

**Letting go/ Taking Charge**

Karen explained her leadership style and its’ influence upon school results. “I was a better principal the second time around, too because I think…your ego doesn’t get in the way. So when you are really young, it’s really important to be right, you know…or in front of people to be right, but then it didn’t matter much the second time…so it’s like, “So what is best for the kids?” She also reflected, “So I think as we get older and maybe that’s what your seeing, you get better, because you are more outward looking, you’re looking out for the kids more than yourself as a leader. I really…I just think we’re just there to support the school and make everything better for the school. So that’s our job you know, like clear…clear the roads so that the teachers can come and do their work with a lot of barriers.”
Karen was questioned about the extent to which building capacity influenced your leadership style? She stated, “You know we are here to build capacity in our adults as well as the students.” One of Karen’s initiatives was to get the teaching faculty to be an integral part of the decision-making process. The purpose of this was to develop teacher leaders and to increase investment in the school. “Questions are really, really important. And you know, yeah…I guess that the questions just…and you build capacity when you do that. You know, when you’re always asking questions you are building their, their comfort in making decisions, and seeing, okay, this fits, or it doesn’t fit, so in that way you are building their capacity to think like leaders.”

**Problem Solving**

Karen explained the process she routinely used to solve challenging problems. “My process is something like you said, you know like looking at, you know gathering as much data as you can because sometimes the time…the time is too short too. But you gather as much data as you can and I like talking to people because then I get a sense of where and what people are thinking before I make the decision and then I like data, if I can have hard data, or whatever. Then, I consider the down stream consequences for that. So, sometimes I am lucky and make sure that I do the ethical reasoning, so I consider… I put myself in other person’s shoes, if she reads this, if the care ethics…so you put how would that person feel with the decision you make. Then I look at what rights, whose rights are being diminished.” She then explained that she finally weighs the decision with idea of what is best for the kids and is the decision inline with what we value? Karen also explained that people should not be surprised with the decisions she makes because they are inline with their beliefs.
Karen also disclosed that she is keenly interested in the topic of dilemmas. She feels that the more complex a problem, the more there is a need to talk to people and really get a sense of what people think about it. She referenced getting support from her school counselor, vice principals and discussing the issue in depth with fellow school principals. Karen really appreciated the raw, critical view of her school counselor. “So then, I had a counselor who was, you know, just told it like it is…she didn’t care (laughing). So that gave me the other side of most perspectives.”

Karen spoke of the necessity of having that uncensored dialogue with staff. “You know then you really get varying ideas rather than everyone kind of thinking the same. You know, so sometimes she would bring out a lot…a lot of times she would bring out things that maybe I didn’t consider or haven’t thought about. So, you know the people around you, for me are so critical. That is why that…relationships, that trust is so critical for a principal.”

**Persistence**

Karen was asked, what role if any does persistence play in leadership performance? She used the topic of her persisting for several years in training the teachers to ask questions as an example. She started the questioning process gradually, and purposefully sought out areas that she could use as examples.

During the interview, Karen also spoke of the need to persist with sticking to her values. Karen shared a situation where the faculty wanted to segregate the students into ability levels to academically move students. This was in direct conflict with Karen’s core belief of equal opportunity for all students. This was such an important belief for her. Early in the interview, she shared how her own experience had led her to believe in
non-segregation of students. She persisted with the faculty and eventually succeeded in keeping the school inclusive for all students.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the values, behaviors and characteristics of award winning, retired school principals in Hawaii. Specifically, it detailed the belief systems that these individual school principals developed during their careers. A case study approach was utilized to document and scrutinize these beliefs using a semi-structured interview process. Jerome T. Murphy’s article, Unheroic Side of Leadership was used to create a theoretical frame and scaffold interview questions for the participants. Murphy postulates these six dimensions of leadership.

1. Developing a Shared Vision- (as well as defining a personal vision) this dimension defines the leaders’ ability to share the framework and direction for organizations with staff.

2. Asking Questions of Quality- this leadership quality includes possessing “local” knowledge-informal history of organization, who are the key individuals, who are the power brokers and what are the sacred rituals. This dimension also entails having “people” knowledge, what are the staff’s thoughts, perceptions of reality and the meaning which they affix to these perceptions. Another key component to this dimension is the presence of an informal information gathering system.

3. Coping with Weakness-this portion of the framework defines a leaders ability recognize their weaknesses and build a system to augment it. Murphy describes four coping strategies; Matching, Compensation, Candor and Acceptance. Matching entails finding an Administrative position that dovetails your unique set of skills. Compensation
relates the quality that Administrators surround themselves with those individuals who are more proficient at a particular task than they are. Candor is the ability to acknowledge to your “inner circle” of colleagues your genuine feelings regarding particular weaknesses or significant job-related issues. Acceptance belies the particular ability for an Administrator to accept their personal shortcomings or issues and move on in a more positive manner.

4. Listening and Acknowledging-this component is the most anti-theoretical portion of the Lion as a Leader image. Effective listening and acknowledging relates that the leader does not always have all of the right answers or solutions to problems.

5. Depending on Others- this dimension relates the importance of mutual interdependence of an educational leader and the staff that work with him or her.

