A Delphi Study that Measures the Effects of Principal Tenure on School Culture at the High School Level

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A Delphi Study that Measures the Effects of Principal Tenure on School Culture at the High School Level

A Dissertation by

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Irvine, California
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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

October 2014

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First and foremost, I would like to say thank you to Dr. Phil Pendley and the Palmterio 1 cohort of Brandman University for being by my side through this tremendous doctoral journey. My success is greatly due to your continued support, guidance and friendship and I truly view each and every one of you as family.

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always knew you were with me. When the chips were down, I was always able to speak to you and I felt your love and support and you helped me make it.
ABSTRACT

A Delphi Study that Measures the Effects of Principal Tenure on School Culture at the High School Level

by Patricia M. Custodio

The purpose of this study was to (a) investigate expert high school principals’ perceptions regarding the minimum length of principal tenure necessary to develop a positive school culture (b) determine the impact the length of high school principal tenure has on high schools’ culture and (c) to develop recommendations regarding actions to be taken with respect to principal tenure. This particular study utilized a structural Delphi model in which expert high school principals give their expert opinion on how principal tenure affects school culture at high schools and provide suggestions for new principals and district cabinet members on how to build a sustainable, positive school culture. By the end of the study, building relationships and developing trust amongst all stakeholders were the two most critical aspects of a new principal’s job when they begin their leadership of a high school. Lastly, providing support and professional development opportunities while ensuring a principal’s tenure is at least five years at a high school are the most critical for a district to provide a new principal to ensure a positive school culture. The findings show that a high school principal should stay at a site for at least five years in order to develop a sustainable, positive school culture. During this time, the district should provide professional development and support so that the principal can focus on building relationships and open communication lines with all stakeholder groups to ensure a team effort is developed to create a positive school culture that supports student success. As for further research, it is recommended that there be a focus on the district’s perspective on the effects of principal tenure on a school’s culture, as well as,
measure how important school culture is to the district. Another area of future research would be to get the stakeholders’ perspectives on the importance and effects of principal tenure on a school’s culture. Lastly, it would be interesting to include current site demographic data and site culture as an added factor as part of the existing study.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter I: Introduction ........................................................................................................... 1
  Background .......................................................................................................................... 3
    School Culture .................................................................................................................. 3
    Leadership ....................................................................................................................... 5
  Effects of Tenure on Leadership ....................................................................................... 8
    Leadership and Trusting Relationships ......................................................................... 8
  Relationships and School Culture .................................................................................... 10
  Principal Turnover ........................................................................................................... 11
    Effects of Principal Turnover ....................................................................................... 12
  Statement of the Research Problem .................................................................................. 13
  Purpose Statement ........................................................................................................... 14
  Research Questions .......................................................................................................... 15
  Significance of the Problem ............................................................................................. 15
  Operational Definitions .................................................................................................... 16
  Delimitations ..................................................................................................................... 17
  Organization of the Study .................................................................................................. 18

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ........................................................................ 19
  Review of the Literature .................................................................................................... 19
    No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 .............................................................................. 20
    Common Core State Standards ..................................................................................... 23
    Administrative Services Credential Program Standards ............................................. 26
    Local Control Funding Formula .................................................................................... 27
    School Culture ................................................................................................................ 28
    Leadership ....................................................................................................................... 32
    Principal Tenure ............................................................................................................. 38
  Conclusions ....................................................................................................................... 42

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY ............................................................................................ 44
  Overview ............................................................................................................................. 44
  Purpose Statement ............................................................................................................. 44
  Research Questions ......................................................................................................... 44
  Research Design ............................................................................................................... 47
  Methodology ..................................................................................................................... 45
    Stages of the Delphi Method ......................................................................................... 46
    Validity of the Delphi Method ....................................................................................... 49
  Population ......................................................................................................................... 50
  Sample ............................................................................................................................... 53
  Instrumentation ............................................................................................................... 55
  Pilot Testing ...................................................................................................................... 56
  Data Collection ................................................................................................................ 58
    Round One ..................................................................................................................... 58
    Round Two ..................................................................................................................... 59
Round Three .................................................................................................................60
Round Four ..................................................................................................................61
Data Analysis ...............................................................................................................62
Limitations ..................................................................................................................63
Summary ......................................................................................................................64

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, FINDINGS  .................65
Overview ......................................................................................................................65
Purpose Statement ......................................................................................................65
Research Questions ....................................................................................................66
Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures .................................................66
Sample ........................................................................................................................71
Presentation and Analysis of Data .............................................................................72
Summary ......................................................................................................................78

CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS ..........80
Purpose Statement ......................................................................................................80
Research Questions ....................................................................................................80
Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures .................................................81
Sample ........................................................................................................................83
Major Findings ............................................................................................................84
Conclusions ................................................................................................................89
Implications for Action ..............................................................................................92
Recommendations for Further Research .................................................................95
Concluding Remarks and Reflections .......................................................................97

REFERENCES ..............................................................................................................99

APPENDICES .............................................................................................................106
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Student demographic data of Riverside, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, and Merced Counties ................................................................. 51

Table 2. Student demographic data for the state of California ........................................ 53

Table 3. Percentage of panel members that participated in each research question of this study ...................................................................................... 55

Table 4. Student demographic data of Riverside, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, and Merced counties ........................................................................ 69

Table 5. Student demographic data for the state of California ........................................ 71

Table 6. Letter of Consent for the entire Study .................................................................. 73

Table 7. RQ1 - What is the minimum number of years a high school principal should stay at a high school to establish a positive school culture? .......... 74

Table 8. Results of RQ2. Results are categorized and listed in alphabetical order ................................................................. 75

Table 9. Results of RQ3 - Based upon the results of question 2, rate the impacts on school culture when the principal's tenure is less than 5 years. Rate the impacts starting with the number 1; 1 having the most impact .......... 76

Table 10. RQ4 - Based upon the results of question 3, what recommendations would you give a new high school principal to ensure the top impacts on school culture are effectively addressed in the least amount of time? ....... 77

Table 11. RQ5 - What recommendations would you give to district cabinet members, including board of education members, ensure high school principals stay at their site for 5 years or more? ......................... 78

Table 12. RQ4 - Based upon the results of question 3, what recommendations would you give a new high school principal to ensure the top impacts on school culture are effectively addressed in the least amount of time? ........... 88

Table 13. RQ 5 - What recommendations would you give to district cabinet members, including board of education members, to ensure high school principals stay at their site for 5 years or more? ........................................ 89
Chapter I: Introduction

Currently in the field of education, there are many changes that are occurring. For the last 12 years there has been a strong push for accountability. To revitalize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 was implemented. The purpose of this legislative act was two-fold: (a) to increase student academic performance and (b) to close the achievement gap for disadvantaged youth. The measuring of student mastery of state standards evolved into a score and became known as a school’s Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) and Academic Performance Index (API). NCLB attempted to transform the educational system so that there was high accountability for all and schools were to ensure all students, no matter their background or economic status, mastered the state standards within a 12 year period.

By 2010, the federal government realized that the NCLB legislative act was near the point where all students were to be proficient but not all schools across the nation were close to reaching that goal. Consequently, the federal government developed the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in which states were able to volunteer to participate. California became one of the 45 states that are currently participating in this new form of accountability. There are many similarities between the NCLB act and the Common Core State Standards such as accountability for student mastery, which is still high, as well as the goal to close the achievement gap for disadvantaged youth. But with the CCSS there is an added focus on college and career goals for each student so that they are global competitors once they graduate from high school.
Effective for the 2014-2015 school year, accountability is going to look different. Within the United States, the educational system is progressing into the Common Core State Standards. Although the terms AYP and API will still exist, how they are going to be calculated will be different; now career and college readiness will be a factor in the accountability system. To assist districts and schools to fully implement these changes, a new funding formula will be implemented which will remove many of the current spending restrictions to the monies so that schools and districts can plan on how to spend the money based upon the data to ensure students show proficiency to the new standards.

Another piece of change that is occurring which will transform the accountability system in California’s schools is the implementation of new state standards for administrators, effective 2014. New administrators will be provided support via the Learning and Lead program along with being expected to uphold the California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (CPSEL). Now administrators will not just be expected to take administrative courses to earn their credential. They must also be provided support during their first years as an administrator; therefore, causing the credentialing schools, districts, and the state to be more synchronous to ensure new administrators are able to provide that same support to their stakeholders and community.

With the ESEA, NCLB, CCSS, and administrative standards, accountability has become the key to show the success of a student and school. Yet one major aspect that hasn’t been discussed or included into the calculation of either accountability system or a school’s success is the school’s culture. School culture goes beyond the success of the student on an exam. School culture encompasses how the students, staff and community view the school; how safe the stakeholders feel on campus; high rigor within classrooms;
teachers showing they care for students; high accessibility of staff to community members; staff are given ample opportunity to learn and master their craft; and, staff have trusting relationships between themselves and with leadership.

The culture of a school is complex and time becomes a necessary component to ensure the school’s culture is strong. Time is needed for trusting relationships between all stakeholders to be built. In addition, stability of leadership is needed to make sure all stakeholders agree on what is needed to be implemented within the school site to ensure student success; to ensure student mastery of the standards occurs and the achievement gap of special subgroups is closed.

Stability in leadership at a school site allows for relationships to be developed and for effective collaboration to occur. Developing Professional Learning Communities (PLC) is a critical aspect of ensuring student success at a school site, but to ensure a group of professionals can work together towards common goals they must have time to get to know and trust each other so that honest discourse can be held on a regular basis. Honest discourse is a critical piece to the puzzle to student proficiency.

According to Leithwood (2004) a recent study conducted for The Wallace Foundation concluded that the three primary roles of superintendents today are setting direction, developing people, and redesigning the organization to better achieve its mission. This focus on developing people requires superintendents to have a strong grasp on the work of their principals, the principals’ effectiveness, and their expertise.
Background

School Culture

What is school culture and why is it an important focus in the educational system? According to Mitchell (2008), “a healthy school culture fosters continuous improvement in student achievement. School culture is the historically transmitted patterns of meanings that include the norms, values, beliefs, ceremonies, rituals, traditions, and myths understood by members of the school community” (p. 1). School culture is what is shown to a school’s stakeholders as a representation of the health of a school. The culture of a school allows a stakeholder to determine if the school is a stable, safe, and positive place for student learning. In addition, a school’s culture allows stakeholders to determine if that school is a positive place for the adults; a place that allows for professional development and teaching. “Schools should become learning organizations in which school personnel are engaged in continuous cycles of action, analysis of progress and results, and change directed towards the attainment of a shared vision or goals” (Anderson & Kumari, 2009, p. 281). The enemy to this process is time.

According to Gossage, Silverstone, Leach, Lovelace and Lajtha (2010) time is needed for the various persons involved with instrumental change at a school site to work together towards a shared vision or goals; therefore, there needs to be stability among the school personnel in order for change to occur; in order for a positive school culture to develop. “It may take months to bring a team on board to design and execute a change program, then several more months to make the transition to a new way of working” (Gossage et al., 2010, p. 2).
With time being an enemy towards a school’s culture and its ability to sustain growth and progress, schools and the communities they serve cannot afford continuous change in its leadership as well. According to Anderson and Kumari, “…there are three concurrent focuses of sustainability and continuous school improvement: (1) effective instructional programs and practices; (2) organizational leadership and structures that enable and support continuous improvement as a regular feature of organizational culture; and (3) desirable student learning outcomes” (Anderson & Kumari, 2009, p. 284). Part of school culture is how effective the school is towards student achievement; therefore, continuous change in leadership can negatively affect school culture. If there is a continuous change in leadership, change in school systems becomes difficult to implement and sustain due to the differences in leadership styles. Having new leaders means having new programs implemented, and very few programs sustained.

Leadership

According to Beyond Change Management transformation is a radical shift of strategy, structure, systems, processes, or technology, so significant that it requires a shift of culture, behavior, and mindset to implement successfully and sustain over time (Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2010). Leadership is centralized in so much as the leader realizes that he must change along with the subordinates in order for transformation to be effective, true and sustainable. In order for a leader to be effective, he/she must be able to invest time with the subordinates and take ownership of the organization. In order for this to occur, the leader must have the time to do so. Time, again, becomes the enemy for leaders if the leader is not given the opportunity to slowly lead culture shifts towards positive growth for an organization.
“Shared leadership is also referred to as distributed, decentralized, collaborative, democratic, and participative leadership” (Evans, 2012, p. 39). With the skills a leader must have to be comfortable with sharing the power of changing an organization, the leader must also be capable of motivating and inspiring others because change is uncomfortable and scary for all involved. Therefore, effective leaders comfort the others and encourage all to continue the mission of transformation and trust that the changes are desirous if the organization is to be operational.

Transformational leadership is a leadership style whereby an individual engages with others in such a way that a leader and his or her followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. They have a strong set of internal values and ideals, are effective at motivating followers and set challenging expectations and achieve high performance. (Childers, 2009, p. 3)

Leaders must remember that building and maintaining positive relationships with the stakeholders of a school site must incorporate many conversations and open-mindedness in order for the relationship to grow and maintain.

As in any other relationship, both sides contribute to its formation, nature and consequences. In other words, the leadership relationship is jointly produced by leaders and followers and has to be understood as a reciprocal and dynamic interaction process between leaders and followers, taking into consideration the characteristics, actions and reactions of both sides. (Shamir, 2011, p. 310)

Along with school and district leaders transforming their site, teachers must learn to also be a willing and effective participant in the transformation. They too must become transformational leaders. “Transformational leadership theory has gained
popularity by offering a flatter approach to school leadership; one in which power and authority is stretched across multiple individuals in schools” (Sides, 2010, p. 6). There is no room for an “us versus them” mentality at the school and district levels. Teachers must be given the authority and power by administration to take the opportunity to make decisions, not just about their classroom, but about the overall school. Teachers must feel confident and safe to share their thoughts and ideas about how the school can change for the betterment of the students. Lastly, teachers must be given the time to build relationships with their leaders and colleagues to feel open to share their ideas. Teachers working towards common goals, learn from each other, willing to teach each other, and be transparent in their strengths and weaknesses is a requirement in transformation as well. Working in isolation, being “king of their castle” is no longer an option for success.

Teachers have had a long tradition of isolation. This has kept standards down and teachers have sometimes been blamed for clinging to it. Some educators are attempting to break the trend of traditional teacher practices by developing, implementing, and sustaining effective PLCs. (Evans, 2012, p. 2)

No matter the style of leadership that the school leader, the principal, chooses to adopt to move the school site forward, the principal becomes the key figure head for the movement.

Taylor, Pressley, and Pearson (2000) identified the presence of strong school building leadership, specifically a strong principal, as one of the major components to effective schools. Whether a school is identified as an effective school or whether it is viewed as a failing school, the individual typically
associated with the success or failure is the principal. (as cited in DeVillier, 2009, p. 13)

Having continuity in the principal position of the school allows for trust to be built between the staff, community, and principal. Once trust is built, positive change can begin. The positive change will lead to student success and a positive school culture.

Sergiovanni (2000) suggested that true leadership for a particular school requires that a leader be cognizant of the unique beliefs, needs, and values of that particular group of students in that particular school. Leadership requires a specialization to that particular school building rather than a global idea that all leaders can be performed and sent out to lead a school. (as cited in DeVillier, 2009, pp. 15-16)

Effects of Tenure on Leadership

“School leaders need to assess the current state of school culture prior to making any changes. Paying attention to routines within the school before changing them may provide valuable insight to a principal regarding how the school culture functions” (Mitchell, 2008, p. 77). This assessment and taking note of the existing culture of an organization takes time. If time is not allotted for this process, there are many negative outcomes that surface. Relationships between leadership and teacher leaders weaken due to the lack of trust that was built or hasn’t had the time to be built due to the absence of time given. In addition, there is a negative impact on the school site’s culture because the principal hasn’t been given the time to analyze the current status of the culture and work with subordinates to implement transformation towards positive change. Lastly, student successes diminish because of the lack of time the principal has to implement
effective change that will fill the achievement gap for students. Constant change in leadership leads to lack of continuity at a school site; which in turns causes lack of progress. “Leadership transition needs gradual change, a strong sense of continuity, especially where strong traditions are held…” (Cocklin & Wilkinson, 2011, p. 666).

**Leadership and Trusting Relationships**

According to the online Merriam-Webster Dictionary, the definition of trust is the “belief that someone or something is reliable, good, honest, effective, etc.” (2014). In order for trust to be built between leader and subordinate, time must be given. Cornell, Ferres, and Travagllone (2003) believed that “trust emerges from the interaction between leader and followers, as it is the willingness to engage in trusting behavior which defines trust. That leaders need to develop interpersonal supportive relations with their followers before trust emerges between them” (as cited in Bird, Wang, Watson, & Murray, 2012, p. 431).