6. Letting Go-this dimension belies the characteristic of knowing when and how to build capacity within others by disseminating the ownership and task of resolving problems within the organization.

The lens of persistence was added to more fully complete the spectrum of investigating exceptional school principal values and beliefs. A question pertaining to persistence was added within the coping with weakness category. A separate persistence category also was used to understand the value and beliefs concerning persistence.

Purposeful sampling was used to contact the initial participants for the study. During the course of the interviews, participants suggested other individuals who fit the research criteria, and would possibly be interested in involvement. This snowball sampling method was used to select the remainder of the participants.
Ten individuals were contacted for involvement in the study, eight agreed to participation. Interviews varied in duration from one and quarter hours to two hours in length. All participants were given consent forms and the interview question several weeks in advance to formulate their ideas and reflect on their careers. Participants were asked to share any information concerning their childhood or other aspects of their personal lives that they feel could have influenced their values and beliefs. The interviews were conducted in several private, secure locations and digitally recorded. The author personally transcribed each of the eight digital recordings. Once transcribed, the author color-coded all data specifically related to each question on each of the transcriptions. The color-coding of all data directly assisted in the formulation of the “Results” section of this document.

This research sought to address three questions.

1. What are the values, behaviors and beliefs of award winning retired principals in Hawaii?
2. What motivated them to enter and then remain in educational leadership?
3. Which commonalities of the participants are the most valuable, and why, when producing award winning results?

Implications for Future Research

This research only begins to capture the massive amount of knowledge, values and beliefs of retired, award winning principals within the State of Hawaii. Throughout the process of interviewing and audio transcription the author felt truly blessed to be able to listen to the life stories these exceptional individuals shared. It truly was a gift that I aspire to share with as many administrators as possible.
Further research is necessary to capture many unexplored elements. Primarily, the effects of mentorship within the principalship in Hawaii should be explored further. Effective, systematic mentorship of new aspiring principals from a base of exceptional administrators could result in; better teacher performance and satisfaction, increased student outcomes and even possibly increased teacher retention.

Investigating the value bases that influence administrator persistence and determination could also prove advantageous to many agencies. From a human resources perspective, principal persistence can be a financially weighty topic, and often influences the every aspect of performance of a principal.

The increasing complexity and demands placed on new principals necessitates increased reliance upon professional networking and creation of systems of support. Understanding the systems of support and networking behaviors of past exceptional principals could also prove to be a lucrative endeavor.

Implications for Future Practice

Multiple themes emerge when considering some findings produced by this research. First, development of a peer-mentoring program for developing principals that fully utilizes the vast breadth of experience and knowledge possessed by these research participants and others like them, could offer many benefits to the Hawaii Department of Education. Primarily, it would enable those individuals who made innumerable personal sacrifices to better Department of Education, have ongoing influence in shaping and supporting aspiring educational leaders. This arrangement could enable retire, exemplary principals to directly influence the value and belief formation process of these new administrators, so that their previous successes can be built upon and possibly replicated.
These individuals’ immense, geographic-specific knowledge base should be explicitly taught to the upcoming generations of educational leaders. The value of this implication was constructed because most of the participants disclosed direct involvement of independently mentoring principals.

Next, professional collaboration, networking and alliance formation of aspiring principals should be explicitly taught within the current preparation program. These behaviors could also be fostered through the comprehensive mentoring program. It is possible that some aspiring principals do not innately possess these culturally sensitive and specific behaviors. Individuals leaving the classroom and entering into the department’s administrator training program need to be mentored and specifically taught as to most effective practice.

Throughout this research, relationship building and maintenance has been referenced by majority of the participant as the foundational skill on which the school and its’ culture is built upon. Comprehending the magnitude of influence these successful, supportive relationships hold upon the performance of a principal, can be a challenge for less-experienced principals. Too often it is learned at the expense of a school, staff members and students. This struggle does not have to be. Relationship and specific collaborative skills should be instructed and modeled during mentorship opportunities so that skills that foster successful school environments are understandable and replicable.

Participants revealed the multiple situations where they expressed frustration because of the rapid turnover of principals at their schools or nearby schools. Currently there is no financial incentive for a principal to remain at one particular school. Conversely, there is significant financial incentive for principals to move from an
elementary to a middle or high school position. Mark and Shannon shared their belief that significant long-term change can only occur after they become deeply imbedded within the school culture. These participants felt it took them more than five years to realize these gains created by deep meaningful intrapersonal relationships.

Long-term principal placement has also show significant academic implications. Jana W.H. Chang has reported in her 2013 dissertation, “An Examination Of School Factors Explaining Differences in Schools That Exit/ Do Not Exit Restructuring Under The No Child Left Behind Act Of 2001,” that schools that enjoyed no principal turnover tended to produce better academic results, more often freeing them from the repressive sanctions of NCLB.

Several current researchers reaffirm the belief that leadership turnover negatively impacts school. (Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins, 2008, p.29) stated, “leadership succession research indicates that unplanned headteacher succession is one of the most common sources of school’s failure to progress, in spite of what teachers might do.”

A suggestion would be for the Hawaii Department of Education to examine their existing efforts to retain principals in their original placements. A possibly would be to make it financially rewarding to minimize movement and remain in one or more schools throughout their career. Less principal movement could offer systematic and cultural stability.

Conclusions

This section seeks to explain the findings from each of the interview questions. This data is used to address the three research questions. One of the challenges of this piece of research is that participating retired principals commonly embedded their beliefs
and values within a story or vignette type of a response, indirectly answering the question postulated. This added an extra challenge to the researcher of accurately capturing the intent and the strength of the belief.

**What are the values, behaviors and beliefs of award winning retired principals in Hawaii?**

Each of the participants was asked if there were any influences that shaped their values or beliefs. Two participants did not share their personal background, even though specifically asked. Four of the participants cited spending their childhood in abject poverty or homelessness. Two of these individuals were originally from the Big Island of Hawaii, and grew up in rural poverty. One of the these individuals consistently referred to retired military volunteers, coaches and community members that raised and took care of him. Of the two remaining participants, one disclosed the influence of growing up in a military family, constantly being relocated. The last participant specified that his academic struggle being in public school was a major factor that shaped his beliefs as a principal.

Although not asked, four of the participants shared that they suffered a divorce during the time of their position as a principal. Of the remaining four, three remained married and one never married.

Participants were asked what values did they feel needed to be present to create exceptional results? This questioned resulted in a range of responses, but each belies the individual character and focus of each participant.

Karen answered this by sharing, “I think exceptional principals have a moral purpose. That they enter the profession knowing they want to make a difference for the
schools and their communities…that mission you have, kind of gives you that energy to continue on and persevere.” (Ganter et al., 1999, p.10) supported the moral imperative belief when they reported school stakeholders as appreciated school leaders that perceived their jobs as a “moral and ethical undertaking.” Another participant, Jill prepared a written statement to answer the question. “I think it is a profound desire to create a worthwhile and enjoyable learning experience for students, parents, faculty and staff.” Mary explained, “To be exceptional, they have to possess knowledge and skills, and I don’t mean you know how to go to a book. But, you have that knowledge and skill that enables you to be self-sufficient and to have positive self-esteem.” Shannon succinctly stated, “The job of a leader is to see the potential of others.” The four remaining participants did not directly answer the prompt. They did however share what they believed their focus was during the time they served as a principal. James shared, “I was always for the underdog, at risk kids…” James’ response indicates a high level of compassion for the disadvantaged children (Ganter, et al., 1999, p.9). reported that compassion and respect amongst several other leadership characteristics are, “the building blocks which will foster effective working relationships within the schools.” Jenn explained she felt her role was to support teachers because that is where the learning occurs. Mark perceived his role to be an inspiration to others so that they all would get better, ultimately for the sake of the kids. When asked, John quickly replied, “It was always about the kids.”
Table 1. Frequency of Word Occurrence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Child. Kid or Student</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Test Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenn</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shannon</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A manual word frequency count of “child, kid or student” was conducted for each of the participants’ interviews. Please see Table 2. for frequencies. The word child, student or kid was used a total count of five hundred and one times throughout the interviews. Participants consistently explained their focus, mission and drive was directly and indirectly linked to children. Several of the participants openly stated they had no wish to be promoted past the level of principal due to impending lack of exposure to the children that they serve. Therefore, one clear value of this research group was service to students.

A manual word count of the word relationship was conducted for each of the participants’ interviews. Please see the Table 2. for frequency scoring. Although not as
high a frequency word as kid or child, it did relate considerable usage at forty-six occurrences. The words partnerships and alliances were used several times in the interviews however it was not scored. These word choices representing a specific type of relationship could have detracted from the overall relationship score count. It does appear that relationships and their specific variant forms, alliances and partnerships were of value to the participants.

Although not considerable in number, the term test scores were also manually counted. The total amount of test score wordage throughout all the interviews was seven times. One of these occurrences was because “Shannon” mentioned during the interview that test scores were not as important as what the student does after they leave high school. Even though specifically asked in the interview, “How did your school improve during your tenure?” it does not seem that standardized test scores were of considerable value to the participants of this study.