In order for a school’s culture to improve within an organization, trust must be present between the leadership, staff, and community.

Fullan (2001) believed that the single factor common to every change initiative is that relationships improve. If relationships improve, things get better. If they remain the same or get worse, ground is lost. Thus leaders must be consummate relationship builders with diverse people and groups—especially with people different than themselves. Effective leaders constantly foster purposeful interaction and problem solving, and are wary of easy consensus. (as cited in Edgerson & Kritsonis, 2006, p. 4)
With trust, the people within an organization are more willing to go beyond their comfort zone and try new things; try new initiatives presented by the principal in order to improve the school.

In addition, to the people feeling more comfortable with change presented by the principal, they also are more willing to stay in the organization and work through the hard times that may be presented to them while working at a school site.

Simons (1999) stated that the heart of a healthy organization is the tacit understanding that connections and relationships among the organization’s members facilitate their ability to achieve their goals and objectives. Without leaders who consistently demonstrate alignment between their words and deeds, i.e., behavioral integrity, it becomes very difficult to foster the relationships that are necessary to sustain the organization. (as cited in Childers, 2009, p. 19)

**Relationships and School Culture**

Small acts can have the biggest long-term effect: giving recognition to those who support the school’s core values; telling stories that connect the school’s past, present and future; and finding room for the idiosyncratic little rituals and celebrations that bind people together. (Saxe, 2011, p. 35)

This is difficult to do if the leadership continuously changes at a school site. Time is needed for relationships to build; trusting relationships are needed in order for the principal’s initiatives to be fully implemented; and the principal needs to stay at the school site for a period of time to allow for the positive changes to occur for improved school culture.

“Leadership toward school reform, however, does not come without its costs.
Emotion words like turmoil, resistance, stress, anger, and frustration often emerge in the literature to describe common reactions to the change process" (Saxe, 2011, p. 42).

Moore (2009) suggested that emotional intelligence is a requisite skill set for a principal attempting to restructure and reorganize the school system. Where emotions commonly run high in an environment of reform, employing emotional intelligence and developing relationships is the responsibility of all principals. (as cited in Saxe, 2011, p. 42)

If the principal is in constant flux, these emotions surface often, in so much as the reform does not occur.

**Principal Turnover**

A principal may leave a school site for various reasons. What is unfortunate is when/if this occurs- it produces turmoil for a school’s culture. According to Belt (2009) two-thirds of principals in New York leave within their first six years of tenure at a school site. In addition, principals tend to stay at their site longer with the following conditions, “suburban schools, schools with smaller enrollment, principal compensation was higher, and the number of LEP (Limited English Proficient) students was lower” (Belt, 2009, p. 9). Other factors that may cause a principal to leave their site are promotion, retirement, and age. According to Belt (2009) principals under the age of 46 in Texas stayed at their site longer than those who were older.

“Experience of the principal can play a role in the success of students; poor performing schools are led by less experienced principals as compared with schools that perform well in terms of student outcomes” (Belt, 2009, p. 11). The inexperience of a
principal can lead to more time being needed to build trusting relationships with subordinates and in turn more time in order for a positive school culture to be built.

Jones and Webber (2001) believed that with “the goal of revitalizing a struggling school community, school districts attempt to create positive change through the leadership turnover” (as cited in Belt, 2009, pp. 12-13).

With any change initiative, there will be turmoil and emotions that will rise to the surface. This may not mean that further change in leadership is needed. This may mean that more time is needed to allow for healthy, trusting relationships to be built. Once these relationships are built, positive school culture change can then begin to be developed.

Effects of Principal Turnover

Belt (2009) believed that:

Though at times held as an effective change strategy, leadership succession is not universally believed to be healthy for schools. Many authors have stated that districts and schools that experience high levels of principal turnover are less likely to experience lasting school reform. (p. 13)

With the change in leadership, comes a change in ideas for school reform. With new ideas and initiatives, comes frustration from subordinates due to the lack of trust built with their leader.

According to Gouldner, new managers tended to create rules and procedures that attempt to compensate for the resistance of employees that had longer tenure in an organization. Often, these new rules and procedures resulted in greater alienation
for the new leader and decreased socialization among employees. (as cited in Belt, 2009, p. 12)

In 2009, Miller discovered that test scores tended to decrease in the first two years of a principal’s tenure at a school site. “Performance then starts to rebound, returning to pre-transition levels by the end of the fourth year since the principal’s departure” (Miller, 2009, p. 2). This supports the reason why districts must keep the leadership of a school stable to allow for the principal’s initiatives to have time to positively change the school’s culture.

Organizations outside of the educational realm also benefits from having a stable leadership. Relationship building is a critical piece to change reform; therefore, the leader must be given the time. Time will allow the leader to gather data to get a clear understanding of what the current status of the organization’s culture is, build trusting relationships with subordinates, and implement initiatives that will transform the organization towards positive growth.

Studies of leadership turnover in other types of organizations suggest that turnover can have either beneficial or detrimental effects on organizations depending on the circumstances. Turnover can have beneficial effects if it helps generate new ideas and innovation and purges an organization of ineffective leaders. If ineffective principals are the most likely to leave, then leadership turnover may be beneficial to schools. At the same time, too much turnover can have negative consequences if it leads to instability, loss of institutional memory, high training costs or lower employee commitment. (Beteille, Kalogrides, & Loeb, 2012, pp. 904-905)
Statement of the Research Problem

“Like the business leader, the principal of the future – the Cultural Change Principal – must be attuned to the big picture, a sophisticated conceptual thinker who transforms the organization through people and teams” (Fullan, 2002, p. 17). Time provides school leadership the ability to build trusting relationships with the community, students and staff in order to collaborate for positive change to move the school forward and have a lasting effect on the culture of the school. Stakeholders who have a vested interest in the current educational system will tell you that it is imperative for school site leadership to remain constant to keep morale high and to ensure student success, yet there hasn’t been much research done on this topic, especially at the high school level.

Hargreaves et al., (2003) believed that “leadership is distributed in time, as well as space, as past influences exert themselves” (as cited in Cocklin & Wilkinson, 2011, p. 664). Cocklin and Wilkinson (2011) concluded that leadership impacts current events.

Than an examination of leadership succession, needs to take place within a wider context, as the challenges of considering whom a principal has replaced, what were their achievements, their legacy and where this may be extended, refined and developed and/or improved exert influence. (Cocklin & Wilkinson, 2011, p. 664)

More needs to be discovered to substantiate what stakeholders already know about the importance of school leadership being a constant in order for a positive school culture to be developed and maintained, especially at the high school level. In addition, there is a need for this information to be heard by superintendents and board members so that decisions can be made to ensure high school principals stay at their high school sites
long enough to develop a sustainable, positive school culture. The questions that needs to be asked to reflect these necessities are: What is it about principal longevity that affects school culture? How long should a principal be at a site before the school’s culture becomes affected? What can new principals do to expedite the development of a positive school culture prior to being moved by district personnel? Lastly, why should district personnel reconsider moving a principal too early from their sites so that the school’s culture can be developed and sustained? These questions shall be answered by this study.

Purpose Statement

The first purpose of this study was to investigate expert high school principals’ perceptions regarding the minimum length of principal tenure necessary to develop a positive school culture. The second purpose of the study was to determine the impact the length of high school principal tenure has on high schools’ culture. The third purpose of the study was to develop recommendations regarding actions to be taken with respect to principal tenure.

Research Questions

According to the perceptions of an expert panel of high school principals:

1. What is the minimum number of years a high school principal should stay at a high school to establish a positive school culture?

2. Based upon the results of question 1, list the impacts on a school's culture when the principal has been there less than X years (X = the minimum number of years to establish a positive school culture from question 1).

3. Based upon the results of question 2, rate the impacts on school culture when
the principal's tenure is less than \( X \). Rate the impacts starting with the number 1; 1 having the most impact.

4. Based upon the results of question 3, what recommendations would you give a new school principal to ensure the top impacts on school culture are effectively addressed in the least amount of time?

5. What recommendations would you give to district administration to ensure high school principals stay at their site for \( X \) number of years or more?

**Significance of the Problem**

“School level leadership plays a vital role in determining the quality of the educational environment for students. School principals lead and influence school culture, the composition of the teaching faculty, and the quality of the learning environment” (Belt, 2009, p. 1). The significance of this study was to provide clear data from expert high school principals on what they perceived are the impacts of principal tenure on a site and its culture. With this data, district cabinet members and the board of education can reflect on their practices of leadership change at their high schools and realize the impact the constant change of principals has on school culture, the students served, and the overall morale of the stakeholders present on a site. In addition, new principals can be aware of what to focus on first to expedite their development of their new school’s culture into positivity and sustainability. The quicker this can be developed, the greater chance the school and its community has in producing successful students that will become successful high school graduates. The overall significance of this study was to improve the chances of a high school principal implementing and developing a positive school culture in the high school they serve.
Operational Definitions

*Tenure.* The length of time a principal has been at one school site.

*Positive School Culture.* The historically transmitted patterns of meanings that include the norms, values, beliefs, ceremonies, rituals, traditions, and myths understood by members of the school community.

*No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB).* A legislative act was two-fold; increase student academic performance and to close the achievement gap for disadvantaged youth.

*Common Core State Standards (CCSS).* New legislative act in which accountability is still high, goal of the achievement gap for disadvantaged youth is still a priority but there is a focus on college and career goals for each student so that they are global competitors once they graduate high school.

*Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC).* New assessment systems that measure student skills against a common set of college- and career-ready standards in mathematics and English language arts.

*Student Proficiency.* A numeric representation of a student’s mastery of state standards.

*Student Mastery.* Student receives a numeric score of proficient or advanced on state exams.

*Leader.* High school principal.

*Title I Programs.* “The purpose of this title is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a
minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and state academic assessments” (U.S. Department of Education, n.d., Sec. 1001, para. 1).

_Disadvantaged Youth._ “Those youth that are economically disadvantaged and 1 or more of the following: (A) Who are out-of-school youth, including out-of-school youth who are unemployed; (B) Who are in or aging out of foster care; (C) Who have limited English proficiency; (D) Who are homeless or who have run away from home; (E) Who are at-risk to leave secondary school without a diploma; (F) Who are former juvenile offenders or at risk of delinquency; or (G) Who are individuals with disabilities” (The Public Health Service Act, 1944, “Chapter 129”).

**Delimitations**

The following delimitations were present in this Delphi study:

1. The population narrowly focused around high school principals within the state of California.

2. The population consisted of those high school principals that were deemed an expert by their superintendent.

3. The population was deemed an expert by their superintendent by using the criteria set by the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) to determine an expert status.

4. There was no consideration of the length of experience the panel member has had as a high school principal.

5. There was no consideration to the type of high school the panel member has held their high school principalship.

6. There was no consideration to the region in which the panel member has held
their high school principalship (rural, urban, suburban).

**Organization of the Study**

The remainder of this study was organized into four chapters, a reference page, and appendices. Chapter II provided background and a review of literature about the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Common Core State Standards of California, school culture, leadership, and principal tenure. Chapter III explained the research design and methodology of the study including the validity of the Delphi method, population and sample for this study, instrumentation used in the study, the data collection process, the pilot test, data analysis, and the limitations of the study. Chapter IV of this study included the presentation and analysis of the data collected. Chapter V of this study included the major findings from this study, the unexpected findings of the study, the implications of the study and the researcher’s recommendations for further research.
Chapter II: Review of the Literature

There was a lot of literature on the accountability required within the educational system, including the current changes to the Common Core State Standards. In addition, there was a plethora of literature on leadership, leadership styles, and the effectiveness of leadership on school culture. Yet there was not much literature on the effects principal tenure has on school culture especially at the high school level. Chapter two reviewed the various literatures on educational accountability, the new changes to the accountability system, leadership, school culture and principal turnover to provide a clear understanding of each topic which lead to the purpose of this study, determining the effects of principal tenure on school culture at the high school level.

**Review of the Literature**

As of 2010, the United States educational system has been in turmoil. Forty-five out of the 50 United States have begun the long, arduous process of adopting a new set of standards known as the Common Core State Standards, for their students to show mastery of their learning; this included California. This comes after nine years of the No Child Left Behind Act initiatives that were implemented across the nation (2001-2014). In addition, California has adopted new standards for school administrators (2014). With the different initiatives, there is one common denominator: accountability. High expectations and high accountability at the school sites are common factors of each initiative and continue to be so for years to come. Every educator is expected to do their best to ensure all students are receiving the best education possible and are graduates that are globally competitive. One very important aspect of a school site that has been overlooked because all energy has been geared to high expectations and high accountability is the school’s culture. School culture represents the whole school; not
just a number that only reflects how much students have mastered the state standards for that school year. There is belief by many that a strong school culture will lead to the common goal of all students mastering the state standards and become global competitors in the 21st century.

**No Child Left Behind Act of 2001**

Prior to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 was the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that was developed in 1965. Both legislative acts were to ensure there was some sort of accountability measure in place within the United States educational system because it was found that high school graduates within the United States were not effective global competitors.

The purpose of this title is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging state academic achievement standards and state academic assessments. This purpose can be accomplished by (1) ensuring that high-quality academic assessments, accountability systems, teacher preparation and training, curriculum, and instructional materials are aligned with challenging State academic standards so that students, teachers, parents and administrators can measure progress against common expectations for student academic achievement. (No Child Left Behind Act, 2002, “Sec. 1001. Statement of Purpose”)

Within ensuring there was an accountability system in place, there was a need to decrease the achievement gap that was evident between students of color, socio-economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, etc. NCLB of 2001 was to
decrease, if not eliminate, that gap. Each state had to develop content standards that all students in grade levels K-12 have to master. In addition, each state had to measure student mastery of the state standards by administering an exam that would measure a student’s level of proficiency towards mastery of state standards. With the state exam, there came expectations from each district and school site to ensure growth in mastery, as well as, a decrease in the achievement gap for the low performing yet significant subgroups that existed within the state.

The law describes performance in terms of ‘annual measurable objectives’ (AMO), indicating the minimum percentage of students who must meet the proficiency level of performance on reading and mathematics assessments, and defines subgroups as economically disadvantaged students, students from major racial and ethnic groups, students with disabilities, and students with limited English proficiency. (Kim & Sunderman, 2005, p. 3)

“TIMELINE – Each State shall establish a timeline for adequate yearly progress. The timeline shall ensure that not later than 12 years after the end of the 2001-2002 school year, all students in each group described in subparagraph (C)(v) will meet or exceed the State’s proficient level of academic achievement on the State assessments under paragraph (3)” (No Child Left Behind Act, 2002, “Timeline”).

If a school or district does not meet the set requirements set by NCLB to ensure all students are mastering the state standards every year, the school’s federal funding would become compromised. At any given time between 2001 to 2014, if a school or district did not meet the NCLB level of proficiency; the term used by the federal government to mean mastery of content standards; for two years in a row, the school or
district would be considered to be in program improvement. This new consideration or title meant sanctions and less money. In addition, if the school site or district continued to be considered in need of improvement, the site or district would need to use what monies it did receive from the federal government to hire an outside agency to assist in revamping the instructional strategies, leadership, and instructional materials to work to increase the proficiency rates of the students.

Schools that fail to make AYP for two or more consecutive years are identified as ‘in need of improvement’ and are subject to a series of sanctions that increase in number and severity the longer a school remains in improvement status. The AYP requirements apply to both Title I and non-Title I schools, although only schools that receive federal funds are subject to the mandatory sanctions. (Kim & Sunderman, 2005, p. 3)

With the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 came a drastic increase in accountability for all the parties involved in a student’s education; ranging from the student, parent, teacher, administrator, and district office personnel. All persons were now being held to a standard of excellence and were all expected to work together towards a common goal: ensure students master the state standards and ensure the achievement gap of those less fortunate was closed. Each year, schools must have shown a gradual increase of students that score proficient or advanced on state exams and as of 2014 all students, 100%, are to be proficient or advanced on all state exams. This legislative act had good intentions but was not successful. In fact, “the accountability requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 place high-poverty schools and racially diverse schools at a disadvantage because they rely on mean proficiency scores
and require all subgroups to meet the same goals for accountability” (Kim & Sunderman, 2005, p. 3). So the question of “now what?” is posed and has to be answered. The federal government’s answer under the Obama reign is The Common Core State Standards.

**Common Core State Standards**

Even though the nation had until the 2013 - 2014 school year to ensure all students, no matter their ethnicity; their primary language or their economic status; they were proficient in the content state standards. But in 2010 the school AYP data was showing that NCLB expectations were unrealistic and unattainable.