A thematic commonalities graph was used to give the researcher a overall view of the commonalities shared by all eight participants. One theme that was evident in all participants was variations of beliefs concerning student advocate within the construct of persistence. Another theme that emerged was the systematic manner in which most participants addressed problem solving. Several other themes to be noted are; value of interpersonal relationships and collaboration.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Values and Beliefs</th>
<th>Shared Vision</th>
<th>Asking Questions</th>
<th>Coping with Weakness</th>
<th>Listening and Acknowledging</th>
<th>Depending On Others</th>
<th>Letting Go</th>
<th>Persistence</th>
<th>Problem Solving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Quiet endurance, self sufficient, organized life-long learner</td>
<td>Collaborative, input of stakeholders</td>
<td>Open-ended, inclusive with faculty</td>
<td>Professional development, outsourced to specialists</td>
<td>Open communication, interpersonal trust</td>
<td>Outsourced to specialist, build capacity</td>
<td>Empowering other to develop capacity</td>
<td>Goal oriented, student advocate</td>
<td>Systematic, goal oriented, student focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Student and community focused</td>
<td>Respect what is in place, input own view into collaborative vision</td>
<td>Value based, looking for teachers heart during interview</td>
<td>Created systems, relationships, partnerships</td>
<td>Collaborative</td>
<td>Team work and interpersonal trust</td>
<td>Empowering others, coaching, business and military</td>
<td>Student advocate</td>
<td>Past schema, collaborative with partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shannon</td>
<td>Serve students and community, life long learner</td>
<td>Respect what is in place, aligned with student focus</td>
<td>Deeper questioning</td>
<td>Surrounded self with others that have diff. skill base</td>
<td>Authentic, open communication, strong interpersonal relationships</td>
<td>High frequency of communication and ability to do each others jobs</td>
<td>Setting the example and building relationships</td>
<td>Student advocate</td>
<td>Systematic, staff involvement in solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>Serve disadvantaged students, lifelong learner, Tribes</td>
<td>Collaborative with his input into student first direction</td>
<td>Tribes based, respectful, clarifying probing</td>
<td>Life long learner, professional development, created systems</td>
<td>Tribes based, respectful, accountable conversations, relationships</td>
<td>Interpersonal relationships</td>
<td>Visible, open door policy, empowerment of others</td>
<td>Student advocate</td>
<td>Relationships, knowing resources and involving others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>Serve students</td>
<td>Systematic, research based</td>
<td>Scientific and purposeful</td>
<td>Professional development</td>
<td>Open communication to establish checks and balances</td>
<td>Interpersonal relationships and trust</td>
<td>Distributed leadership</td>
<td>“Not finished yet philosophy” student advocate</td>
<td>Systematic research of problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Values and Beliefs</td>
<td>Shared Vision</td>
<td>Asking Questions</td>
<td>Coping with Weakness</td>
<td>Listening and Acknowledging</td>
<td>Depending on Others</td>
<td>Letting Go</td>
<td>Persistence</td>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Serve students to improve system outcomes</td>
<td>Strong philosophical base, student focused</td>
<td>Values, thematic based, gathering info.</td>
<td>Professional development</td>
<td>Deep interpersonal connections</td>
<td>Interpersonal relationships and trust</td>
<td>Team effort</td>
<td>Student advocate</td>
<td>Relationships with people for support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenn</td>
<td>Teacher support, student adv.</td>
<td>Research, systematic approach, community involvement</td>
<td>Committee based research</td>
<td>Staff support, purposeful tasking to others</td>
<td>Teamwork and open discussions</td>
<td>Inclusiveness of all, supporting people</td>
<td>Distributed leadership</td>
<td>Student advocate</td>
<td>Teamwork, consensus and research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>Moral purpose to serve students and community</td>
<td>Collaborative engagement of all stakeholders</td>
<td>Spirit of inquiry</td>
<td>Professional development, outsourcing to specialists</td>
<td>Perceived as mother figure, interpersonal relationships</td>
<td>Inclusiveness and relationships</td>
<td>Distribution of leadership, remove barriers</td>
<td>Student advocate</td>
<td>Student focused, systematic research</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Shared Vision

The participants were questioned about their views concerning articulating a shared vision and how does it influence culture and school results. The participants’ disclosures ranged from systematic implementation techniques to using the current vision and just solidifying it. Jill who shared the most detailed process, began with assessing what exists, educating faculty to encouraging thinking to then formulating of a plan. Three of the participants explained how it should be a collaborative, inclusive process involving all stakeholders. Another participant, Jenn looked at current research to plan a vision and mission for the school emphasizing the unity of purpose. Mark focused on explaining how the mission and vision had to be anchored on a strong philosophic base so that it was flexible yet stood the strength of time and challenges. Mark emphasized the need to respect and honor what came before, slowly crafting the vision and mission. On the opposing end of the continuum, due to circumstance Jenn maintained the existing vision and mission at her school but focused on unifying the singular belief with everyone.

Participants shared a range of responses to the Mission and Vision question. The particular existing mission and vision of each of the school sites could have influenced the range of responses. Two participants, John and Shannon shared there was a very strong preexisting vision and mission at their schools.

Two participants did not share how they felt vision and mission influences school results. The remaining six participants expressed a range of beliefs. Jenn, Mark and Karen felt that it heavily influenced every component of their school, how they operated,
decisions and daily functioning. Of the remaining three, Shannon focused on related the expenditure of effort required for full alignment of the existing vision and mission. James explained that a “Tribes” program heavily influenced his school, and that ideology shaped the culture. Mary related that mission and vision helped ensure that they remained focused and aligned in their beliefs.

A common belief of most participants was however, the utility of having a vision and mission and having all school decisions being in line with it. Two participants even specified that it must have a solid grounding in an unwavering philosophical base. This philosophical anchoring would enable vision and mission flexibility through the passage of time.

**Asking Questions**

Participants were asked the influence of asking questions of quality played in developing exceptional results, including the interview process. Jill explained how she investigated and questioned things. She was meticulous and scientifically purposeful in her approach. James believed in asking, “clarifying and probing questions,” however was reserved and cautioned about the importance of being respectful and not causing people to shut down. James felt these beliefs were in line with the schools’ Tribes philosophy. Shannon referenced Bloom’s Taxonomy in her response and felt that it was important to delve into deeper level questioning. Jenn’s response was centered on a research type of a model for decision-making. Jenn shared that committees were formed and conducted research on the topic to be investigated. A proposal was then drafted for the faculty to question it for clarity. Higher level questioning by the faculty was at the heart of this process. Karen’s school culture was formed in the spirit of inquiry. Karen persisted for
several years in this pursuit until she was able to have the faculty routinely question each other.

John and Mark similarly, did not directly share their thoughts on the influence of questions in developing exceptional results. They did both expound upon their interview teacher process and what characteristics, beliefs and values they were looking for in prospective faculty. John was influenced by appropriately serving his military community. Mark explained that he specifically looked for applicants that unreservedly wanted to work at his school because of what they believed in and how they operated. Jill shared that specifically looked for adaptability, willingness to try new things, integrity and their perspective on working with other human beings. Jill focused many of her interview questions on having the applicant explain what they have done in a particular scenario versus what they say they will do. James also posed scenario-based questions attempting to get at the core of their being. Additionally, James disclosed that he did an extensive background check on every applicant. Mary disclosed that she involved other staff in the interview process to support her in making a decision. Karen explained that she felt that she did not interview people in a traditional sense, however had a lengthy conversations with them, seeking to find if they were a good fit for the school. When asked, Shannon explained that all hiring was a group decision, including who was selected to be the next vice principal.

Two participants offered responses indicating that the spirit of inquiry was a school wide initiative built into the governance of the school. All eight participants shared a systematic way of interviewing prospective faculty. One participant James, shared that he did extensive background checks on applicants. Mark expected participants
to arrive thirty minutes early and write their philosophy of education while waiting for the actual interview.

The topic of questioning can be vast. All participants used the interview to share their beliefs regarding it’s utility for them as a school principal. Two participants instilled the belief of questioning into the culture of the school. One participant dispersed leadership for information gathering and faculty decision-making and vision investment. One participant relied upon the thematic structure a program (Tribes) to delineate safe questioning at the school level. Several participants shared vignettes outlining their interview process, in order to qualify what they believed to be high-quality teaching applicant. All participants believed in using questioning to support their performance as a principal, however how it was used by each of them was slightly different.

Coping with Weakness

Participants were asked how did your school improve during your tenure? Three of the eight participants briefly spoke of test scores improving during their tenure. Two of these participants, Jill and James only mentioned test scores improving as a result of implementation of a performing arts program. James specified that this performing arts program was the pride of his community and it directly lead to improved reading proficiency and being a recipient of an award. James was also very proud of implementing a full inclusion model at his school. The third participant, Shannon specified that scores were important, but not as important as what the children did after leaving her high school. This belief lead to the implementation of, “High Schools That Work” program, a culinary program connected to a community college, and academies embedded into the school program.
The remaining five participants did not share information regarding test scores however focused on program implementation or school status change. Karen shared that there were no further due process cases at her school, they moved out of restructuring while undergoing a major philosophical shift within the school. Mary shared that her school earned a Blue Ribbon Award and she drastically reduced the geographic exemptions leaving her school. Mark disclosed that his school was terrible when he arrived and he helped build it into an exceptional school, serving all kids. John shared that his school became WASC accredited, created a culinary academy and created a military partnership model adopted by schools around the country.

Participants were asked how they overcame professional weakness or shortcomings? Jill shared she always tried to stay ahead of the game and was an avid reader of research. James created systems that supported both the school and his role as the principal. James was also a strong proponent of professional development. Shannon hired vice principals that had different strengths than hers and purposefully surrounded herself with people that have skill sets to support hers. Mary relied upon independent professional development to support her need areas. Jenn relied heavily upon the support of others she surrounded her self with, and hired specialists to train and support the faculty. Mark related his belief in professional development and life long learning. Mark also was cognizant of those with influence and relied upon them to assist in moving the school. John surrounded himself with good people that he trusted. He felt that these people made his good ideas better.

Four of the eight participants explicitly shared a belief in independent professional development to support their growth areas. Four of the eight participants
also shared the belief of surrounding yourself with people that can offset your skill set or support your weaknesses. Two of the eight participants relied on reading research to support their growth areas. One participant spoke of creating systems of support to manage these areas of need.

A majority of the participants purposefully surrounded themselves with individuals that could offer the school different skill set than them. These participants noted that their level of interdependence on others was considerable. Several of the participants disclosed seeking professional development to support their areas of needed growth. All participants expressed indicators of their school improving as implementing academic and performing arts programs, character development initiatives and student supports. These initiatives focused on increasing student opportunity and satisfaction. Test scores were a infrequently mentioned, cursory indicator of school improvement.