Since 2010, 45 states have adopted the same standards for English and math. These standards are called the Common Core State Standards. Having the same standards helps all students get a good education, even if they change schools or move to a different state. Teachers, parents, and education experts designed the standards to prepare students for success in college and the workplace. (California Department of Education, n.d., para. 2)

The 45 states had the option of adding up to 15% more standards to the core Common Core State Standards to meet the individual state’s needs; the state of California was one state that took part in this option.

With the Common Core State Standards students would be able to move from state to state and still be able to learn the same information and also have their learning geared towards a college and career focus. This new legislative focus comes with the same high accountability standards and testing that occurred with NCLB but with a clearer and shared focus on student mastery. In addition, the focus of the standards,
although are similar, go more in depth and provide opportunities for the student to master skills that will be used immediately in the global workforce upon their graduation or within the college arena, depending on the post-secondary journey the high school graduate chooses.

The Common Core State Standards provide a consistent, clear understanding of what students are expected to learn, so teachers and parents know what they need to do to help them. The standards are designed to be robust and relevant to the real world, reflecting the knowledge and skills that our young people need for success in college and careers. With American students fully prepared for the future, our communities will be best positioned to compete successfully in the global economy. (California Department of Education, n.d., para. 6)

Now with CCSS although the content standards are similar, the information will be presented in more depth, with increased rigor, and a college and career focus. With these changes, comes the need for teachers to be given the opportunity to learn how to change their teaching styles, as well as, be given opportunities for externships so that they can implement the career aspects of the Common Core State Standards. “Educators will have access to professional learning opportunities that promote best practices for teaching all students, including our youngest students, gifted students, students with disabilities, English learners, and underperforming students” (California Department of Education, 2013, p. 7).

With the state standards that were developed in 1997 and the implementation of NCLB Act of 2001, there was an increase in accountability yet the achievement gap continued to widen and not every student within the state was able to show mastery of the
state standards. With CCSS “educators will know how to use student data provided by SBAC (Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium) assessments to inform their practice and will be prepared to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students” (California Department of Education, 2013, p. 7). With NCLB the results of yearly assessments would be received once the next school year has already begun, and at the high school level, most teachers would have different students by then and using the assessment data to change instruction became very difficult and ineffective. Since they had different students, teachers had no way to reteach the state standards the assessment showed were not mastered. With the CCSS and the SBAC students will only be tested three times in their elementary and secondary school careers. Along with the adoption of the Common Core State Standards, each adopting state had the option of two assessment consortiums to partake in; the state of California chose the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. “The SBAC is developing assessments for mathematics and ELA for students in grades 3 through 8 and grade 11. SBAC assessments will assess all students except those with significant cognitive disabilities” (California Department of Education, 2013, p. 17). This will provide teachers with clearer information and receive the data in a timely fashion to see how best to teach the necessary standards. In addition, this will allow teachers to modify their teaching and reteach their lessons to meet the individual needs of each student so that the achievement gap will lessen.

Successful implementation of the CCSS requires strong instructional leadership in every school and well-prepared teachers in every classroom. In order for any standards-based system to be successful, educators must possess a thorough understanding of what students are expected to know and be able to do, as well as
an array of instructional strategies designed to support every student in meeting those expectations. (California Department of Education, 2013, p. 6)

With change, comes stress and the need for time to implement those changes. With the transition to the Common Core, high accountability expectations are still present but there is an added stress for educators to ensure they fully implement the new standards while providing a valuable and effective education to their students. In addition, the school leaders are also trying to master the changes, the state standards and federal expectations to ensure the achievement gap of their students decrease; and their teachers are provided the necessary information to implement these changes so they can assist in decreasing this gap.

Educators will have access to professional learning opportunities that promote best practices for teaching all students, including our youngest students, gifted students, students with disabilities, English learners, and underperforming students. Educators will know how to use student data provided by SBAC assessments to inform their practice and will be prepared to differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students. (California Department of Education, 2013, p. 7)

The need for stable leadership and thorough, effective professional development opportunities is critical at the school site to ensure the CCSS can be effective and actually close the achievement gap between low performing subgroups so that 100% of students within the United States can actually be global competitors in the college and career arenas.
Administrative Services Credential Program Standards

No different from the reforms being made with the state standards that are occurring, the administrative standards and expectations are in reform as well. In 2003, the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) adopted six administrative credentialing standards known as the California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders that all school administrators were expected to learn and uphold. In 2014, the CTC reformed the credentialing process by adding more requirements for someone to earn their preliminary administrative credential and then clearing their credential. An added portion to the credentialing process is the Learning to Lead program.

The Learning to Lead system begins with five years of credentialed experience in public schools, and continues through identification of leadership potential, enrollment in a preparation program, participation in an induction program during the first two years of employment, and ongoing learning throughout an administrative career. (Commission on Teacher Credentialing [CTC], 2014, p. 11)

These new requirements ensure that a new administrator receives support and guidance as they begin their administrative journey. This will allow for the new administrator to support their stakeholders with the added changes to the state standards that bridges academic learning to the career technical standards, and the state testing.

Local Control Funding Formula

Along with the Common Core State Standards and new administrative standards comes a new local control funding formula (LCFF) that school districts will need to learn and implement.

The 2013–14 budget package replaces the previous K–12 finance system with a new LCFF. For school districts and charter schools, the LCFF creates base,
supplemental, and concentration grants in place of most previously existing K–12 funding streams, including revenue limits and most state categorical programs.

(Department of Education, 2014, para. 1)

This new funding formula gave districts and schools flexibility on spending funding. Prior to LCFF, districts and schools received various types of state and federal funds that came with strict spending restrictions. Now LCFF removes many, not all, of the restrictions and each district and site is to develop a plan, Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP), to show how the money received should be spent to meet the needs of the students; especially the socio-economically disadvantaged, foster youth, and English Learners; to be proficient or advanced in the new standards.

**School Culture**

“The enemy is time. It may take months to bring a team on board to design and execute a change program, then several more months to make the transition to a new way of working. By that time, who can be sure the initiative is even relevant to the real business issues of the day?” (Gossage et al., 2010, p. 2). Even though this quote references the business world, it also applies to the educational world. Time is education’s worst enemy because the accountability system does not allow for students, staff, and the school system the time to consistently work together to develop a child into a global competitor.

Because of NCLB of 2001 and now CCSS, there is a drastic need for the United States’ educational system to pick up the pace and ensure all students are held to the same standard and can perform globally.
In the current era of performance-based accountability, the idea that schools are capable of incrementally and continuously improving the quality of teaching and learning for all students has become institutionalized in public policy in some spheres, notably the Adequate Yearly Progress provisions of the federal No Child Left Behind policy in the United States. (Anderson & Kumari, 2009, p. 282)

The 21st century consists of technology that allows people from all around the world to connect, interact and compete; therefore, American students need to be able to compete internationally for their post-secondary education as well as in the workplace. With these pressures, comes the need for the school system to constantly adapt to the quick paced changes of the world, yet it’s a system that is not used to change. “Change management must be an internal—and eternal—capability, present within the company at every moment. An organization and its culture must be constantly adaptable to new directions, rather than reshape itself periodically with stand-alone change programs” (Gossage et al., 2010, p. 2).

With this increased pressure to develop globally competitive students, the culture of school’s have suffered. Leadership has narrowly focused on high stakes accountability and has often neglected a school’s culture. Yet a school’s culture leads to student academic success. Clark and Clark (2003) stated that “a healthy school culture fosters continuous improvement in student achievement. School culture is the historically transmitted patterns of meanings that include the norms, values, beliefs, ceremonies, rituals, traditions, and myths understood by members of the school community” (as cited in Mitchell, 2008, p. 1). Stability in the aspects listed above of a strong school culture is
critical but with high stakes accountability being in the forefront of all decisions at school sites, this is lost.

Without losing focus on meeting state and federal expectations of student academic achievement, the leadership at a school site must not forget about the school’s culture.

Leadership is a vital component to the successful functioning of many aspects of a school. Principals should become familiar with the definitions and supporting literature of the six areas of creating a positive school culture in a climate of high-stakes accountability. Schools have unique cultures that consist of norms and values. Schools are organizations with very specific cultures. School culture is the historically transmitted patterns of meaning that include the norms, values, beliefs, ceremonies, rituals, traditions, and myths understood by the schools stakeholders. (Mitchell, 2008, p. 75)

The culture must be nurtured and protected, along with focusing on high-stakes accountability because they go hand in hand. “Reinforcing and, where necessary, re-culturing school cultures are crucial roles of principals. Shaping the school culture means being able to read, assess, and reinforce key elements of the underlying norms and values, rituals and ceremonies of the school” (Crow & Peterson, 2010, p. 66). Leadership must understand the history and internal habits of the school site in order to implement initiatives that focus on accountability. Therefore, fully understanding the nature and culture of the people and community before implementation will ensure a greater chance of success for new initiatives.
What companies have to avoid is the situation where they put in place a major new strategy or market initiative, and only later think about the workforce, leadership and culture programs needed to help everyone perform in new ways and to support the change. By the time an organizational change project has been ramped up, planned and staffed, chances are the company has moved on to the next strategic wave. (Gossage et al., 2010, p. 3)

Leadership must be given the time at a school site to study the current culture of the site and then take measurement of the site’s current status academically. Once enough time is given, leadership can then collaborate with the staff to implement the proper initiatives to close the gap between the site’s current academic level to the high accountability expectations of the state and federal government.

Deal (1995) called it a ‘manager of meaning’ because culture is the one thing that helps all educators make sense of why they are doing what they are doing and builds loyalty and commitment to the organization and leader. Without a positive culture, a school is not able to change effectively and has difficulty focusing on student learning because of its need to devote energy to the health of the group. (as cited in Bolton, 2011, p. 11)

Without the appropriate time allotted to the leadership to study and analyze current levels, only the high stakes accountability will be focused on and any initiatives implemented generally become a top down decision and ultimately fail.

There is no disagreement that the principal has an impact. Cunningham and Gresso (1993) said it this way:
The task of leadership is to create and support the culture necessary to foster an attitude of effectiveness in everything that is done within the school. Once this attitude is achieved and supported by the culture, all other aspects of the organization will fall in line. This is why culture building is the key to organizational success. (as cited in Bolton, 2011, p. 23)

Before a leader, a principal, can transform a school’s current processes to increase student achievement, a principal must be able to build relationships with his/her staff. “Engaging staff in a collaborative process to develop shared values, or collective commitments, is one of the most powerful tools for changing behaviors that can, ultimately, transform the culture of a school or district” (Eaker & Keating, 2008, pp. 15-16). These relationships will ensure commitment from the teachers that are in the trenches and have direct effects on student achievement. “School improvement analysts have long recognized that fundamental improvement in the quality of schools will not happen simply as a result of the implementation of a new policy, program, organizational structure, or teaching practice” (Anderson & Kumari, 2009, p. 281).

There are many aspects to an organization’s culture and it takes patience, time and persistence in order for that culture to be sustainable and positive.

Jerald (2006) argues that:

Culture is born from an organization’s vision, beliefs, values, and mission.

Stating your mission is significant, but only a small part of your effort. Culture develops and grows up through an accumulation of actions, traditions, symbols, ceremonies, and rituals that are closely aligned with that vision. (as cited in Fisher, Frey, & Pumpian, 2012, p. 6)
Again, time is needed for a leader to immerse them within the existing culture of a school site and be able to build necessary relationships with the existing staff so that trust can be built and new initiatives can be introduced and implemented to fruition.

“Engaging staff in a collaborative process to develop shared values, or “collective commitments,” is one of the most powerful tools for changing behaviors that can, ultimately, transform the culture of a school or district” (Eaker & Keating, 2008, pp. 15-16).

**Leadership**

Before a leader can implement new and innovative processes at a school site, the leader must build trusting relationships with the stakeholders and must give allotted the time needed to ensure all aspects have been implemented to fruition.

For the purpose of examining leadership and school improvement, we define leadership as a process of influence by which leaders (i.e., school principals and others within the school) identify a direction for change, develop strategies for action (formally or informally), and facilitate the efforts of teachers and other stakeholders that lead to improvement of identified outcomes. (Heck & Hallinger, 2010, p. 136)

Before a leader can implement these processes at a school site, the leader must build trusting relationships with the stakeholders and must give allotted the time needed to ensure all aspects have been implemented to fruition. In today’s educational system, especially at the high school, principals are not allowed this time.

Gerstner and Day (1997) stated that:
Leadership relationships are not only reciprocal but also dynamic. Followers' responses to the leader's actions affect the leader's further actions and leaders' responses to followers' characteristics and actions affect the leader's perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and actions. With successive interactions, the relationships between leaders and followers may evolve over time and may spiral up or down. (as cited in Shamir, 2011, p. 310)

Shamir (2011) believed that “it is crucial for the understanding of leadership relationships because even without the intervention of external factors or events, time itself may affect the nature of the relationship” (p. 310).

As stated previously, time is needed for trusting relationships to be built and for a leader’s vision to be fully developed and implemented at a school site. Without time, only the surface of a school’s issues and culture are touched.

Hargreaves et al., (2003) believed that “leadership is distributed in time, as well as space, as past influences exert themselves” (as cited in Cocklin & Wilkinson, 2011, p. 664). Cocklin and Wilkinson (2011) concluded that leadership impacts current events. “That an examination of leadership succession, needs to take place within a wider context, as the challenges of considering whom a principal has replaced, what were their achievements, their legacy and where this may be extended, refined and developed and/or improved exert influence” (Cocklin and Wilkinson, 2011, p. 664).

When a new principal begins his leadership at a school site, they must get an understanding of what has already been implemented at the school and determine if the old principal’s vision matches up with theirs. In addition, the new principal has to not only show what he is about but also has to learn what the various stakeholder groups are
accustomed to. When there are differences to the leaders’ visions and ways of leadership, this causes confusion and strife amongst the stakeholders. This then causes turmoil within the school’s culture which could lead to a decrease in student achievement.

Principals new to a school are often preoccupied with establishing their legitimacy and authority with teachers, students and parents, and as research indicates those who focus on ‘person-oriented’ approaches are more likely to gain acceptance than those who focus on tasks and not empowering people. In this situation it is important to understand the school’s prior culture, to respect the ‘Heroes’ from the past and school lore and to understand leadership succession and the various career stages and performance aspects of leadership. (Cocklin & Wilkinson, 2011, p. 665)

It is crucial for a new leader to understand the current culture of the school and must build trusting relationships with key stakeholder groups to get a true temperature of the school’s current status.

Sergiovanni (2000) suggested that true leadership for a particular school requires that a leader be cognizant of the unique beliefs, needs, and values of that particular group of students in that particular school. Leadership requires a specialization to that particular school building rather than a global idea that all leaders can be performed and sent out to lead a school. (as cited in DeVillier, 2009, pp. 15-16)

Without the time for the principal to do such relationship building, the leader tends to make decisions on what he sees on the surface as a gap in meeting the high accountability expectations set by the federal and state governments but the decisions are
not meeting the deep entrenched needs that have created the accountability gap in the first place.

The school staff sits at the forefront of the leadership succession, an experience which might bring about a range of mixed emotions, of expectation, apprehension, relief and fear, among others. It may be tinged with regret for the loss of a well-liked leader, of abandonment as a leader moves on or relief that a less respected principal has left, certainly staff morale is a key element. (Cocklin & Wilkinson, 2011, p. 666)

Transformational leadership, which tends to be attempted with new principals, must develop strong, working relationships with the school staff. Once these relationships are created, student academic success will follow. With transformation, often times comes a sense of unease due to the impending and drastic change, therefore, the leader must take it slow and chisel their way through all the aspects of the school’s culture in order to ensure high achievement and accountability. The first breakthrough needs to be the relationship between principal and teachers.

De Villier (2009) believed that “effective schools have principals who lead through commitment and not authority. Additionally, some critics suggest that teacher who becomes a part of principal’s vision somehow relinquish their professional independence” (p. 13). Lezotte (1992) challenged this notion by “insisting that teachers who share a common vision with their principal have the opportunity to become a part of a community with a shared mission for student learning” (as cited in DeVillier, 2009, p. 13)
In transformational leadership, the principal and stakeholders must become one with a shared vision and goals set for the school and students.

Successful transformation requires a deeper dialogue among the people in the organization than is typical. It demands greater introspection into the very fabric of who the people of the organization are, what they stand for, and how they contribute to the larger environment they serve. (Anderson & Ackerman Anderson, 2010, p. 71)

The union of the principal and stakeholders into one leadership with one vision and with one set of goals that are designed to increase student achievement takes time. This time must be allowed so that these relationships can be fostered and nourished. Constant change in leadership diminishes any work towards unity the previous principal has created with the stakeholders, and the stakeholders that are left feel jilted and uncertain about their and their students’ futures.