**Listening and Acknowledging**

Participants were asked, to what extent does listening and acknowledging influence principal performance, and what led you to this belief? Mark shared, “You really got to know the person, that personal connection to them as human beings, it’s really important.” Jenn believed effective principals needed to be in constant communication with all teachers and staff. This communication is what can lead to the building of trust and people to communicate openly. Mary shared “I am for the most part, a collaborative team oriented leader, so I have to build relationships… and communicate effectively.” John shared, “What I learned in coaching, everything is collaborative, you know I don’t make arbitrary decisions.” Jill believed she listened and acknowledged, “but filters things with my own understanding of the situation.” James’ school incorporated
the Tribes program, which laid the foundation for respectful talk and listening amongst students and adults. Jenn believed that everybody deserves to be heard. Karen divulged that she was viewed as a mother figure by most of the faculty, a status that didn’t always make her comfortable.

The participants all valued listening and acknowledging behaviors with faculty and community. Mark and James however, specified that listening and acknowledging must occur at a deeper level such as knowing the person, not just the person as an employee, or initiated a school-wide program to develop effective, respectful listening and communication skills in adults and children.

Participants were asked, what influence does listening and acknowledging create on organizational climate and exceptional results? Mark explained that it is easier to solve an altercation if people know you and there is a relationship. James shared that Tribes considerably impacted the school’s culture. Shannon shared that she remained at both of her schools a long time, and by embedding herself within the school, this helped create deep meaningful relationships that enabled open, honest communication.

Listening and acknowledging were topics of value to all participants. Relationships were founded on intrapersonal trust and open communication. Leadership of a school towards exceptional results became a manageable task with the supportive relationships that were purposefully created and sustained.

**Depending on Others**

Participants were asked how they built their school culture. Mark explained that he led by example and expecting his administration team to be highly visible. James
worked on building his trust with parents, community and teachers. Jenn believed inclusiveness was critical to building the school culture. Mary explained that she built the culture by providing developmental support and making the teachers feel valued. Karen wanted everyone to feel that it was their school,

    Participants were asked about the influence of interpersonal trust plays on achieving exceptional results. John responded that he knew his personnel and who he could count on. Jill explained that you cannot do the job by yourself and it is crucial to have good people walking the same path as you. Shannon spoke of her constant communication with her vice principals in knowing exactly what each was into at any given moment. This investment in communication also built trust. Mary shared that trust is something that is built over the everyday little things.

    All participants depended upon others to support school daily operations and improvement to varying degrees. Although valued differently, all participants were cognizant of the necessity of having effective supports in place to achieve exceptional results.

    **Letting Go/ Taking Charge**

    Participants were asked to explain their leadership style and any influence upon school results. Jill believed she was primarily a student advocate. John explained four major influences that shaped him as a leader; military, coaching, business and principal mentorship. Karen believed she was more student focused and effective her second tenure as a principal, not allowing other factors to create barriers to the schools’ success. Shannon believed heavily upon setting the example and working harder than anybody else. Mary felt that her leadership style was collaborative with a focus on capacity
building of parents, students and community. Jenn explained that her leadership style focused on empowerment of teachers. James believed his leaders focused on empowering people, being visible and having an open door policy. Mark shared, that his leadership style and its’ results were all a team effort, everything was done with support of faculty. These effective beliefs are supported by (Marks and Printy, 2003, p. 393) when they stated, “principals who share leadership responsibilities with others would be less subject to burnout than principal “heroes” who attempt the challenges and complexities of leadership alone.”

Participants shared their beliefs on leadership distribution. All participants held beliefs on how manage and when to allocate responsibility. Several participants disclosed the need to deliberately ensure success so that individual capacity can be built gradually.

**Problem Solving**

James shared that he researches the case, get prepared and relies heavily upon his relationships to support him through the process. Mark explained his high level of communication and his relationships supported him in problem solving. Jenn disclosed that problem solving and decision making was shared so that teachers were developed and empowered. Mary shared that she had a repertoire of previous problems that she had built up over the years to support her systematic decision-making. (Leithwood and Stager, 1989, p.140) reaffirms this finding as a component in expert problem solving. “Past experience was the main tool for understanding these problems. They were like problems the principals had solved many times before.” Mary also valued support from others and mentoring. Shannon believed in communication and support of her team to problem solve together. Karen gathered data, considered multiple down stream
consequences, looked at who would be impacted then how it would affect the kids. John stated he rarely made unilateral decisions, only in times of crisis, but created systems to disperse decision-making to the school level. Jill methodically assessed all side of the situation and until she thoroughly understands the nature of the problem. Jill then strategizes a plan, asseses possible consequences, checks again, and then implement and evaluates. These behaviors are reaffirmed as expert problem solving techniques by (Leithwood and Stager, 1989, p.130) when they stated, “Experts, as compared to novices, spend more time at the beginning planning their initial overall strategies and are more flexible, opportunistic planners during problem solving.”

All of the participants believed in creating strategies to support decision-making and problem solving. Seven of the eight participants specifically believed in disbursing the decision-making with others, such as vice principals, curriculum specialists or specially formed committees. Jill however relied upon her systematic process to resolve issues. Therefore, a majority of participants directly sought the support of others during this process.

**Persistence**

All participants were asked, “What role if any does persistence play in leadership performance?” Jill shared she didn’t know the word persistence, and that she feels she was never finished with the job. She did however share that persistence is necessary to accomplish things. John shared that he never felt like it was work, he loved helping the kids and watching them grow. Karen believed in the importance of sticking to her core values when others wished to compromise the schools’ direction and mission. Shannon explained that it takes many years to do the job well and make sustainable long-term
changes. Persisting was critical for both her as a person and the school as a whole. Mary shared that you needed to be persistent if you wish to get results over time. She also explained that it is important to be in alignment with the school vision and mission with your persistence. Jenn shared that she loved being a principal and it never really felt like work. Mark shared his story regarding boiling water and aligned it with the need to persist to obtain the desired results. Mark also shared that dearly misses the school, the people and the challenges. James persisted to support the disadvantaged students, citing that they were his inspiration.

Multiple participants shared that they enjoyed the role of principal to the point where it did not feel like work. Several of the participants specified the need for long periods of time to effect long term, sustainable change. All of the participants felt that they persisted to support the students and the communities in which they reside.

**What motivated them to enter and then remain in educational leadership?**

Mary, Mark, Shannon, Jill and Karen all entered the education field as teachers. James entered the field as a special education teacher. Jenn and John entered in the field as school counselors. The participants reported that they entered the field of administration to increase their influence on student outcomes. Mark added that wanted to pursue a masters degree but it was easier to get certified to become an administrator, so he chose that route. Jill’s first career choice was chemistry, but then later decided upon education.

The participants maintained that they persisted to support children and make things better. At the end of the interview, John shared that he would did the job for free if
he could have, he had gotten so much pleasure from it. John now mentors principals. Jill maintains that even though she is retired, she still doesn’t seem finished, and now mentors principals and superintendents. Jenn loved what she did and shared that she knew what she was doing was for the kids’ sake. Jenn now mentors principals. James loved what he did and believed he made a difference for kids, especially the disadvantaged. James now routinely volunteers for his church, Special Olympics and watches the grandkids. Karen loved working with kids, persisting because she knew she made a difference. Karen returned to school and completed her PhD in education once retired. Shannon loved helping the kids, adults and community. Shannon occasionally lectures and mentors principals. Mark shared that he really misses being a principal and the people he worked with during his career. It was always about the kids, according to Mark. Mark now mentors principals. Mary remained in leadership to support children and challenge the adults to be their best. Mary did not share her personal endeavors once retired.

Throughout the interviews the degree and length of personal sacrifice made by all of the participants was readily apparent. In several instances this commitment took its’ toll on the personal relationships and the overall health of the participants. As one participant shared, “You cannot give two-hundred percent to your job and not take one hundred percent from somewhere else.”

Which commonalities of the participants are the most valuable, and why, when producing award winning results?

Student focused
A reoccurring theme throughout the interviews was the degree to which all decisions made by the participants were based on student needs and support. A strong student focus was readily apparent. This belief system could have possibly created increased community support, assisting the school in achieving exceptional results. As Mary shared, “We have to make sure every student learns, every student is happy, so when they go home…their parents know they are learning and happy also.” Happy, satisfied parents can potentially lead to strong community support for the school.

**Interdependence**

Participants spoke of the need to build relationships and alliances within the school and with outside agencies to support their schools’ progress toward being exceptional. (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2008, p.521) also report that, “The efficacy of school leaders it would seem, arises less from direction and inspiration and more from the aligned and supportive nature of their working conditions.” Research participants valued their relationships with other principals and their complex area superintendent. This relationship was used as a system of support for problem solving and information gathering. In addition, participants purposefully surrounded themselves with individuals that supplanted or supported their needs areas. Participants also used this venue to build leadership capacity and systemic capacity at the school level. This also contributed to the investment and empowerment of staff at the school sites.

Although not specifically mentioned in a large number of occurrences, relationships played a large role in principal performance. (Ganter, Daresh, Dunlap and Newsom, 1999) also reported this finding that a school principal’s relationships and ability to effectively communicate were of importance when parents and community
members were surveyed. All participants spoke of seeking out support of fellow principals, community members, or military partnerships during the interview process.

**Persistence**

It is possible that many of the participants were influenced by their challenging childhood experiences; four participants spoke of enduring a childhood surviving in poverty. In addition, it is worth mentioning that two participants, Mark and Karen specifically told of a situation while in public school, a professional educator verbally dissuaded them from furthering their education. It seemed that though humiliating, it added to both participants’ sense of determination, and the need to ensure it did not happen to other children under their watch. Both participants shared that these events instilled a belief in the need for equity of opportunity for all students, another reason for persistence. (Leithwood et. al. 2008) supported persistence as a core belief in explaining how some school leaders experience success. These researchers explained that in the most challenging of situations, persistence in the pursuit of high expectations combined with optimism and resiliency could explain why some educational leaders are more successful than others.

The participants all shared the joy of supporting children as a reason for persistence. John, Mark and James shared an innate sense responsibility to advocate for the underprivileged, disadvantaged children. Another participant, Mary even explained her determination as being driven by having a moral purpose.

**Mentorship**

Although no specific interview questions were crafted to ascertain the belief in principals being mentored early in their careers, many participants shared their
experience being either supported, or needing more support. Several participants mentioned specific individuals that mentored them and contributed to their belief and value structures.