Cotton (2003) identified effective principals as those that interact with parents and the community in order to communicate their particular vision for the school. These principals work to build a bridge between the school and the community where schools become a center of the community, teachers and parents become partners in the success of their children, and neighborhoods become a meeting place for instruction and learning. (as cited in DeVillier, 2009, p. 27)

As accountability has increased, there has been an increase in the change of leadership at school sites, especially at the high schools.

The core message about effective leadership in schools facing difficult or challenging circumstances is one of building capacity through empowering,
involving, and developing others and by providing systems of learning support, guidance, and assistance. Capacity building should be the central aim of all schools, but for those in challenging circumstances, it is imperative to ensure that school improvement is long term rather than short-lived. (Harris, 2010, p. 781)

The phrase “long term” is key in this research. As accountability has increased, there has been an increase in the change of leadership at school sites, especially at the high schools. This continuous leadership change has led to a decrease in school improvement and capacity building. It has to be assumed that the frequent leadership change was due to the idea that change would lead to increase in student mastery of the standards and increased accountability but in fact, it has had the opposite effect because the culture of the school was neglected.

The traditional approach to school improvement has focused on changing structures – policies, rules, schedules, and the size of schools. Although structural changes can typically be implemented rather quickly and easily, they are never enough to have a significant, long-term impact on student learning. Meaningful, sustainable improvement requires cultural changes – changes in the assumptions, beliefs, values, and habits that constitute the norm for those within an organization. Without attention to culture, efforts to improve schools are doomed to fail. (Eaker & Gonzalez, 2006-2007, pp. 7-8)

The increased job description is just another facet of the argument that a principal’s tenure at a school site is just as an important aspect of the accountability system as student mastery of the state standards.
The role of the principal has changed significantly in recent years. School leaders are not only building managers, but also key drivers of the many facets of school improvement. Principals fill a wider variety of roles than ever before, serving as supervisors, instructional leaders, fund-raisers, visionaries, community organizers, data analysts, and change agents. (Guilfoyle, 2013, p. 1)

The increased job description is just another facet of the argument that a principal’s tenure at a school site is just as an important aspect of the accountability system as student mastery of the state standards. The time a principal leads a school equates to a focus on building a positive school culture. These two variables will lead to and support student academic success and overall school accountability.

**Principal Tenure**

To date, there has not been much research done regarding the average length a high school principal stays at their site, as well as, what are the most common reasons why principals leave. Some research about this issue has been conducted in states other than California.

Belt (2009) used two studies, one conduct by Rand (2004) which showed that the turnover rate for school level leaders in Illinois and North Carolina were between 14-18% and the second using New York administrative data from Papa, Lankford, and Wyckoff (2002) which found that two-thirds of all new principals leave building level leadership in their initial position within the first six years of their careers.

With that said, the turnover rate tends to be greater and the longevity tends to be less in areas where the population is more challenging.

Papa (2004) found that “principal turnover increased in New York schools as
the student population increased. However, the author also found that principal turnover was lower in suburban schools, schools with smaller enrollment, principal compensation was higher, and the number of LEP students was lower” (as cited in Belt, 2009, p. 9).

While these studies addressed the issue of principal tenure, none addressed the issue for California.

One facet of a principal’s duties is to hire staff. Generally principals hire staff that have a matching vision and focus as the principal. This in turn, expedites the process of unifying the staff with the principal so that all members work towards the same goals; which leads to a positive school culture.

Belt (2009) believed that “principals that could hire and retain high quality teachers were a key component of effective schools. Particular principal attributes can influence the composition and stability of the teaching staff and thus impact the academic culture” (p. 1). Brewer (1993) linked higher student outcomes to schools with larger portions of the teaching team hired by principals with high standards (as cited in Belt, 2009).

Another aspect of a principal’s job duty is to initiate reform to transform a school and its culture that the principal envisions to be what the students and community need to ensure academic success and meet the expectations of high stakes accountability. Unfortunately, especially at the high school level, time is a rare resource that is not readily available to ensure the transformation not only comes to life but to completion as well as to sustain that change.

Second, Fullan (1999, 2001) stated that the amount of time and the degree of energy required to institute school reform at the secondary level is at least twice
that of elementary schools. While time is an important factor in every school, secondary teachers and principals do not have the luxury of being able to discuss at length their respective roles and their expectations of each other. (as cited in Meyer & MacMillan, 2011, pp. 4-5)

Along with the principal’s job description increasing with numerous other duties outside of leading and managing a school, teachers too must deal with multiple changes with their profession, which includes numerous directions they are expected to follow from various leaders that have been placed at the head of the school site.

Principal turnover has the potential to impact seriously school morale and values as teachers attempt to adjust to new administrators and their possible shifts in focus. In an era of mandated school improvement, teachers in schools with new administrators have to deal not only with changes in district, state and/or provincial policies, but also with adapting to the new principal. (Meyer & MacMillan, 2011, p. 1)

The question that should be posed next is: Why are there so many turnovers at the principal level, especially at the high schools? Reasons such as constant increase in responsibility, high stress levels, age, promotion within the district, high student populations, and the high demands of urban schools are examples of why a principal may leave the high school setting (Berrong, 2012). An added problem with this high turnover rate is the type of principals that fill the vacancy at the high schools.

Prior research suggests that many non-salary job characteristics affect teacher and principal preferences including student characteristics, school culture, facilities, and safety. These working conditions vary considerably across schools. Schools
with less appealing attributes generally receive fewer applicants for vacant principal positions than do other schools, and therefore cannot be as selective when hiring replacements. Consequently, new principals in such schools tend to have less experience leading other schools and are less likely to have advanced degrees than principals in other schools. (Beteille et al., 2012, p. 905)

Another perspective to explain principal turnover is at the district level. With the goal of revitalizing a struggling school community, school districts attempt to create positive change through leadership turnover. Ogawa (1991) stated that “although it has become an accepted organizational method of attempting to improve school performance, the constant movement of principals around a district has not been shown to improve school performance” (as cited in Belt, 2009, pp. 12-13).

Districts may, in an attempt to create change, increase principal turnover as a matter of practice. No matter the reason, there has been little research on the effects the constant turnover has on school culture. Research has also been conducted on which principal traits lead to higher student achievement but little has been done to address the resultant outcomes when a school changes principals. This is a serious research oversight since it has been acknowledged for decades that the principal is the key figure of change in education. (Berrong, 2012, pp. 1-2)

The entire school, the school’s leadership, the school’s culture, the school’s effectiveness towards accountability measures, the school’s stakeholders, etc. must be considered when making a drastic decision to change the school’s leadership. The principal is the key to school reform and the continuity of that position is critical.
Continuity of school leadership is at the core of student achievement and a positive school culture.

Conclusions

Currently the state of California is going through many changes in their educational system. As of 2010 new academic standards have been adopted and as of 2014 new administrative credentialing standards have been adopted. With these adoptions comes increased accountability for all educators, no matter what position they hold at a school site. The Common Core State Standards bridges academic learnings with career technical learnings. The new administrative credentialing standards provide more support for new administrators by ensuring the credentialing programs, school districts, and state communicate and provide that support as one force.

With the reforms in standards, credentialing and accountability, time is needed for schools to make the necessary adjustments to meet these expectations while still producing high school graduates that are global competitors and lifelong learners. Time is the enemy for a school’s culture because time is needed for stability to be established at a school site. In order for a school’s culture to be developed into something that is positive and stable, the school must be provided the time to develop norms and traditions that become engrained into the entire school and community.

No matter the type of leadership style a principal has at a site, the leader must have the time to develop trusting relationships among all stakeholder groups so that new initiatives can be implemented and adopted by all. In addition, the principal must be given the time to build these relationships, learn the culture of the school, and implement
new initiatives that the principal believes is needed to move the school forward, especially to meet the expectations of the new accountability standards.

There are many reasons why principals leave a school site; district needs the principal to make positive change at another school and promotion are the main reasons why a principal leaves a site. This change in leadership can cause turmoil for a site. In addition, if there is continual and frequent change in leadership, this can have a negative effect on the school’s culture. Therefore, this study will examine what impacts frequent change in leadership can have on a school’s culture, specifically at the high school level, and will further provide guidance to new principals on what they need to focus on from the very beginning of their tenure to develop a sustainable positive school culture. This study will also provide guidance to district personnel on how much time a principal needs to stay at their site to develop that sustainable positive school culture.
Chapter III: Methodology

Overview

Chapter three reviewed the purpose statement of this research and the research questions that was posed. In addition, the methodology of the study was discussed.

This research study was a Structural Modeling Delphi study in which a panel of expert high school principals determined the effects a principal’s tenure has on a high school’s culture. Prior to the Brandman University Internal Review Board (BUIRB) approval, a pilot test was conducted by using current high school principals that were located in the Los Angeles and San Bernardino County high schools that were willing to participate and provide input on the pilot test process. Lastly, this chapter reviewed the data analysis process and the limitations to this study.

Purpose Statement

The first purpose of this study was to investigate expert high school principals’ perceptions regarding the minimum length of principal tenure necessary to develop a positive school culture. The second purpose of the study was to determine the impact the length of high school principal tenure has on high schools’ culture. The third purpose of the study was to develop recommendations regarding actions to be taken with respect to principal tenure.

Research Questions

According to the perceptions of an expert panel of high school principals:

1. What is the minimum number of years a high school principal should stay at high school to establish a positive school culture?

2. Based upon the results of question 1, list the impacts on a school's culture
when the principal has been there less than X years (X = the minimum number of years to establish a positive school culture from question 1).

3. Based upon the results of question 2, rate the impacts on school culture when the principal's tenure is less than X. Rate the impacts starting with the number 1; 1 having the most impact.

4. Based upon the results of question 3, what recommendations would you give a new high school principal to ensure the top impacts on school culture are effectively addressed in the least amount of time?

5. What recommendations would you give to district cabinet members, including a board of education members, to ensure high school principals stay at their site for X number of years or more?

**Research Design**

According to Stitt-Gohdes and Crews (2004) there are three different types of Delphi methods; the Policy Delphi Model, the Trend Model, and the Structural Model. This particular Delphi study utilized Structural Modeling. “Structural Modeling allows participants individually to express independent relationships/judgments, but they are all used to produce a group or whole model or system” (Stitt-Gohdes & Crews, 2004, pp. 2-3). Each expert was asked the same research questions to answer. Once all responses were received, the researcher collected and analyzed all data. The data was utilized to develop the next research question that the panel members were expected to answer.

**Methodology**

This research study used a Delphi method to gather the expert perceptions of high school principals in the state of California to identify the effects a principal’s tenure at a
school site has on the high school’s culture. The Delphi method became popular amongst researchers in the early 1960’s with the RAND Corporation. “The RAND researchers explored the use of expert panels to address forecasting issues. Their reasoning was that experts, particularly when they agree, are more likely than non-experts to be correct about questions in their field” (Gordon, 1994, p. 1). Therefore, for this study, expert high school principals were used to determine the effects principal tenure has on school culture at the high school level.

“The Delphi method was designed to encourage a true debate independent of personalities. Anonymity was required in the sense that no one knew who else was participating” (Gordon, 1994, p. 1). Keeping anonymity in mind, all data was collected by the researcher and collated to complete the next research question. Due to the nature of the research questions, the researcher did not have the panel reflect on the results of the collated data prior to asking the next research question. These steps have been followed in this study.

**Stages of the Delphi Method**

There were multiple steps to the Delphi method that were used. The communication between all participants and the researcher was a quantitative and qualitative approach in which communication was via electronic mail and Survey Monkey. Following BUIRB approval, and after the participants agreed to participate; on June 29, 2014, all 19 participants were emailed the letter of consent (see Appendix A) and research question one (RQ1): “What is the minimum number of years a high school principal should stay at a high school to establish a positive school culture?” Each participant was given multiple opportunities to respond to the research question. It took
two weeks to receive 13 responses out of 19 panel members that originally committed to participate in the study. Once the responses were received, the researcher tabulated all data. The tabulation of the data was used to measure the mode from the distribution of answers given by the experts (see Appendix B). The mode was used to finalize research question number two.

“Leadership toward school reform, however, does not come without its costs. Emotion words like turmoil, resistance, stress, anger, and frustration often emerge in the literature to describe common reactions to the change process” (Saxe, 2011, p. 3). Given this background, the next step in this process was for the researcher to ask a qualitative question that addressed principal tenure in which each expert was asked research question number two via email. On July 14, 2014, the researcher emailed research question number two to all 19 participants. One email was sent without the letter of consent to those participants that completed the letter of consent during research question number one. The researcher sent a separate email with the letter of consent to those panel members that did not participate in research question number one. The researcher included all 19 members to participate in each question even though they may not have participated in every question in an attempt to get as many expert opinions as possible for this study.

Research question two (RQ2) that was sent was: “Based upon the results of question 1, list the impacts on a school's culture when the principal has been there less than X years (X = the minimum number of years to establish a positive school culture that was collated from research question 1)”. Due to the qualitative nature of the data, the researcher collated the data and grouped the impacts by common themes (see Appendix
C). If data was repeated by the panelists, it was not duplicated in the alphabetical list but the researcher ensured to note how many times each answer was duplicated, if applicable. For research question two, there were a total of 11 responses out of the original 19 panel members.

For research question three (RQ3), the researcher utilized Survey Monkey so that the experts could provide quantitative data to rate the impacts given in question number two using a numerical scale, with one (1) equaling most impactful. Research question number three was sent on July 28, 2014, and was: “Based upon the results of question 2, rate the impacts on school culture when the principal's tenure is less than 5 years. Rate the impacts starting with the number 1; 1 having the most impact.” All impacts listed by the panel members were given back to the panelists alphabetically to ensure not to sway their answer in any way (see Appendix D). Consensus was determined by measuring the mode score for each impact rated. The data used from research question number three was used by the experts to provide recommendations to new principals to expedite the process of developing a sustainable, positive school culture at their high school.

On August 10, 2014, the researcher sent research question four (RQ4) and research question five (RQ5) together since the data wasn’t dependent upon each other. The fourth research question was: “Based upon the results of question 3, what recommendations would you give a new high school principal to ensure the top impacts on school culture are effectively addressed in the least amount of time?” A qualitative approach was used for this question and email was the vehicle used to distribute this question to the experts. The feedback process was the same to develop consensus to this research question. All recommendations were included, although those that were
duplicate recommendations from various panelists were noted by the researcher but the panelists were not informed of the duplicate responses (see Appendix E).

The final research question was: “What recommendations would you give to district administration to ensure high school principals stay at their site for X number of years or more?” Qualitative data was collected for this question and electronic mail was used to communicate and gather data from the expert panel members. In addition, the feedback process described above was used to gain consensus to this question. All recommendations were included but those that are duplicate recommendations from various panelists were noted by the researcher but not shared with the panelists (see Appendix F).

Validity of the Delphi Method

According to the Journal of Career and Technical Education, “its capacity to capture those areas of collective knowledge that are held within professions but not often verbalized, makes it enormously useful in the field of professional education” (Stitt-Gohdes & Crews, 2004, p. 3). The Delphi method offers experts the opportunity to express their opinions about a research topic without fear of judgment. Therefore, anonymity is a critical aspect of this particular method. “When the Delphi Conference is used, the participants can ‘meet’ any time to provide their judgments/suggestions and feel as though they are part of a group solving or discussing a particular problem” (Stitt-Gohdes & Crews, 2004, p. 3). An aspect of the Delphi study is for groups of people to collaborate in a non-threatening manner to come to consensus. In this particular study, only experts with similar backgrounds were utilized to come to consensus; therefore, the feedback process was not utilized during this study. The researcher compiled all
information and determined consensus based upon the mode of research question data, when applicable. This allowed for professional discourse without the fear to come to consensus on a particular topic. This consensus leads to the development of advice to change policy or practice within an organization or system.

Like any other research method, there are weaknesses to the Delphi method. A major weakness the researcher needed to be cognizant of was to ensure the expert panel members were given enough time to respond to each question (Stitt-Gohdes & Crews, 2004). The Delphi method takes time; therefore, the researcher must take the time to allow for the process to be administered to fruition. If not, the expert opinion and feedback will be not valid. “if a researcher hastily tries to complete a Delphi study, thorough time for thought may not be given to the problem and consensus may not be obtained” (Stitt-Gohdes & Crews, 2004, p. 3). The researcher allowed for two weeks for all 19 panel members to respond to each research question. In addition, the researcher sent reminders on every third day to all members that haven’t responded by the time to ensure as many responses were received for each question. For each question, there were a varying numbers of responses that were provided by the 19 member panel.

**Population**

According to Turoff and Linstone (2002), “there are no general rules for creating a panel” (p. 65). Therefore, the population for this study was current and former high school principals in Riverside, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, and Merced counties throughout the state of California. “Sometimes you can start with a small group of potential panelists and begin by discussing possible names and searching as a group for
interesting and appropriate candidates. This is a better strategy than searching lists of relatively unknown names by categories” (Turoff & Linstone, 2002, p. 67).

The researcher started by getting a list of high school principals from the retired Superintendent of Hemet Unified School District and the Superintendents of Perris Union High School District, Chino Unified School District, and Merced Union High School District that they considered to be expert high school principals. The researcher contacted all recommended expert high school principals and developed the panel that was utilized. The recommended participants came from Riverside, San Bernardino, Los Angeles and Merced Counties in California. All panel members have been identified by their superiors as high school expert principals and have been a high school principal for at least three years.

Table 1 depicts the demographics of Riverside, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, and Merced counties and a chart showing the overall demographics of the State of California.

Table 1

<p>| Student demographic data of Riverside, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, and Merced counties |
|-------------------------------|------------------|</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Riverside County</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Asian American</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>60.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Bernardino County</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Asian American</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)

Table 1

*Student demographic data of Riverside, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, and Merced counties*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Los Angeles County</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Asian American</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>64.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Merced County</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Asian American</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>69.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The demographics of the selected counties and the demographics of the State of California were very similar meaning that the results of this study were generalized to the State of California as noted in Table 2.

Table 2

*Student demographic data for the state of California*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>California</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Asian American</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>52.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Adapted from “Ed-Data Fiscal, Demographics, and Performance Data on California’s K-12 Schools” by California Department of Education, EdSource and the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT), 2014. Copyright 2014 by Education Data Partnership.

Sample

According to Dr. Gunaydin (n.d.), “the minimum number of participants to ensure a good group performance is somewhat dependent on the study design” (para 8). Experiments by Brockhoff (1975) suggested that under ideal circumstances, groups as small as four can perform well” (as cited in Gunaydin, n.d., para. 8). Therefore, the
researcher confirmed 19 participants that committed to participate in this study. By the end of the study, two members decided not to participate by choosing the “I do not consent to participate” which left 17 panel members to participate.

The ACSA Administrator of the Year selection criteria were used to identify participating principals for this study. The ACSA criteria were:

1. Exceptional leadership in managing school programs.
2. Commitment to educational quality and student achievement.
3. Commitment to professional growth and innovation in dealing with issues and problems facing public education.
4. Recommended by their current or former superintendent.

An additional criterion added by the researcher is:

6. Qualified principals who are willing to participate in the study.

Using the ACSA Criteria stated previously, the first level sample for this study was identified by superintendents in Riverside, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, and Merced Counties at the first level. The same ACSA Criteria were used, except criterion number four: recommended by their current or former superintendent, was used when the expert high school principals from the first level were asked to recommend other expert high school principals. Two levels of recommendations were utilized by the researcher to increase the population. A list of principals identified at the first level was maintained confidentially by the researcher.

Individuals are considered eligible to be invited to participate in a Delphi study if
they have somewhat related backgrounds and experiences concerning the target issue, are capable of contributing helpful inputs, and are willing to revise their initial or previous judgments for the purpose of reaching or attaining consensus. (Hsu & Sandford, 2007, p. 3)

Following the identification of potential participants, emails were sent to the participants to secure their participation. Once each member agreed to participate via email, they were asked to sign a letter of consent prior to participating in the study. The letter of consent was first to be answered, followed by research question number one. Once consent was provided, they were asked to participate in each of the five research questions. If a panel member did not participate in research question one, the letter of consent was attached to the next research question. The researcher asked all panel members to participate even though there was not consistent participation from all members for all questions. The percent of participants that participated in each research question are outlined in Table 3.

Table 3

Percent of participants that participated in each research question in this study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question:</th>
<th>Number of Participants:</th>
<th>Total Number of Panel Members:</th>
<th>Percent Participated:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Instrumentation

Research question number one was a quantitative research question in which all panel members were contacted via email to answer. The results of RQ1 were calculated by determining the mode of the data.

The data from RQ1 was used to complete RQ2 in which a qualitative approach was used to gather data. Each panel member was asked an open-ended qualitative question in which the results were collected by the researcher via email. The qualitative data was collected by the researcher and collated. The researcher combined liked themed responses into 11 impacts. The data was presented back to the panel members via a qualitative survey for RQ3 in alphabetical order.

RQ3 asked the panel members to list all impacts provided by the panel members in RQ2 in order from most impactful to least impactful. This quantitative data was collated and shared with the panel members.

The panel members then used this data to answer RQ4 and RQ5. Research question number four and RQ5 was sent to each panel member at the same time since the data did not depend on each other for accurate answers from the panel members. Research question number four and RQ5 were both open-ended qualitative questions in which each panel member was asked to share their expert opinions. The researcher collated the qualitative data and developed a summary of all results.

Pilot Testing

Following approval by the Brandman Institutional Review Board, a field test of the instruments for this study occurred. “The administration of the questionnaire should be about the same as that to be used in the study, and the pilot test respondents should be
given space to write comments about individual items and the questionnaire as a whole” (Mc Millan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 205). The pilot test for this particular research study was limited to the high school principals of Chino Valley Unified School District and Pomona Unified School District in the state of California. There were a total of seven high school principals from both districts that participated. The rationale for using these subjects was that they are high school principals, were willing to participate, and, as a group, had similar characteristics to the study sample.

Selecting research participants is a critical component of Delphi research since it is their expert opinions upon which the output of the Delphi is based. There were four requirements for “expertise”: i) knowledge and experience with the issues under investigation; ii) capacity and willingness to participate; iii) sufficient time to participate in the Delphi; and, iv) effective communication skills. (Skulmoski, Hartman, & Krahn, 2007, pp. 3-4)

All high school principals in each district were contacted and asked to participate but only those principals that were open minded and willing to participate were used as the expert panel members for this pilot test. Each member was individually emailed by the researcher to ask their willingness to participate in this pilot test and anonymity was of top priority for the researcher throughout. The researcher explained the purpose of their participation, as well as, the purpose of the study and reassured each participant that their responses would be anonymous. The panel members for the pilot test were chosen because they resembled the study’s expert panel members by being high school principals, though they may not be considered experts by their colleagues. Each member of the pilot test panel had varying ranges of experience as a high school principal but
each had been a principal for at least one school year at the high school level. The pilot test followed the same process as described previously in the methodology section. Electronic mail and Survey Monkey were the vehicles used for this process.

Round one of the pilot test was an email to each participant that included the reasons for this study, a reminder that all answers are anonymous, timeline to provide an answer, directions, and the research question. The directions used for research question number one was, “List only one answer in the form of a number to represent your answer to the question.” The research question was: “What is the minimum number of years a high school principal should stay at a high school to establish a positive school culture?” Each participant was given two weeks to respond via email to this question. Every third day, a reminder was sent by the researcher via email to remind them that their response is desired and no more responses were collected after the 14th day. An added portion to the pilot test was that each participant was given the opportunity to give feedback to the process to the researcher. At the bottom of each email, the researcher asked additional questions that related to feedback on the process in which the participants were asked to answer: “Please provide any critical feedback to the process. Was the research question clear? Was enough time given to answer the research question effectively? How would you change this part of the process?”

The mode was found to represent the minimum number of years used to ask research question number two. All stages of the Delphi method was utilized with the pilot test panel, including but not limited to the use of Survey Monkey for research question number three. Similar rounds were used for each of the research questions for a total of four rounds for the entire process.
Data Collection

Following approval by the Brandman Institutional Review Board, the data collection for this study occurred. This Delphi study utilized four rounds of questioning. The vehicles used to gather the quantitative and qualitative data were electronic mail and Survey Monkey, which was delivered via email. Each member was contacted personally by the researcher to discuss how each member was chosen for this study, explained the purpose of the study, explained how the data would be used, and ensured each participant complete anonymity. Lastly, the timeline for the entire study and the need for open-mindedness as an expectation were explained as well. Only those willing to participate and committed to the entire process were chosen to be expert panel members.

Round One

Round one of the study was an email to each participant that included the reasons for this study, a reminder that all answers are anonymous, timeline to provide an answer, directions, and the research question. The directions used for research question number one was, “List only one answer in the form of a number to represent your answer to the question.” The research question was: “What is the minimum number of years a high school principal should stay at a high school to establish a positive school culture?” Each participant was given two weeks to respond via email to this question. On the third day, a reminder was sent by the researcher via email to remind them that their response is desired and that they have three days left to respond. If their response was not received on the seventh day, the researcher continued to send reminders to the nonparticipants for another seven days. After 14 days with three reminders, their participation was considered nonviable by the researcher. The mode of the number of years collected by
those willing expert panel members that participated in this particular research question was used to ask research question number two.

**Round Two**

Round two of the study was an email to each participant that reminded them of the reasons for this study, a reminder that all answers are anonymous, timeline to provide an answer, directions, and the research question. The directions used for research question number two were, “List as many impacts on school culture a principal’s tenure may have. No particular order is needed for your list.” The research question was: “Based upon the results of question 1, list the impacts on a school's culture when the principal has been there less than X years (X = the minimum number of years to establish a positive school culture from question 1).” Each participant was given two weeks to respond via email to this question. On the third day, a reminder was sent by the researcher via email to remind them that their response is desired and that they have three days left to respond. If their response was not received on the seventh day, the researcher continued to send reminders to the nonparticipants for another seven days. After 14 days with three reminders, their participation was considered nonviable by the researcher. The researcher took note of any impacts provided by multiple members but did not inform the members of duplicate responses to ensure no bias has occurred with the panel members.

**Round Three**

Round three of the study was an email to each participant that reminded them of the reasons for this study, a reminder that all answers are anonymous, timeline to provide an answer, directions, and the research question. In addition to the email, there was a link to Survey Monkey where the participants were able to provide their answer to research
question number three. The direction used for research question number three was, “Rate each impact from greatest to least impactful. Use number one for the most impactful and decrease in number to the least impactful.” The research question was: “Based upon the results of question 2, rate the impacts on school culture when the principal's tenure is less than X. Rate the impacts starting with the number 1; 1 having the most impact.” Each participant was given two weeks to respond via email to this question. On the third day, a reminder was sent by the researcher via email to remind them that their response is desired and that they have three days left to respond. If their response was not received on the seventh day, the researcher continued to send reminders to the nonparticipants for another seven days. After 14 days with three reminders, their participation was considered nonviable by the researcher. The researcher found the mode for the rated impacts provided by the panel members to determine the consensus list of all impacts from greatest to least impact on a positive school culture. The researcher sent the final list to the expert panel members for their information and to assist in the development of question number four.

**Round Four**

Round four of the study was an email to each participant that reminded them of the reasons for this study, a reminder that all answers are anonymous, timeline to provide an answer, directions, and the research question. The direction used for research question number four was, “List as many recommendations to new principals that you feel is important to provide. The researcher will assume that the recommendations are not listed in any particular order of importance.” In addition, the panel member was asked research question number five, “List as many recommendations to district administration that you
feel are important to provide. The researcher will assume that the recommendations are not listed in any particular order of importance.” Both research questions were asked in the same round since the data does not depend on each other. Each participant was given two weeks to respond via email to this question. On the third day, a reminder was sent by the researcher via email to remind them that their response is desired and that they have three days left to respond. If their response was not received on the seventh day, the researcher continued to send reminders to the nonparticipants for another seven days. After 14 days with three reminders, their participation was considered nonviable by the researcher. The researcher thanked all panel members for their participation in the study and informed them that this was the final step in their participation. Lastly, the researcher informed all panel members that they would be contacted with the final results of the study once the study was approved by Brandman University.

Following collection of the data, all data were stored in either as secured locked cabinet or in password protected files on the researcher’s hard drive.

Data Analysis

Research question number one asked: “What is the minimum number of years a high school principal should stay at a high school to establish a positive school culture?” Each expert panel member was to submit one number to represent their answer. The researcher collected all answers and the mode was the minimum number of years used for research question number two. The mode was used by the researcher because it represented the most common recommended number of years given by the expert panel.

Research question number two asked: “Based upon the results of question 1, list the impacts on a school's culture when the principal has been there less than X years (X =
the minimum number of years to establish a positive school culture from question 1).”

All impacts provided by the panel members were listed in no particular order. The researcher took note of any impacts that were listed multiple times by the members but did not share this information with the panel members during the feedback process. This decreased any bias to the members as they answered research question number three.

Research question number three asked: “Based upon the results of question 2, rate the impacts on school culture when the principal's tenure is less than X. Rate the impacts starting with the number 1; 1 having the most impact.” A tool named Survey Monkey was used to collect the rating of the various impacts provided by the members from research question number two. The mode was used to determine the consensus of impacts from greatest impact on school culture to least impactful on school culture.

Research question number four asked: “Based upon the results of question 3, what recommendations would you give a new high school principal to ensure the top impacts on school culture are effectively addressed in the least amount of time?” All recommendations to new principals were collected. The researcher took note of any recommendations that were duplicated by multiple panel members and publicized this information to the panel members during the feedback process.

Research question number five asked: “What recommendations would you give to district administration to ensure high school principals stay at their site for X number of years or more?” All recommendations to district administration were collected. The researcher took note of any recommendations that were duplicated by multiple panel members and publicized this information to the panel members during the feedback process.
All data was utilized by the researcher to provide recommendations to change the common practice in school districts to frequently change principal leadership at the high school level.

**Limitations**

The following limitations were present in this Delphi study:

1. Consensus was determined by calculating the mode of all data sets.

2. A panel member was considered a non-participant if they informed the researcher that they no longer wanted to participate via the letter of consent or if the panel member refused to submit an answer to a research question after the researcher made contact multiple times via email to determine their status of commitment.

3. If a panel member was deemed a non-participant any time after round one of the study, their responses were not removed from previous rounds.

4. All panel members were asked to participate in all research questions even though the researcher deemed them as a nonparticipant in a previous research question.

5. Only those panel members that informed the researcher via the letter of consent that they were not willing to participate were deemed as a nonparticipant for the rest of the study.

6. The researcher has worked as a teacher and assistant principal at four different high schools in three different districts that have been led by principals whose tenure has been less than three years. This may have resulted in unintentional and unconscious bias but the researcher did everything in her power to ensure unbiased data collection and analysis.
Summary

Chapter three of this research study included a detailed description of the Delphi methodology used in this study. In addition, the purpose of the study and the five research questions were included for this study. This chapter incorporated a brief history of the Delphi research method and the three types of methodologies available for use. This particular study utilized a structural model because the purpose of this study is to provide expert opinion to current principals and district cabinet members on the minimum number of years a high school principal should be at one site in order to develop a sustainable, positive school culture. This was followed by a detailed step by step process of how this particular study was administered; first starting with the methodology of choosing a population sample and then administering a pilot test. Finally, the study’s limitations and delimitations were provided. Chapter four will provide the details of all data collected from each step of this Delphi Structural Modeling study.
Chapter IV: Research, Data Collection, Findings

With the ESEA, NCLB, CCSS, and administrator standards, accountability has become the key to show the success of a student and school. Yet one major aspect that hasn’t been discussed or included into the calculation of either accountability system or a school’s success is the school’s culture. School culture encompasses how the students, staff and community view the school; how safe the stakeholders feel on campus; high rigor within classrooms; teachers showing they care for students; high accessibility of staff to community members; staff are given ample opportunity to learn and master their craft; and, staff have trusting relationships between themselves and with leadership.

Chapter IV will provide detailed quantitative and qualitative data of the effects of principal tenure are on a high school’s school culture; based upon the expert opinions of panel members that are or have been a high school principal for at least three years and have been identified by their superintendent or peer as an expert high school principal.

Overview

This chapter provides a summary of this study’s purpose statement, research questions, methodology, data collection procedures, and population and sample. Following this summary, a detailed report of the findings of the study will be provided with a reference to the appendices that shows all the data collected for each research question.

Purpose Statement

The first purpose of this study was to investigate expert high school principals’ perceptions regarding the minimum length of principal tenure necessary to develop a positive school culture. The second purpose of the study was to determine the impact the length of high school principal tenure has on high schools’ culture. The third purpose of
the study was to develop recommendations regarding actions to be taken with respect to principal tenure.

**Research Questions**

According to the perceptions of an expert panel of high school principals:

1. What is the minimum number of years a high school principal should stay at a high school to establish a positive school culture?

2. Based upon the results of question 1, list the impacts on a school's culture when the principal has been there less than X years (X = the minimum number of years to establish a positive school culture from question 1).

3. Based upon the results of question 2, rate the impacts on school culture when the principal's tenure is less than X. Rate the impacts starting with the number 1; 1 having the most impact.

4. Based upon the results of question 3, what recommendations would you give a new high school principal to ensure the top impacts on school culture are effectively addressed in the least amount of time?

5. What recommendations would you give to district cabinet members, including board of education members, to ensure high school principals stay at their site for X number of years or more?

**Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures**

This research study used a Delphi method to gather the expert perceptions of high school principals in the state of California to identify the effects a principal’s tenure at a school site has on the high school’s culture. The experts chosen for this particular research study will be high school principals within the state of California that have been
identified by their superintendent and fellow colleagues as an expert. The criteria used to determine the expert status of a high school principal will be based upon the criteria determined by the Association of California School Administrators. Superintendents were given the ACSA criteria used to identify the qualities of an expert high school principal in order for them to provide who they considered an expert for this study.

There are multiple steps to the Delphi method that will be used. The communication between all participants and the researcher will be either a quantitative or qualitative approach in which the research questions will be communicated via electronic mail and surveys. After the participants have agreed to participate, they will be emailed the first research question: “What is the minimum number of years a high school principal should stay at a high school to establish a positive school culture?” The next step in this process is for the researcher to ask a qualitative question in which each expert is asked research question number two via email: “Based upon the results of question 1, list the impacts on a school's culture when the principal has been there less than X years (X = the minimum number of years to establish a positive school culture from question 1).”

For research question three, the researcher will utilize Survey Monkey so that the experts can provide qualitative data to rate the impacts given in question number two using a numerical scale, with one (1) equaling most impactful. Research question number three is: “Based upon the results of question 2, rate the impacts on school culture when the principal's tenure is less than X. Rate the impacts starting with the number 1; 1 having the most impact.” The fourth research question is: “Based upon the results of question 3, what recommendations would you give a new high school principal to ensure
the top impacts on school culture are effectively addressed in the least amount of time?”

The final research question is: “What recommendations would you give to district administration to ensure high school principals stay at their site for X number of years or more?”

This Delphi study utilized four rounds of questioning. The two vehicles used to gather the quantitative and qualitative data were electronic mail and Survey Monkey, which was delivered via email. Each member was contacted personally by the researcher to discuss how each member was chosen for this study, explained the purpose of the study, explained how the data would be used, and ensured each participant complete anonymity. Lastly, the timeline for the entire study and the need for open-mindedness as an expectation were explained as well. Only those willing to participate and committed to the entire process were chosen to be expert panel members. According to Turoff and Linstone (2002), “there are no general rules for creating a panel” (p. 65). Therefore, the population for this study is current and former high school principals in Riverside, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, and Merced counties in the state of California. “Sometimes you can start with a small group of potential panelists and begin by discussing possible names and searching as a group for interesting and appropriate candidates. This is a better strategy than searching lists of relatively unknown names by categories” (Turoff & Linstone, 2002, p. 67).

The researcher started by getting a list of high school principals from the retired Superintendent of Hemet Unified School District and the Superintendents of Perris Union High School District, Chino Valley Unified School District, and Merced Union High School District that they considered to be expert high school principals. From that list,
the researcher asked those identified expert principals for other expert principals that they could identify. The researcher contacted all recommended expert high school principals and developed the panel that was utilized. The recommended participants came from Riverside, San Bernardino, Los Angeles and Merced Counties in California. All panel members have been identified either by their superiors or colleagues as high school expert principals and have been a high school principal for at least three years.

Table 6 depicts the demographics of Riverside, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, and Merced counties and identifies the student demographic by percentage.

Table 4

*Student demographic data of Riverside, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, and Merced counties.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Riverside County</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Asian American</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>60.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>San Bernardino County</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Asian American</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Bernardino County</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(continued)

Table 4

*Student demographic data of Riverside, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, and Merced counties.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>San Bernardino County</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Los Angeles County</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Asian American</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>64.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Merced County</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Asian American</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>69.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Adapted from “Ed-Data Fiscal, Demographics, and Performance Data on California’s K-12 Schools” by California Department of Education, EdSource and the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT), 2014. Copyright 2014 by Education Data Partnership.
The demographics of the selected counties and the demographics of the State of California are very similar meaning that the results of this study can be generalized to the State of California (see Table 5).

Table 5

*Student demographic data for the state of California*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>California</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaska Native</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Asian American</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>52.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Adapted from “Ed-Data Fiscal, Demographics, and Performance Data on California’s K-12 Schools” by California Department of Education, EdSource and the Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT), 2014. Copyright 2014 by Education Data Partnership.

**Sample**

According to Dr. Gunaydin (n.d.), “the minimum number of participants to ensure a good group performance is somewhat dependent on the study design” (para 8).

Experiments by Brockhoff (1975) suggest that under ideal circumstances, groups as small as four can perform well” (as cited in Gunaydin, n.d., para. 8). The researcher made contact with the superintendents of the Riverside, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, and Merced counties and asked them to identify high school principals using the ACSA Administrator of the Year selection criteria. Once high school principals were identified
by their superintendent, those experts were also asked to identify high school principals they consider experts based upon the same ACSA criteria. The researcher confirmed 19 participants for this study.

The ACSA Administrator of the Year selection criteria used to identify participating principals for this study was:

1. Exceptional leadership in managing school programs.
2. Commitment to educational quality and student achievement.
3. Commitment to professional growth and innovation in dealing with issues and problems facing public education.
4. Recommended by their current or former superintendent.

An additional criterion added by the researcher is:

6. Qualified principals who are willing to participate in the study.

All principals identified by the superintendents and fellow colleagues was maintained confidential by the researcher.

Individuals are considered eligible to be invited to participate in a Delphi study if they have somewhat related backgrounds and experiences concerning the target issue, are capable of contributing helpful inputs, and are willing to revise their initial or previous judgments for the purpose of reaching or attaining consensus. (Hsu & Sandford, 2007, p. 3)

Following the identification of potential participants, emails were sent to potential participants to secure their participation.
Presentation and Analysis of Data

Throughout the entire study, the same expert panel members were asked to participate in the study. Each panel member was asked each question even though they may not have participated in a previous question. The only exception was if the panel member chose not to provide consent to participate in the study. There was a total of one of the 19 original panel members that chose not to provide consent. There were two panel members that never responded to the study. Out of the 16 panel members that provided consent, one panel member chose not to provide consent, yet provided an answer to research question one; therefore, the researcher inquired to receive clarity on the panel member’s consent to participate. The panel member informed the researcher that he/she accidentally did not provide consent to participate but to incorporate his/her response within the study. Table 6 illustrates this data.

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Number of Participants:</th>
<th># of Participants that Consent to Participate:</th>
<th>Percentage of Participants that Provided Consent:</th>
<th># of Participants that did not Consent to Participate:</th>
<th>Percentage of Participants that did not Consent to Participate:</th>
<th># of Participants that did not Participate at all in the Study:</th>
<th>Percentage of Participants that did not Participate at all in the Study:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. One panel member informed the researcher he/she accidentally stated he did not consent to participate and to include his expert opinion. And one panel member never informed the researcher that he/she provided consent to participate or not.

Out of the 13 expert panel members that participated in RQ1, 46% of the experts believed that a principal should stay no less than five years at a high school in order to develop a positive school culture (see Table 7).
Table 7

**RQ1:** What is the minimum number of years a high school principal should stay at a high school to establish a positive school culture?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Average Number</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Respondents: 13**

*Note.* 13 respondents answered RQ1.

For RQ2, the mode of RQ1 was used (five years). Research question two was asked as: “Based upon the results of question 1, list the impacts on a school’s culture when the principal has been there less than 5 years.” Out of the 19 expert panel members that were given the opportunity to participate in RQ2, 11 panel members participated. The researcher received the qualitative data from each of the 11 panel members and collated the data into 11 impacts. See Appendix C for the detailed list of responses from the panel members. The researcher then categorized and alphabetized the 11 impacts and presented them to the panel members to answer RQ3 as shown in Table 8.
RQ 2 - Based upon the results of question 1, list the impacts on a school's culture when the principal has been there less than 5 years

| 11 Impacts on a school’s culture when the principal has been there less than 5 years. |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Coaching and mentoring of new teachers | Consistency in school-wide discipline |
| Consistency of instruction school-wide | Increased student involvement |
| Knowledge of the district's initiatives and expectations | Knowledge of the school's history that has developed the current culture |
| Relationships built with all stakeholder groups | Stability with the school's vision |
| The number of teacher leaders developed on campus | Trust between the staff and leadership |
| Understanding of the leadership's initiatives | |

*Note. Results are listed in alphabetical order.*

Out of the 19 expert panel members that were given the opportunity to participate in RQ3, 12 members participated. One panel member, who did not participate yet in the study, chose to not provide consent to participate in the rest of the study. The researcher did not include this expert in the rest of the study; therefore, for RQ4 and RQ5, there were only 18 panel members available to participate in the rest of the study.

For RQ3, Survey Monkey was used to collate the quantitative data provided by the expert panel. The panel members were asked to rate the 11 impacts that were collated from RQ2 from the impact having the most impact on a new high school principal to having the least impact on developing a positive school culture. The original list of impacts was alphabetized by the researcher when they were presented to the panel members so to not give any bias.

Appendix D details the data collected for RQ3 but the researcher will note that the expert panel believed that relationships built with all stakeholder groups was the
most impactful for a new high school principal. Table 9 gives an overview of the results for RQ3 and lists the 11 impacts, with number one as having the greatest impact and number 11 the least impact, according to the expert panel.

Table 9

RQ3 - Based upon the results of question 2, rate the impacts on school culture when the principal's tenure is less than 5 years. Rate the impacts starting with the number 1; 1 having the most impact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Average Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Relationships built with all stakeholder groups.</td>
<td>4.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Trust between the staff and leadership.</td>
<td>6.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Understanding of the leadership's initiatives.</td>
<td>8.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Consistency of instruction school-wide.</td>
<td>9.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Knowledge of the school's history that has developed the current culture.</td>
<td>11.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Consistency in school-wide discipline.</td>
<td>12.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Stability with the school's vision.</td>
<td>12.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The number of teacher leaders developed on campus.</td>
<td>15.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Increased student involvement.</td>
<td>15.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Coaching and mentoring of new teachers.</td>
<td>17.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Knowledge of the district's initiatives and expectations.</td>
<td>17.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The Lowest Average Rating means it was the “most impactful” and the Highest Average Rating means it was the “least impactful.”

Research question four was sent to 18 out of the original 19 expert panel members. It is important to note that during RQ3, one panel member did not prove consent to participate in the rest of the study. The data received was qualitative and the researcher collated the data into 12 recommendations to a new high school principal. The majority of the panel members felt that building trusting relationships with all stakeholder groups was of top priority. Eighty-two percent of the 11 panel members that participated recommended this the most. This correlates with the data received in RQ3, building relationships with stakeholders and develop trusting relationships between staff and
leadership as the top two impacts. Again, Appendix D shows all of the qualitative data received by the participating panel members.

Table 10

**RQ4 - Based upon the results of question 3, what recommendations would you give a new high school principal to ensure the top impacts on school culture are effectively addressed in the least amount of time?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collated recommendations to new high school principals:</th>
<th># of participants out of 11 panel members:</th>
<th>% of Participation:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Build trusting relationships with all stakeholders, first focus on the key players.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep communication lines open.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be visible.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find out what the staff's vision of the school is.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be an instructional leader.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be honest.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link agendas between the school site, stakeholders, and district.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wait, watch and listen as a new principal before making changes.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not comment on your predecessors.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earn easy wins - fix or get something the staff has been wanting to get done.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present your vision clearly and concisely.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay away from the gossip.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For RQ5, there were 11 panel members that participated out of the 18 panel members. In RQ3, one of the 19 original members did not provide consent to participate; therefore, for RQ5, there were only 18 members available to provide their expert opinion in the study (see Appendix F).

In RQ5, the panel members were asked to provide recommendations to school district cabinet members to ensure high school principals stay at their school sites for the
recommended five years. Seventy-three percent of the 18 panel members recommended that districts provide training and support to new principals to ensure their success.

Sixty-four percent of the panel members believed that there should be district policy to keep a principal at their site for no less than five years.

Table 11

**RQ5 - What recommendations would you give to district cabinet members, including board of education members, to ensure high school principals stay at their site for 5 years or more?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation for Districts:</th>
<th># of Participants out of 11 panel members:</th>
<th>% of Participation:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Districts provide training and support</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Policy that a principal stays at a school site for no less than 5 years</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District and site visions should be the same</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Districts support site administrator decisions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be honest</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remove non-instructional materials away from a principal's job duties</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary**

There was quantitative and qualitative data that was collected throughout this study. Originally there were 19 expert panel members that agreed to participate in this study. By the third research question, there were only 18 panel members that were willing to participate. By the end of the study, building relationships and developing trust amongst all stakeholders were the two most critical aspects of a new principal’s job when they begin their leadership of a high school. Lastly, providing support and professional development opportunities while ensuring a principal’s tenure is at least five years at a
high school are the most critical for a district to provide a new principal to ensure a positive school culture is built for the betterment of its students.
Chapter V: Findings, Conclusions, Recommendations

Purpose Statement

The first purpose of this study was to investigate expert high school principals’ perceptions regarding the minimum length of principal tenure necessary to develop a positive school culture. The second purpose of the study was to determine the impact the length of high school principal tenure has on high schools’ culture. The third purpose of the study was to develop recommendations regarding actions to be taken with respect to principal tenure.

Research Questions

According to the perceptions of an expert panel of high school principals:

1. What is the minimum number of years a high school principal should stay at a high school to establish a positive school culture?

2. Based upon the results of question 1, list the impacts on a school’s culture when the principal has been there less than X years (X = the minimum number of years to establish a positive school culture from question 1).

3. Based upon the results of question 2, rate the impacts on school culture when the principal’s tenure is less than X. Rate the impacts starting with the number 1; 1 having the most impact.

4. Based upon the results of question 3, what recommendations would you give a new high school principal to ensure the top impacts on school culture are effectively addressed in the least amount of time?

5. What recommendations would you give to district cabinet members,
including board of education members, to ensure high school principals stay at their site for X number of years or more?

**Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures**

This research study used a Delphi method to gather the expert perceptions of high school principals in the state of California to identify the effects a principal’s tenure at a school site has on the high school’s culture. The experts chosen for this particular research study will be high school principals within the state of California that have been identified by their superintendent and fellow colleagues as an expert. The criteria used to determine the expert status of a high school principal will be based upon the criteria determined by the Association of California School Administrators. Superintendents were given the ACSA criteria used to identify the qualities of an expert high school principal in order for them to provide who they considered an expert for this study.

There are multiple steps to the Delphi method that will be used. The communication between all participants and the researcher will be either a quantitative or qualitative approach in which communication will be via electronic mail. After the participants have agreed to participate, they will be emailed the first research question: “What is the minimum number of years a high school principal should stay at a high school to establish a positive school culture?” The next step in this process is for the researcher to ask a qualitative question in which each expert is asked research question number two via email: “Based upon the results of question 1, list the impacts on a school’s culture when the principal has been there less than X years (X = the minimum number of years to establish a positive school culture from question 1).” For research question three, the researcher will utilize Survey Monkey so that the experts can provide
qualitative data to rate the impacts given in question number two using a numerical scale, with one (1) equaling most impactful. Research question number three is: “Based upon the results of question 2, rate the impacts on school culture when the principal's tenure is less than X. Rate the impacts starting with the number 1; 1 having the most impact.” The fourth research question is: “Based upon the results of question 3, what recommendations would you give a new high school principal to ensure the top impacts on school culture are effectively addressed in the least amount of time?” The final research question is: “What recommendations would you give to district administration to ensure high school principals stay at their site for X number of years or more?”

This Delphi study utilized four rounds of questioning. The two vehicles used to gather the quantitative and qualitative data were electronic mail and Survey Monkey, which was delivered via email. Each member was contacted personally by the researcher to discuss how each member was chosen for this study, explained the purpose of the study, explained how the data would be used, and ensured each participant complete anonymity. Lastly, the timeline for the entire study and the need for open-mindedness as an expectation were explained as well. Only those willing to participate and committed to the entire process were chosen to be expert panel members. According to Turoff and Linstone (2002), “there are no general rules for creating a panel” (p. 65). Therefore, the population for this study is current and former high school principals in Riverside, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, and Merced counties in the state of California. “Sometimes you can start with a small group of potential panelists and begin by discussing possible names and searching as a group for interesting and appropriate candidates. This is a
better strategy than searching lists of relatively unknown names by categories” (Turoff & Linstone, 2002, p. 67).

The researcher started by getting a list of high school principals from the retired Superintendent of Hemet Unified School District and the Superintendents of Perris Union High School District, Chino Valley Unified School District, and Merced Union High School District that they considered to be expert high school principals. From that list, the researcher asked those identified expert principals for other expert principals that they could identify. The researcher contacted all recommended expert high school principals and developed the panel that was utilized. The recommended participants came from Riverside, San Bernardino, Los Angeles and Merced Counties in California. All panel members have been identified either by their superiors or colleagues as high school expert principals and have been a high school principal for at least three years.

Sample

According to Dr. Gunaydin (n.d.), “The minimum number of participants to ensure a good group performance is somewhat dependent on the study design” (para. 8). Experiments by Brockhoff (1975) suggest that under ideal circumstances, groups as small as four can perform well” (Gunaydin, n.d., para. 8). Therefore, the researcher confirmed 19 participants for this study.

The ACSA Administrator of the Year selection criteria were used to identify participating principals for this study. The ACSA criteria are:

1. Exceptional leadership in managing school programs.
2. Commitment to educational quality and student achievement.
3. Commitment to professional growth and innovation in dealing with issues
and problems facing public education.

4. Recommended by their current or former superintendent.


An additional criterion added by the researcher is:

6. Qualified principals who are willing to participate in the study.

Using the ACSA Criteria stated previously, the first level sample for this study was identified by superintendents in Riverside, San Bernardino, Los Angeles, and Merced Counties at the first level. The same ACSA Criteria were used, except criterion number four: recommended by their current or former superintendent, was used when the expert high school principals from the first level were asked to recommend other expert high school principals. Two levels of recommendations were utilized by the researcher to increase the population. A list of principals identified at the first level was maintained confidentially by the researcher.

Individuals are considered eligible to be invited to participate in a Delphi study if they have somewhat related backgrounds and experiences concerning the target issue, are capable of contributing helpful inputs, and are willing to revise their initial or previous judgments for the purpose of reaching or attaining consensus. (Hsu & Sandford, 2007, p. 3)

Following the identification of potential participants, emails were sent to potential participants to secure their participation.
Major Findings

Research Question 1

What is the minimum number of years a high school principal should stay at a high school to establish a positive school culture?

Six of the 13 panel members that participated in providing their expert opinion to RQ1 stated that a principal needs to stay at a site for no less than five years. This was followed by four of the 13 panel members that participated stated that a principal needs to stay at a site for no less than three years. Therefore, the mode of RQ1 is five years and that data was used for the rest of the study.

Research Question 2

Based upon the results of question 1, list the impacts on a school’s culture when the principal has been there less than 5 years (5 = the minimum number of years to establish a positive school culture from question 1).

When a principal has been at their school site for less than five years, there are many aspects of a school culture that get affected; from instruction, relationships, and stability in the school’s vision.

“One of the most overlooked challenges facing public education is the lack of succession planning and management. The concept of formally and purposefully creating the capacity for developing and sustaining leadership is not something that most schools or school districts strategically consider” (Hall, 2006-2007, p. 44).

There were a total of 11 categories that were developed by the researcher after reviewing the qualitative data from the 12 expert panel members that participated in this research question. Appendix C contains the qualitative data for RQ2.
Research Question 3

Based upon the results of question 2, rate the impacts on school culture when the principal's tenure is less than X. Rate the impacts starting with the number 1; 1 having the most impact.

The impacts were calculated by the researcher quantitatively; the mode was calculated for each impact and then listed by most impactful (lowest mode) to least impactful (highest mode). See Appendix D for statistical data.

Building relationships and trust amongst all stakeholder groups were the two top impacts on a school’s culture when a principal has not been at a school less than five years.

At the heart of a healthy organization is the tacit understanding that connections and relationships among the organization’s members facilitate their ability to achieve their goals and objectives. Without leaders who consistently demonstrate alignment between their words and deeds, i.e., behavioral integrity, it becomes very difficult to foster the relationships that are necessary to sustain the organization. (Childers, 2009, p. 19)

Trust and relationship building takes time. “Time is crucial for the understanding of leadership relationships because even without the intervention of external factors or events, time itself may affect the nature of the relationship” (Shamir, 2011, p. 310).

Although research on building relationships within an organization does not state exact length of time for relationships to be built, it is safe to say that based upon the recommendation from the expert panel of allowing principals five years to develop a
positive school culture at a high school would be sufficient time for those trusting relationships to be built.

The other impacts suggested by the expert panel during this study referred to stability and consistency within various aspects of leadership. In order for stability and consistency to be developed, time is also needed. According to Anderson and Kumari (2009), “…there are three concurrent focuses of sustainability and continuous school improvement: (1) effective instructional programs and practices; (2) organizational leadership and structures that enable and support continuous improvement as a regular feature of organizational culture; and (3) desirable student learning outcomes” (p. 284).

**Research Question 4**

**Based upon the results of question 3, what recommendations would you give a new high school principal to ensure the top impacts on school culture are effectively addressed in the least amount of time?**

Eighty-two percent of the panel members recommended the need to build trusting relationships with all stakeholder groups for a new high school principal in order to begin building a positive school culture as noted in Table 12. This result corresponds with the impacts provided by the panel members in RQ3. This was followed by 45% of the panel members believed that open communication lines was the next critical step for a new principal to focus on when at a school site. A 37% difference between the recommendation of building trusting relationships and ensuring open communication lines states that building relationships is the most critical aspect for any new leader to focus on when they first arrive at a site. See Appendix E for the qualitative data provided from the expert panel for RQ4.
Research Question 5

What recommendations would you give to district cabinet members, including board of education members, to ensure high school principals stay at their site for X number of years or more?

The top two recommendations to district cabinet from the expert panel were to provide support and professional development to new principals, as well as, make it district policy to allow a principal to stay at a school site for a minimum of five years, as documented on Table 13. There was a 9% difference in panel members agreeing that support and professional development was more important for district cabinet to begin to implement for new principals than making it policy for allowing principals to stay at a site for at least five years to develop a positive school culture (see Appendix F for all qualitative data collected from the expert panel for RQ5).

Table 12

RQ4 - Based upon the results of question 3, what recommendations would you give a new high school principal to ensure the top impacts on school culture are effectively addressed in the least amount of time?

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Build trusting relationships with all stakeholders, first focus on the key players</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep communication lines open</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be visible</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Find out what the staff's vision of the school is</td>
<td>4</td>
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Link agendas between the school site, stakeholders, and district

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<tr>
<td>Be honest</td>
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<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remove non-instructional materials away from a principal's job duties</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 13**

*RQ5 - What recommendations would you give to district cabinet members, including board of education members, to ensure high school principals stay at their site for 5 years or more?*

Conclusions

The results of the quantitative and qualitative data that was collected during this study supports the need for district administration, new principals, and stakeholders to be patient during the process of a new leader entering a school site and working to build a positive school culture. Patience is critical because time is needed for the new leader to understand the history of the school, understand the stakeholders and what they visualize.
as important for the success of the students and school; which are all needed to build trusting relationships with all stakeholder groups and build a sustainable, positive school culture.

According to Anthony Muhammad, author of *Transforming School Culture How to Overcome Staff Division*:

It [culture change] requires leaders adept at gaining cooperation and skilled in the arts of diplomacy, salesmanship, patience, endurance, and encouragement. It takes knowledge of where a school has been and agreement about where the school should go. It requires an ability to deal with beliefs, policies, and institutions that have been established to buffer educators from change and accountability. (Muhammad, 2009, p. 16)

This correlates with the study’s expert panel. According to this study’s expert panel, building relationships with all stakeholder groups is the most impactful to a positive school culture if a principal does not stay at a school site for at least five years. Relationships are an investment; therefore, stakeholders will not invest in building a relationship with their leader if they do not see the benefit in doing so. If they do not trust in the idea that the leader is trustworthy and is going to stay long enough to be in a trusting relationship with them, the stakeholders will resist devoting time in building that relationship.

Another important aspect that surfaced during this study is the importance of stability and consistency in order to produce a positive school culture. The panel members recommended a minimum of five years for a principal to build a positive school culture. Five years is needed for the trusting relationships to be built. In addition, five
years allows for stability and consistency to be developed so that stakeholders can trust their leader to be part of the development of a sustainable positive school culture.

The core message about effective leadership in schools facing difficult or challenging circumstances is one of building capacity through empowering, involving, and developing others and by providing systems of learning support, guidance, and assistance. Capacity building should be the central aim of all schools, but for those in challenging circumstances, it is imperative to ensure that school improvement is long term rather than short-lived. (Harris, 2010, p. 781)

If a trusting relationship is not built between the leadership and stakeholders, capacity building is nearly impossible. The stakeholders will not be willing to change and grow as leaders if they are not confident that their leaders are going to be by their side throughout the transformation.

“Like any organization, schools are the sum of their parts. Educators, students, parents, and society as a whole add a component to school that is equally as challenging to deal with as the governmental laws and regulations….” (Muhammad, 2009, p. 21). Present day educational system is very complex in which many facets of the system are simultaneously working to ensure the success of students. Amongst all of the recommendations provided by the expert panel, there were common themes in what the expert panel members recommended to new high school principals to ensure the impacts on school culture are effectively addressed in the least amount of time. The common themes were: (a) build trusting relationships; (b) be visible; (c) know the history of the school’s people, the school, and the community; (d) understand what the stakeholders believe are the needs of the school and what their vision of the school is and incorporate
those ideas into your own vision for the school; and (e) be fair, honest, and transparent in all leadership decisions and interactions (see Appendix D). The new principal must be aware of the aspects that affect the site and its students so to ensure all stakeholder groups simultaneously work to ensure a positive school culture can be built and sustained by the stakeholders.

“In fact, U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings told a group of businesspeople in Detroit that ‘we can’t adequately solve this problem [the achievement gap] until we diagnose what’s wrong. Many years and several billion dollars later, our best educational minds are still diagnosing the problem’ (Muhammad, 2009, p. 12). The complexity of public education is evident by many; therefore, the expert panel members recommended the following to district administration to ensure high school principals stay at their site for five years or more: (a) ensure there is consistency in site leadership; (b) provide various supports to high school principals like professional development, principal cohorts, and support the tough decisions that need to be made to ensure a quality education for students; (c) ensure the district’s vision is clear so that the principal has a flawless understanding to make sure the site’s vision is in concurrence with the district; (d) be an active mentor for the principal to develop a five year plan for the site to ensure the five year plan is aligned with the district’s goals; and (e) allow the principal to hire his/her own administrative team (see Appendix E). The complexity of the educational system can be partly unconstrained if the district and site principal are united in the leadership decisions and plan together for what is best for the students, site, and community. Once the district and site leadership work together and send the same
messages, the community, parents, students, and staff will feel supported and will be willing participants in initiatives set forth by district and site leadership.

**Implications for Action**

Universal achievement remains a pipe dream until we take an honest look at our beliefs, practices, behaviors, and the norms of our organization. These elements make up a very sensitive system known as a school’s culture. This is where many school officials and reformers fear to tread, but it is this place that holds the biggest keys to unlocking the potential of our public schools. (Muhammad, 2009, p. 12)

Prior to a principal starting leadership work at a school site, the district office should meet with the new leader to educate the principal on what the district’s vision is; what the district’s perceptions are of the school site; and to provide a mentor who works closely with the new principal to ensure a successful transition as the new principal of the high school. Simultaneous to the new principal working to get to know the staff and develop the school’s vision with the staff, the principal needs to ensure the school’s vision is linked with the district’s vision, the principal must move slowly, be visible and build trusting relationships with the various stakeholder groups of the site. Eighty-two percent of the expert panel recommended that a new principal should build trusting relationships as a top priority towards building a positive school culture.

The process of change can be bumpy and messy during certain periods of time. The transition to a new principal is certainly a period of change for any group that calls itself a school. Tuckman’s Model of Group Development describes the stages of change as, “Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing” (Tuckman, 1965). It is during the
“Storming” period, where old methods and relationships are changing, that turbulence occurs. This is a normal and necessary part of moving on to higher levels of function for the group. However, if a district does not understand that some level of turbulence is a necessary step to future success; it may interpret a necessary period of turbulence incorrectly and stop supporting a principal before the turbulence can subside naturally. It is imperative that districts support new principals through these periods of change so that long term function and performance can be gained.

In addition, 45% of the panel believed the principal must have open communication lines and be honest with whatever commitments are made to lead the school. Transparency is critical for a principal so that the trusting relationships can continue to flourish and stabilize. Transparency in what the principal’s beliefs are for the betterment of the students and site; in what the principal’s style of leadership and his/her consistency in leadership; and the principal’s dedication to doing what is right for the people of the site is critical to building a sustainable, positive school culture. Being honest, transparent, an effective communicator, effective listener and patient are all aspects to building trusting relationships. In order for a leader to implement all of these recommendations, time is needed for the principal to do so. The principal should not feel compelled to hurry through this process because the process will not be implemented to fruition. Hence, stakeholders will be hesitant to transform with the new leader through various initiatives the principal believes is critical for the success of the students and school culture. The panel of expert high school principals highly recommended that site principals are given at least five years to build a positive and sustainable positive school culture; therefore, they should be given this time.
If a principal is expected to be patient and take the time necessary to build trusting relationships and get to know and understand the existing history and culture of the site and its people, so should the district administration. District administration must also be patient and supportive to the site leadership. Site leadership should feel comfortable in facing tough decisions with the confidence that district administration will support the decisions made because site leadership and the district are one unit, not separate entities. District administration should be active members and mentors to their site principals.

The success of a district’s school sites and the people the sites serve are what will determine the success or lack of success a district is perceived as having; therefore; district administration should have open, trusting communication with the leaders they have entrusted at each of their sites and be supportive. “Anything less than a unified effort will continue the trend of falling short in our goal for students” (Muhammad, 2009, p. 84).

The school staff sits at the forefront of the leadership succession, an experience which might bring about a range of mixed emotions, of expectation, apprehension, relief and fear, among others. It may be tinged with regret for the loss of a well-liked leader, of abandonment as a leader moves on or relief that a less respected principal has left, certainly staff morale is a key element. (Cocklin & Wilkinson, 2011, p. 666)

Staff members need to embrace change. Change is difficult yet necessary for progress; therefore, staff members should be leaders with the principal and keep student success as the main focus for all decisions when working in conjunction with the principal for the betterment of the students and site.
Recommendations for Further Research

This study focused on what expert high school principals or previous high school principals believe is critical for a new high school principal to focus on in order to develop a sustainable, positive school culture. It would be worth researching further to receive the superintendent’s perspective on what is critical to build a sustainable, positive school culture. Considering the site principal works for the district, is the superintendent’s designee, it would be interesting to get the district’s point of view on how long they believe a principal should stay at a school site to be successful and produce a sustainable school culture. In addition, it would be interesting to measure how important principal tenure is to the superintendent compared to the other factors a superintendent must consider when making changes to site leadership. Then compare this data to this study’s recommendation of the importance of principal tenure is to a school site via the lens of the principal.

Another recommendation for further research would be to research if school culture is important to school district cabinet members as an important aspect to school accountability and site leadership decision making. It would be important to see how building trusting relationships is viewed amongst district cabinet members and how it might impact accountability and student success compared to the perceptions of the expert high school principals that participated in this study.

A third recommendation for further research would be to delve deeper into the perspectives of expert high school principals and previous high school principals on the impacts of principal tenure on a positive school culture. This research was limited to a panel of 19 members. This study could be enhanced by increasing the number of expert
panel members and interview the members to get a deeper understanding of personal experiences of being a new principal of a site and how long their tenure was at the site to measure their effectiveness of building a positive school culture.

A fourth recommendation for further research is to include current school culture, student demographics, staff demographics, and district culture in this study. Could these factors influence how long a principal should stay at a high school in order to develop the sustainable, positive school culture?

A final recommendation for further research is to focus on the perspective of students and parents as to how long a principal tenure should be to develop a positive school culture. This perspective will give a full picture so that improvement can be made at the district level when decisions are made in site leadership changes.

**Concluding Remarks and Reflections**

The results of this research coincide with the researcher’s personal experience working at four different high schools; three of the four high schools have had a principal for no longer than three years. Currently, the researcher is at a high school in which the principal has started his fifth year and the researcher has been able to see firsthand how effective keeping a principal at the site for at least five years has on a school’s culture compared to the researcher’s previous experience in the first three high schools of the researcher’s career. In the fifth year, the school’s stakeholders have now begun to trust the principal and are less resistant to change initiatives introduced. Educators are in the business for students; therefore, if educators and the educated trust the leader, they will follow said leader towards their vision for what is best for the students and site. The researcher has observed firsthand how important it is to go slow as a leader, learn the
school’s history, develop allies, and build trusting relationships in order to develop a positive school culture.

District cabinet should be influenced by the results of this study and work with new principals in understanding the importance of allowing a principal to move slowly so that the new leader can understand the school and its current culture, as well as, focus on building trusting relationships with the various stakeholder groups. Prior to the start of the new principal’s tenure, the district cabinet should work with the new principal to ensure that the principal fully understands the district’s vision, so that there is continuity between the voice of the district and the voice of the principal once his/her tenure starts at the high school. Continuous collaboration and voice between all leadership is critical so that the stakeholders feel they are being led by one unit – one that is united.

Once the principal is moved from the site, if unity is developed between the district, principal, and now the stakeholders, it will allow for the successor to continue with the one vision that has been developed by his/her predecessor. This is with the assumption that the district continues with the professional development prior to the successor’s tenure, as previously described.
References


Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3447735)


Muhammad, A. (2009). *Transforming school culture how to overcome staff division.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.


APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Letter of Consent

INFORMED CONSENT
INFORMATION ABOUT: A DELPHI STUDY THAT MEASURES THE EFFECTS OF PRINCIPAL TENURE ON SCHOOL CULTURE AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY
16355 LAGUNA CANYON ROAD
IRVINE, CA 92618

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: PATRICIA MARI CUSTODIO

PURPOSE OF STUDY – You are being asked to participate in a research study that investigates: The purpose of this study is to ask a panel of 15 experts that are also or have been very successful high school principals in their professional career. Each expert must have been a high school principal for at least 3 years. The experts will give their opinion on how long a principal should stay at their school site to establish a positive school culture. In addition, the experts will give what they view are the impacts principal tenure has when the principal has been at the site less than the number of years the experts believe is critical to sustain a positive school culture, as well as, rate each impact from greatest impact to least amount of impact. Lastly, each expert will be provided the opportunity to give suggestions to district personnel; the superintendent, board members and cabinet members; as to why they should consider keeping principals at their high school sites for a period of time that allows for a positive school culture to be developed.

In participating in this study you agree to the following:

• Understand that anonymity is of utmost importance throughout this study; therefore, you will not be aware who else will be part of this study
• Understand that all responses provided will be anonymous; therefore, honest and thorough answers are critical and expected at all times
• All communication of data will be via electronic mail, Survey Monkey, and phone (as needed to send reminders to confirm participation and answer specific clarifying questions that may arise)
• You commit to responding to all research questions within seven (7) days each
• You are responsible to answering five (5) research questions over a span of 5 weeks; the researcher will collate the data immediately after all responses are received by each participant

I understand that:

a) The possible risks of this procedure include: Due to anonymity being a key factor in this study, there are no apparent risks to participating.

b) The possible benefits of this study to you are: Due to your participating being completely voluntary, there are no benefits from your participation in this study except that you will receive the final results of the study that you can use for your professional
benefit as you see fit.
c) Any questions you have concerning my participation in this study will be answered by: Patricia M. Custodio, main investigator. Patricia M. Custodio can be reached by email: cust9101@mail.brandman.edu or by phone: 909-217-2955.
d) You understand that you may refuse to participate or may withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the investigator may stop the study at any time.
e) Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that could be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, you will be informed and consent re-obtained. You understand that if you have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, you may write or call the office of the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, at 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618.
I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the Research Participant’s Bill of Rights.

I have read the above and understand it and hereby consent to the procedure(s) set forth.  
☐ I consent to participate in this study.  ☐ I do not consent to participate in this study.
APPENDIX B

Data from Responses to RQ1

RQ1: What is the minimum number of years a high school principal should stay at a high school to establish a positive school culture?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Average Number</th>
<th>Total Number</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10+</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Respondents: 13

Note. 13 respondents answered RQ1.
RQ 2: Based upon the results of question 1, list the impacts on a school's culture when the principal has been there less than 5 years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>Instruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Depending on the level of instruction when a principal begins their tenure, it takes 4-5 years to attain consistency for all staff members.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to get to know and understand school community.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of continuity.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The major issue is that it takes approximately 3 years to implement programs or routines. It takes another three years to collect and understand data whether this data is a result of your purposeful actions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begins to solidify relationships only to leave.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of trust with staff as this takes time to build.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Norms.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is instability with regard to the school's vision.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional time needed to get know staff.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase in teacher in becoming leaders on the campus.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2</th>
<th>Discipline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School-wide consistent discipline can be instituted year one but is still tied to the improvement of instruction.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not able to establish strong ties to community and stakeholders.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of vision.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my case, I used each year as an opportunity to focus on particular shareholders. It is difficult if not impossible to build real relationships with all shareholders in that length of time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress made moves backwards when leadership changes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of knowledge of culture and what events have shaped the current culture.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Involvement.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The staff is unsure if the changes that are being instituted are long or short-term.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional time needed to get know parents.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test score increase overtime.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clean Campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>Clean Campus</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Staff Relationships</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><strong>Staff Relationships</strong></td>
<td>A strong and effective principal will begin building relationships with staff members on day one of their tenure. But it takes a minimum of 2-3 years for trust to be built as consistency is built over time. In larger (2500+) comprehensive high schools it will obviously take more time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Once programs are implemented, it takes a number of years for the adjustments to be made in order to maximize the program's intent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Coaching and mentoring new teachers is halted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Can instill hope in staff if the culture was not good under previous principal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>WASC Implications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Some staff will find it difficult to understand school-wide expectations for a variety of behaviors by students and staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Additional time needed to get to know community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Professional Learning Communities use data to change instruction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Expectations of Greatness and “everybody can succeed”</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><strong>Expectations of Greatness and “everybody can succeed”</strong></td>
<td>Again, depending on the belief level of the school when the principal starts, this expectation requires a culture change that requires far more than 3-4 years if it is going to be school wide.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The factors listed above vary based on the experience of the Principal or the particular skills he/she possesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Professional development plans may be cut short.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Can stagnate a school culture as staff what to see if new principal will be there long enough to make cultural changes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Vision and Mission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>There is a lack of understanding as to why things are done the way they are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td>Parent/Community Relations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Additional time needed to get know history.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less discipline issues.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This particular culture can be changed and improved immediately if the expectation is clearly articulated and monitored.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hard to measure true impact of a leader without substantial and longitudinal data.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There is the belief that some initiatives do not need to be taken seriously since the principal probably won't be around long enough to see it through.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Additional time needed to establish trust.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students, parents and the community is positive about the school.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td>Student Involvement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Additional time needed to establish school priorities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community Partners adopt the school and help with tutoring, etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Additional time needed to identify priorities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers are willing to work with difficult students so they also can be successful.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* There were 11 respondents that provided consent to this research question, but one respondent left the answer blank and did not provide a response.
APPENDIX D

A Detailed List of Responses from the Panel Members for RQ3

RQ 3: Based upon the results of question 2, rate the impacts on school culture when the principal's tenure is less than X. Rate the impacts starting with the number 1; 1 having the most impact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>Rating Average</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coaching and mentoring of new teachers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17.18</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency in school-wide discipline</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12.36</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency of instruction school-wide</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.27</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased student involvement</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15.91</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of the districts initiatives and</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17.91</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of the school's history that has</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11.27</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relationships built with all stakeholder groups</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.91</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stability with the school's vision</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12.91</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The number of teacher leaders developed on teachers</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15.09</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust between the staff and leadership</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.36</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding of the leadership's initiatives</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8.82</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The Lowest Average Rating means it was the “most impactful” and the Highest Average Rating means it was the “least impactful.” All recommendations were included, although those that were duplicate recommendations from various panelists were noted by the researcher but the panelists were not informed of the duplicate responses.
APPENDIX E

Responses from the Panel Members for RQ4

RQ 4: The results of Research Question #3 are as follows. The data listed is from the most impactful (top) to the least impactful (bottom):

1. Relationships built with all stakeholder groups
2. Trust between the staff and leadership
3. Understanding of the leadership's initiatives
4. Consistency of instruction school-wide
5. Knowledge of the school's history that has developed the current culture
6. Consistency in school-wide discipline
7. Stability with the school's vision
8. The number of teacher leaders developed on campus
9. Increased student involvement
10. Coaching and mentoring of new teachers
11. Knowledge of the district's initiatives and expectations

Based upon the results of question 3, what recommendations would you give a new high school principal to ensure the top impacts on school culture are effectively addressed in the least amount of time?

New principals should wait, watch, and listen for a little while before attempting to make any changes. They should concentrate on building trustful working relationships with everyone on staff and begin with the most impactful people . . . unions reps, those staff members most involved in the community, those with strong connections to the district office and to the county office and to the board members. Once you have the "key players" in your court, your chances of "winning the game" are much improved.

You must develop relationships in order to be able cast a vision and lead a school in the right direction. Helping students to learn, to graduate, and to pursue college and career starts with developing a rapport with the people who will be working with them day in and day out, seeking to accomplish these goals.

Take the time to get to know your staff and what they currently like that is going on and what they think could be improved. Try to get easy wins quickly, if something needs to be fixed or they have been asking for something, get that done asap. Ask staff what they see the purpose of the school and the direction it is going in and should be going in. Talk to the leaders on your staff and get a pulse of the school so you know what is important to them.
1. Honesty - It is imperative that a principal be honest at all times. The staff will respect he/she even when they are delivering negative information or "saying no to a request". 2. Visibility - The more a principal is visible, the quicker relationships and trust will be built. 3. Communication - I highly recommend a new principal meet individually with as many staff members and stakeholders as possible before the school year starts to listen to their input, start the relationship building, and let them know what they have to say is important. After school starts, keep the communication lines open with an open door policy and engage staff/stakeholders in conversation as much as possible. 4. Knowledge of instruction - It is imperative that the principal is the instructional leader for the school and this means they must be out in front of the staff during professional development and keep up with the latest trends.

Link Agendas and make sure to manage your message and expectations vertically and horizontally.

New high school principals should: - remember that relationship building cannot be only with the teaching staff since all stakeholders play a part in creating a positive school culture. - remember that to build trust, they must be honest in what they can and cannot, or what they will or will not do. There must be consistency between what they say and what they do. - be clear as to what initiatives will be implemented and then there needs to be follow through and accountability with regard to implementation of these initiative. This communicates a school culture where all stakeholders are held to the same expectations. - that they cannot do the work alone. Norm with their APs so that everyone is giving the same message and has the same expectation for instruction and learning. - recognize the importance of collaboration time so that teachers can plan their lessons with a focus on the same standards and learning outcomes.

My first recommendation would be to get out of your office. Walk around and meet the classified staff who run the offices in your building. Be visible in centralized areas where staff mingles, checks mail, makes copies, etc. Be in classrooms from Day One. Visibility is key, and if you do your homework so that you are already familiar with the names of people in various departments, that will help lock in those faces to your memory. As clarifying questions as often as possible. These types of questions do not make people feel defensive but are asked in wording and tone that implies curiosity and respect for past practices.

Get input from all stakeholders, have your leadership team prioritize and develop a plan. The leadership team can help with the vision and get staff on board, principals who do things in isolation or just with the "favorites" are not very successful.

Make sure that your vision is clear and concise. Make sure that you spend enough time meeting with stakeholders, getting to know them and to explain their role in the vision for the school. This is a lengthy process so don't become impatient. Listen to their concerns and be ready to implement minor simple suggestions that are in line with the vision. This simple changes will help build trust and relationships. Depending upon the immediate needs of the school, I would advise, if possible, to wait until the beginning of the second year to begin implementation of major initiatives.
Make time to meet with people face to face. Respond to emails and phone calls quickly, even if you do not have a solution to their problem. Connecting with people to acknowledge them while you find a solution is powerful.

To make it a point to schedule time with each employee to get to know them and for them to get to know you. Find out what each of them like about the school and their insights on what can be improved. Share this with the staff. Tie these results to the school's initiatives. Time spent in this cannot be discounted. Maintain professional distance and maintain professionalism with all employees including the administrative team. Do not change things up initially. Take time to size things up unless there are practices that are just not good for kids. Stay away from the gossip and do not engage in talking about your predecessors. Look for multiple ways to communicate and establish multiple lines of communication so that everyone can speak. Be careful about reacting to any one source of information and putting all your eggs in one basket. There are a number of secret agendas out there and sometimes you will find yourself in the middle of one if there is not enough communication and transparency at the site. Make sure you are visible in classrooms and at school events. Spotlight excellence when you see it particularly with instruction. Tie your staff meetings and professional development to your focus.
**APPENDIX F**

**Responses from the Panel Members for RQ5**

**RQ 5**: What recommendations would you give to district administration to ensure high school principals stay at their site for 5 years or more?

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<th>Make it part of district policy that appointments are for a five year minimum. Also, make it part of district policy that district supervisors provide assistance (ie: coaching and necessary training) and, perhaps, most importantly, that district office personnel support the decisions of the site administrators . . . back up their decisions and help defend difficult decisions to the union, the board, and the community when necessary. (Change cannot happen when site administrators must continue capitulation to outside forces.)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Listen to them! Ensure the support flows to the site and not just to the district office. Finally, stop moving principals around from site to site after less than five years.</td>
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<td>Support the administrator, sometimes that will be by trusting their judgment of what their staff can handle at any given time. Sometimes it’s going to be financial, allowing them to purchase items or get things fixed on campus that may have been overlooked due to cost. Provide a seasoned veteran as a mentor, even if you have to look at outside the district. Allow them to vent their frustrations, but not give up. Help them develop a five year plan and then provide support to make the plan work.</td>
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<td>1. Honesty - explained above 2. Consistency - It is bad practice to move from one initiative to another year after year. This is done often and after a while the staff will not listen or participate. 3. Role model - The principal should be the role model for the school and the district 24 hours a day. How a principal dresses, acts, and most importantly how they treat people will be observed very closely by the staff, student body, and community. 4. Visibility - explained above 5. Constant communication with the district office. Make sure to inform the D.O. about everything occurring at the school both good and bad. 6. Don’t explain to your school staff that the latest initiative came from the district office and that is the only reason they have to do it. :)</td>
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<td>5 Years is major commitment. Make sure that you are clear and supportive with the principal in exactly what role you want the principal to play - i.e. turn around, maintain, transform, clean house etc... Provide a professional network of support and clear pathway to a promotion - i.e. HR, Ed. Services etc... Grow your leaders!</td>
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<td>District Administration should: - find creative ways of removing the non instructional management duties from the principal's list of responsibilities so that they can focus more on instruction and student learning. - provide teacher leadership training for ALL teachers as a way of communicating the importance of moving forward independently regardless of positional authority (that teachers inherently play a leadership role not only to their students but also to each other). - provide opportunities for administrators to meet regularly where they can share challenges and effective management and instructional leadership strategies. - be visible on campus at times other than where there is a crisis or a problem. This communicates the concept of teamwork.</td>
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It is tempting to move principals in order to solve issues at a site. Knowing that a principal has a particular strength in an area that is needed at another school often leads to moves. I would recommend that district administrators promote continuity of leadership at the sites by allowing principals to select, groom, and train their administrative teams. A weak administrative team is demoralizing for all and creates additional work/stress for the principal. I would also foster each principal’s sense of home: they are the mayors of their cities. Have principals create 5-year plans for their sites and share those visions with one another. Encourage principal PLCs across the district both through vertical articulation and through high school principals are their own learning community. Keep principals happy to be in the district by trusting them with decision-making and supporting their needs with money, time, personnel as much as possible. Then focus on the results: have principals gather data (beyond numbers alone) to show their results. This will create a sense of pride and accomplishment that principals will be able to leave behind once they move on. One caveat: I would not interfere with an experienced principal who is looking for promotion. While it’s ideal to have great leadership at our sites, I would rather have an outstanding leader for 3 years who moves up than be saddled with mediocrity for 8 years.

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<th>High Schools need consistency and changing principals is not effective and can influence test scores, school climate and Accreditation.</th>
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<td>I would outline benchmarks for progress and implementations of new initiatives. It would become readily evident that unless a Principal stays at a site for a minimum of five years then chances are that the vision or the changes will fail to become institutionalized. Moving Principals around every few years really has the effect of demoralizing a school because every leader will bring a new style or new plans for leading the school. At best, the two consecutive leaders may share similar styles and ideas but the new personnel will still have to develop relationships and trust with the new staff and stakeholders. At worst, the changes may lead to an entrenched culture of mistrust or refusal to make changes because the school community may anticipate that leadership will change in a short amount of time.</td>
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<td>Support them with PD and allow them to be part of the process for hiring their staff.</td>
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| Principals need a clear focus from their central office on what is important. These areas of focus should be reflected in budget and time in meetings, and in every communication. Central offices need to be clear on their values, beliefs, and non-negationables. Their actions should be tied to them. Too often, high school principals become disenchanted with central office figures because of a lack of focus, lack of competence, an emphasis on being politically correct, or an emphasis on their own career trajectory. Another issue which drives high school principals crazy is a cabinet that is elementary focused or one which has no high school principal experience. The high school principals hip is one of the most challenging for high school administrators. Each district in the end is judged by how well their high schools perform. My recommendations are: Make time to meet with each of them regularly over lunch. Grow them professionally with leadership opportunities. Have a clear focus. They need to know what you stand for. Support them relentlessly. |

Note. All recommendations were included but those that are duplicate recommendations from various panelists were noted by the researcher but not shared with the panelists