Karen, spoke of seeking fellow principal assistance when navigating challenging problems. At her first administration placement, Jill shared she was directly mentored by two female administrators that both later earned commendations for their performance. Later in her career, Jill daily drove across the island of Oahu to work with another exceptional principal that played a large role in mentoring her.

Mary and James both spoke networking and referenced using the Complex Area Superintendent as a resource in challenging situations and as a basis for support.
APPENDICES

Figure 1.0 Case study Protocol

As stated by (Yin, 2009 p.79) “The protocol is a major way of increasing the reliability of case study research, and is intended to guide the investigator in carrying out the data collection from a single case.” I will rely upon Yin’s (2009) framework for developing the Case study Protocol.

a. Introduction to the Case study and Purpose of Protocol

The overarching research questions that the case study protocol is intended to address are, “What are the values, behaviors and beliefs of award-winning, retired Principals in Hawaii.” Secondly, What motivated them to enter and then remain in educational leadership? Lastly, which commonalities of the participants are the most valuable, and why, when producing exceptional results?

The theoretical framework for this multiple case study is outlined in Jerome T. Murphy’s “Unheroic Side of Leadership: Notes From the Swamp.” It was used to thematically scaffold interview questions for the participants.

The role of the protocol in this research study is clear. This protocol provides me with the same questioning reference for all of the participants within this piece of research. This will increase consistency of data procurement and ease the process of data analysis by having pre-selected units of analysis (each item on interview questions).

b. Data Collection Procedures

The names of the sites to be visited are…(this list would entail all of the schools where the participating retired principals had worked during the time period when commendation was awarded).
The data collection plan includes the following, interviews with participating retired, award winning principals, archival evidence of attaining the respective award, any archival evidence relating to participating individuals’ career.

The expected preparation to conduct research includes the following, written permission from Institutional Review Board to proceed with research, agreement for participants to participate in research, interview questions for participants, and an outline of data expected to be collected for each participant.

c. Case Study Questions (see figure 3.0 Interview questions for Principals)
To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to request approval to conduct research commencing in the fall of 2013. This research will be investigating retired, award winning Hawaii public school Principals. I would like to interview and build a multiple case study of these nine retired, award-winning school principals. This group would consist of three participants each from Elementary, Middle and High School level.

This research investigates the traits and characteristics of retired, Hawaii public school principals for the purpose of recording and creating a better understanding of what has led these individuals to attain this exemplary status.

This research involves no deception, working with minors, and has created procedural safeguards within the case study protocol to maintain confidentiality of all participants. Once the research has been completed and presented, all personally identifiable participant information will be destroyed.

I am supervised by University of Hawaii professor Dr. Stacey Roberts of the Educational Administration Department. This research would be conducted to satisfy the researchers’ final requirements to attain a Ph. D in Educational Administration.

Your thoughtful consideration of this proposed research would be greatly appreciated. If you have further questions regarding this proposal or the intended research. I look forward to your reply.

Thank you Very Much,

Kristofer Phifer
Figure 3.0 Informed Consent form

Agreement to Participate in Research

This research examines the traits and characteristics of award winning Principals within the State of Hawaii. We hope to learn from the lifetime of experiences and training of Principals who since retired from the Department of Education. We thank you for your interest in this study. If interested in participating, you will be interviewed by Ph. D candidate Kristofer Phifer. He will be digitally recording and transcribing your interview. All identities disclosed therein the data collection process will be anonymous. Your identity will be protected by the use of an assigned pseudonym. Any associated information that would lead to personal identification (school names or immediate locations) will be withheld from reported data. You will be asked later to review the interview transcription and case summary. Your suggested corrections will be incorporated into the case summary.

Your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any point, without any penalty or repercussions to yourself. The direct benefit you will receive from involvement in this research will be that you have the opportunity to share your beliefs, values and experiences with other administrators or instructors. I believe there is no significant risk in your participation in this study.

The audio taped recordings will be labeled with a code so that individual identification by other than principal investigator is not possible. The recordings could be used a data in subsequent research by the investigator or his associates. Coded audio taped data and the associated coded transcriptions will be stored in cases for future research at the principal investigator’s primary residence.
If you have questions or concerns regarding this study please feel free to contact the principle investigator, Kristofer Phifer at 561-1952. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the UH Committee on Human Studies at 956-5007 or write to 1960 East-West Rd. Biomedical Bldg. B-104, Honolulu, Hi 96822 (email: uhirb@hawaii.edu).

Should you agree to participate, I am grateful for your generous involvement and the sharing of your knowledge, experience and skills as advice to future school administrators. Once again, you are able to discontinue involvement and opt-out at any time without penalty or repercussions to yourself.

( ) Yes, I agree to be audio-taped for data collection purposes

( ) No, I do not agree to be audio-taped for data collection purposes

Signed,

________________________________________________________________________

Name:

Date:
Figure 4.0 ISLC Standards

“Standard 1. A school Administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

Standard 2. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all the students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

Standard 3. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring the management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

Standard 4. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all the students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

Standard 5. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

Standard 6. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and
influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.”
REFERENCES:


