The Efficacy of the Co-Principal Model of School Administration as Viewed Through the Lens of the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders

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The Efficacy of the Co-Principal Model of School Administration as Viewed Through the Lens of the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders

A Dissertation by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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March, 2020
The Efficacy of the Co-Principal Model of School Administration as Viewed Through the Lens of the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders

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The Efficacy of the Co-Principal Model of School Administration as Viewed Through the Lens of the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders

by Jennifer Slater-Sanchez

Purpose: It was the purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study to examine the experiences of K-12 school principals who participated in the co-principal model viewed through the lens of the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELs). No such study specifically focusing on the CPSELs has been conducted, even though the co-principal model has been implemented in various forms for over forty years. It is important to determine if the co-principalship is an effective alternative for schools and districts.

Methodology: To investigate the co-principal model of school leadership in California schools and districts, this study followed a phenomenological qualitative research design. A series of face-to-face or virtual interviews with the various co-principals took place. Interviews were conducted to provide personal experiences of those who have worked in the co-principal model for at least one year. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded for themes. In addition, participants were asked to submit artifacts that would provide additional information that was pertinent to this study. For analyzing the artifacts of the study’s participants, a matrix was devised for theme analysis.

Findings: Examination of the qualitative data from the nine principals participating in this study affirm that the co-principal model is indeed a viable alternative to the traditional model of school administration. Universally, participants spoke in favor of a co-principalship, sharing that it adds increased principal presence at the school site, is a solid example of collaboration and professionalism for staff and students, allows them to
share the principal workload with another person, and strengthen relationships with stakeholders. Unanimously, participants agreed that they prefer the co-principalship.

**Conclusions:** The study supported the implementation of a co-principalship and the value that having two leaders on a school site can add. The ability to share the workload with another person also allows for a better work-life balance for those serving in a co-principalship.

**Recommendations:** Further research is recommended to focus on the personal characteristics needed in order for a co-principalship to be successful. Another idea is to study the perceptions of district superintendents and/or classroom teachers who have implemented or worked under the model.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

“There are no good schools without good principals. It just doesn’t exist. And where you have good principals, great teachers come, and they stay, they work hard, and they grow.” – Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education

The principal is the most influential person in a school. Loeb and Valant (2009) argue that the school principal is the key person at a school site and is critical to the success of any reform effort or other school improvement initiative. Federal, state, and district accountability measures and policies have placed increasing demands on school leaders and numerous districts throughout the United States face a shortage of qualified candidates to fill open positions. The crisis is real.

James MacGregor Burns asserts, "Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth" (1978, p. 2). Many scholars identify leadership as a key determinant of an organization’s success. Schools that have effective principals are much more likely to positively impact the achievement of students and experience overall school-wide success (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe & Meyereson, 2005; Firestone & Riehl, 2005; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).

The position of a school principal in today’s context is a new phenomenon to some extent. The first schools had just one teacher or master who answered to the local community members for what occurred in the classroom. As schools in the United States became larger in the early 1800s and the number of students grew, “grade-level classes were established, the ‘principal teacher’ position was created” (Kafka, 2015, p. 321). The principal teacher was responsible for some administrative and clerical duties
to keep the school in order, like assigning students to classes, taking attendance, managing student discipline, and maintaining the building. These responsibilities gave the principal teacher authority over the school, as did the role of communicating with the district superintendent. As the 19th century progressed, the job of the principal teacher primarily became an administrator, instructional leader, manager, supervisor, and even a politician, eventually losing his teaching responsibilities (Brown, 2005; Cuban, 1988; Kafka, 2015; Pierce, 1935; Rousmaniere, 2007).

Up until the 1970s, school principals primarily served as student disciplinarians and building managers. However, during the 1970s, the principal’s roles began to evolve, and the term instructional leadership emerged (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003). Toward the end of the 20th century and now well into the 21st century, the job description of the school principal has become remarkably complex, requiring a broader skillset than it did in previous decades (Archer, 2004). Over the last twenty-five years, “the work of the principal has expanded to include increasingly complex demands” (Eckman, 2006, p. 3) in areas such as: frequent reporting to state and federal agencies, responding to accountability measures, ensuring that all students achieve at high standards, providing instructional leadership, meeting the needs of English learners and children with disabilities, answering to higher expectations for communication between home and school, and maintaining safe school environments (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003).

In the 17th century, the first American schools opened in the original thirteen colonies. “Early public schools in the United States did not focus on academics like math or reading. Instead they taught the virtues of family, religion, and community”
By the mid-1800s, academics became the sole responsibility of public schools to keep up with the economic demands of the industrial revolution. For that period in history, the system appeared to work. However, in our current global economic climate in the year 2019, the established education system is not able to meet the needs of a hyper-connected society, which is continuously evolving (Lynch, 2016). The research is clear; the education system has plenty of room for improvement - parent involvement is at an all-time low, classrooms are overcrowded with too many students, the morale of educators is down, disruptive behavior in students is on the rise, and bullying is having a profound impact on the learning of many students (Chen, 2019; Kennedy, 2001; Lynch, 2016; Public Schools, 2019). Additionally, California is in the middle of a teacher drought, 57 percent of teenagers in the United States are concerned that a shooting may happen at their school, and yet schools are still expected to raise test scores (California Department of Education, 2010; Lambert, 2018; Litvinov, Alvarez, Long, & Walker, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

The U.S. public education system is facing numerous challenges and in order to provide the best possible education for our students, there is a real need to address these issues. A special report titled "Principals Under Pressure" outlines the top six challenges identified by today’s school principals: (1) managing work-life balance, (2) meeting students' mental health needs, (3) addressing toxic employees, (4) supporting special education services, (5) being creative in retaining teachers, and (6) openly communicating about safety and security protocols (Harper, 2018, para. 2). According to Kominiak (2018), principals have the toughest jobs in schools. Their responsibilities include reporting to the district office, being responsive to parents and other
stakeholders, supporting, coaching, and retaining teachers, and building relationships with students (Education Week, 2019). How can one person do it all?

**Background**

**Principal Role Changes**

As the 19th century principalship has moved away from the classroom and into the administrative office, today’s school principal has become more responsible for student learning, yet less connected with it (Rousmaniere, 2007). Historically, the school principal has been tasked with being building managers and viewed as people who were more interested in enforcing compliance and using their power, than in the more important responsibilities of teaching and learning. “The job of a modern-day principal has transformed into something that would be almost unrecognizable to the principals of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s” (Alvoid & Black, Jr., 2014, p. 1). School leaders of the 21st century are expected to do a great deal, as the role of a school principal has evolved from instructing students and managing the day-to-day operations of schools, to supervising and evaluating teachers of students and being leaders of learning, tasked with developing a team who can “deliver effective instruction” (Wallace Foundation, 2013, p. 6). Grubb and Flessa (2006), state, “In an era of accountability, policy makers have imposed new requirements, and the principal is responsible for enhancing progress on multiple (and often conflicting) measures of educational achievement” (p. 519). The notion of the school principal as a manager has evolved and expanded into an administrative model in which those serving in the position are now expected to be inspirational leaders, visionary change agents, coaches, and team builders.
“The roles and responsibilities of principals today are more complex than ever” (Chirichello, 2003, p. 40). The position of a school administrator has developed into a job of many complexities and responsibilities. Recruiting qualified administrators has become increasingly difficult, as fewer people are applying to fill administrator vacancies, especially in the state of California. Leading a school in California is significantly harder than in other states, as it ranks well below others in the number of students per administrator, and it pays less.

According to Alvoid and Black (2014), many new principal recruits find the job to be overwhelming and difficult. A study of first-year principals in 2012 by the national nonprofit, New Leaders, found that 20 percent of new school leaders leave their positions within the first two years of being hired (Burkhauser, Gates, Hamilton, & Schuyler Ikemoto). The workload, time demands, and stress associated with a school principal position are contributors to a shortage of applicants. Furthermore, the salary levels of school principals are often perceived as not being proportionate to the various demands and expectations that come with the job (Hewitt, Denny, & Pijanowski, 2011), and it can be a very isolated position.

**Alternative Leadership Models**

In order to reduce the amount of stress and added responsibilities that are associated with a principal position, superintendents and school boards have attempted to explore alternative leadership models in schools. Whitaker (2002) concluded that leaders of school districts must explore new ways to revise the job responsibilities of the school principal and decrease the time demands placed upon those currently serving in the position. According to Hirsch and Groff (2002), the principalship needs to be
restructured, so the responsibilities of the job can be redistributed. Chapman (2005) says, “There is a need to adopt new approaches to conceptualizing the role of principal and alternative strategies for redesigning and restructuring positions of leadership across the school” (p. 8). Grubb and Flessa (2006) vehemently support school districts exploring alternative school leadership models as one way to relieve the growing pressure that is being placed on the solo principal.

Johnson (2005) proposed an alternative school site leadership model by recognizing the need to “find ways to reduce the workload, such as appointing ‘partner’ principals or providing stipends to teachers to take on certain managerial tasks” (p. 23). Pounder and Merrill (2001) suggested the job responsibilities within a solo principal’s position need to be unbundled and repackaged with a team of administrators who share the leadership of the school. They contend, “No one person should be expected to provide direct oversight for all school dimensions and activities” (p. 19). Zeitoun and Newton (2002) believe an alternative organizational model’s efficacy has to examine if it improves workplace conditions to guarantee that more applicants are attracted to the position, increases job retention while reducing turnover, student achievement increases as a result of instructional leadership, and there is more time available to supervise and evaluate instruction, as well as provide professional development opportunities.

**Co-Principal Model of School Administration**

The typical model for school administration is usually a principal with an assistant principal or vice principal; sometimes it is just a solo principal running the day-to-day operations of a school. The traditional model does not seem to be keeping up with the increasing demands that are being placed upon one school administrator. An
alternative approach to traditional school leadership is the concept of a co-principal model of school administration. In this dual leadership model, two principals share the responsibility of the organization. It is an idea “to provide improved management techniques to run increasingly complex schools …” (Shockley & Smith, 1981, p. 92). This new model has been suggested and implemented in various schools and districts as a strategy to address the increasing demands on school leaders, as well as the shortage of qualified school administrators. According to Eckman (2006), “the co-principal model is one way to address the increased demands placed upon school leaders and the shortage of qualified educational leaders” applying for positions (p. 1).

West first suggested the idea of co-principal school leaders in 1978. In 1982, Korba examined and cautioned about this alternative approach to school leadership that is centered around a team of two full-time principals, one who is in charge of administration and one who is in charge of instruction. Court (2003) studied international models of co-lead partnerships drawing on the concepts of distributed leadership to help explain their different practices and aims. In 2004, Gronn and Hamilton concluded the “co-principalship is an important attempt to institutionalize a culture and a practice of distributed leadership” (p. 33). As Muir & Education Partnerships (2005) state,

When it works well, co-principals have an increased ‘principal presence’ in the school; help guide (not control) teachers and their instruction; help facilitate the multiple leaders in the building toward the common goal of helping all students learn well; reduce the sense of ‘loneliness at the top’; play a crucial role in encouraging and modeling nontraditional forms of leadership;
and increase participation in all levels, creating a learning community (para. 3).

The practice of shared leadership is neither new nor unusual. To make it work, co-leaders must learn to work together, and tasks need to be divided. This is not much different than corporations and businesses who have a dual leadership model. More often than not, one will find business partners, instead of sole proprietorships, that work together toward the common goal of making their business successful. According to some reports, the amount of work and stress involved in running a business alone is oftentimes too much for just one person (Marks, 2014).

The California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELs)

The California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELs) specify what a school “administrator must know and be able to do” to develop into effective, sustainable practices (Commission on Teacher Credentialing & California Department of Education, 2014, p. 1). The CPSELs are a specific set of policy standards in California, which are the basis for the professional learning, preparation, development, induction, and evaluation of aspiring school administrators. The CPSELs have been a part of the educational leader preparation continuum in California since 2001. They were developed and written through a collaborative effort between the ACSA, the CDE, the CTC, representatives from the California School Leadership Academy at WestEd, public and private universities in California, and local county offices of education.

In October 2013, the California Department of Education (CDE) along with the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) gathered a panel who were tasked with updating the CPSELs to more appropriately reflect the expectations of
school administrators in the 21st century, the current conditions of schools in California, and the needs of the diverse student population statewide. The updated and revised CPSELs were approved by the CTC in February 2014. They reflect the current and emerging expectations for leaders in education.

Guiding Principles of the CPSELs:

- Inform leadership development and performance across a career continuum
- Incorporate existing, accepted descriptions and guides for professional education leadership
- Consistently promote student attainment of performance and content expectations as well as student well being
- Acknowledge the need for ongoing dialogue, challenging assumptions and continued learning among staff and stakeholders
- Reflect the pervasive need to consider equity dilemmas, problems, and issues
- Promote action on the concepts of access, opportunity, and empowerment for all members of the school community (Commission on Teacher Credentialing & California Department of Education, 2014)

The CPSELs are now structured in three levels: standards, elements, and example indicators of practice. This format parallels the organization of other state documents and describes the work expected of an education leader in detail (Commission on Teacher Credentialing & California Department of Education, 2014).
Organized into six broad categories, the standards represent the expectations and responsibilities of an education leader, both professionally and personally. The revised CPSELs have the same structure of the original standards in regard to the six major leadership areas. Each one has a title that articulates its identification and use:

- STANDARD 1: Development and Implementation of a Shared Vision
- STANDARD 2: Instructional Leadership
- STANDARD 3: Management and Learning Environment
- STANDARD 4: Family and Community Engagement
- STANDARD 5: Ethics and Integrity
- STANDARD 6: External Context and Policy

Within each of the six standards, the elements focus on three to four main areas. The elements specify the intention of each standard, while also helping to define key areas of leader actions. The indicators further articulate leader action in more detail and give examples of how a school administrator may demonstrate the standard or element in his or her own practice (Commission on Teacher Credentialing & California Department of Education, 2014).

The responsibilities of California’s school leaders have evolved and become more extensive since the introduction of the first edition of the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders in 2001. Transforming California’s system for preparing and “supporting administrators to become effective education leaders requires a consensus about high expectations” that are attainable for all (Commission on Teacher Credentialing & California Department of Education, 2014, p. 3). The CPSELs are universally supported “criteria that are a critical component” of the comprehensive
system of administrator development and support which is striving to develop exceptional school leaders throughout the entire state of California (Commission on Teacher Credentialing & California Department of Education, 2014, p. 3).

**Co-Principal Research**

Information on the co-principal model of school administration and the attributes of the men and women “who serve as co-principals is lacking” (Gronn & Hamilton, 2004, Eckman, 2006, p. 3). The small amount that has been published was written in the early 1980s and mid-2000s.

Most of the information that is published about co-principals and the co-principal leadership model are personal stories found in education magazine articles or on the internet. In some of the articles, information on the initiation of a co-principal model has been shared. Chirichello (2004) describes the advantages of a shared leadership team comprised of co-principals and an assistant principal at two different elementary schools in Mansfield, Massachusetts. The article discusses that the goal of this model was to increase the amount of time dedicated to instructional activities and reduce the time dedicated to school management.

In 2006, Eckman wrote about the professional and personal attributes of co-principals, the various leadership models implemented in the participants’ schools, the determinants that contributed to the implementation of the co-principalship in their school districts, and their perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the model. This study also discusses job satisfaction, role commitment, and the role conflict levels of the co-principals. Eckman (2007) shares the findings of a qualitative study of co-principals in both public and private schools in Wisconsin, Maine, Massachusetts,
Wisconsin, Illinois, Oregon, and California. Like the 2006 study, the respondents describe the rationale for implementing the co-principal model, the strengths and weaknesses of the model, and how dual leadership teams operate in their schools.

Eckman and Kelber (2009) present a qualitative study comparing the traditional principalship and the co-principalship. Participants included 87 traditional solo principals and 87 co-principals. The results showed that the co-principalship increased job satisfaction and reduced role conflict, thereby suggesting the desirability of the co-principal administrative model. In 2010, Eckman and Kelber analyzed data from a quantitative study that focused on the job satisfaction and role conflict of 102 female principals. Survey data was collected from 51 female solo principals and 51 female co-principals. In their paper, they address the impact that the type of leadership model has on women principals (traditional solo principalship or co-principalship), in regard to job satisfaction and role conflict.

Hewitt, Denny, and Pijanowski surveyed 391 teachers for their study in 2012 to determine teacher preferences for alternate school site leadership models. Fifty-three percent of the teachers who participated in this study identified the co-principal model as their preference for a school site administrative structure. Moreover, Morrison (2013) describes the advantages of a leadership team of co-principals at a high school in Essex, England. He asserts that there is an alternative to the one-person-in-charge approach that may provide better leadership. In addition to giving the students a good example of teamwork and communication, the co-principals in this study believe this shared leadership model invigorates them and inspires more confident decision-making. Though Eckman leads published research on this model, focusing on the professional
and personal characteristics of the men and women serving as co-principals, the rationale for implementing the co-principal model, the various types of co-principal models used, and the perceptions of the co-principals, there is very little research found on the effectiveness of co-principals.

**Statement of the Research Problem**

The school principal is the pivotal individual in the success or lack thereof at their respective school site. The principal must still be an effective leader while challenged with increasing responsibilities, stress factors, and time demands that inevitably make the job difficult for just one person (Jameson, 2002). Today’s school principal must be a jack-of-all trades – inspiring and visionary leaders, efficient accountants, human relations experts, and excellent administrators (Shockley & Smith, 1981). The day-to-day demands of being a solo school principal can be overwhelming. A 2015 tweet by @educationweek stated that eighty five percent of principals report they are highly stressed, citing a report from the National Association of Elementary School Principals.

According to Dixon and Waiksnis (2015), isolation is an enemy to great teaching, as well as to great leadership. Principals need partners in order to have a voice outside one’s own head. “While still considered a radical departure from conventional school governance structures, co-principalship teams of two or more have captured the imagination of school boards and the educational community at large” (Hirst, 2006, p. 7). The dual leadership model of the co-principalship acknowledges that schools and the issues facing them are too complex for one person to effectively run. By separating the responsibilities between two or more people, each principal can devote more attention to
his/her own designated areas (Shockley & Smith, 1981). The responsibilities of a school principal may be less stressful when leadership is shared, and the feelings of loneliness could disappear. In addition, job satisfaction may increase with two principals sharing the role, as they would have an internal support system with each other. “The 'burden' of running a school could be reduced, especially when difficult problems arise - with two heads, quite literally, being better than one” (Starr, 2010, p. 19).

The body of literature shows that the co-principal model of shared leadership has been tried on a limited basis in both public and private schools since the 1970s. The idea of two leaders within a principalship has appeared in literature for nearly forty years (Korba, 1982; Shockley & Smith, 1981; West, 1978), however there is little written about the effectiveness of the model. The majority of research conducted so far has been focused on the traditional solo principal, with some information on the implementation of a co-principal model.

Results from the few studies on this topic lead to the conclusion that co-principals “value not being alone at the top” (Eckman, 2007, p. 26). Co-principals feel that having another principal to share the workload and authority gives them the opportunity to have more success in leading their schools and meet the needs of various stakeholders. Gilbreath (2001) pointed out that shared leadership requires mutual trust, clear communication, and collaboration between partners. Studies of co-principalships have found that open communication minimized attempts by others to pit one co-principal against the other (Hirst, 2006). Many of the co-principal teams in these studies noted a high level of job satisfaction with this leadership model.
Experts in the field of education agree that current school principals are tasked with more demands and pressures that ever before, and that restructuring the traditional model of school leadership is one way to address the challenges facing today’s districts and administrators. The co-principal model is one alternative; however, Eckman (2006) suggests that further research is needed to identify the elements that will aide in sustaining the dual leadership model over time, especially for the schools and districts where the co-principal model is already being successfully implemented and executed. There is not a great deal of research on the effectiveness of the co-principal model of school leadership and there is no research about the about the co-principal model as viewed through the lens of the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELs). It is important to determine if the co-principalship is an effective alternative for schools and districts.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research was to examine the experiences of K-12 school principals who participated in the co-principal model viewed through the lens of the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELs).

**Research Questions**

1. How does the co-principal model support a school principal to facilitate the development and implementation of a shared vision of learning and growth for all students?
2. How does the co-principal model support a school principal to shape a collaborative culture of teaching and learning?
3. How does the co-principal model support a school principal to manage the organization to cultivate a safe and productive learning and working environment?

4. How does the co-principal model support a school principal to collaborate with families and other stakeholders to address diverse student and community interests and mobilize community resources?

5. How does the co-principal model support a school principal to make decisions, model, and behave in ways that demonstrate professionalism, ethics, integrity, justice, and equity and hold staff to the same standard?

6. How does the co-principal model support a school principal to influence political, social, economic, legal, and cultural contexts affecting education to improve education policies and practices?

**Significance of the Problem**

A significant factor in the success or failure of a school is leadership. Up until the 1970s, school principals primarily served as student disciplinarians and building managers. However, during the 1970s, the principal’s roles began to evolve and the term instructional leadership emerged. Increased demands have been placed upon school principals over the past few decades, including “meeting students' mental health needs, addressing toxic employees, supporting special education services, being creative in retaining teachers, and openly communicating about safety and security protocols” (Harper, 2018, para. 2). For many administrators, meeting the intensity of the workload has led to decreased levels of job satisfaction, and an increase of conflicts amongst their personal and professional lives (Eckman, 2004; Eckman, 2007; Pounder & Merrill,
David Ruenzel (1998) reported, "The organizational demands placed on California principals are profound. While they are responsible for significantly more teachers and students than school principals in other states, they also have an extremely small support staff" (p. 4).

The work demands that many of today’s school principals face have led numerous administrators to leave their leadership positions. This has resulted in a high turnover rate of those serving in the principal position (Pounder & Merrill, 2001), as well as a shortage of qualified, experienced candidates in almost all school districts in the United States (Houston, 1998; Protheroe, 2001; Young & McLeod, 2001). According to the Institute for Education Statistics, during the 2011/12 school year, one in five principals left their school by the end of the 2012/13 school year (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2019). In 2014, a School Leaders Network report found that one out of every two new principals leave by their third year of leading a school (Clifford & Chiang, 2016). Gilbreath (2001) states that the role of today’s school principal has become so demanding that districts across the country are experiencing difficulty filling vacancies. Unfortunately, principal turnover is not only common, but also extremely disruptive to a school. The lack of applicants applying for school administrative positions and job satisfaction for current school administrators continues to be a concern to district policy makers, including superintendents, and school boards.

Some in the education field have called for the solo principal position to be restructured. Numerous school districts across the country and in California have responded by dividing the duties and roles of a principalship between two co-
principals (Gilbreath, 2001). There are advantages to the co-principal model. According to West (1978), sharing leadership roles allows for more visits to classrooms, observations, and comprehensive follow-up with teachers, fewer suspensions and expulsions for students, and greater job satisfaction for administrators. Eckman’s research in 2007 supports this notion, with co-principals in her study expressing satisfaction in sharing the decision-making and workloads that is usually expected of solo leaders. In addition, many stated they did not have the feeling of being lonely in the top position. Starr (2010) states, "Job- sharing provides a valid and reasonable means of acquiring more personal time - or 'work/life' balance. Most large organizations have 'work-life balance policies, even though in education they appear to be more aspirational than mandated or achievable” (p. 20). A solid work-life balance has the potential to attract more aspiring female administrators, because as the principal role becomes more manageable than the traditional solo principalship, there is a likelihood that more women may apply for the position (Eckman & Kelber, 2010).

The disadvantages to this shared leadership model include temperaments, work commitment, personalities, and communication. When sharing a job there cannot be any slander, power plays, or one-upmanship. Trust is essential for the co-principalship to work. “Obviously people sharing one job need to be compatible, have similar values, understandings and philosophical beliefs, primarily about education but about other important areas, such as the number of hours they will dedicate to school work” (Starr, 2010, p. 20).

The body of literature shows that the co-principalship model of shared leadership has been tried on a limited basis in public and private schools for over forty
years. Results from the majority of studies on this topic lead to the conclusion that co-principals “value not being alone at the top” (Eckman, 2007, p. 26). Co-principals feel that having another principal to share the workload and authority gives them an opportunity to be more effective in leading their schools and meeting the needs of stakeholders. Gilbreath (2001) pointed out that shared leadership requires mutual trust, clear communication, and collaboration between partners. Studies of co-principal teams have found that open communication minimized attempts by others to pit one co-principal against the other (Hirst, 2006). Results from these studies purport that this alternative leadership model allows for a high degree of job satisfaction amongst the co-principals surveyed.

Many experts in the education field agree that current school principals are tasked with more demands and pressures than ever before, and that restructuring the traditional model of school leadership is one way to address the challenges facing today’s districts and administrators. The co-principal model is one alternative; however, more research is needed. Past research on co-principals has focused on either a single team, school, or district. There is not a great deal of information gathered from those who have tried this leadership model, there have been few studies to determine its value (Connell, 2000), and no studies on the co-principal model as viewed through the lens of the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELs). This study will contribute to the current landscape of research and provide a greater understanding.
Definitions

The following definitions are given to provide clarity for key terms as they are used in this study.

**Alternative leadership models.** Different, various approaches to leading a school, instead of the traditional model of one individual leading a group.

**The California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELS).** The California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELS) are a set of broad policy standards that are the foundation for administrator preparation, induction, development, professional learning and evaluation in California. The CPSELS describe critical areas of leadership for administrators and offer a structure for developing and supporting education leaders throughout their careers.

**Co-principal.** Co-leader of a school site administrative team. A full-time principal who serves in the co-principal leadership model and is referred to as a principal.

**Co-principal leadership model/Co-principalship.** Use of a school site administrative team composed of two or more leaders who share equal authority. Both hold appropriate administrative credentials. In a full-time co-principalship, two principals serve at the same time, equally sharing the position, work, authority, and responsibility.

**Dual leaders.** Two people sharing a leadership position with equal authority.

**Principal.** The leader of the administrative team at the school level.

**Shared leadership.** A leadership model that operates in a collaborative manner among administrators and faculty.

**Traditional model of administration.** A traditional administrative model in a
public school is generally understood to mean one principal who may or may not have an assistant principal or vice principal. Assistant principals and vice-principals are considered to be a step below the principal in hierarchy.

**Delimitations**

According to Patton (2015), delimitations are established to set boundaries for a study. The study was delimited to schools in Southern California that have implemented a co-principal model. The researcher narrowed the scope of the study using the following three factors: 1) served as a co-principal for a minimum of one year; 2) served as a co-principal within the last five years; and 3) a co-principal who shared the full-time principal position with another full-time principal.

**Organization of the Study**

This study is arranged into five chapters. Chapter I presents an overview of the background and rationale of the study, statement of the research problem, purpose statement, research questions, significance of the problem, definitions, delimitations, and organization of the study. Chapter II presents a review of literature organized around the complex demands of a school principal, the co-principal model of school administration, and the effectiveness of school principal as gauged by California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELs) to provide content triangulation. It also discusses the role of school principal as it relates to the success of a school, principal effectiveness, and a short history of the changing roles of school principal. It summarizes literature on the co-principalship. In addition, this chapter provides an overview of principal role changes, alternative school leadership models, the co-principal model, and leaders for California schools. Chapter III presents a summary
of the methods used to select samples and gather and analyze data. It also presents a rationale for the qualitative approach to the primary research questions and provides a literature base for various techniques employed. Chapter IV presents the findings of this study as they relate to the six research questions. It also presents an analysis of the results. Chapter V summarizes major findings of the study and presents propositions and their relationship to the literature. It also discusses implications for policy and practice and offers recommendations for future study.
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

“The task of leadership is to create an alignment of strengths so strong that it makes the system’s weaknesses irrelevant.” - Peter Drucker

Introduction

Chapter II will ground this study in the existing literature as it pertains to the co-principal model of school leadership as viewed through the lens of the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELs). In this chapter, the researcher begins with an overview of the major challenges facing public schools and the complex demands of today’s school leaders in the United States. Next, the literature review gives the reader some background on the importance of effective school leadership and the relationship between the school principal and the success of a school. This chapter also addresses how the role of a school principal has evolved and changed over the past century. The section that follows provides insight into how some schools and districts have implemented alternative leadership models and the co-principal leadership model. In addressing the implementation of the co-principalship, the researcher utilized the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELs). This chapter goes on to discuss the efficacy of this model and ends with a summary.

Major Challenges Facing Public Schools in the United States

In the United States of America, there are numerous issues in education being discussed in the news media and amongst the general public as big topics of debate. The current system of education is beset with a wide range of challenges from state and district disciplinary policies to student mental health to cuts in government funding. With more than 50 million students attending public schools in America, it is no surprise
that school administrators deal with a number of these challenges on a daily basis. Today’s educational leaders must wear a number of different hats. “They are instructional leaders, personnel directors, fund-raisers, public information officers, social workers, negotiators, legal experts, statisticians, financial analysts, and politicians” (Ed Source, 2001, p. 1). Over the last thirty years, California’s public education system has experienced changes that are unprecedented. In addition, there is greater pressure for school leaders to juggle multiple responsibilities, while simultaneously working toward increased student achievement in a high stakes, highly public environment of school accountability.

**Principals Under Pressure**

Many would agree that there is no job in K-12 education that is more demanding and complex than that of a school principal. Principals need to make staff and students their top priority, by building relationships and responding to parents. In addition, they must answer to the district office, as well as state and federal accountability requirements. According to a 2015 Hechinger Report, “principals are quitting the job at unprecedented rates” due to escalating pressures for performance and a multitude of job demands in a high stress environment and “more than half leave within five years of taking office” (Schulzke, 2015, para. 1). Today’s principals are expected to be the business manager, the Chief Executive Officer, the instructional manager, and the person responsible for discipline.

In a 2018 *Education Week* report titled “Principals Under Pressure”, school leaders were asked to name the biggest challenges of the job. Six specific issues were reported repeatedly from two broad categories - educational duties and managing
people. A principal’s educational duties include overseeing the general education demands of a school, while also being up to date on the changing laws and best practices that govern the complex needs of special education students. On top of that, principals are also expected to maintain school safety and student mental health, supervise toxic employees, retain the best teachers, manage time and tasks, and have their own work-life balance (Harper, 2018). The growing mental health issues affecting today’s students must also be addressed, all while maintaining a positive school culture and safe campus where students feel safe and secure to come to school each day.

School principals must also manage people, which can be difficult for some. This includes retaining good teachers, which requires time and commitment in order to foster trusting relationships. Managing frustrated and/or incompetent employees is another big issue that consumes countless time and energy. All the while, principals are human and need to maintain their own sanity by having a healthy work-life balance. A life consumed by work responsibilities can lead to burn out, health problems, or for some, leaving the profession altogether.

**School safety.** Since the devastating massacre at Columbine High School on April 20, 1999, “the United States has seen more than 230 school shootings”, according to data from the Washington Post (Woodrow-Cox, Rich, Chiu, Muyskens, & Ulmanu, 2019, para. 1). More than 228,000 students have experienced gun violence in the last twenty years in 234 different schools in America. The reality of school shootings is evident in a 2019 nationally representative survey of 505 high school principals that was conducted by the UCLA Institute for Democracy, Education and Access. According to the survey, “high-school principals from California to Connecticut said the threat of gun
violence ‘has captured the most attention,’ represents the ‘largest stress,’ and poses the ‘gravest concerns’” (Rogers, 2019, para. 2).

**Student mental health.** There is a national mental health crisis that is growing. The number of school age children needing specialized help in America is on the rise and the number of educators who are qualified to handle these situations is decreasing.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, 13 percent of children aged eight to fifteen have had a diagnosable mental illness in the past year (Burch, 2018). But it’s not just the children who are grappling with mental health issues. The National Alliance on Mental Illness says one in five Americans experiences mental illness each year (Burch, 2018). This means that twenty percent of a school’s staff may also be affected. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has issued numerous reports showing that rates of suicide among young people rose 56% between 2007 and 2016.

**Supervising toxic employees.** Difficulties with staff members can have many causes. Toxic employees can wield a negative power in schools, causing problems for principals, parents, and students by corrupting the culture (Harper, 2018). A toxic school employee can negatively influence the faculty culture, spreading gossip in the staff lounge, or complaining during meetings. Oftentimes, these staff members are not bad people, they may just be simply burnt out from the profession. Unfortunately, their presence can be toxic to other faculty members and the school culture as a whole, preventing everyone from meeting the school’s mission. Since it is largely the responsibility of the principal to set the tone of the school’s culture, dealing with difficult staff members and correcting situations falls on them. This may mean finding common goals and common ground, observing and evaluating employees, reacting
appropriately, and sometimes removing the toxicity from the school. While it's difficult to change the behavior of others, there are steps that can be taken by educational professionals to protect themselves and students from staff members and minimize their overall impact.

**Handling the complex needs of special education students.** Principals are responsible for the education of all students who attend their school. From the very first day, a student’s education becomes the responsibility of the principal. “With this expectation, the principal needs to make sure staff include adequately trained special education teachers and related services personnel, and that the education team meets the specific timelines and requirements for providing special education services” (Bateman & Bateman, 2014, p. 4). The principal needs to be able to explain special education compliance procedures to all stakeholders and have knowledge about special education services. School principals must be prepared to facilitate and participate in individualized education meetings (IEPs) and should periodically observe special education instruction. In addition, the principal should know something about the needs of students, be ready to discuss their unique needs, and know how to prevent discipline issues.

**Retaining the best teachers.** In 2017, approximately eight percent of teachers in the U.S. were leaving the profession each year and another eight percent changed schools, creating even more turnover at the school level (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Thus, the overall turnover rate is currently about sixteen percent. Teachers’ wages have declined since the 1990s, compared to the salaries of other college graduates. According to Darling-Hammond, Carver-Thomas, and Sutcher (2016), “U.S.
teachers teach the greatest number of hours per week … and have nearly the lowest number of hours for planning. They also have above-average class sizes and teach more low-income students …” (p. 1). Being a new teacher can be overwhelming. Teachers often cite working conditions, such as the lack of support from their principals and minimal opportunities to collaborate with colleagues, as the top reasons for leaving. A 2016 study by the Learning Policy Institute shows that if a beginning “teacher receives mentoring, collaboration, extra resources, and is part of a strong teacher network, then first-year turnover is cut by more than half” (Darling-Hammond, Carver-Thomas, and Sutcher, 2016, p. 8).

**Managing time and tasks.** As the leader of a school, principals must know and be able to manage their time and effectively use it. However, since principals are challenged every day by a plethora of different tasks, time management is not always easy. In their study of elementary and secondary school principals, Kochan, Spencer, and Mathews (2000) found the number one issue facing principals to be “managing their work and their time and coping with the stresses, tasks and responsibilities of the job” (p. 305). Principals are routinely pressed for time, between instructional leadership, family engagement, and building management, making the job extremely stressful. In 2017, the National Panel of New Principals was surveyed via the “Rise and Shine” survey. Eighty-four percent of new principals reported they had a high-stress school year and 59 percent of new principals identified time management as the most difficult aspect of their jobs (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2017).

**Maintaining a work-life balance.** It can be challenging to meet the conflicting demands of a career and home life when the job is school administration. “Principals
tend to experience burnout to a greater degree than most business professionals, which should be a concern to district leaders because of the high cost of replacing them” (Harper, 2018, p. 1). School principals are constantly pulled in different directions - from dealing with students, parents, district office staff, school board representatives, community members, and sometimes even toxic employees. Maintaining a healthy work-life balance is imperative for principals. They need to find some kind of balance in their lives that allows them to maintain their composure and sanity, in order to focus on why they became a principal in the first place and avoid experiencing burn out. Otherwise, according to Harper (2018), they risk making hasty decisions or lashing out in frustration, which will only complicate their own lives and potentially impact others' lives as well.

**California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELS)**

Since 2004, the state of California has utilized the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELS) as part of the standards-based program for the Administrative Services Clear Credential. Many school districts have also adopted or adapted the CPSELS for administrator induction programs, professional learning structures, and annual evaluations. The CPSELS are the guiding professional standards for education leaders that describe effective leadership. The standards are organized into six broad categories that represent the responsibilities of an education leader, representing both professional and personal practice.
Figure 1. California Professional Standards for Education Leaders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STANDARD 1: Development and Implementation of a Shared Vision</th>
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<td>Education leaders facilitate the development and implementation of a shared vision of learning and growth of all students.</td>
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<th>STANDARD 2: Instructional Leadership</th>
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<td>Education leaders shape a collaborative culture of teaching and learning, informed by professional standards and focused on student and professional growth.</td>
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<th>STANDARD 3: Management and Learning Environment</th>
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<td>Education leaders manage the organization to cultivate a safe and productive learning and working environment.</td>
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<th>STANDARD 4: Family and Community Engagement</th>
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<td>Education leaders collaborate with families and other stakeholders to address diverse student and community interests and mobilize community resources.</td>
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<th>STANDARD 5: Ethics and Integrity</th>
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<td>Education leaders make decisions, model, and behave in ways that demonstrate professionalism, ethics, integrity, justice, and equity and hold staff to the same standard.</td>
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<th>STANDARD 6: External Context and Policy</th>
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<tr>
<td>Education leaders influence political, social, economic, legal, and cultural contexts affecting education to improve education policies and practices.</td>
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Development and implementation of a shared vision. According to Villareal (2001), “successful campuses ‘talk the walk’ (articulating what needs to be done) and ‘walk the talk’ (doing what should be done)” (para. 4). Successful principals understand that it is important to establish clear learning goals and garner schoolwide commitment to these goals. “The development of a clear vision and goals for learning is emphasized by principals of high-achieving schools” (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 5). Visions drive organizations into the future. “A successful principal must have a clear vision that shows how all components of a school will operate at some point in the near future” (Strong, Richard, & Catano, 2008, p. 4). It is the school principal’s task to
develop and implement a shared vision that is supported by teachers, families, and the community. Researcher Judith Kafka (2009) agrees, noting that "a growing body of literature suggests that there is a discernible relationship between school leaders' actions and student achievement" (p. 318). Goldring and Schuermann (2009) elaborate, asserting that "today's educational leaders need to motivate community-mindedness to address community wide problems that are central to schools and the current imperatives of student achievement" (p. 16).

**Instructional leadership.** “The primary responsibility of a school principal is to promote the learning and success of all the students” (Lunenberg, 2010, p. 5). All schools need principals to exercise their roles as instructional leaders who ensure the quality of instruction (Portin et al., 2003). As such, effective principals “spend time in classrooms observing the process of teaching and learning while also balancing other needs such as student safety and parent relationships” (Stronge, Richards, & Cantano, 2008, p. 4). The key factor in the success of a school’s improvement initiatives and the overall effectiveness of the school is the instructional leadership of the principal. “School principals can accomplish this goal by focusing on learning, encouraging collaboration, using data to improve learning, providing support, and aligning curriculum, assessment, and instruction” (Lunenburg, 2010, p. 1).

**Management and learning environment.** Goldenberg and Sullivan describe leadership as the “cohesion that makes the other elements and components” of a program work together to create positive change (1994, p. 11). Principal behaviors are believed to be fundamental to the creation and facilitation of an effective teaching and
learning environment within a school. School management is as important as
instructional leadership. As Lunenburg (2010) states,

… when school improvements occur, principals play a central role in (a)
ensuring that resources – money, time, and professional development – align
with instructional goals, (b) supporting the professional growth of teachers in a
variety of interconnected ways, (c) including teachers in the information loop,
(d) cultivating the relationship between the school and community, and (e)
managing the day-to-day tasks of running a school. Each of these is viewed as a
management task in the sense that it involves daily or weekly attention to
problem solving within the school and between the school and its immediate
environment (p. 1).

Managing the day-to-day operations of a school are essential to school
leadership. A principal who can effectively manage the day-to-day school operations
and resources will ensure a safe, nurturing, and successful learning environment for all
students and their staff.

**Family and community engagement.** “It takes a village to raise a child—and
the continued support of that village to help the child succeed in school” (Hanover
Research, 2018, para. 1). Principals are tasked with establishing, nurturing, and
maintaining relationships that can collectively have an impact on the quality of
education in their schools. Research shows that family and community involvement in
education correlates with higher academic performance from students and improved
schools. When schools, families, and communities work as a team to support learning,
students have better attendance and behavior, tend to earn higher grades, stay in school longer, and are more likely to enroll in post-secondary education programs.

**Ethics and integrity.** School principals are not only leaders in their community, they are tasked with modeling leadership to teachers and students. As such, they must maintain standards of exemplary professional conduct. According to Lynch (2015), “While there has always been a requirement for ethics in leadership, the last hundred years have seen a shift in the paradigm of leadership ethics” (para. 1). George Marshall offers *Eight Principles of Ethical Leadership* for administrators who seek guidance on how to implement ethical practices in their schools. These eight principles include 1) personal courage, 2) public interest before self, 3) self-control, self-discipline and integrity, 4) task and employee centeredness, 5) recognizing talent, 6) requiring high ethics from everyone, 7) sensitivity and understanding, and 8) inclusiveness (Lynch, 2015, para. 2). Leading by example and solid ethical practices can be inspiring to stakeholders, earning respect for education leaders.

**External Context and Policy.** Federal, state, and district educational policies play a major role in promoting effective and equitable educational systems. The role of a principal is to provide strategic direction of the school system. Staying in compliance with educational policy dictates many of the actions of school districts, which ultimately affect the education of students. It is the responsibility of the school principal to know federal, state, and district policy in order to effectively run their school - this includes knowledge about the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Title I funding, and special education laws, to the California Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP), Local
Control Funding Formula (LCFF), and state laws in regard to student discipline, as well as local Board policy and administrative regulations.

**Effective School Leadership**

Great schools exist because of great leaders. The academic success and well-being of students in California are outcomes that are highly connected to excellent school leaders. Schools require effective leaders and managers if they are to provide the best possible education for their students. According to Louis et al. (2010), “leadership is second only to classroom instruction among school-related factors that affect student learning in school” (p. 5). For more than ten years, the Wallace Foundation has led rigorous research on school leadership. A recent report highlighted an important outcome from the research: “A particularly noteworthy finding is the empirical link between school leadership and improved student achievement” (Wallace Foundation, 2011, p. 3). The foundation further stated:

> Education research shows that most school variables, considered separately, have at most small effects on learning. The real payoff comes when individual variables combine to reach critical mass. Creating the conditions under which that can occur is the job of the principal (Wallace Foundation, 2011, p. 2).

It is clear from effective schools research that “effective principals influence a variety of school outcomes, including student achievement, through their recruitment and motivation of quality teachers, their ability to identify and articulate school vision and goals, their effective allocation of resources, and their development of organizational structures to support instruction and learning” (Horng, Kalogrides, and Loeb 2009, p. 1). Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) noted in *School Leadership*
that Works: From Research to Results that “principal and teacher quality account for nearly 60% of a school’s total impact on student achievement, and principals alone for a full 25%” (p. 1). Education leaders have the ability to create an environment where teachers want to come to work and where students learn and thrive.

Leithwood et al. (2006) found that the key components of an effective leadership included the following: 1) guideline, 2) distributed leadership, 3) fundamentals of leadership, ideas and emotional nature, and 4) interfering variables or specific conditions of individual schools. Stronge, Richard, and Catano (2008) described the characteristics the administrators should have. They were: 1) academic leadership, 2) school atmosphere, 3) personnel resource administration, 4) regular evaluation of the performance of teachers and personnel, 5) administration and management, 6) communication and communal relations, 7) professionalism, and 8) students’ learning achievement. Suber (2011) held that characteristics of effective school administrators were: 1) teaching development and evaluation, 2) educational supervision to develop a teacher’s behavior and students’ learning achievement, 3) activities and professional development in accordance with the needs, 4) reduced resignation and transference of teachers, and 5) promotion of the school’s positive culture. Kanok-orn (2016) described a successful leader as having to: 1) develop a vision and values, 2) increase a teacher quality, 3) improve teaching quality and develop skills in life and work, 4) adjust the structure of an organization, 5) build cooperation, develop and enhance relations with all personnel, 6) build a strong relation with a community, 7) improve conditions for learning and teaching, and 8) design and improve a curriculum.
“The importance of values, people, and teamwork to the success of principals, teachers, and schools is affirmed in the work of Marzano, Waters, and McNulty” (Lumpkin, 2008, p. 4). Values, people, and teamwork are themes that come up over and over again in various literature in regard to principal success; for those who model integrity and other values; focus on nurturing, supporting, and developing teachers; and collaboratively team with teachers. Effective leadership means behavior, vision, values and clear direction of the administrators. They have to be capable of making a decision according to their beliefs and values with focus on benefits of the organization. They should also be able to motivate, persuade the personnel to be more determined to carry out their duties. Effective principals know how to establish a good relationship between the school and the community. Parents and communities should be involved, so that the set goals and objectives can be obtained. “Successful principals establish a school’s culture based on integrity and values, enhance the competences of each teacher, and create alignment with a shared focus on student learning through teamwork” (Lumpkin, 2008, p. 6).

History of the School Principal

Education has been part of the American fabric since the colonial era (Singer, 2016). The first American schools in the thirteen original colonies opened in the 17th century. According to Singer, the American education system began in the revolutionary time when new leaders were concerned with creating an “educated citizenry” (2016). “Early public schools in the United States did not focus on academics like math or reading. Instead they taught the virtues of family, religion, and community” (The American Board, 2015, p. 1). Academics became the singular responsibility of public
schools by the mid-19th century, in order to keep up with the economic demands of the industrial revolution.

**Principal Role Changes**

The role of the principal has changed remarkably from its first historical designation as the "principal teacher" (Matthews and Crow 2003, p. 18). Brubaker and Simon (1986) offered the following conceptual frameworks to depict the evolutionary phases of the principalship:

1. The Principal Teacher (1647 - 1850)
2. The Principal as General Manager (1850-1920)
3. The Principal as Professional and Scientific Manager (1920 - 1970)
4. The Principal as Administrator and Instructional Leader (1970 - present)
5. The Principal as Curriculum Leader (Present - sometime in the future)

**The Principal Teacher**

The first schools had just one teacher or master who answered to the local community members for what occurred in the classroom. As schools in the United States became larger in the early 1800s and the number of students grew, grade-level classes were established, and the “principal teacher” position was established (Kafka, 2015). The principal teacher was responsible for some administrative and clerical duties to keep the school in order, such as assigning students to classes, taking attendance, managing student discipline, and maintaining the building. These tasks gave the principal teacher authority over the school and the role of communicating with the district superintendent.
The Principal as the General Manager

As the 19th century progressed, the job of the principal teacher primarily became an administrator, instructional leader, manager, supervisor, and even a politician, eventually losing one’s teaching responsibilities (Brown, 2005; Cuban, 1988; Kafka, 2015; Pierce, 1935; Rousmaniere, 2007). As Pierce (1935) noted, the principal in most cities was regarded as an important, powerful head of the school:

He gave orders, and enforced them. He directed, advised, and instructed teachers. He classified pupils, disciplined them, and enforced safeguards designed to protect their health and morals. He supervised and rated janitors. He requisitioned all educational, and frequently all maintenance, supplies. Parents sought his advice, and respected his regulations. Such supervisors, general and special, as visited his school usually made requests of teachers only with the consent, or through the medium of the principal (p. 39).

The Principal as Professional and Scientific Manager

By the late 1920s, the principalship was marked by scientific management with responsibilities being primarily administrative. It was believed that the principal should run the school using business principles for budgeting, maintenance, and student accounting (Beck & Murphy, 1993). It was in the 1930s that principals began to look at research to help resolve their problems and school leaders were expected to make informed decisions using this research. The 1940s saw the principals tasked with curriculum development, shared decision making between teachers and administration, in addition to supervision. The principal became more of a school coordinator than a director.
The next two decades began to focus on human relations. Much like the 1930s, principals during the 1950s were expected to apply university-based research to the school setting (Beck & Murphy, 1993). Principals were also expected to manage their time by delegating duties to their clerical staff. By the 1960s, the principal was seen to hold power in a school. Principals approached their responsibilities using scientific strategies to reach measurable outcomes (Beck & Murphy, 1993). This technical perspective led to the practice of principals being evaluated using measurable outcomes. There was less glory in the principalship during this time, much less associated with the position than in previous decades. Principals began to notice that they answered to numerous stakeholders, all with different wants and needs.

**The Principal as Administrator and Instructional Leader**

School principals primarily served as student disciplinarians and building managers up until the 1970s. During this time, the principal continued to wear many hats and juggle the needs of teachers, students, parents, superintendents, and community. The role of the principal began to evolve, with the role expanding to focus on meaningful learning for students, and the term instructional leadership emerging (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003). The principal was now expected to be a visionary leader with a plan on how to achieve this vision for the school. The idea of the school principal as the change agent was magnified with the 1983 publication of *A Nation At Risk* which highlighted the lack of performance of students in the United States.

Toward the end of the 20th century and now well into the 21st century, the job description of the school principal has become remarkably complex, requiring a higher degree of skill than it did in previous decades (Archer, 2004). Over the last twenty-five
years, “the work of the principal has expanded to include increasingly complex demands” (Eckman, 2006, p. 3) in areas such as frequent reporting to state and federal agencies, responding to accountability measures, ensuring that all students achieve at high standards, providing instructional leadership, meeting the needs of English learners and children with disabilities, answering to higher expectations for communication between home and school, and maintaining safe school environments (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). “The principal’s job is complex and multidimensional, and the effectiveness of principals depends, in part, on…how they allocate their time across daily responsibilities” (King Rice 2010, p. 2).

**The Principal as Curriculum Leader**

In the age of accountability, today’s principals are evaluated on everything from academic achievement to attendance to student discipline. To compact matters, major competition exists between traditional public schools and charter or private schools. Today’s leaders are responsible for leading their staff to the improvement of instruction through curriculum standards and team structures that are created for teachers to learn from one another. Glatthorn (1987) wrote, “One of the tasks of curriculum leadership is to use the right methods to bring the written, the taught, the supported, and the tested curriculums into closer alignment, so that the learned curriculum is maximized” (p. 4). The principal as the school’s curriculum leader is responsible for guiding the grade level and/or department’s work and ensuring it is synchronized with school goals. Jailall and Glatthorn (2009) addressed the curriculum leadership role and asserted, “Strong, intentional leadership in curriculum development is a necessity for strong instructional leadership” (p. 188).
School leaders of the 21st century must eagerly face the challenging responsibility of preparing today’s young minds for the future, as well as think strategically about the goals, strategies, and systems that will support this task. However, many of today’s principals feel they have a plate full of often-conflicting priorities and that not everything can always be accomplished or done well. There are multiple stakeholders to answer to - teachers, students, parents, community members, district leaders, and school board members. Many feel they are always on call and must respond to the unique needs of these groups, sometimes on a moment’s notice. Principals note the intense effort they put forth daily to find the time needed to focus on important issues, when there are still countless administrative responsibilities and tasks that must be completed and deadlines to be met.

**Alternative Leadership Models**

“The school principal plays a pivotal role in the success of a school and is the key person responsible for the maintenance of a high-quality educational program” (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005; Edmonds, 1979; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982; Reynolds & Teddlie, 2000; Hewitt, Denny, & Pijanowski, 2012, p. 74). The principalship can be a very isolated position. The standard, traditional format of school administrative leadership is usually a principal with an assistant or vice principal. The job of the principal is becoming extremely complex and requires a higher degree of skill than in past decades (Archer, 2004). “It has become progressively more apparent that the traditional view of one principal to one school, as the only approach to school leadership, is not sustainable” (Masters, 2013, p. 1).
Grubb and Flessa (2006) reported that a principal is “responsible for hiring and perhaps firing teachers, coordinating bus schedules, mollifying angry parents, disciplining children, overseeing the cafeteria, supervising special education and other categorical programs, and responding to all the stuff that walks in the door” (p. 519). According to Hewitt, Denny, and Pijanowski (2012), “elementary school principals, although satisfied with their job, felt the salary was not commensurate with the duties and reported, as well, that the time demands of the job and the work load were excessive and the overall stress factors were extreme” (p. 76). Some education leaders believe these factors will make it harder to recruit good candidates for the principal position in the future. Pounder and Merrill (2001) concluded that due to the increasing demands that are being placed upon principals, there is now a shortage of teachers who aspire to apply for the position. The time demands and overall workload of the principalship are contributors to a shortage of applicants. Goldstein (2002) reported the shortage of principal candidates is compounded by legislation that holds the principal more accountable.

Cannon (2004) said the school site leadership structure must be re-evaluated or school districts will not be able to attract the high-quality applicants they desire, or retain the high-quality new hires. Cannon stated:

The research revealed that...a fundamental rethinking of the principalship is necessary and that such momentous change requires nothing less than a paradigm shift. The new paradigm would be based on sharing leadership rather than on a hierarchical approach. It would have structures that are flexible and customized to the local needs of the school and school community.

Learning
would be central and a work/life balance would be essential, for all principals. The new paradigm would also offer flexibility to encourage women to both take up, and remain in the principalship (p. 4).

Whitaker (2002) said school districts must search for ways to revamp the job of the school principal in order to reduce the time demands of the current position. Hirsch and Groff (2002) reported that the principal’s job should be re-organized, so the job responsibilities are re-distributed. According to Flessa (2003), the principalship can be an impossible job that isolates the solo principal, who may already be overwhelmed with tasks that make it difficult to focus on the instructional program. Chapman (2005) also stated that the job of the principal has become increasingly difficult over the years and adding to the complexity are recent educational reform mandates.

Chapman asserts, “there is a need to adopt new approaches to conceptualizing the role of principal and alternative strategies for redesigning and restructuring positions of leadership across the school” (p. 8). Grubb and Flessa (2006) are in favor of alternative school site organizational models as a way to alleviate growing pressure on the principal. Both strongly support alternative administrative models and state, “given the pressures on schools, we can anticipate ever-worsening conditions for principals, increasing shortages of candidates, continued inattention to instructional leadership, and further domination of the rational bureaucratic model with all its flaws” (p. 536).

According to Newton and Zeitoun (2002), the extensive skillset needed by today’s school principal oftentimes discourages potential applicants from considering and applying for the position. Newton and Zeitoun stated that “policymakers are challenged to reinvent the role in ways that will increase the size of the applicant pool” (p. 3).
Restructuring a school’s administrative leadership model requires broad-based support that acknowledges change from tradition is difficult for many (Hewitt, Denny, and Pijanowski, 2012). As a way to change the job responsibilities and role of the principal, Johnson (2005) suggested an alternative by recognizing the need to “find ways to reduce the workload, such as appointing ‘partner’ principals or providing stipends to teachers to take on certain managerial tasks” (p. 23). The hiring of an equal partner principal would reduce the burdens and demands of the job and allow each “partner principal” to focus their energy on a particular area. Norton (2002) said the job description of a school principal must be re-examined by district leadership and the solo position must be restructured to give them an opportunity to fully focus on instructional leadership.

“While faced with increasing time demands and stress factors that make the job difficult for one person, the principal must still be an effective leader” (Hewitt, Denny, & Pijanowski, 2012, p. 77). The efficacy of an alternative leadership model must examine whether the model improves conditions in the workplace that insures more applicants are attracted, minorities and underrepresented groups are attracted to apply, job retention is increased while turnover is reduced, instructional leadership results in improved student achievement, and more time is available to observe and evaluate instruction, and provide professional development (Zeitoun & Newton, 2002). In working to define how schools could have more effective school site leadership, Cannon (2004) stated that “four areas emerge from the literature as possible ways of responding to the challenges impacting the principalship; namely, building capacity,
sharing leadership, frameworks for building leadership capabilities, and alternative models of principalship” (p. 73).

Zeitoun and Newton (2002) identified six alternative models that could be utilized to restructure the traditional school model consisting of a principal and an assistant principal. The six models included (1) the Co-Principal model; (2) the Principal/Business Manager model; (3) the Multi-Principal model; (4) the Principal/Associate Principal model; (5) the Principal Teacher/Principal Administrator model; and (6) the Principal/Educational Specialist model. Cannon (2004) developed five alternative models of leadership that could be applied to the school site setting. The five designs identified included (1) Supported Leadership (A), a business matrix model; (2) Supported Leadership (B), a distributed leadership model; (3) Dual Leadership with split task specialization; (4) Dual Leadership with job-sharing; and (5) Integrative Leadership - a two-principal model with responsibilities integrated (p. 72).

Figure 2. Alternative Leadership Models

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<td>Co-Principal Model</td>
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<td>Principal/Business Manager Model</td>
<td>Supported Leadership B - distributed leadership model</td>
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<td>Multi-Principal Model</td>
<td>Dual Leadership with split tasks specialization</td>
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<td>Principal/Associate Principal Model</td>
<td>Dual Leadership with job-sharing</td>
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<td>Principal Teacher/Principal Administrator Model</td>
<td>Integrative Leadership - a two-principal model with responsibilities integrated</td>
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The role of a school administrator has become a job of many complexities and responsibilities. Recruiting qualified administrators has become increasingly difficult, as fewer people are applying to fill administrator vacancies, especially in the state of California. According to Alvoid and Black (2014), many new principal recruits find the difficulty of the job overwhelming. This shortage of applicants and the lack of interest by teachers who could potentially be effective educational leaders should be concerning to educational policy makers. It is imperative for school districts to explore other school leadership options and look to reorganize the structure of administrative staffing in order to reduce the time demands and stress experienced by the solo principal.

**Co-Principal Model of School Administration**

The co-principal model of school leadership appears to be the most popular of the alternative leadership models identified. West first suggested the idea of co-principal school leaders in 1978. While serving as the Superintendent of the High Point Public Schools in High Point, North Carolina, West implemented a co-principal model that lasted for ten years. He stated, “By reorganizing the available manpower and changing roles and responsibilities, the secondary school principalship can become manageable and workable with greater satisfaction for administrators and increased benefits for pupils, teachers, the school board and other taxpayers being served” (p. 242). West believed this reorganization involved the implementation of a co-principalship, in which both administrators were equals in both authority of the school and in pay. Evaluation data from the first year of operating under this alternative leadership model revealed that the co-principal concept had much to offer school districts, some forty years ago. Significant benefits included:
• Increased opportunities for visits to classrooms and appropriate follow-up with teachers;
• A reduction in the number of suspensions and expulsions;
• Increased numbers of staff participating in professional development opportunities;
• A cleaner school environment and increased efficiency of the custodial staff; and
• Greater job satisfaction for school administrators.

West concluded that the co-principal was indeed one viable alternative to improving the secondary solo principalship.

Other school districts replicated West’s idea and co-principal teams were implemented in eight different schools during that time (Groover 1989; Korba 1982; Shockley and Smith 1981). In 1981, Shockley and Smith examined the realities of the co-principalship. Like West, they determined there were many strengths to this administrative model, including the main benefit of ensuring that the principal can become an instructional leader by being freed from the paperwork, payroll and bookkeeping responsibilities. However, they also identified a major weakness that like most teaming situations, equal managers must be compatible, both personally and philosophically, in order to work together as co-equals. They cautioned that the job descriptions of a co-principal should be specifically defined and delineated, as vague role descriptions may open the door for confusion, rivalry, and role conflicts. In addition, Shockley and Smith suggested that co-principal teams must be strategically matched in terms of their personalities and in terms of their professional abilities.
“Compatible personalities and philosophies are a must in a teaming arrangement of this nature” (p. 92).

In 1982, Korba examined and cautioned about this alternative approach to school leadership that is centered around a team of two full time principals, one who is in charge of administration and one who is in charge of instruction. Korba (1982) stated that the co-principalship "forces the balancing of accountabilities in terms of the overall system goals" (p. 58). He established that the co-principal model may be the best of the shared leadership approaches; but one cannot really come to this conclusion without additional examination of alternatives. There is still the need for a review of the literature on the experiences of other organizations, as well as a discussion of the educational implications of the implementation of the co-principal model.

Groover (1989) summarized that the co-principalship may or may not provide all of the answers anticipated. In some school districts, the leadership model was only implemented for one year due to power struggles that developed between team members who were not compatible, the cost associated with having two principals, or an overall dislike for the concept. Daas interviewed and observed a male/female co-principal team over a three-month period in 1995 and found that the data showed that these co-principals did not divide their responsibilities but instead worked interchangeably with their administrative duties according to availability, expertise, and/or personal preference. They were able to manifest a united front and created a more democratic climate for the entire school.

Connell studied the model in 2000 to determine if it might be a viable alternative to traditional public-school administration. Her findings indicate that
respondents believed certain factors must be in place for the model to be successful. Among these factors was a compatibility of personalities, the suppression of egos and willingness to release some degree of control, as well as “the ability to communicate well and often, flexibility, honesty, integrity, knowledge of educational issues, a commitment to principles, and a sense of humor” (p. 227).

In 2003, former principal and superintendent Michael Chirichello examined a district where the two elementary schools each have co-principals and an assistant principal, and all three loop with students and teachers through three-year cycles. His research viewed the perspectives of the superintendent, principals, assistant principals, and teachers. All stakeholders positively responded to the co-principal leadership model with the researcher asserting, “Perhaps Mansfield's experience with the co-principalship can be replicated to help other schools reshape leadership” (p. 43).

O’Toole, Gailbraith and Lawler (2002) asserted from their research on numerous business models, that there are enough successful examples to show that co-leadership does work. They identified several factors that would improve the odds of ensuring that an administrative partnership would work. “Joint selection, complementary skills and emotional orientations, and mechanisms for coordination are among those key factors” (p. 82). The researchers caution that more analysis of the model and the factors related to its success is needed, because while they may seem to be common sense, they are not common practice.

Gronn and Hamilton (2004) concluded that a “co-principalship is an important attempt to institutionalize a culture and a practice of distributed
leadership” (p. 33). Grubb and Flessa (2006) studied ten schools with alternative administrative leadership structures and found that eight of the schools used the co-principal model. The researchers reported that the respondents liked the co-principal model because it reduced staff isolation and provided them with someone to talk to and share their concerns and/or frustrations. Furthermore, a teacher participant noted, “You know, to see two people interact as peers, as equals, I think is really beneficial for the staff and for the students. Almost like, you know, how having a two-parent family is a better model than having a single [parent]” (p. 533).

In 2006, Eckman wrote about the professional and personal attributes of leaders in a co-principalship, the various leadership models implemented in the participants’ schools, the determinants that contributed to the implementation of the co-principalship in their school districts, and their perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the model. “The respondents reported high levels of job satisfaction. In writing about their work as co-principals, a majority of the respondents indicated that the strength of the shared leadership model was the ability to work closely with another principal” (p. 15). The respondents also identified problems with the model, in “communicating, defining responsibilities, developing trust, presenting a unified front, and being ‘played against each other’ by parents, teachers and community members” (p. 16).

Eckman continued her research in 2007 with a qualitative study of co-principals in both public and private schools in seven states. Like the 2006 study, the participants describe the implementation of the co-principal model, its strengths and weaknesses, and information on how dual leadership teams operate in their schools. According to Eckman, study participants acknowledged several benefits of the co-principal model,
including job satisfaction, access and availability of the co-principals, the importance of modeling shared leadership, and the opportunity to attract more applicants to the principalship. Eckman also identified problems encountered by stakeholders with the model: ambiguity in leadership, inefficiencies and redundancies, lack of support from the school district, creating and retaining a team, and the ability to balance personal and professional roles.

Kelber joined Eckman in 2009 to present the findings of a qualitative study comparing the traditional principalship and the co-principalship. The results showed that the co-principal model increased job satisfaction and reduced role conflict, thereby suggesting the desirability of the co-principal administrative model. The pair worked together again in 2010 to research female traditional solo principals, as well as co-principals. Their research sought to address the impact of the leadership model as experienced by female principals, and how sharing the principalship affects personal job satisfaction and role conflict. The co-principals in their study experienced lower levels of role conflict and higher levels of job satisfaction than did the female traditional solo principals.

Hewitt, Denny, and Pijanowski surveyed nearly 400 teachers in 2012 to determine teacher preferences for alternative school leadership models. Over half of the teachers who participated in this study identified the co-principal model as their preference for a school site administrative structure. In Essex, England in 2013, Morrison describes the advantages of a leadership team of co-principals, asserting that there is a viable alternative to the one-person-in-charge approach that may provide better leadership. The co-principals in this study believe this leadership model invigorates
them and inspires more confident decision-making, and the students experienced a good example of teamwork and communication.

There are positives and negative aspects to both the traditional solo principal and the co-principalship (Eckman & Kelber, 2010). The traditional, solo principalship position has historically been characterized as being “lonely at the top”, as all of the instructional and managerial decision-making is in one person’s hands (Jackson, 1977). The co-principal model has “significantly shifted one of the major problems of the principalship namely the intensity of the work, and the resulting lack of private ‘down time’” (Thomson and Blackmore 2006, p. 169). With two equal leaders sharing the principalship, this model offers an organizational structure that permits for improved interactions with teachers, parents, students, and community groups. As Eckman and Kelber (2010) state,

Examining the effect of the co-principal model on students, teachers, parents and community members is the next necessary step in understanding and evaluating this leadership model. The information gained will assist school administrators in their decision to consider a co-principal model. Identifying the attributes that make for successful co-leadership teams and how to make the model sustainable over time will aid schools in the implementation of a co-principal model as an alternative to the traditional solo principal (p. 217).

**California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELs)**

Effective leadership is well documented as a critical element for achieving positive education results. Research, in fact, confirms that strong, focused leadership is critical to ensuring the continuous improvement of school success and student outcomes.
“Effective leadership is essential in setting direction, developing people, engaging communities, and creating conditions for successful teaching and learning” (Kearney, 2015, p. 1).

The California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELs) are a specific set of policy standards in California, which are the basis for the professional learning, preparation, development, induction, and evaluation of aspiring school administrators. The CPSELs specify what a school “administrator must know and be able to do” to develop into effective, sustainable practices (Commission on Teacher Credentialing & California Department of Education, 2014, p. 1). The six broad standards, along with the clearly defined elements within each, serve as a foundation for the preparation, induction, professional learning, and evaluation of school administrators in California. These standards articulate the major areas for developing and supporting school leaders, as they work to become effective administrators over the course of their entire careers.

**History of the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders**

The CPSELs have been a part of the educational leader preparation continuum in California since 2001. They were adapted from the national Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards for School Leaders in order to fit the context and priorities of California. They were developed and written through a collaborative effort between the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA), the California Department of Education (CDE), the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC), representatives from the California School Leadership Academy
at WestEd, a number of public and private universities in California, and local county offices of education.

Since their inception, the standards have been widely used across the state. “But as the California education context has continued to evolve, the education community has recognized the need to refresh the standards to ensure that they remain relevant and useful, reflecting an updated perspective on teaching and learning …” (Kearney, 2015, p. 1-2). In October 2013, the California Department of Education (CDE) along with the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) gathered a panel who were tasked with updating the CPSELs to more appropriately reflect the expectations of school administrators in the 21st century, the current conditions of schools in California, and the needs of the diverse student population statewide. The updated and revised CPSELs were approved by the CTC in February 2014. They reflect the current and emerging expectations for California’s leaders in education. According to Kearney (2015), “this continuity helps educators, policymakers, and programs align the updated CPSEL with current local and state policies, national leadership standards, research, and evidence-based practices” (p. 2).

**Guiding Principles of the CPSELs:**

- Inform leadership development and performance across a career continuum
- Incorporate existing, accepted descriptions and guides for professional education leadership
- Consistently promote student attainment of performance and content expectations as well as student well being
• Acknowledge the need for ongoing dialogue, challenging assumptions and continued learning among staff and stakeholders

• Reflect the pervasive need to consider equity dilemmas, problems, and issues

• Promote action on the concepts of access, opportunity, and empowerment for all members of the school community (Commission on Teacher Credentialing & California Department of Education, 2014)

**Organization of the CPSELs**

Modeled after the original CPSELs footprint, the updated standards have a new structure designed to clarify the intent of each standard, as well as to help articulate key areas of leader actions within each standard. The CPSELs are now organized in three levels: at the broadest level is the standard, which identifies expectations for effective practice; at the next level are the elements of the standard, which are key areas of leader action within the standard; and at the most detailed level are example indicators of practice, which show how an administrator might demonstrate the element or standard within her or his practice. This new structure parallels the organization of other state documents and describes the work expected of an education leader in detail (Commission on Teacher Credentialing & California Department of Education, 2014).

Organized into six categories, the standards represent the responsibilities of an administrator, both professionally and personally. Within each of the six standards, the elements focus on three to four main areas. The elements specify the intention of each standard, while also helping to organize and define key areas of leader actions. The indicators additionally define actions by education leaders, going into more detail and
giving examples of how a school administrator may demonstrate the standard or element in his or her own practice (Commission on Teacher Credentialing & California Department of Education, 2014). A full list of the standards, elements, and examples can be found in Appendix I.

The responsibilities of California’s school administrators have evolved and expanded since the introduction of the first edition of the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders in 2001. Transforming California’s system for preparing and supporting administrators to become effective education leaders requires an agreement of high expectations that are achievable for all. The CPSELs are universally supported criteria and critical component of the comprehensive system of administrator development and support, which is striving to develop exceptional school leaders throughout the entire state of California (Commission on Teacher Credentialing & California Department of Education, 2014).

**Summary**

The role and job responsibilities of a school principal has been slowly changing over the last one hundred years. Today’s principals are tasked with more responsibilities than ever before and the daily demands and pressures come from a variety of stakeholders. State and federal mandates expect them to show academic gains each year, minimize the number of suspensions and expulsions, have high attendance rates, manage their fiscal resources appropriately, and have all reports submitted on time. The Board of Education and district superintendent expect them to be exemplary examples of both administrative and instructional leadership. “Teachers expect them to be supportive, keeping parents off their backs and discipline problems out of their classes”
(West, 1978, p. 1). Parents want an open-door policy and sometimes, on a moment’s notice, expect a personal conference to discuss their concerns. In addition, students want a principal who is fair, yet firm to all.

Over the last several decades, the work of a school principal has “expanded to include increasingly complex demands in areas such as: responding to accountability measures, reporting frequently to state and federal agencies, providing instructional leadership, ensuring all children achieve at high standards, meeting the needs of children with disabilities, maintaining safe school environments, responding to increased expectations for home-school communication, and serving as change agents and visionary leaders” (Eckman, 2006, p. 3).

California's school leaders, specifically, are "pulled in all directions and have insufficient resources to handle a job that has become ... a struggle for them to focus on what they say matters to them most—improved student achievement" (Ruenzel, 1998, p. 1). California ranks 51st in the country (including Washington, D.C.) in terms of the ratio of principals and assistant principals to students. The expectations of today’s principals have led to a crisis in education, in which there is a lack of aspirants who are applying for the position and many of those who do take on the position leave within two years.

For numerous decades, school administrators have been perceived as a critical factor in the effectiveness of schools. In other words, leadership matters in an era of school accountability, shared decision-making, and the effective management in schools (King Rice, 2010). Researchers who have studied successful schools asserted that a key element of an effective school is an effective principal (Whitaker, 1997). From the
current research on effective schools, it is well documented that “effective principals influence a variety of school outcomes, including student achievement, through their recruitment and motivation of quality teachers, their ability to identify and articulate school vision and goals, their effective allocation of resources, and their development of organizational structures to support instruction and learning” (Horng, Kalogrides, and Loeb, 2009, p. 1). How can one person do it all?

Concerned with the lack of qualified applicants and the subsequent burnout experienced by those in the position, numerous school districts in the U.S. and abroad have looked at alternative leadership models to the traditional principalship. Chapman says, “There is a need to adopt new approaches to conceptualizing the role of principal and alternative strategies for redesigning and restructuring positions of leadership across the school” (p. 8). Grubb and Flessa (2006) support alternative school site leadership models as a way to alleviate the growing pressures being placed upon the solo principal. The idea of shared leadership within a principalship has appeared in literature for nearly forty years (Korba, 1982; Shockley & Smith, 1981; West, 1978), however there is little written about the effectiveness of the model.

The dual leadership model of the co-principalship acknowledges that schools and the issues facing them are too complex for one person to effectively run. By separating the responsibilities between two or more people, each principal can devote more attention to his/her own designated areas (Shockley & Smith, 1981). In the co-principal model, two people share leadership and responsibility equally. It is an idea “to provide improved management techniques to run increasingly complex schools …” (Shockley & Smith, p. 92). According to Eckman (2007), the co-principal model offers
school districts a variation to the traditional solo principal position and has the possibility of attracting and retaining qualified individuals to lead our schools.

The co-principalship has its advantages and disadvantages. Previous studies on the model have determined that its strengths include a stronger focus on instruction, as well as an increase in administrator accessibility to teachers and students. Co-principals appreciate not being alone at the top. Many relish in the chance to share the workload and the decision-making with someone else, even though it means sharing power and authority (Eckman, 2007). Perceived weaknesses of the co-principal model include a confusion of roles, power struggles, and no final authority in decision-making (Gilbreath, 2001). Co-leaders have to develop strong relationships with each other in order to foster maximum trust. “To share power and authority requires co-principals to communicate constantly, keep their egos in check, and strive to create a united front” (Eckman, 2007, p. 27). Moreover, just like in a successful relationship, there has to be a personality match between the partners.

In all realms of their work, school administrators, whether solo or in a shared leadership position, must focus on how they are encouraging the learning, achievement, development, and well-being of each and every student. Given the ever-evolving demands of the job, education leaders need agreed upon and recognized standards to guide their practice in directions that will be the most beneficial to students. The California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELs) specify what a school “administrator must know and be able to do” to develop into effective, sustainable practices (Commission on Teacher Credentialing & California Department of Education, 2014, p. 1). The CPSELs have been a part of the educational leader
preparation continuum in California since 2001. The CPSELs are a specific set of policy standards in California, which are the basis for the professional learning, preparation, development, induction, and evaluation of aspiring school administrators.

Additional research on the co-principal model will increase the understanding of an alternative form of leadership that numerous school districts are already implementing. It is worthwhile to gain an understanding of how the co-principalship is perceived by those who have served in this role. Furthermore, it is necessary to investigate what impact this model has on school effectiveness in terms of the CPSELs - development and implementation of a shared vision, instructional leadership, management and learning environment, family and community engagement, ethics and integrity, and external context and policy.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Chapter III describes the methodology used in this phenomenological study. This investigation focuses on the efficacy of the co-principal model of school leadership as viewed through the lens of the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELS) and attempts to answer the proposed research questions. This phenomenological investigation includes school principals in the state of California. The phenomenological research is explained in this chapter, including the method and approach used to identify the population and sample, as well as the instrumentation, data analysis, limitations of the study, and the summary.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research was to examine the experiences of K-12 school principals who participated in the co-principal model viewed through the lens of the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELS).

Research Questions

1. How does the co-principal model support a school principal to facilitate the development and implementation of a shared vision of learning and growth for all students?
2. How does the co-principal model support a school principal to shape a collaborative culture of teaching and learning?
3. How does the co-principal model support a school principal to manage the organization to cultivate a safe and productive learning and working environment?
4. How does the co-principal model support a school principal to collaborate with families and other stakeholders to address diverse student and community interests and mobilize community resources?

5. How does the co-principal model support a school principal to make decisions, model, and behave in ways that demonstrate professionalism, ethics, integrity, justice, and equity and hold staff to the same standard?

6. How does the co-principal model support a school principal to influence political, social, economic, legal, and cultural contexts affecting education to improve education policies and practices?

**Research Design**

To investigate the co-principal model of school leadership in California schools and districts, this study followed a phenomenological qualitative research design. The appropriateness of this study includes further understanding of the efficacy of the co-principal model of school leadership as viewed through the lens of the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELs). A phenomenological qualitative approach “describes phenomena as it exists” (Vogt, 1999, p. 79). This methodology seeks to understand what people experience with regard to some phenomenon, and how these individuals interpret those experiences. Phenomenological research recognizes the essence of human experience about a phenomenon as described by the participants (Creswell, 2003). This method of research attempts to understand people’s perceptions, perspectives and insight of a particular situation (or phenomenon), and is useful for gathering stories, narratives and anecdotes from individuals or groups of people. This research method explores real-life situations as the researcher interacts
and collaborates with participants by observing them in their natural environment, and
the collection of data, which allows the researcher to make an interpretation of the
meaning of the lived experience.

Several research methods were carefully considered for this study. However, a
qualitative method was determined the most appropriate to capture stories from the field.
According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), a “phenomenological study describes
the meanings of lived experience” (p. 24). This study used a non-experimental and
descriptive approach. “Non-experimental research designs describe the phenomena and
examine the relationship between different phenomena without any direct manipulation
of conditions that are experienced” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 22). This
research model was appropriate for this study because “descriptive research provides very
valuable data, particularly when first investigating an area” (McMillan & Schumacher,
1997, p. 281). The methodology allowed the researcher to examine and describe how the
co-principal model impacts a co-principal’s ability to lead in their role at a California
public school, as viewed through the lens of the California Professional Standards for
Education Leaders (CPSELS).

No such study specifically focusing on the CPSELS has been conducted, even
though the co-principal model has been implemented in various forms for over forty
years. The experiences of co-principals provide information on how this shared
leadership model operates.
Population

McMillan and Schumacher (2010), state “Population is a group of elements or cases, whether individuals, objects, or events, that conform to specific criteria and to which we intend to generalize the results of the research” (p. 129). Participants in the general population must share at least a single attribute of interest (Bartlett et al., 2001; Creswell, 2003). It is this single attribute that makes participants eligible to be the population. The intended population of this study is designed to include all K-12 public school principals in the state of California. According to the California Department of Education (CDE) website, there were 1,037 school districts in the 2018-19 school year with a total of 10,521 schools (California Department of Education, 2019). Based on
the CDE website, the estimated population consists of the 10,521 school principals serving in California at the time of this study.

**Sampling Frame**

The selected participants of the overall population used within a study are the target population, also known as the sampling frame. “The target population is often different from the list of elements from which the sample is actually selected …” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 129). The sampling frame is used for research studies in order to make inferences. It was not practical for the researcher to use such a large population due to time, geographic location, and monetary constraints.

The population was narrowed to school principals with experience serving in the co-principal model in K-12 California public schools, to glean information regarding their insights and experiences. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) note it is important for the target population to be clearly identified in any research, to better communicate the findings and the context in which the findings were obtained. The researcher contacted the California Department of Education (CDE) and the Association for California School Administrators (ACSA) to inquire about the number of co-principals serving in the shared leadership model in California. Unfortunately, both high profile groups shared that there was no centralized data base to determine these numbers. In an attempt to draw an estimated targeted population, the researcher also did an exhaustive search of the literature to see if there were any recorded estimates regarding the percent of schools, either nationwide or in California, that utilize the co-principal model. There were no citations in any of the literature, which further illustrates the gap in the literature, regarding the co-principal model. For the
purposes of this study, there is no quantifiable target population, but both the CDE and ACSA acknowledged that they were aware of many schools throughout California utilizing the co-principal model.

**Sample**

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) explain that the sample is the “group of individuals from whom data is collected” (p. 129). Likewise, Patton (2015), Krathwohl (2009), and Creswell (2003) defined the sample as the subset of a larger group or target population, which represents the whole population. Purposeful sampling is preferred in a qualitative study. These subjects “are selected because they are ‘information rich’ and illuminative …” (Patton, 2015, p. 46). Patton (2015) also states that strategic, purposeful sampling can yield crucial information about research cases.

Strategic, purposeful sampling was used by the researcher in this study. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) further elaborate that purposeful sampling is when the researcher “selects a sample that is representative of the population or that includes subjects with needed characteristics” (p. 138). In purposeful sampling “people are selected because they are information rich and illuminative…they offer useful manifestations of the phenomenon of interest” (Patton, 2002, p. 40). Because of the lack of a centralized database, the researcher contacted the Association of School Administrators (ACSA) and county offices of education in Southern California to inquire about co-principal teams they could recommend for participation in this study. The researcher is a co-principal and is aware of many co-principals in the Southern California vicinity. As a result, the researcher maintained a reasonable belief that 9 co-
principals who met the following criteria could be located in Southern California to participate in this study.

Utilizing purposeful sampling, school principals were selected based on the following criteria:

1. Experience working as a full-time principal in the co-principal model in a K-12 public school for at least one year
2. Experience serving as a full-time co-principal within the last five years
3. Experience sharing the full-time principal position with another full-time principal equally
4. Located in Southern California

“When it is not feasible to include all members from a large target population, it is necessary to identify an accessible population that is practical for the researcher to interview” (Bartels, 2017, p. 92). For the purpose of this study, the population consisted of nine school principals from Southern California K-12 public schools. The narrowing of the sampling frame provided a reasonable sample population.
Figure 4. Population, Sampling Frame, and Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Principals in California in 2019</td>
<td>10,521</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sampling Frame</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Principals in California K-12 public schools who have had experience serving as a co-principal</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Principals in Southern California K-12 public schools with experience working as a full-time principal in the co-principal model in a K-12 public school for at least one year</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Principals in Southern California K-12 public schools with experience serving as a full-time co-principal within the last five years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Principals in Southern California K-12 public schools with experience sharing the full-time principal position with another full-time principal equally.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample Subject Selection Process

After the Institution Review Board (IRB) completed a review and approved this study, selected principals recommended by ACSA and county offices of education were contacted. The process for contacting the sample subjects is outlined below:

1. An Informational Letter was sent to district superintendents (Appendix A). The researcher contacted the principals at their offices via email and/or phone to explain the purpose, benefits, and risks of participating in the study. The researcher also explained associated terms of anonymity for participants in the study. The researcher answered any remaining questions posed by
the principals regarding the study.

2. Upon agreement to participate, the researcher scheduled a 60-minute meeting with each principal. Time was limited to 60 minutes in order to be respectful of the participants’ busy schedules. During this 60-minute meeting, the researcher explained that the following documents would be emailed prior to the interview to ensure adequate preparation so as to remain in the allotted time frame: (1) Invitation to Participate letter (Appendix B), (2) Research Participant’s Bill of Rights (Appendix C), (3) Informed Consent form to be signed and collected at the time of the interview (Appendix D), and (4) Interview Questions for review prior to the interview (Appendix E).

3. Upon completion of scheduling interviews, the researcher emailed the following documents to the participants: (1) Invitation to Participate, (2) Research Participant’s Bill of Rights, (3) Informed Consent form, and (4) Scripted Interview Questions.

Instrumentation

Patton (2002) refers to three techniques used in collecting qualitative data - interviews, observations, and artifacts/documents. After some consideration, the researcher determined that interviews and collected artifacts would best capture the themes and patterns of the perceptions of principals on their experiences with the co-principal model of school administration.
Instrument

McMillan and Schumacher (2010 state, “the data collection mainstay of a phenomenologist is the personal in-depth, unstructured interview” (p. 346). The main instrument used in this study was semi-structured questions to enable the researcher to conduct more of a conversation rather than a rigid interview. During the literature review, numerous themes related to the co-principal model were discovered and used to develop the study’s interview questions (Appendix E). In addition, the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELs) were employed as a benchmark to focus the interview schedule. Because the researcher is interested in how the CPSELs influenced a co-principal’s leadership, semi-structured questions were necessary in these face-to-face or virtual interviews. The researcher was flexible to ensure co-principals could add as much detail and background to their answers as they saw fit. If a participant shared information that the researcher deemed important, additional probing techniques were used in an attempt to gain additional information (Trochim, 2001).

According to Fowler (2014), an interview schedule is, “a guide an interviewer uses when conducting a structured interview” (p. 24). The interview schedule included the exact questions that would be asked, along with directions on how to proceed with the interview (Fowler, 2014). The literature review, synthesis matrix, and scripted interviews all signify the reliability of this study.

For this study an expert in the field of K-12 education reviewed the interview questions (Appendix E). The expert used in this phase of the instrument development has earned a doctorate degree and served in all capacities of K-12 administration. The expert reviewed and provided feedback on the content and organization of the interview
questions. Any interview questions found by the expert to be leading or not constructed well, were re-written to meet the appropriate criteria. The researcher then conducted a field test of the instrument, prior to conducting any interviews, which is described in the next section titled Validity and Reliability.

**Artifacts**

“Artifacts are tangible manifestations that describe people’s experience, knowledge, actions and values” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 361). After the interviews were completed, the researcher asked the participants of the study to provide any artifacts that could help or better explain the information they gave during the interview. Artifacts collected included sample role responsibility sheets, newsletters, flyers, emails, photographs, newspaper articles, institutional collateral and other examples of viable products. Additionally, the researcher reviewed the participants’ school websites and other public records to identify artifacts that could confirm information expressed during the interviews.

**The Researcher as an Instrument of the Study**

When conducting qualitative research, the researcher becomes an instrument of the study. “In qualitative inquiry, the researcher is the instrument” (Patton, 2015, p. 22). For this study the researcher conducted all participant interviews and guided all necessary data collection methods of the study. Due to the researcher being the instrument in a qualitative study, Pezzalla, Pettigrew, and Miller-Day (2012) contended that the unique personality, characteristics, and interview techniques of the researcher may influence how the data is collected. Since the researcher also serves as a co-principal in her current job, this study may contain some biases on how the interviewer
influenced the participants during the interview sessions. Protocols were built into the data collection process to address these potential biases, and these are addressed later in this chapter.

**Validity**

“Validity, in qualitative research, refers to the degree of congruence between the explanation of the phenomena and the realities of the world” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 330). Validity in this qualitative study was achieved through the inclusion of an expert panel and through a field test that was conducted prior to data collection. Employing an outside expert panel assisted the researcher in sifting interviewer bias out of the study. The researcher had the opportunity to practice interviewing skills and make revisions through field testing. The researcher was also able to determine if the interview questions and prompts allowed participants to describe their experiences in depth, in order to gain rich data. Feedback received from field test participants enabled the researcher to determine if the questions, prompts, and/or length of the interviews needed to be modified in any way.

**Expert Panel**

An expert panel comprised of three people was established in order to further review and refine interview questions to ensure alignment with the research questions. The three experts were chosen based on their knowledge of the co-principal model of school administration and the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELs). Each of the panelists reviewed the interview questions in order to confirm they were aligned to the research questions and purpose statement.
Expert 1. The first member of the expert panel member received her Doctorate in Education from the University of Laverne. She has been an elementary, middle school, and high school teacher, as well as an elementary and middle school principal. In addition, she has been a district Director, Assistant Superintendent, and superintendent. She is currently an adjunct professor for Brandman University.

Expert 2. The second member of the panel received her Doctorate in Organizational Leadership from Brandman University. The focus of her research was female studies and the effect of gender dissonance and the rise of women in to the position of K-12 public school superintendent. She has excellent knowledge in K-12 public education, curriculum, instruction, and human relationships. She is currently an elementary school principal.

Expert 3. The third member of the expert panel received her Doctorate in Organizational Leadership at Brandman University. She has served as a secondary English teacher and administrator. She is currently serving as a high school administrator in Southern California.

Field Test

Calitz (2009) asserts that using a field test of questions helps to detect unclear or ambiguous statements in the research protocol. Van Wijk and Harrison (2013) believe that field tests can add value and credibility to the entire research study. When an interview is used as the research instrument, a field test helps to do the following:

1. Determine whether the researcher has included all the questions that are needed to answer the research question (Berg, 2001).
2. Highlight difficult and unnecessary questions.
3. Record the time taken to complete the interview.

4. Determine whether each question elicits an adequate response.

5. Establish whether responses can be properly interpreted relative to the information required (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001).

6. Allow the researcher to practice and perfect his/her interviewing techniques (Berg, 2001).

One principal with experience serving as a co-principal, who was not part of this study’s sample, was used to conduct a field test that meets the established criteria. The participant was given an invitation to participate. One of the expert panel members accompanied the researcher to observe the field test interview and provided any necessary feedback regarding general suggestions, survey length, timing, body language and tone conveyed during the field test. This expert panel member also conveyed to the researcher that the interviewer conducted an unbiased interview. Conducting a field test gives the researcher the ability to practice giving the interview and ensures that the interview questions are clear. The more naturally events unfold, and participants feel comfortable, the more information will be gained from the research data (McMillian & Schumacher, 2010).

The researcher utilized an iPhone and the REV transcribing application to record the interview. After the interview was completed, the data was transcribed and given to the field test participant for further input. The researcher asked for feedback on how the interview was conducted and if the participant was comfortable to answer questions in depth. Feedback was given to the researcher by the participant regarding interview style and delivery, as well as adherence to the interview protocol. This
feedback was given in an informal conversation, not another interview, and on the “Field Test Interviewee Feedback Questions” form (Appendix F). The researcher wanted to clarify any areas where improvement and/or revision was needed, such as confusing questions, enough time for the interview to be held, the comfort level of the participants being interviewed, and that all terminology was understood. The researcher also debriefed with the outside expert utilizing the “Interview Observer Feedback Reflection Questions” (Appendix G) and an informal conversation.

**Reliability**

Mildred Patten (2014) said, “a test is said to be reliable if it yields consistent results” (p. 83). In 2015, Michael Quinn Patton in discussing qualitative research, said, reliability “refers to the degree to which your instrument consistently measures something from one time to another (p. 151). Joppe (2000) further defines reliability as: … The extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable. (p. 1)

The researcher used intercoder reliability by submitting the data to an expert panel for review. Patton (2015) stated that intercoder reliability is when expert evaluators read and compare the data and come to the same conclusions in coding the themes as the researcher. Coding is the process of sorting, labeling, and organizing themes in a qualitative study. The emerging data is then analyzed and interpreted to elicit findings (Patton, 2015).
All of the interviews were recorded by the researcher and professionally transcribed. The transcriptions were made available to the participants. In order to limit bias, the researcher asked participants to check the transcriptions for accuracy. This process also increased the credibility of the data and ensured accurate themes were evident. By working with an expert panel, field testing the interview questions, and utilizing intercoder reliability, the researcher established alignment with the research questions. “The credibility of qualitative methods, therefore, hinges to a great extent on the skill, competence, and the rigor of the person doing the fieldwork” (Patton, 2015, p. 22).

To guarantee reliability in qualitative research, the analysis of trustworthiness is essential. Seale (1999), states that the “trustworthiness of a research report lies at the heart of issues conventionally discussed as validity and reliability” (p. 266). “Effective interviewing techniques, skillful questioning, and the capacity to establish rapport are keys to obtaining credible and useful data through interviews” (Patton, 2015, p. 27).

The field test feedback from the expert panel on the interview questions, process, and protocols helped the researcher in becoming competent in data collection. Researcher bias was reduced with the adherence to protocols, while also ensuring the safety of participants.

**Data Collection**

Before data collection began, the researcher was granted approval from the Institution Review Board (IRB) at Brandman University to conduct this study. IRB ensures the study adhered to all ethical and legal guidelines. Participant’s rights and privacy were protected throughout the duration of this study. Informed consents were
provided to and received from all participants prior to any data collection. Each respondent was able to withdraw from the study at any time and ethical protections were provided and adhered to during the study to protect all participants (Roberts, 2010).

Data was collected from co-principals through interviews. The interviews were designed to elicit information from principals to provide information on the research questions. In the process of data collection, the researcher developed a directory of all principals in Southern California K-12 public schools that met the criteria for the study. Each principal would have served as a co-principal for a minimum of one year, served as a co-principal within the last five years, and would have served as a co-principal who has shared the full-time principal position with another full-time principal.

The researcher identified individuals who met the criteria from the list of prospective principals. These individuals were selected to receive invitations to participate in the study. Emails were sent to all the participants that met the criterion. The email contained information about the purpose of the study in addition to the research questions. Upon agreement to participate, a second email was sent, and a follow-up phone call was made to each participant, which allowed the researcher to formally introduce herself. The participants were given confidentiality assurances and supplied all documents for informed consent. Data collected from the study would only be used by the researcher and all respondents’ identities would remain confidential throughout the duration of the study.

Next, a time and place for the interviews was scheduled with each of the participants. A series of nine face-to-face or virtual interviews with the various co-
principals took place in January 2020. Interview sessions were held either in person or virtually with each participant. Interviews were conducted to provide personal experiences of people who have worked in the co-principal model. Following the qualitative research techniques recommended by Glesne and Peshkin (1992), the interview sessions lasted about 60 minutes and were held at times and in settings that were convenient for the participants (Eckman, 2007). The participants chose the time and place of the interviews. This allowed the respondents to be interviewed at the best time for them and in the most comfortable setting, in order to give honest answers, which would yield rich data. Each in-person interview was recorded on an iPhone or if conducted virtually, recorded with the Zoom software, and then professionally transcribed using an application called REV. The interview sessions were recorded for accuracy and transcribed exactly. The professionally transcribed interviews assisted the researcher in distinguishing the patterns and themes related to the efficacy of the co-principal model of school administration. The semi-structured interviews included pre-identified, closed-form questions which allowed the researcher to obtain specific information, in addition to open-ended questions which afforded the respondents an opportunity to make additional explanations or comments. At the end of each interview the researcher asked participants if there was a need for clarification or anything they would like to add. Furthermore, participants were asked to submit artifacts that would provide the researcher with additional information that was pertinent to this study. Participants were also informed that the transcription of the interviews would be available for their approval in a timely manner. The analysis of data began after each respondent reviewed the interview transcription and gave approval to the researcher.
Data Analysis

Qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach that strives to understand phenomena in context-specific settings, such as "real world setting [where] the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest" (Patton, 2002, p. 39). Qualitative research, generally defined, means "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 17). It is the kind of research that produces findings arrived from real-world settings where the "phenomenon of interest unfold naturally" (Patton, 2002, p. 39).

To facilitate the analysis of data, the transcribed interviews were uploaded and entered into the NVIVO software. The researcher employed a coding strategy in order to ascertain categories, which were then labeled into codes and assigned categories (J. W. Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). These codes were determined by the themes, patterns, and commonalities found within the transcribed responses and were then translated into findings (Merriam, 2009). Themes should emerge through this coding process that are related to the interview questions. Statements selected from the interviews that illustrate themes were then indexed under the appropriate nodes in the software program. The researcher identified themes that were consistent among the interviews that are included in the methodology.

For analyzing the artifacts of the study’s participants, a matrix was devised for theme analysis. According to McMillan & Schumacher (2010), when collecting and analyzing artifacts there are five strategies to use that will also be incorporated into this
study. These strategies, and the means by which the researcher will ensure they are adhered to, are as follows:

1. *Locating the artifacts* – Each artifact will be retrieved from each participant prior or before the interview to ensure they are collected.

2. *Identifying the artifacts* – The researcher will record, scan, and load the artifacts in NVivo to be analyzed.

3. *Analysis of artifacts* – The researcher will read and draw themes out of the artifacts collected.

4. *Criticism of artifacts* – The researcher will compare the artifacts using the matrix to see if they match any of the elements that the literature deems should be incorporated.

5. *Interpretation of artifact meanings* – The researcher will draw connections between participants’ interviews and the themes found in the artifacts to add meaning to the qualitative data.

**Intercoder Reliability**

“Intercoder reliability refers to the extent to which two or more independent coders agree on the coding of the content of interest with an application of the same coding scheme” (Lavraks, 2008, p. 1). The amount of agreement between two or more coders applies to qualitative text. Assessing the reliability of the coding helps the researcher establish the credibility of qualitative findings. The coded transcriptions and themes in this study were reviewed by the expert panel for accuracy and alignment.
Limitations

Every research study has elements that cause limitations. “Limitations are particular features of your study that you know may negatively affect the results or your ability to generalize” (Roberts, 2010, p. 162). The limitations of this study are the small sample size, geographic location of study participants, time, and bias of the researcher. The ability to generalize was constrained because the researcher was only able to look closely at co-principals who have also served as solo school principals in the state of California.

Sample Size

According to the California Department of Education website, there were 1,037 school districts in the 2018-19-18 school year with a total of 10,521 schools (California Department of Education, 2019). The population consists of the 10,521 school principals serving in California at the time of this study. To draw an estimated targeted population, the researcher contacted the CDE and ACSA, in addition to conducting an exhaustive search of the literature to see if there were any recorded estimates regarding the percent of schools, either nationwide or in California, that utilize the co-principal model. There were no citations in any of the literature. For the purposes of this study, there is no quantifiable target population. The sample population consisted of nine principals from Southern California K-12 schools. With in-depth interviews being utilized, the number of participants needed to be limited due to time and resources.

Geography

Considering the geographical location of the researcher, who lives in the northern Los Angeles County area of Southern California, interviews took place virtually using a
program called Zoom and interviews with the co-principals who were located closer to the researcher took place in person.

**Time**

In an effort to minimize the disruption to the principals’ schedules, interview sessions were planned to take approximately 60 minutes. The school leaders were extremely busy, and the researcher wanted to respect their schedules.

**Researcher as the Study Instrument**

The researcher as the study instrument in semi-structured and/or unstructured qualitative interviews has the potential to influence the collection of data because of the unique characteristics of the researcher. At the time of the study, the researcher was serving her fifth year as a co-principal of a middle school in Southern California. In addition, the researcher was in her 24th year of cumulative experience in public education. To address the limitation of researcher as the study instrument, the researcher provided participants with information about her background to communicate potential bias. According to Patten (2014), bias is always present when conducting interviews, therefore, a field test was conducted to reduce this limitation.

**Summary**

Chapter III detailed the methodology used in this study - a qualitative phenomenological approach with an explanatory design. An overview introduced the chapter with the purpose statement and research questions being restated. The research design explained the selection of qualitative research for the basis of the study. The population of study was described and the sample that would be used, along with the selection process, was examined. The use of an expert panel and field testing to gain
more validity and reliability was explored. The chapter outlined the data collection and analysis while outlining ethical considerations and limitations. Chapter IV reports on the research findings and gives a detailed description of the results of this study.
CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

Chapter IV presents an analysis of the data collected from the phenomenological study which examines the experiences of co-principals. This chapter reviews the purpose of the study, research questions, research methods, data collection methods, population, and sample. Chapter IV concludes with a presentation of the data, organized by research question, through the conceptual framework presented in Chapter II. The chapter will conclude with a summary of findings.

Overview

Chapter IV explains the findings from interviews conducted with nine Southern California principals with the purpose of examining the lived experiences of K-12 school principals who participated in the co-principal model viewed through the lens of the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELs). In addition, the interviews sought to determine if sharing a full-time principal position amongst two leaders is more effective than having one principal serving in a solo position. With an increasing number of individuals leaving principal positions and a lack of qualified candidates interested in going into the principalship, the researcher designed the study to expand the literature on the efficacy of the co-principal model of school leadership as viewed through the lens of the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELs). Chapter IV begins with a brief introduction that includes the major categories of the chapter.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research was to examine the experiences of K-12 school principals who participated in the co-principal model viewed
through the lens of the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELS).

Research Questions

1. How does the co-principal model support a school principal to facilitate the development and implementation of a shared vision of learning and growth for all students?

2. How does the co-principal model support a school principal to shape a collaborative culture of teaching and learning?

3. How does the co-principal model support a school principal to manage the organization to cultivate a safe and productive learning and working environment?

4. How does the co-principal model support a school principal to collaborate with families and other stakeholders to address diverse student and community interests and mobilize community resources?

5. How does the co-principal model support a school principal to make decisions, model, and behave in ways that demonstrate professionalism, ethics, integrity, justice, and equity and hold staff to the same standard?

6. How does the co-principal model support a school principal to influence political, social, economic, legal, and cultural contexts affecting education to improve education policies and practices?

Research Methods and Data Collection Procedures

The qualitative methodology selected for this study was a phenomenological study exploring the lived experiences of K-12 school principals in Southern California
who have served in a co-principal leadership position. Because this study sought to examine the lived experiences of individuals who have served as co-principals for at least one year, the researcher met with male and female K-12 school principals and conducted a series of semi-structured interviews to capture the essence of their experience. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with four principals in Los Angeles County, as well as five virtual interviews with principals in Riverside and Los Angeles County. The interviews were conducted at a time and location selected by the participant during the month of January 2020. All participants were provided the research questions in advance, as well as a statement of consent and confidentiality.

Interviews were recorded using an iPhone and then transcribed using the Rev Transcription service. After receiving transcriptions from Rev Transcription, data was coded using the NVivo coding software. Data was coded for frequency of themes aligned with the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELs).

*Figure 5. California Professional Standards for Education Leaders*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STANDARD 1: Development and Implementation of a Shared Vision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education leaders facilitate the development and implementation of a shared vision of learning and growth of all students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STANDARD 2: Instructional Leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Education leaders shape a collaborative culture of teaching and learning, informed by professional standards and focused on student and professional growth.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STANDARD 3: Management and Learning Environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education leaders manage the organization to cultivate a safe and productive learning and working environment.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STANDARD 4: Family and Community Engagement</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education leaders collaborate with families and other stakeholders to address diverse student and community interests and mobilize community resources.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STANDARD 5: Ethics and Integrity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education leaders make decisions, model, and behave in ways that demonstrate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
professionalism, ethics, integrity, justice, and equity and hold staff to the same standard.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STANDARD 6: External Context and Policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education leaders influence political, social, economic, legal, and cultural contexts affecting education to improve education policies and practices.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The researcher utilized inter-coder reliability to establish the reliability of the study through working with a peer researcher to code a portion of the data until a common conclusion was reached (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999).

**Population**

The intended population of this study was designed to include all K-12 public school principals in the state of California, specifically those serving in Southern California. According to the California Department of Education (CDE) website, there were 1,037 school districts in the 2018-19 school year with a total of 10,521 schools (California Department of Education, 2019). Based on the CDE website, the estimated population consists of the 10,521 school principals serving in California at the time of this study.

The population was narrowed to school principals with experience serving in the co-principal model in K-12 California public schools, to glean information regarding their insights and experiences. Utilizing purposeful sampling, school principals were selected based on the following criteria:

1. Experience working as a full-time principal in the co-principal model in a K-12 public school for at least one year
2. Experience serving as a full-time co-principal within the last five years
3. Experience sharing the full-time principal position with another full-time principal equally

4. Located in Southern California

Sample

A sample of nine public comprehensive K-12 school principals were chosen to participate in the study. The sample included three males and six female principals employed in Riverside County and Los Angeles County. The sample of nine school principals for the study were chosen from the 10,521 K-12 public school principals in California at the time of this study.

To conduct and execute this qualitative research study, the researcher used a strategic, purposeful sampling method. For this study, the sampling method was to use the delimiting methods and narrow the population to principals who had 1) experience working as a full-time principal in the co-principal model in a K-12 public school for at least one year; 2) experience serving as a full-time co-principal within the last five years; 3) experience sharing the full-time principal position with another full-time principal equally; and 4) were located in Southern California.

The sample for this study consisted of nine K-12 principals in Riverside County and Los Angeles County, California. The researcher began the study by contacting the California Department of Education (CDE) and the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) to inquire about the number of co-principals serving in the shared leadership model in California. Unfortunately, both high profile groups shared that there was no centralized database to determine these numbers. In an attempt to draw an estimated targeted population, the researcher also did an exhaustive search of the
literature to see if there were any recorded estimates regarding the percent of schools, either nationwide or in California, that utilize the co-principal model. There were no citations in any of the literature, which further illustrates the gap in the literature, regarding the co-principal model. For the purposes of this study, there is no quantifiable target population, but both the CDE and ACSA acknowledged that they were aware of many schools throughout California utilizing the co-principal model. After identifying 14 current and former co-principals in Southern California, a list of potential study participants was compiled. Potential study participants were contacted by phone and email to ascertain interest in participation in the study and schedule the interview.

**Demographic Data**

With a limited participation of co-principals in Southern California, every effort was made to maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of the study participants. As a result, participants’ names and identifying information, such as school district and school, were omitted from the findings. The nine study participants were numerically identified from P1 through P9 and are outlined in Table 1. The sample included three male and six female principals from the counties of Los Angeles and Riverside.
Table 1.

Demographic Data of Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years as a Co-Principal</th>
<th>Month, Day, and Year of Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>January 3, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>January 8, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>January 9, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>January 10, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>January 10, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>January 10, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>January 13, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>January 13, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>January 13, 2020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. P = Principal.
Presentation and Analysis of Data

To answer the research questions, the researcher coded emergent themes from the data into the six conceptual areas from the study, based on the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELs). The six broad standards are: (1) Development and Implementation of a Shared Vision, (2) Instructional Leadership, (3) Management and Learning Environment, (4) Family and Community Engagement, (5) Ethics and Integrity, and (6) External Context and Policy. The CPSELs were the foundation for how data was coded in this study. The data was organized to reflect codes that emerged in response to the six broad standards. For a review of the comprehensive list of the standards, elements, and examples, please refer to Appendix I. Additionally, findings were further sorted into themes supported by recent literature on the co-principal leadership model.

STANDARD 1: Development and Implementation of a Shared Vision: Education leaders facilitate the development and implementation of a shared vision of learning and growth of all students.

The first research question of this study sought to answer: How does the co-principal model support a school principal to facilitate the development and implementation of a shared vision of learning and growth for all students? All principals interviewed reported they have increased leadership as a result of the co-principal model. The collective opinion of the principals was that there was not just one, but two people to facilitate the development and implementation of a shared vision for their school sites. Some principals cautioned that the success of the model is dependent, however, on having the “right” people matched up as co-principals. In response to this question, four
themes emerged: (a) double the people, (b) a partnership between two people, (c) using the strengths of two people, and (d) working as a team/one voice. Data was coded into these subcategories and Table 2 outlines the examples related to facilitating the development and implementation of a shared vision, as well as the number of principals that reported the examples and frequency of references. Within these sub-categories, co-principals provided examples to support these themes.

Principal 1, who served as a co-principal for five years and is in his first year as a solo principal shared examples of how two full-time principals provided twice as many people to develop and implement a shared vision for the school site. He stated,

Because it was a co-leadership doing that, you kind of had double the people to do double the work. So now you had a group of people that I was able to make a connection with, you have a group of people that the other co-principal was able to make a connection with, and so the work was kind of doubled in that we were able to reach into those groups, and kind of help move forward with our goal.

Principal 4 served as a solo principal for over a decade before becoming a co-principal. She described the co-principalship as a partnership between two people. “I would say the co-principal and I had more of a shared vision and we implemented that simultaneously together as a duo,” she stated.

Principal 3, who has served with two different co-principals and is currently in her third year as a co-principal, felt the greatest advantage of the co-principalship was utilizing the strengths that each principal brought to the table. She noted,

I would say that the biggest thing about the co-principal model is that you have two people that are highly motivated. People that have experience is important
and it's an excellent model for just brainstorming and bouncing ideas off of one another. I think it really helps to have two people that are really passionate about the same thing, who kind of work towards a shared vision, versus just a principal who's kind of making the decisions and then bringing along the vice principal, if you will.

Principal 7, who is in her fourth year of a co-principalship with the same co-principal, shared the same sentiment in stating,

I think being in the co-principal model, we're both able to bring in our strengths and develop our vision and the pathway that we want to go. We're able to do that together. So, we're able to mesh those together so people see our strengths to support our vision. But really developing that together and not in isolation has been a definite benefit to me.

Principal 2 served as a co-principal for three years with two different principals and is currently working at the district office. He described his experience as a co-principal as two people working together with one voice, adding, “We just sat down and we talked about our vision and how we can work together collaboratively so that we can help our students. Really that's the core of it.”

Principal 7 added,

And then making sure that the staff sees us collaborating together and we may not agree on everything, but we always know that we can work together to come up with a common solution towards our vision and that's what collaboration truly is. You don't always agree with the person that you work with, but you're always
going towards that same goal. And as long as we model that behavior for our staff, we see that as a positive to move our school forward.

Table 2.

*Examples Related to Facilitating the Development and Implementation of a Shared Vision as Reported by K-12 Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples Related to Facilitating the Development and Implementation of a Shared Vision</th>
<th>Number of Principals who Reported Examples</th>
<th>Number of References of Examples Reported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Double the People</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Partnership Between Two People</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the Strengths of Two People</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working as a Team/One Voice</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STANDARD 2: Instructional Leadership:** Education leaders shape a collaborative culture of teaching and learning, informed by professional standards and focused on student and professional growth.

The second research question of this study sought to answer: *How does the co-principal model support a school principal to shape a collaborative culture of teaching and learning?* All principals interviewed reported that working in the co-principal model is the best example of instructional leadership and collaboration for staff and students. They explained that the collaborative nature of the co-principal model shows stakeholders how different people with different viewpoints can come together to work
toward a common goal. The principals felt like they have had more instructional leadership due to having two leaders. The term “working marriage” was shared by two principals, along with the opinion that people had to “leave their egos at the door” in order to make the model work. In response to this question, three themes emerged: (a) modeling collaboration, (b) strengths of skill sets, and (c) working marriage. Data was coded into these subcategories and Table 3 outlines the examples related to instructional leadership, as well as the number of principals that reported the examples and frequency of references. Within these sub-categories, co-principals provided examples to support these themes.

Principal 2 is currently a solo principal, but served as a co-principal for two years overseeing two schools. She reflected,

So, I think that the co-principal model is a perfect example of shaping that collaborative culture because we're modeling for our staff what it looks like to work collaboratively. It doesn't come down to, well, one person has the final say. It comes down to we are modeling what that professional learning community, that collaborative culture, should look like, not only for our staff, but also for our parents and for our students.

Principal 6, who served as a co-principal in both charter and public schools, said, We tried to be, intentionally tried to be, very transparent about our own process in collaborating, and coming to a decision together, and what that back and forth looked like. He and I even read a couple of the same leadership books, when we were dealing with our ILT or our leadership, our administrative team. We read a couple of books about how to elicit disagreement and argument within a meeting,
and then practiced that with each other. It helped us with our communication. And it helped us to develop a team and a culture at our school of being able to disagree, and actually practice those behaviors of pushing back and listening, and all that kind of stuff. And then he and I of course would model it for our team, which was pretty interesting.

Principal 4 offered,

Because I think that individuals have weaknesses and strengths, and if it's the right team of people, you can really benefit from each other's strengths and weaknesses. I really felt that my second teaching model or co-principalship that my co-principal was a super, superpower with staff development. And so, why not? Great! That's your superpower, you go with it. And just kind of being able, as far as the teaching and learning, to really tap into each other's strengths so that you can really make it powerful for your staff and your students.

Principal 9 shared,

I think it worked well because we had equal strengths and because we were co-principals this leadership model enabled or empowered both of us to speak from the voice of a principal, as opposed to one of us speaking as a principal and one of us speaking as a vice principal with the idea that somebody could speak over us at that point, or they could go to the principal later and get a different response. We carried the same weight, and that that helped in our dialogue with our teachers.
Table 3.

*Examples Related to Instructional Leadership as Reported by K-12 Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples Related to Instructional Leadership</th>
<th>Number of Principals who Reported Examples</th>
<th>Number of References of Examples Reported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modeling Collaboration</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengths of Skill Sets</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Marriage</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STANDARD 3: Management and Learning Environment:** Education leaders manage the organization to cultivate a safe and productive learning and working environment.

The third question of this study sought to answer: *How does the co-principal model support a school principal to manage the organization to cultivate a safe and productive learning and working environment?* The principals interviewed had the strongest opinions in relation to this question, will all nine reporting the co-principal model allows them to share the workload with another person. In fact, each co-principal described how they split the duties within each of their school sites. They collectively felt working in the co-principal model allows them more presence at the school site and value “not being alone at the top.” In response to this question, three themes emerged: (a) having two leaders split the workload, (b) not being alone at the top, and (c) utilizing the strengths of two people. Data was coded into these subcategories and Table 4 outlines the examples related to management and learning environment, as well as the number of principals that reported the examples and frequency of references. Within these sub-categories, co-principals provided examples to support these themes.
Principal 6 reported,

I think in this area, and maybe this was part of the divide that we had, because we did a lot together, where our thinking was together. But we also, in dividing up our roles, I took on the instructional piece more, and he took on school safety and grounds, and some of those sorts of things. So, I think it allowed him to spend more time with things like school security and school safety, and making sure that our teams were productive. It allowed both of us to meet up in the morning, talk for a little bit, and then go out to work with our teams to make sure that we were getting the most out of our teams.

Principal 9 shared,

The first year we split it up by grade level. I had fifth grade through eighth grade and my co-principal had kindergarten through fourth grade. It was a cleaner separation when we did it that way. I think in a lot of ways it was easier to manage because we essentially were principals of our grade levels and any questions that came in regarding anything, it was just divided by grade level.

Principal 8, who is co-principals with Principal 7, said, “The biggest thing is the communication and really reviewing our calendar constantly of knowing, okay, I have this to do. This is my task I need to get done this week.” Principal 2 agreed and reported, “So I think that collaboration and that sense of you're not in it alone helps to produce that kind of safe environment. It's that multiple sets of eyes. Things that I might not see, somebody else might see, and vice versa.”

According to Principal 9,

I think our strengths, playing to our strengths. My co-principal was very good at
a lot of the documentation portions as far as communicating with district office personnel, the required documentation that principals have to fill out in general, working with the community, working with the parent organizations, where my strength was more in working with the students, particularly discipline and safety issues on campus. It allowed both of us to work to our strengths and to feel confident in making decisions without having to seek the authorization or approval of a higher person of authority. We both were able to maximize our abilities and yet didn't have to worry so much about the parts where maybe we'd have struggled more. We were able to just focus on our strengths.

Table 4.

*Examples Related to Management and Learning Environment as Reported by K-12 Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples Related to Management and the Learning Environment</th>
<th>Number of Principals who Reported Examples</th>
<th>Number of References of Examples Reported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Having Two Leaders Split the Work</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Being Alone at the Top</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilizing the Strengths of Two People</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STANDARD 4: Family and Community Engagement:** Education leaders collaborate with families and other stakeholders to address diverse student and community interests and mobilize community resources.

The fourth question of this study sought to answer: *How does the co-principal
model support a school principal to collaborate with families and other stakeholders to address diverse student and community interests and mobilize community resources? All nine principals emphasized and elaborated on the ability of having two full time principals to “divide and conquer” and “split the responsibilities with another person” when asked about family and community engagement. Many noted that it allows them to have a deeper relationship with and spend more time with various stakeholder groups because they can concentrate on half of what a solo principal is typically responsible for. Principals also said that the model especially works in this scenario when certain personalities are drawn to one co-principal and not the other; it allows them an option. Principals shared that the co-principal model, in relation to working with stakeholders, allows them a greater work/life balance in that splitting the school responsibilities with another principal means they do not have to be at “everything”. In response to this question, two themes emerged: (a) divide and conquer and (b) splitting the responsibilities of stakeholders. Data was coded into these subcategories and Table 5 outlines the examples related to family and community engagement, as well as the number of principals that reported the examples and frequency of references. Within these sub-categories, co-principals provided examples to support these themes.

Principal 1 reported,

We divide and conquer. He spent more time with community, like the PTSA, parent support groups, our ELAC meetings. So, he did a lot more work with the community, and I did a lot more work with our individual teachers and our pathways within our departments.
Principal 5, who had worked with Principal 1, agreed.

Yes, I did a school site council in a PTA, and he would do maybe DELAC and ELAC, but if there was something on the agenda that I had more expertise or was under my umbrella and I needed to be a little more specific, I would go to those meetings that he normally would attend and vice versa.

Principal 3 added,

I think it works because number one, it's good to have two people who have experience that can relate and connect with different people. Because again, it's different when you have a vice principal that you're coaching up versus when you have a co-principal model. It's your equal. So, you kind of have this unit, this strong unit. So, if maybe you're having difficulty making a connection with one parent, you know that your co-principal will most likely be able to make that connection. I think it just really helps to reach all of your stakeholders. I really do.

Principal 2 shared,

This is one of the areas where the co-principalship model is so incredibly effective, because we're all individuals. We all find that we connect or build a deeper relationship with certain stakeholders than with others, and that's just the reality. The co-principalship model works really well, because there were some students who, for whatever reason, maybe trauma, what they have at home, a whole variety of things, responded better to a male than they did to a female, and vice versa. My co-principal would tell you he doesn't do kindergartners, whereas that's kind of my bread and butter. So, again, that impacts how we include our
families in the fold of what we're doing, because of the experiences that we had. It then also gave us an opportunity ... If there was a student or a stakeholder that I was really struggling to get on board, it gave me someone else to kind of say, "Okay, you know what? Maybe you can try the message, and it comes across differently," and vice versa.

Principal 5 explained,

I think it works because to have the principal go to every single one of those events, you would have to be out pretty much four nights out of five. And that can be very taxing on someone mentally, physically, emotionally. And so it works. It just puts the responsibility, it totally worse.

Table 5.

Examples Related to Family and Community Engagement as Reported by K-12 Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples Related to Family and Community Engagement</th>
<th>Number of Principals who Reported Examples</th>
<th>Number of References of Examples Reported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Divide and Conquer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Splitting the Responsibilities of Stakeholders</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

STANDARD 5: Ethics and Integrity: Education leaders make decisions, model, and behave in ways that demonstrate professionalism, ethics, integrity, justice, and equity and hold staff to the same standard.

The fifth question of this study sought to answer: How does the co-principal
model support a school principal to make decisions, model, and behave in ways that demonstrate professionalism, ethics, integrity, justice, and equity and hold staff to the same standard? All principals reported that working in the co-principal model is a natural example for staff, students, and parents in demonstrating professionalism, ethics, integrity, justice, and equity. They reiterated the points made in answering question 2, in that the collaborative model of the co-principalship shows stakeholders how different people with different viewpoints can come together to work toward a common goal. Numerous principals noted that they would handle disagreements behind closed doors and display a united front with staff and other stakeholders. Some noted a downside to this is decision-making or responding to stakeholder questions, which can take more time than if a solo principal was solely responsible for that decision. In response to this question, three themes emerged: (a) modeling collaboration and professionalism, (b) communication, and (c) pushing each other to be better. Data was coded into these subcategories and Table 6 outlines the examples related to instructional leadership, as well as the number of principals that reported the examples and frequency of references. Within these sub-categories, co-principals provided examples to support these themes.

Principal 3 shared an example,

You model professionalism through having one another's back. And by that, I mean you are a team, you are a unit. There's no, well, if I don't get what I want, I'm going to go to mom or I'm going to go to dad. It's you model in front of your staff that you have to be professional and that we are a unit. I think that that's really important. As teachers, same thing, they have to model that with their parents, with their students. I think that that's really been the case.
She continued, “We never just answer anything off the cuff without really knowing where one another stands and where we stand as a unit. We can disagree behind closed doors, but not in front of our staff.”

Principals 7 and 8 discussed the importance of communication in working with another principal. “We work really hard in that communication and in working like that, and it's a level of respect and if you're in a co-principal model then you understand what I'm saying.” Principal 1 shared his feelings. “Because we always walked out of the office in agreement. So, if there was something that I may not have agreed with, or my co-principal didn't agree with, we would really close the door, and we would have a united, just a united front.”

Principal 4 elaborated on how having an equal leader pushed her to be better, saying, “That's an interesting aspect of it because I think having a co-principal is that you're a good role model for one another.” She continued,

It just makes you better because you have a role model that is at the same level as you and you can be like, wow, she just said that so beautifully and eloquently. You start reflecting and thinking, Oh, man, I hope I could do it that good. You know? So, I think it just makes you better because you're surrounded by people who do a good job.
Table 6.

*Examples Related to Ethics and Integrity as Reported by K-12 Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples Related to Ethics and Integrity</th>
<th>Number of Principals who Reported Examples</th>
<th>Number of References of Examples Reported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modeling Collaboration and Professionalism</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushing Each Other to Be Better</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STANDARD 6: External Context and Policy:** Education leaders influence political, social, economic, legal, and cultural contexts affecting education to improve education policies and practices.

The sixth question of this study sought to answer: *How does the co-principal model support a school principal to influence political, social, economic, legal, and cultural contexts affecting education to improve education policies and practices?* The principals interviewed shared that this was another example of the importance of having two people sharing the principalship. They reported that utilizing the strengths of both people allows them to have someone else in their corner advocating for the same things. Several noted that certain issues at their school sites were better handled by having two administrators who have two different viewpoints, lenses, life experiences, or leadership styles. Principals noted that for the model to work however, there has to be a strong level of trust and transparency amongst the two principals. In response to this question, two themes emerged: (a) utilizing the strengths of two people and (b) two people advocating. Data was coded into these subcategories and Table 7 outlines the examples related to
instructional leadership, as well as the number of principals that reported the examples and frequency of references. Within these sub-categories, co-principals provided examples to support these themes.

Principal 2 said,

I think because you're building off two people's unique strengths, it really impacts the ability to improve those policies and practices. I can think of things, even at my own school site, that we changed two years ago under the co-principal model that have now stayed because we found that they were so much more effective for what we were trying to do with our kids and with our community that probably wouldn't have happened had it always just been a singular principal model.

Principal 3 agreed, saying,

It really impacts your stakeholders, in your cultural context of your school, just having those two strong leaders, the presence and the parents knowing that they can go to either one. It's not just, again, typically it's the principal shouldering the majority of the responsibilities. I feel like it just creates a good balance.

Principal 9 shared,

I think largely because every issue that came up, or every situation that came up, we had multiple lenses. The way that my co-principal would see something and the way I would see something might be very different, but by sharing our perspectives, we would come up with a more rounded solution. I'm often able to avoid some of the hiccups that we may have stepped into or we may have had to deal with had we just been alone because we may not have thought of the other perspective.
Principal 3 discussed,

Having a co-principal puts you in a good place, especially with your superintendent because there's two of you. So I definitely feel like if you have two strong people that are advocating for one thing, it is more likely to convey that this is an issue of great importance or something that should be highly considered because you have two strong principals that are saying, we really feel this.

Table 7.

*Examples Related to External Context and Policy as Reported by K-12 Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples Related to External Context and Policy</th>
<th>Number of Principals who Reported Examples</th>
<th>Number of References of Examples Reported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Utilizing the Strengths of Two People</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two People Advocating</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Advantages to the Co-Principal Model**

*What do you perceive are the advantages to the co-principalship?* In response to a follow-up question on the advantages of the co-principal model, two themes emerged: (a) divide and conquer and (b) two people sharing the workload. All of the principal agreed that the job of a school principal comes with a great deal of responsibilities that oftentimes makes it difficult for one person to do alone, in addition to doing it well. The co-principal model is an advantage in having someone else to share the workload by splitting the responsibilities with another person.
Principal 2 shared,

The shared leadership is a definite advantage. I think especially in terms of managing large school sites or larger school sites, having that co-principalship provides opportunities for the leader of the school site to be fully invested in every aspect. For example, one of the nice elements is if I was in an IEP, I could be fully invested in my IEP and in making sure that student and those parents got the time and the dedication that they deserved, because I knew that my partner could handle whatever else came through the door while I was devoting my time to that. Whereas, again, when you're training a vice principal, no matter how good they are, there's still those questions or they'll look in the window about, I don't know what to do with this. Then your focus is drawn different ways.

Principal 1 felt, "The job is daunting, and there are so many moving parts that, in order to, and I feel, in order to do this large of a job, it's nice to have two leaders, and have two people making decisions." Principal 5 added,

Shared leadership, that's definitely an advantage. You have what we always call a thinking partner. And there's some things that are really confidential and it's nice when you can walk across the hall or go to the next office and close the door and sit down and have conversations around some of the things that you're struggling with in terms of the school site. And get someone else's feedback who understands the dynamics of the job. It's hard to do with assistant principal because they haven't had the spectrum yet, and they're getting there. But that's what we found the most powerful.

Principals 7 and 8 emphasized that they experienced a better work/life balance
due to sharing leadership at their school site.

On a personal note, I really think it should be the future of especially high school principalships, because with the study, you really should consider researching how many principals get divorced, who are high school principals. And the difficulty on the family and the structure and the time commitment and being a good parent and a good spouse is just incredible. And to find that balance. I really believe that co-principal model allows that balance, supports that balance and protects that extra time. We all know high school takes 70 to 80 hours to run. When you have a co you can get it down to 60 to 70.

Table 8.

Examples Related to the Advantages of the Co-Principal Model as Reported by K-12 Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples Related to the Advantages to the Co-Principal Model</th>
<th>Number of Principals who Reported Examples</th>
<th>Number of References of Examples Reported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Divide and Conquer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two People to Share the Workload</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Disadvantages to the Co-Principal Model

What do you perceive are the advantages to the co-principalship? In response to a follow-up question on the disadvantages of the co-principal model, three themes emerged: (a) must be the right fit of people, (b) lack of being involved in every aspect of the job, and (c) two people making decisions takes time. All of the principals felt
strongly that in order for the co-principalship to be successful, it takes the right two people being matched together. Some shared stories of experiences they had in which they did not see eye-to-eye with their counterpart or their fears of being matched with someone who was not a philosophical and/or work ethics match. A few principals also noted that not being involved in every single aspect of the job did not allow them the growth or experience that solo principals receive.

Principal 2 explained, “You definitely have to have the right mix, you have to have the right relationships.” Principal 4 said,

If it's two people who cannot work together, cannot... Even if you disagree, it's kind of like parents. It's like working with kids and if our teachers ever saw that we didn't agree, then they'll notice that division. I think it could, if it's a bad co-principalship, could be a disaster, an absolute disaster.

Principal 5 added,

If you don't have the right team or right two people, the disadvantage is that it doesn't work because of those things I said earlier. The ego, or if you don't trust, or if you have some implicit bias about how skilled the other person is or isn't. So that could be a disadvantage.

And Principal 9 emphasized,

I think the only downside would be if you didn't have the ability to work well together. If your personalities didn't work well, if one was more dominant or one with more alpha, and didn't have that ability to recognize when it's their strength and when it's the other person's strength and be able to trade off.

Principal 3 shared,
One disadvantage is that sometimes you get really comfortable in the things you're good at and it makes you not want to go outside of that. For example, I really love the upper grades and I've really spent a lot of time in the upper grades and I spend a lot of time with my teachers in the upper grades. But I know that at some point I'm probably going to need to switch and I'm going to need to be over the lower grades, so they get a full holistic balance.

Principals 7 and 8 added, “On occasion it can be confusing to stakeholders.”

Principal 6 said,

It is easier for me now, as a single principal here at (unnamed high school), for me to go off. Not go off, but to, I don't know, make a snap decision that maybe I'll regret later. It was harder with the co-principalship, because I had to have that cooling off time or discussing things with him, at least big decisions, right?

Principal 1 agreed,

I know my staff is very excited that one person now gets to make the decisions, because they didn't like having to go back and forth, because there still was the, one person is going to say yes, one person is going to say no, before they have an opportunity to talk, right.
Table 9.

*Examples Related to the Disadvantages of the Co-Principal Model as Reported by K-12 Principals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples Related to the Disadvantages to the Co-Principal Model</th>
<th>Number of Principals who Reported Examples</th>
<th>Number of References of Examples Reported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Must Be the Right Fit of People</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Being Involved in Every Aspect of the Job</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two People Making Decisions Takes Time</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Preferred Leadership Model**

The researcher asked participants one final question. *Which leadership model do you prefer and why - the solo principalship or the co-principalship?* Seven of the nine respondents stated they preferred the shared leadership model of the co-principalship. Two of the respondents like them both and both models have their “allure”, with one of the respondents saying it depends on the school size. Principal 2 shared,

I like the co-principalship. It didn't feel like I was in it by myself. It always felt like I had a thought partner. Even as a solo principal, if I get stuck on something where I'm really not sure, I'm still most likely to call my co-principal, who's now in a different role, and say, "Can you just think this through with me?" Because you learn so much about how the other person thinks. So, I think that's definitely a huge advantage.

Principal 3 summed up, “I've really grown to love the co-principalship. I really
have. I feel that I'm also continuously learning. It gives me an opportunity to learn from my colleague who's my equal.” Principal 4 agreed, stating, “The co-principalship is by far, in 29 years, my favorite model.”

**Analysis of Artifacts**

All nine participants were asked to provide artifacts related to their co-principalship. Artifacts collected included sample role responsibility sheets, newsletters, flyers, emails, photographs, newspaper articles, institutional collateral and other examples of viable products. Additionally, the researcher reviewed the participants’ school websites and other public records to identify artifacts that could confirm information expressed during the interviews. Six of the principals provided a role responsibility sheet to show which principal was responsible for the various aspects of leading their school. Principal 1 said, “We split the campus, again, in half.” Principal 3 shared, “We split by grade levels. She does the lower grades. I do the upper grades.” Principal 5 elaborated, “I did a school site council in a PTA, and he would do maybe DELAC and ELAC, but if there was something on the agenda that I had more expertise or was under my umbrella and I needed to be a little more specific, I would go to those meetings that he normally would attend and vice versa.” Principal 9 shared in his experience duties were divided two different ways.

The first year we split it up by grade level. I had fifth grade through eighth grade and my co-principal had kindergarten through fourth grade. It was a cleaner separation when we did it that way. I think in a lot of ways it was easier to manage because we essentially were principals of our grade levels and any questions that came in regarding anything, it was just divided by grade level. The
second year we decided to work more towards our strengths. She focused more on the instructional coaching and the evaluation process and more of the clerical side and the coaching side of administration. I focused more on the behaviors, the discipline, the safety programs, the classified employees, so kind of the day to day stuff.

Two principals also shared documentation sent to stakeholders to verify that their communication was sent out with one voice. Principals 7 and 8 reported, “Whenever we do speeches, we always follow a shared model. I do the welcome and then she will do the closing. So, we get those roles in place, so that we know exactly what we're going to do.”

Table 10.

Artifacts Related to the Co-Principal Model as Reported by K-12 Principals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artifacts Related to the Co-Principal Model as Reported by K-12 Principals</th>
<th>Number of Principals who Reported Examples</th>
<th>Number of References of Examples Reported</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Separation of Role Responsibilities</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Front / One Voice</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key Findings**

Principals in this study shared perceptions on their experiences of working in the co-principal model of school leadership, based on the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELs). The six broad standards are: (1) Development and Implementation of a Shared Vision, (2) Instructional Leadership, (3) Management and
Learning Environment, (4) Family and Community Engagement, (5) Ethics and Integrity, and (6) External Context and Policy. Key findings are aligned with each of the six conceptual areas.

**Finding Related to Question 1 - Development and Implementation of a Shared Vision of Learning**

All nine principals interviewed reported they have increased leadership as a result of the co-principal model. The collective opinion of the principals is that there is not just one, but two people to facilitate the development and implementation of a shared vision for their school sites.

**Finding Related to Question 2 - Instructional Leadership**

All nine principals interviewed reported that working in the co-principal model is the best example of instructional leadership and collaboration for staff and students. They explained that the collaborative nature of the co-principal model shows stakeholders how different people with different viewpoints can come together to work toward a common goal. The principals felt like they had more instructional leadership due to having two leaders.

**Finding Related to Question 3 - Management of Learning Environment**

All nine principals interviewed reported that the co-principal model allows them to share the workload with another person. Each co-principal described how they split the duties within each of their school sites. They collectively felt working in the co-principal model allows them more presence at the school site and value “not being alone at the top.”
Finding Related to Question 4 - Family and Community Engagement

All nine principals emphasized and elaborated on the ability of having two full time principals to “divide and conquer” and “split the responsibilities with another person”. Many noted that it allows them to have a deeper relationship with and spend more time with various stakeholders’ groups because they are able to concentrate on half of what a solo principal is typically responsible for. Principals also said that the model works in this scenario when certain personalities are drawn to one co-principal and not the other; it allows them an option. Principals shared that the co-principal model allows them a greater work/life balance in that splitting the school responsibilities with another principal means they do not have to be at “everything”.

Finding Related to Question 5 - Ethics and Integrity

All nine principals reported that working in the co-principal model is a natural example for staff, students, and parents in demonstrating professionalism, ethics, integrity, justice, and equity. They reiterated the points made in answering question 2, in that the collaborative model shows stakeholders how different people with different viewpoints can come together to work toward a common goal. Five principals noted that they would handle disagreements behind closed doors and would have a united front in front of staff and other stakeholders.

Finding Related to Question 6 - External Context and Policy

All nine principals interviewed shared that this is another example of the importance of having two people sharing the principalship. They reported that utilizing the strengths of both people allows them to have someone else in their corner advocating for the same things. Seven participants noted that certain issues at their school sites were
better handled by having two administrators who have two different viewpoints, lenses, life experiences, or leadership styles.

Findings Related to Follow-Up Questions - Advantages and Disadvantages of the Co-Principalship

All nine of the principals agreed that the job of a school principal comes with a great deal of responsibilities that oftentimes makes it difficult for one person to do alone, in addition to doing it well. The co-principal model is an advantage in having someone else to share the workload by splitting the responsibilities with another person.

All nine of the principals felt strongly that in order for the co-principalship to be successful, it takes the right two people being matched together. Two participants shared stories of experiences they had in which they did not see eye-to-eye with their counterpart or their fears of being matched with someone who was not a philosophical and/or work ethics match. Four principals also noted that not being involved in every single aspect of the job did not allow them the growth or experience that solo principals get.

Findings Related to the Analysis of the Artifacts

All nine principals interviewed noted that the administrative duties expected of a school principal were split with their partner. Four participants provided a “role responsibilities sheet” to share how their responsibilities were divided. Four of the principals noted that they and their co-principal split the school by grade level, the other five shared that they divided their duties by strengths, such as working with stakeholder groups, departments, student needs, etc. Two principals shared documentation from communication with stakeholders. All nine principals stressed the importance of having “one voice”, saying that it is essential to the success of the co-principalship and helps
with not being played against each other by students, staff, and parents.

Summary of Findings

- The co-principal model gives increased leadership presence at the school site. The model allows for not just one, but two people to facilitate the development and implementation of a shared vision for their school sites.

- The co-principal model is the best example of instructional leadership and collaboration for staff and students. The collaborative nature of the co-principal model shows stakeholders how different people with different viewpoints can come together to work toward a common goal. There is more instructional leadership due to having two leaders.

- The co-principal model allows principals to share the workload with another person. The model allows for more presence at the school site and principals value “not being alone at the top.”

- The co-principal model allows principals to “divide and conquer” and “split the responsibilities with another person”. It allows leaders to have a deeper relationship with and spend more time with various stakeholders’ groups because they are able to concentrate on half of what a solo principal was typically responsible for. The co-principal model allows for a greater work/life balance in that splitting the school responsibilities with another principal means they do not have to be at “everything”.

- The co-principal model is a natural example for staff, students, and parents in demonstrating professionalism, ethics, integrity, justice, and equity. The collaborative model shows stakeholders how different people with different
viewpoints can come together to work toward a common goal.

- The co-principal model utilizes the strengths of both people to advocate for the same things.
- The co-principal model is an advantage in having someone else to share the workload by splitting the responsibilities with another person.
- In order for the co-principalship to be successful, it takes the right two people being matched together. Also, not being involved in every single aspect of the job does not allow them the growth or experience that solo principals get.
- In a co-principalship, responsibilities are shared and divided. Communication with stakeholders, written or oral, comes from both individuals with one voice.

**Unexpected Findings**

**Unexpected Finding 1**

The co-principal model of school leadership is the preferred leadership model. Seven of the nine respondents stated they preferred the shared leadership model of the co-principalship. Two of the respondents said they like them both and both models have their “allure”, with one of the respondents saying it depends on the school size. Seven principals have either previously served or are currently serving as a solo principal. The other two have not served as solo principals but have served as assistant or vice principals under one school principal.

**Unexpected Finding 2**

There are very few co-principals in the state of California, specifically Southern California. As a result of no centralized database from either CDE or ACSA, the researcher turned to Google to find potential individuals to participate in the study. After
an exhaustive search and numerous phone calls to various county offices of education and school districts, the researcher began looking at school websites in order to locate former and current co-principals. After locating fourteen potential participants, the researcher was able to secure nine who were willing to be interviewed.

**Unexpected Finding 3**

Each of the six interview questions, follow-up questions, and analysis of artifacts yielded the same unanimous responses from participants. In all instances, all nine participants agreed that the co-principal model enhances a principal’s ability to lead a school in relation to the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELs).

**Summary of Unexpected Findings**

- The co-principal model of school leadership is the preferred leadership model.
- There are very few former and current co-principals in Southern California. No centralized database exists of co-principals in the state of California.
- Participants’ responses were unanimous for all interview questions and the analysis of artifacts.

**Summary**

Chapter IV presented the data collected and findings of the qualitative study. This study sought to examine the lived experiences of K-12 school principals in Southern California who have served in the co-principal model for at least one year and within the last five years. The study aimed to discover their perceptions of working in the co-principal model of school leadership, based on the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELs). The population was K-12 principals in California, and the
sample was K-12 principals in Riverside County and Los Angeles County, California. A total of nine school principals participated in the study, three males and six females. The six research questions guided the study around the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELs).

Research participants engaged in an in-depth, face-to-face and virtual interviews at a location of their choice. All interviews were recorded and transcribed using the Rev Transcription service. The data was coded for emergent themes using NVivo coding software. To increase reliability, the researcher utilized inter-coder reliability (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999) through working with a peer researcher to code a portion of the data until a common conclusion was reached.

The six conceptual areas are the six broad CPSEL standards are: (1) Development and Implementation of a Shared Vision, (2) Instructional Leadership, (3) Management and Learning Environment, (4) Family and Community Engagement, (5) Ethics and Integrity, and (6) External Context and Policy. The CPSELs were the foundation for how data was coded in this study. Findings were further sorted into themes based upon the responses from the participants.

The chapter concluded with an examination of the artifacts which outlined documentation that showed how co-principals separated their job responsibilities, showed a united front/one voice in their messages, and communicated with stakeholders. Chapter V presents the conclusions of the study, implications for action, and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“Individually we are a drop. Together, we are an ocean.” - Ryunosuke Satoro

Chapter V presents the major findings, conclusions, and implications for action based on this phenomenological study. Conclusions and implications were drawn from the key findings of the research of literature and the study. The chapter closes with recommendations for future research and concluding remarks on the topic.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research was to examine the experiences of K-12 school principals who participated in the co-principal model viewed through the lens of the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELS).

**Research Questions**

The following questions were used to guide this study:

1. How does the co-principal model support a school principal to facilitate the development and implementation of a shared vision of learning and growth for all students?
2. How does the co-principal model support a school principal to shape a collaborative culture of teaching and learning?
3. How does the co-principal model support a school principal to manage the organization to cultivate a safe and productive learning and working environment?
4. How does the co-principal model support a school principal to collaborate with families and other stakeholders to address diverse student and community interests and mobilize community resources?

5. How does the co-principal model support a school principal to make decisions, model, and behave in ways that demonstrate professionalism, ethics, integrity, justice, and equity and hold staff to the same standard?

6. How does the co-principal model support a school principal to influence political, social, economic, legal, and cultural contexts affecting education to improve education policies and practices?

**Methodology**

This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of K-12 school principals in Southern California who have served in a co-principal leadership position. The researcher conducted face-to-face and virtual interviews with three male and six female principals in Riverside County and Los Angeles County, California at a time and location selected by the participants in January 2020. Interviews were recorded using an iPhone and then transcribed using the Rev Transcription service. After receiving transcriptions from Rev Transcription, data was coded using the NVivo coding software. Data was coded for frequency of themes aligned with the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELs).

**Population**

The population for this study consisted of all K-12 public school principals in the state of California, specifically those serving in Southern California. Based on the CDE website, the estimated population consists of the 10,521 school principals serving in
California at the time of this study. In an attempt to draw an estimated targeted population, the researcher contacted the California Department of Education and the Association of California School Administrators, in addition to completing an exhaustive search of the literature to see if there were any recorded estimates regarding the percent of schools, either nationwide or in California, that utilize the co-principal model. For the purposes of this study, there is no quantifiable target population, but both the CDE and ACSA acknowledged that they were aware of many schools throughout California utilizing the co-principal model. Those selected to participate in the study were principals who: (1) had experience working as a full-time principal in the co-principal model in a K-12 public school for at least one year, (2) had experience serving as a full-time co-principal within the last five years, (3) had experience sharing the full-time principal position with another full-time principal equally, and (4) were located in Southern California.

Sample

A sample of nine public comprehensive K-12 school principals were chosen to participate in the study. The sample included three males and six female principals employed in Riverside County and Los Angeles County. The sample of nine school principals for the study were chosen from the 10,521 K-12 public school principals in California at the time of this study.

To conduct and execute this qualitative research study, the researcher used a strategic, purposeful sampling method. For this study, the sampling method was to use the delimiting methods and narrow the population to principals who had 1) experience working as a full-time principal in the co-principal model in a K-12 public school for at
least one year; 2) experience serving as a full-time co-principal within the last five years;
3) experience sharing the full-time principal position with another full-time principal
equally; and 4) were located in Southern California. After identifying 14 current and
former co-principals in Southern California, a list of potential study participants was
compiled. Potential study participants were contacted by phone and email to ascertain
interest in participation in the study and schedule the interview.

**Major Findings**

The major findings of this qualitative phenomenological study are organized in
relation to each of the research questions. Major findings are aligned with the six
conceptual areas as outlined in the review of literature: (1) Development and
Implementation of a Shared Vision, (2) Instructional Leadership, (3) Management and
Learning Environment, (4) Family and Community Engagement, (5) Ethics and Integrity,
and (6) External Context and Policy.

**Summary of Findings Related to the Research Questions**

Principals in this study shared perceptions on their experiences of working in the
co-principal model of school leadership, based on the California Professional Standards
for Education Leaders (CPSEls). The six broad standards are: (1) Development and
Implementation of a Shared Vision, (2) Instructional Leadership, (3) Management and
Learning Environment, (4) Family and Community Engagement, (5) Ethics and Integrity,
and (6) External Context and Policy. Key findings are aligned with each of the six
conceptual areas.
Finding Related to Question 1 - Development and Implementation of a Shared Vision of Learning

Research Question 1 asked: How does the co-principal model support a school principal to facilitate the development and implementation of a shared vision of learning and growth for all students?

All nine principals interviewed reported they have increased leadership as a result of the co-principal model. The collective opinion of the principals is that there is not just one, but two people to facilitate the development and implementation of a shared vision for their school sites.

Finding Related to Question 2 - Instructional Leadership

Research Question 2 asked: How does the co-principal model support a school principal to shape a collaborative culture of teaching and learning?

All nine principals interviewed reported that working in the co-principal model is the best example of instructional leadership and collaboration for staff and students. They explained that the collaborative nature of the co-principal model shows stakeholders how different people with different viewpoints can come together to work toward a common goal. The principals felt like they had more instructional leadership due to having two leaders.

Finding Related to Question 3 - Management of Learning Environment

Research Question 3 asked: How does the co-principal model support a school principal to manage the organization to cultivate a safe and productive learning and working environment?
All nine principals interviewed reported that the co-principal model allows them to share the workload with another person. Each co-principal described how they split the duties within each of their school sites. They collectively felt working in the co-principal model allows them more presence at the school site and value “not being alone at the top.”

**Finding Related to Question 4 - Family and Community Engagement**

Research Question 4 asked: *How does the co-principal model support a school principal to collaborate with families and other stakeholders to address diverse student and community interests and mobilize community resources?*

All nine principals emphasized and elaborated on the ability of having two full time principals to “divide and conquer” and “split the responsibilities with another person”. Many noted that it allows them to have a deeper relationship with and spend more time with various stakeholders’ groups because they are able to concentrate on half of what a solo principal is typically responsible for. Principals also said that the model works in this scenario when certain personalities are drawn to one co-principal and not the other; it allows them an option. Principals shared that the co-principal model allows them a greater work/life balance in that splitting the school responsibilities with another principal means they do not have to be at “everything”.

**Finding Related to Question 5 - Ethics and Integrity**

Research Question 5 asked: *How does the co-principal model support a school principal to make decisions, model, and behave in ways that demonstrate professionalism, ethics, integrity, justice, and equity and hold staff to the same standard?*
All nine principals reported that working in the co-principal model is a natural example for staff, students, and parents in demonstrating professionalism, ethics, integrity, justice, and equity. They reiterated the points made in answering question 2, in that the collaborative model shows stakeholders how different people with different viewpoints can come together to work toward a common goal. Five principals noted that they would handle disagreements behind closed doors and would have a united front in front of staff and other stakeholders.

**Finding Related to Question 6 - External Context and Policy**

Research Question 6 asked: How does the co-principal model support a school principal to influence political, social, economic, legal, and cultural contexts affecting education to improve education policies and practices?

All nine principals interviewed shared that this is another example of the importance of having two people sharing the principalship. They reported that utilizing the strengths of both people allows them to have someone else in their corner advocating for the same things. Seven participants noted that certain issues at their school sites were better handled by having two administrators who have two different viewpoints, lenses, life experiences, or leadership styles.

Follow up questions asked: (1) What do you perceive are the advantages of the co-principalship? and (2) What do you perceive are the disadvantages of the co-principalship?
Findings Related to Follow-Up Questions - Advantages and Disadvantages of the Co-Principalship

All nine of the principals agreed that the job of a school principal comes with a great deal of responsibilities that oftentimes makes it difficult for one person to do alone, in addition to doing it well. The co-principal model is an advantage in having someone else to share the workload by splitting the responsibilities with another person.

All nine of the principals felt strongly that in order for the co-principalship to be successful, it takes the right two people being matched together. Two participants shared stories of experiences they had in which they did not see eye-to-eye with their counterpart or their fears of being matched with someone who was not a philosophical and/or work ethics match. Four principals also noted that not being involved in every single aspect of the job did not allow them the growth or experience that solo principals get.

After the interviews were completed, the researcher asked the participants to provide any artifacts that could help or better explain the information they gave during the interview.

Findings Related to the Analysis of the Artifacts

All nine principals interviewed noted that the administrative duties expected of a school principal were split with their partner. Four participants provided a “role responsibilities sheet” to share how their responsibilities were divided. Four of the principals noted that they and their co-principal split the school by grade level, the other five shared that they divided their duties by strengths, such as working with stakeholder groups, departments, student needs, etc. Two principals shared documentation from communication with stakeholders. All nine principals stressed the importance of having
“one voice”, saying that it is essential to the success of the co-principalship and helps with not being played against each other by students, staff, and parents.

**Unexpected Findings**

Through the review of literature and the qualitative research study, three unexpected findings were uncovered.

**Unexpected Finding 1**

The co-principal model of school leadership is the preferred leadership model. Seven of the nine respondents stated they preferred the shared leadership model of the co-principalship. Two of the respondents said they like them both and both models have their “allure”, with one of the respondents saying it depends on the school size. Seven principals have either previously served or are currently serving as a solo principal. The other two have not served as solo principals, but have served as assistant or vice principals under one school principal.

**Unexpected Finding 2**

There are very few co-principals in the state of California, specifically Southern California. As a result of no centralized database from either CDE or ACSA, the researcher turned to Google to find potential individuals to participate in the study. After an exhaustive search and numerous phone calls to various county offices of education and school districts, the researcher began looking at school websites in order to locate former and current co-principals. After locating fourteen potential participants, the researcher was able to secure nine who were willing to be interviewed.
Unexpected Finding 3

Each of the six interview questions, follow-up questions, and analysis of artifacts yielded the same unanimous responses from participants. In all instances, all nine participants agreed that the co-principal model enhances a principal’s ability to lead a school in relation to the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELs).

Conclusions

The major findings of this study were used to form conclusions on how the co-principal model supports principals in leading and effectively running their school sites.

Conclusion 1: Principals Working in the Co-Principal Model Serve as Role Models for Collaboration and Professionalism

Participants in this study gave examples of how serving in a co-principalship allowed them to model sharing leadership and decision-making with another person who may have differing viewpoints and perspectives, while still working toward a common goal and a single message. The partner principals stated they would never disagree with each other in front of stakeholders, but instead discuss things behind closed doors, in order to present a united front to staff, students, and parents. They commented that they knew they were being watched and listened to through collegial interactions. Much like the tenants of a Professional Learning Community, they “recognize that they must work together to achieve their collective purpose of learning for all. Therefore, they create structures to promote a collaborative culture.” (Dufour, 2004, p. 8). The participants shared that constant communication and mutual respect for one another is key. The study
concluded that in a co-principalship, the principals serve as role models for collaboration and professionalism.

**Conclusion 2: Principals Working in the Co-Principal Model Believe They Make Better Decisions**

The findings support that two heads can truly be better than one. Decision-making is an essential condition of educational administration, because a school, like all formal organizations, is basically a decision-making structure (Hoy and Miskel, 2001). When it comes to decision-making, having someone to collaborate with and bounce ideas off of is beneficial, compared to an individual working in isolation. Participants shared that the co-principal model was different than having a vice-principal, in which the solo principal was the primary decision-maker who brought along the vice-principal. One participant described her co-principal as “a thought partner who is there to question your thinking or to point out different viewpoints that maybe you hadn't thought about, and in a way that is not adversarial or nor confrontational.” In the shared leadership model, you have two equal leaders who are working toward the same goals and making the same decisions for their school site.

**Conclusion 3: The Co-Principal Model Increases Leadership Efficacy at a School**

A conclusion supported by findings in the study and supported in the literature is that a school operates more effectively when there are two principals running it. Participants described being more available to stakeholders and having more time to invest in their particular skill area. In education, there are seven common correlates of effective schools. These include a clear school mission, high expectations for success, instructional leadership, opportunity to learn and time on task, safe and orderly
environment, positive home-school relations, and frequent monitoring of student progress (Kirk & Jones, 2004). Study participants were emphatic that because they were able to split their principal responsibilities, the co-principal model allowed them increased amounts of time to devote to the various aspects of effectively managing their school sites, such as more frequent classroom visits, participating in stakeholder committee meetings, and getting to know the staff, students, and parents better. Because the school is essentially cut in half, participants said they could “divide and conquer” and more effectively manage school operations and resources to ensure a safe, caring, and effective learning environment.

Conclusion 4: Principals Who Have Worked as Both a Solo and Co-Principal Prefer a Shared Leadership Environment

A conclusion from the findings is that principals prefer working in the co-principal model. All of the participants unanimously stated they would much rather work in the co-principalship, than going alone. The changing role of the school principal over the last hundred years has added more responsibilities that make it nearly impossible for one person to do, let alone, do well. Participants noted that not only did they split the responsibilities that are typically expected of a solo principal, but they were also able to mitigate and share some of the frustration and anguish principals face on a daily basis with their equal partner principal. For instance, if one of the co-principals had more experience in a certain area, or had formed a better relationship with a stakeholder, they were able to step in for the other principal. According to Alvoid and Black (2014), many new principal recruits find the job to be overwhelming and difficult. The workload, time demands, and stress associated with a school principal position are contributors to a
shortage of applicants. In an era of school reform mandates, principals should not have to work in isolation. The participants in this study prefer not to.

**Conclusion 5: The Co-Principal Model Enhances a Leader’s Work-Life Balance**

A final conclusion supported by the findings is that the co-principal model provides a better work-life balance. Work-life balance is an important aspect of a healthy work environment. According to Harper (2018), school principals tend to experience burnout to a greater degree than most business professionals. One out of every two new principals leave by their third year of leading a school (Clifford & Chiang, 2016). Maintaining work-life balance is crucial, as it helps reduce stress and helps prevent burnout in the workplace. Participants in this study felt that as solo principals they found it challenging to strike a healthy work-life balance. In the co-principalship, they felt that they still had something left for themselves and their families after a busy day at their school sites.

**Implications for Action**

Based on the results of the study and a thorough review of literature, the following implications for action are recommended for school districts and professional organizations.

- School districts in California needs to require new principals to work in a co-principal model, in order to acclimate new hires into the position. As a condition of implementation, districts must be aware of pairing cohesive personalities. Co-principal teams should be carefully examined to ensure that the “right” people are placed together.
School districts and/or local county offices of education should consider the practice of explicitly connecting new co-principal teams with veteran (mentor) co-principal teams. The mentors can coach, guide, and prepare the new principals in their shared leadership positions.

The Administrative Services Clear Credential program in California needs to include a course that addresses the co-principal model to raise awareness to districts and employees of its benefits. The class must be deliberate, planned, and specific to teaching communication and collaboration in order to support future administrators in successfully working with another full-time principal.

As a driving force for school leaders in California, ACSA should design a co-principal academy that would cover the benefits of the co-principal model and instruct administrators on best practices within the role. Co-principals who attend these trainings will have more knowledge in working successfully with their partner principal.

The California Department of Education must have a database of co-principals. A centralized database would allow those working as co-principals to network, in addition to provide a reference to those looking to query school information on those who have a dual leadership model in place.

The results of this study need to be presented at conferences, symposiums, and webinars for ACSA, to inform members of the benefits of having two full-time principals leading one school site. The forum would be particularly impactful for superintendents, as well as those who are considering, but hesitant to go into school administration.
• The findings of this study must be shared with organizations such as the ACSA, the California School Boards Association (CSBA), county offices of education, and various networking groups to educate school district leaders on the benefits of implementing the co-principal model in their schools.

Recommendations for Further Research

“The co-principal concept offers an alternative approach to traditional school administration” (Shockley & Smith, 1981, p. 92). This study filled a gap in the literature by providing principal’s perceptions of the co-principal model of school leadership as viewed through the lens of the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELs). Analyzed data from the interviews and artifacts provided information from principal’s perceptions on the following California leadership standards: (1) Development and Implementation of a Shared Vision, (2) Instructional Leadership, (3) Management and Learning Environment, (4) Family and Community Engagement, (5) Ethics and Integrity, and (6) External Context and Policy.

Recommendation 1

Based on the collected data from this study, conduct a replication study looking at schools that have implemented the co-principal model, as viewed through the lens of the California Professional Standards of Education Leaders, as perceived by district superintendents and/or classroom teachers.

Recommendation 2

In this research study, the sample was limited to counties in Southern California. The researcher recommends conducting a replication study that uses the same population with a different sample from Northern California to add to the depth of this research.
Recommendation 3

Based on the findings and the participant suggestions, it is recommended to conduct a mixed-methods study focusing on the personal characteristics needed in order for a co-principalship to be successful.

Recommendation 4

It is recommended to develop a longitudinal study to identify factors that shape how shared leadership relationships evolve and change over time.

Recommendation 5

It is recommended that a phenomenological or case study be performed on exemplary schools who have co-principals, to examine if this model has more impact than a solo principalship.

Recommendation 6

Considering the co-principal leadership model was first suggested in the 1970s, yet few schools or districts have implemented or maintained the model, the researcher also recommends a qualitative study to examine the sustainability of the co-principal model over time.

Recommendation 7

It is recommended that a quantitative study be performed on the principal role in order to compare how various stakeholders perceive the co-principal model.

Recommendation 8

A final recommendation based on participant suggestions, is for a qualitative phenomenological study be performed on gender configurations in co-principal teams, in order to examine the gender differences in a shared leadership model.
Concluding Remarks and Reflections

“Whatever the mind can conceive and believe, the mind can achieve.” - Napoleon Hill

As an educator who served for nineteen years before becoming a school principal, I was fortunate to be hired as a co-principal of a middle school five years ago. At the time, my superintendent implemented two co-principal teams at two different schools. She wanted to try the model at schools that she felt needed more principal presence. I have found the experience to be invaluable to my own growth, as well as that of the principal I work with. I have never served in a principalship alone, he was a solo principal for over a decade before working with me. We both emphatically feel that the co-principal model has been a positive experience both professionally and personally. It has helped to raise student achievement and build a collaborative culture with students and staff.

I aspired to study a topic that would provide information on this alternative leadership model, in relation to the very standards that guide administrative programs in the state of California to see if having co-principals did in fact make a difference. Conducting this study offered that opportunity, to examine the perceptions of co-principals within and outside of my school district. In addition, this study provided an opportunity to explore the very issues that today’s principal face. Through the review of literature and conducting the study, I became aware that principals across the country are experiencing the same challenges and the role of the principal is becoming more intense as the years go on. The number of people applying for and staying in the position of a school principal is at an all-time low. I wanted to see if there is an alternative to the solo principalship that could entice more candidates to apply for the position.
Conducting interviews with the nine principals was incredibly fascinating. Some participants were difficult to track down, others were difficult to get ahold of, and others were hesitant to be interviewed. The process provided them the opportunity to share their experiences - good and bad - and to further the research on this leadership model. The nine principals provided incredible insight to contribute to literature that will provide awareness to leaders and districts, as they work to address the shortage of qualified, experienced future school principals.

My hope is that this study will help to answer the question, “Are two heads better than one when it comes to school leadership?”
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Date:

Dear Superintendent,

I am a doctoral candidate in Brandman University’s Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership Program in the School of Education. I am conducting a qualitative study on the efficacy of the co-principal model of school administration as viewed through the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELs).

I identified the districts who have implemented the co-principal model. I am now seeking principals/co-principals who have experience working with the model. I am asking for your assistance in obtaining an interview with leaders within your district who have experience with the co-principalship.

This research will provide further information regarding the implementation of the co-principal model in schools. The research will include examining the co-principal model as viewed through the CPSELs. The study will also add to the literature, which analyzes the perceptions of various stakeholders who have worked with the model.

I am asking for your assistance in obtaining an interview with those who have co-principal experience. The interview would be approximately 60 minutes and I am willing to setup a time and location that will be convenient to whomever you provide. This can be done in person or virtually. If you agree to assist me with this request, you can be assured that it will be completely confidential. No names will be attached to any notes or records from the interview. All information will remain in locked files, accessible only to the researcher. No employer will have access to the interview information. The individual being interviewed will be free to stop the interview and withdraw from the study at any time. You are also encouraged to ask any questions that will help you understand how this study will be performed and/or how it will affect you. At the completion of my study, I will be happy to provide you with the findings of the research.

The research investigator, Jennifer Slater-Sanchez, is available at jslater@mail.brandman.edu or by phone at 661-609-7506, to answer any questions or concerns you may have. Your participation would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Slater-Sanchez

Doctoral Candidate
Date:

Dear School District Leader,

Thank you for your time. Your Superintendent provided your information to me so that I could speak to you about your experience with the co-principal model of school administration.

My name is Jennifer Slater-Sanchez and I am a Doctoral Candidate in the School of Education at Brandman University. I am working on a qualitative study on the efficacy of the co-principal model of school administration as viewed through the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELS).

**Purpose:** The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research was to examine the experiences of K-12 school principals who participated in the co-principal model viewed through the lens of the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELS).

You are invited to participate in this study. The information gathered may assist school districts in implementing alternative models of school administration. The study should not take more than an hour to complete and includes an interview. The interview will be audio-taped with your permission. Participation in this study is voluntary. Your identity as a participant will remain confidential.

If you have any questions, please contact me at jslater@mail.brandman.edu. In addition to this email, I will also be following-up with a personal phone call.

I appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Slater-Sanchez

Doctoral Candidate
APPENDIX C

Brandman University IRB Adopted November 2013

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Research Participant’s Bill of Rights

Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.

2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.

3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.

4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.

5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.

6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.

7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.

8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.

9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.

10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers to answer them. You also may contact the Brandman University Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The Brandman University Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.
APPENDIX D
Brandman University

INTERVIEW INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMATION ABOUT: The Efficacy of the Co-Principal Model of School Administration as Viewed Through the Lens of the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Jennifer Slater-Sanchez

PURPOSE OF STUDY: The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research was to examine the experiences of K-12 school principals who participated in the co-principal model viewed through the lens of the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELS).

By participating in this study, I agree to participate in an individual interview. The interview(s) will last approximately 60 minutes and will be conducted in person.

I understand that:

a) There are minimal risks associated with participating in this research. I understand that the Investigator will protect my confidentiality by keeping the identifying codes and research materials in a password protected computer and/or in a locked file drawer that is available only to the researcher.

b) I understand that the interview will be audio recorded. The recordings will be available only to the researcher and the professional transcriptionist. The audio recordings will be used to capture the interview dialogue and to ensure the accuracy of the information collected during the interview. All information will be identifier-redacted and my confidentiality will be maintained. Upon completion of the study all recordings will be destroyed. All other data and consents will be securely stored for three years after completion of data collection and confidentially shredded or fully deleted.
c) The possible benefit of this study to me is that my input may help add to the research regarding the co-principal model of school leadership and the impact of having two full time principals at a school site. The findings will be available to me at the conclusion of the study and will provide new insights about the coaching experience in which I participated. I understand that I will not be compensated for my participation.

d) If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Jennifer Slater-Sanchez at jslater@mail.brandman.edu or by phone at (661) 609-7506; or Dr. Marilou Ryder (Advisor) at ryder@brandman.edu.

e) My participation in this research study is voluntary. I may decide to not participate in the study, and I can withdraw at any time. I can also decide not to answer particular questions during the interview if I so choose. I understand that I 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.

f) No information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent and that all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be so informed, and my consent re-obtained. I understand that if I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, at 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-9937.

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.

____________________________________
Signature of Participant or Responsible Party

____________________________________
Signature of Principal Investigator

____________________________________
Date
Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. As part of my dissertation research for the doctorate in Organizational Leadership at Brandman University, I am interviewing principals who have served in a full time co-principalship for at least one year and within the last five years.

The purpose of this interview is to learn about your experiences serving as a co-principal through the lens of the California Professional Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELs).

The interview will take about an hour and will include 16 questions. I may ask some follow up questions if I need further clarification. Any information that is obtained in connection to this study will remain confidential. All of my data will be reported without reference to an individual or an institution. After I record and transcribe the data, I will send it to you so that you can check to make sure that I have captured your thoughts and ideas accurately. I want to make this interview as comfortable as possible for you, so at any point during the interview you can ask that I skip a particular question or discontinue the entire interview. With your permission, I would like to record this interview so that I ensure that I capture your thoughts accurately. Thank you.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

**Part I - Personal Demographics**

1. Please state your name, position, name of your school district and where our interview is currently taking place.

2. Please share your years of experience as a co-principal.

3. Can you share some information about how you were chosen as a co-principal?

**Part II. Research Questions**

1. *How does the co-principal model support a principal to facilitate the development*
and implementation of a shared vision of learning and growth for all students?

a. Question: Can you share an example of how working in the co-principal model has helped to facilitate the development and implementation of a shared vision of learning and growth for all students?

b. Possible follow up - Why do you think the model works (or doesn’t work) in this scenario?

2. How does the co-principal model support a principal to shape a collaborative culture of teaching and learning?

a. Question: Can you share an example of how working in the co-principal model has helped to shape a collaborative culture of teaching and learning?

b. Possible follow up - Why do you think the model works (or doesn’t work) in this scenario?

3. How does the co-principal model support a principal to manage the organization to cultivate a safe and productive learning and working environment?

a. Question: Can you share an example of how working in the co-principal model has helped to manage the organization to cultivate a safe and productive learning and working environment?

b. Possible follow up - Why do you think the model works (or doesn’t work) in this scenario?

4. How does the co-principal model support a principal to collaborate with families and other stakeholders to address diverse student and community interests and mobilize community resources?
a. Question: Can you share an example of how working in the co-principal model has helped to collaborate with families and other stakeholders to address diverse student and community interests and mobilize community resources?

b. Possible follow up - Why do you think the model works (or doesn’t work) in this scenario?

5. How does the co-principal model support a principal to make decisions, model, and behave in ways that demonstrate professionalism, ethics, integrity, justice, and equity and hold staff to the same standard?

a. Question: Can you share an example of how working in the co-principal model has helped to make decisions, model, and behave in ways that demonstrate professionalism, ethics, integrity, justice, and equity and hold staff to the same standard?

b. Possible follow up - Why do you think the model works (or doesn’t work) in this scenario?

6. How does the co-principal model support a principal to influence political, social, economic, legal, and cultural contexts affecting education to improve education policies and practices?

a. Question: Can you share an example of how working in the co-principal model has helped to influence political, social, economic, legal, and cultural contexts affecting education to improve education policies and practices?

b. Possible follow up - Why do you think the model works (or doesn’t work)
in this scenario?

Part III. Follow Up Questions

1. What do you perceive are the advantages of the co-principalship?

2. What do you perceive are the disadvantages of the co-principalship?

3. Which leadership model do you prefer and why - the solo principalship or co-
   principalship?

4. Is there anything else you would like to share from your experiences working in
   both models?

Possible probes that can be added to any question, for clarification:

1. “Would you expand upon that a bit?”

2. “Do you have more to add?”

3. “What did you mean by . . .”

4. “Why do you think that was the case?”

5. “Could you please tell me more about . . .”

6. “Can you give me an example of . . .”

7. “How did you feel about that?”
While conducting the interview you should take notes of their clarification request or comments about not being clear about the question. After you complete the interview ask your field test interviewee the following clarifying questions. **Try not to make it another interview; just have a friendly conversation.** Either script or record their feedback so you can compare with the other two members of your team to develop your feedback report on how to improve the interview questions.

1. How did you feel about the interview? Do you think you had ample opportunities to describe what you do as a leader when working with your team or staff?

2. Did you feel the amount of time for the interview was ok?

3. Were the questions by and large clear or were there places where you were uncertain what was being asked?

4. Can you recall any words or terms being asked about during the interview that were confusing?

5. And finally, did I appear comfortable during the interview… (I’m pretty new at this)?
APPENDIX G

Interview Observer Feedback Reflection Questions

Conducting interviews is a learned skill set/experience. Gaining valuable insight about your interview skills and affect with the interview will support your data gathering when interviewing the actual participants. As the researcher you should reflect on the questions below after completing the interview. You should also discuss the following reflection questions with your ‘observer’ after completing the interview field test. The questions are written from your perspective as the interviewer. Provide your observer with a copy of these reflective questions prior to the field test interview. Then you can verbalize your thoughts with the observer and they can add valuable insight from their observation. After completing this process you may have edits or changes to recommend for the interview protocol before finalizing.

1. How long did the interview take? Did the time seem to be appropriate?

2. Were the questions clear or were there places when the interviewee was unclear?

3. Where were any words or terms used during the interview that were unclear or confusing?

4. How did you feel during the interview? Comfortable? Nervous? For the observer: how did you perceive the interviewer in regards to the preceding descriptors?

5. Did you feel prepared to conduct the interview? Is there something you could have done to be better prepared? For the observer: how did you perceive the interviewer in regards to the preceding descriptors?

6. What parts of the interview went the most smoothly and why do you think that was the case?

7. Are there parts of the interview that seemed to be awkward and why do you think that was the case?

8. If you were to change any part of the interview, what would it be and how would you change it?

9. What suggestions do you have for improving the overall process?
## APPENDIX H

### Synthesis Matrix

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## APPENDIX I

California Standards for Education Leaders (CPSELs)

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<tr>
<th>STANDARD 1: Development and Implementation of a Shared Vision - Education leaders facilitate the development and implementation of a shared vision of learning and growth of all students.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Element 1A:</strong> Student-Centered Vision - Leaders shape a collective vision that uses multiple measures of data and focuses on equitable access, opportunities, and outcomes for all students.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Example Indicators:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1A-1 Advance support for the academic, linguistic, cultural, social-emotional, behavioral, and physical development of each learner.</td>
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<td>1A-2 Cultivate multiple learning opportunities and support systems that build on student assets and address student needs.</td>
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<td>1A-3 Address achievement and opportunity disparities between student groups, with attention to those with special needs; cultural, racial, and linguistic differences; and disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds.</td>
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<td>1A-4 Emphasize the expectation that all students will meet content and performance standards.</td>
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<td><strong>Element 1B:</strong> Developing Shared Vision - Leaders engage others in a collaborative process to develop a vision of teaching and learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders.</td>
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<td><strong>Example Indicators:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1B-1 Embrace diverse perspectives and craft consensus about the vision and goals.</td>
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<td>1B-2 Communicate the vision so that the staff and school community understand it and use it for decision-making.</td>
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<td>1B-3 Build shared accountability to achieve the vision by distributing leadership roles and responsibilities among staff and community.</td>
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<td>1B-4 Align the vision and goals with local, state, and federal education laws and regulations.</td>
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<td><strong>Element 1C:</strong> Vision Planning and Implementation - Leaders guide and monitor decisions, actions, and outcomes using the shared vision and goals.</td>
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<td><strong>Example Indicators:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1C-1 Include all stakeholders in a process of continuous improvement (reflection, revision, and modification) based on the systematic review of evidence and progress.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1C-2 Use evidence (including, but not limited to, student achievement, attendance, behavior and school climate data, research, and best practices) to shape and revise plans, programs, and activities that advance the vision.</td>
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**STANDARD 2: Instructional Leadership** - Education leaders shape a collaborative culture of teaching and learning, informed by professional standards and focused on student and professional growth.

**ELEMENT 2A:**
Professional Learning Culture - Leaders promote a culture in which staff engage in individual and collective professional learning that results in their continuous improvement and high performance.

**EXAMPLE INDICATORS:**
2A-1 Establish coherent, research-based professional learning aligned with organizational vision and goals for educator and student growth.

2A-2 Promote professional learning plans that focus on real situations and specific needs related to increasing the learning and well-being of all staff and students.

2A-3 Capitalize on the diverse experiences and abilities of staff to plan, implement, and assess professional learning.

2A-4 Strengthen staff trust, shared responsibility, and leadership by instituting structures and processes that promote collaborative inquiry and problem solving.

**ELEMENT 2B:**
Curriculum and Instruction - Leaders guide and support the implementation of standards-based curriculum, instruction, and assessments that address student expectations and outcomes.

**EXAMPLE INDICATORS:**
2B-1 Develop a shared understanding of adopted standards-based curriculum that reflects student content and performance expectations.

2B-2 Promote and monitor the use of state frameworks and guides that offer evidence-based instructional and support strategies to increase learning for diverse student assets and needs.

2B-3 Provide access to a variety of resources that are needed for the effective instruction and differentiated support of all students.

2B-4 Guide and monitor the alignment of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional practice.

**ELEMENT 2C:**
Assessment and Accountability - Leaders develop and use assessment and accountability systems to monitor, improve, and extend educator practice, program outcomes, and student learning.

**EXAMPLE INDICATORS:**
2C-1 Define clear purposes, goals, and working agreements for collecting and sharing information about professional practice and student outcomes.
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<th>Element</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example Indicators</th>
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| **2C-2** | Guide staff and the community in regular disaggregation and analysis of local and state student assessment results and program data. | 2C-3 Use information from a variety of sources to guide program and professional learning planning, implementation, and revisions.  
2C-4 Use professional expectations and standards to guide, monitor, support, and supervise to improve teaching and learning.  
2C-5 Apply a variety of tools and technology to gather feedback, organize and analyze multiple data sources, and monitor student progress directed toward improving teaching and learning. |
| **STANDARD 3:**  
**Management and Learning Environment**  
**Element 3A:**  
Operations and Facilities - Leaders provide and oversee a functional, safe, and clean learning environment. | **Example Indicators:**  
3A-1 Systematically review the physical plant and grounds to ensure that they are safe, meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements, and comply with conditions that support accessibility for all students.  
3A-2 Collaborate with the district to monitor and maintain student services (e.g., food, transportation) that contribute to student learning, health, and welfare.  
3A-3 Manage the acquisition, distribution, and maintenance of equipment, materials, and technology needed to meet the academic, linguistic, cultural, social-emotional, and physical requirements of students.  
3A-4 Work with stakeholders and experts to plan and implement emergency and risk management procedures for individuals and the site. |
| **Element 3B:**  
Plans and Procedures Leaders establish structures and employ policies and processes that support students to graduate ready for college and career. | **Example Indicators:**  
3B-1 Develop schedules and assign placements that are student-centered and maximize instructional time and staff collaboration.  
3B-2 Manage legal and contractual agreements and storage of confidential records (both paper and electronic) to ensure student security and confidentiality. |
| ELEMENT 3B: | EXAMPLE INDICATORS: |
| Set clear working agreements that support sharing problems, practices, and results within a safe and supportive environment. |
| 3B-4 Engage stakeholders in using problem-solving and decision-making processes and distributed leadership to develop, monitor, evaluate, and revise plans and programs. |

| ELEMENT 3C: | EXAMPLE INDICATORS: |
| Climate - Leaders facilitate safe, fair, and respectful environments that meet the intellectual, linguistic, cultural, social-emotional, and physical needs of each learner. |
| 3C-1 Strengthen school climate through participation, engagement, connection, and a sense of belonging among all students and staff. |
| 3C-2 Implement a positive and equitable student responsibility and behavior system with teaching, intervention and prevention strategies and protocols that are clear, fair, incremental, restorative, culturally responsive, and celebrate student and school achievement. |
| 3C-3 Consistently monitor, review, and respond to attendance, disciplinary, and other relevant data to improve school climate and student engagement and ensure that management practices are free from bias and equitably applied to all students. |

| ELEMENT 3D: | EXAMPLE INDICATORS: |
| Fiscal and Human Resources - Leaders align fiscal and human resources and manage policies and contractual agreements that build a productive learning environment. |
| 3D-1 Provide a clear rationale for decisions and distribute resources equitably to advance a shared vision and goals focused on the needs of all students. |
| 3D-2 Work with the district and school community to focus on both short- and long-term fiscal management. |
| 3D-3 Actively direct staff hiring and placement to match staff capacity with student academic and support goals. |
| 3D-4 Engage staff in professional learning and formative assessments with specific feedback for continuous growth. |
| 3D-5 Conduct personnel evaluations to improve teaching and learning, in keeping with district and state policies. |
| 3D-6 Establish and monitor expectations for staff behavior and performance, recognizing positive results and responding to poor performance and/or inappropriate or illegal
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<th>STANDARD 4: Family and Community Engagement - Education leaders collaborate with families and other stakeholders to address diverse student and community interests and mobilize community resources.</th>
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| **ELEMENT 4A:** Parent and Family Engagement - Leaders meaningfully involve all parents and families, including underrepresented communities, in student learning and support programs. | **EXAMPLE INDICATORS:**  
4A-1 Establish a welcoming environment for family participation and education by recognizing and respecting diverse family goals and aspirations for students.  
4A-2 Follow guidelines for communication and participation established in federal and state mandates, district policies, and legal agreements.  
4A-3 Solicit input from and communicate regularly with all parents and families in ways that are accessible and understandable.  
4A-4 Engage families with staff to establish academic programs and supports that address individual and collective student assets and needs.  
4A-5 Facilitate a reciprocal relationship with families that encourages them to assist the school and to participate in opportunities that extend their capacity to support students. |
| **ELEMENT 4B:** Community Partnerships - Leaders establish community partnerships that promote and support students to meet performance and content expectations and graduate ready for college and career. | **EXAMPLE INDICATORS:**  
4B-1 Incorporate information about family and community expectations and needs into decision-making and activities.  
4B-2 Share leadership responsibility by establishing community, business, institutional, and civic partnerships that invest in and support the vision and goals.  
4B-3 Treat all stakeholder groups with fairness and respect, and work to bring consensus on key issues that affect student learning and well-being.  
4B-4 Participate in local activities that engage staff and community members in communicating school successes to the broader community. |
| **ELEMENT 4C:** Community Resources and Services - Leaders leverage and integrate community resources | **EXAMPLE INDICATORS:**  
4C-1 Seek out and collaborate with community programs and services that assist students who... |
and services to meet the varied needs of all students.

need academic, mental health, linguistic, cultural, social-emotional, physical, or other support to succeed in school.

4C-2 Build mutually beneficial relationships with external organizations to coordinate the use of school and community facilities.

4C-3 Work with community emergency and welfare agencies to develop positive relationships.

4C-4 Secure community support to sustain existing resources and add new resources that address emerging student needs.

**STANDARD 5: Ethics and Integrity** - Education leaders make decisions, model, and behave in ways that demonstrate professionalism, ethics, integrity, justice, and equity and hold staff to the same standard.

**ELEMENT 5A:** Reflective Practice - Leaders act upon a personal code of ethics that requires continuous reflection and learning.

**EXAMPLE INDICATORS:**

5A-1 Examine personal assumptions, values, and beliefs to address students' various academic, linguistic, cultural, social-emotional, physical, and economic assets and needs and promote equitable practices and access appropriate resources.

5A-2 Reflect on areas for improvement and take responsibility for change and growth.

5A-3 Engage in professional learning to be up-to-date with education research, literature, best practices, and trends to strengthen ability to lead.

5A-4 Continuously improve cultural proficiency skills and competency in curriculum, instruction, and assessment for all learners.

5A-5 Sustain personal motivation, commitment, energy, and health by balancing professional and personal responsibilities.

**ELEMENT 5B:** Ethical Decision-Making - Leaders guide and support personal and collective actions that use relevant evidence and available research to make fair and ethical decisions.

**EXAMPLE INDICATORS:**

5B-1 Consider and evaluate the potential moral and legal consequences of decisions.

5B-2 Review multiple measures of data and research on effective teaching and learning, leadership, management practices, equity, and other pertinent areas to inform decision-making.
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<th><strong>ELEMENT 5B:</strong></th>
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<td>5B-3 Identify personal and institutional biases and remove barriers that derive from economic, social-emotional, racial, linguistic, cultural, physical, gender-based, or other sources of educational disadvantage or discrimination.</td>
<td>5B-4 Commit to making difficult decisions in service of equitable outcomes for students, staff, and the school community.</td>
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<td><strong>ELEMENT 5C:</strong></td>
<td><strong>EXAMPLE INDICATORS:</strong></td>
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<td>Ethical Action - Leaders recognize and use their professional influence with staff and the community to develop a climate of trust, mutual respect, and honest communication, necessary to consistently make fair and equitable decisions on behalf of all students.</td>
<td>5C-1 Communicate expectations and support for professional behavior that reflects ethics, integrity, justice, and equity.</td>
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<td>5C-2 Use a variety of strategies to lead others in safely examining personal assumptions and respectfully challenge beliefs that negatively affect improving teaching and learning for all students.</td>
<td>5C-3 Encourage and inspire others to higher levels of performance, commitment, and motivation by modeling transparent and accountable behavior.</td>
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<td>5C-4 Protect the rights and appropriate confidentiality of students, staff, and families.</td>
<td>5C-5 Promote understanding and follow the legal, social, and ethical use of technology among all members of the school community.</td>
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**STANDARD 6: External Context and Policy - Education leaders influence political, social, economic, legal, and cultural contexts affecting education to improve education policies and practices.**

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<th><strong>ELEMENT 6A:</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding and Communicating Policy - Leaders actively structure and participate in opportunities that develop greater public understanding of the education policy environment.</td>
<td>6A-1 Operate consistently within the parameters of federal, state, and local laws, policies, regulations, and statutory requirements.</td>
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<td>6A-2 Understand and can explain the roles of school leaders, boards of education, legislators, and other key stakeholders in making education policy.</td>
<td>6A-3 Welcome and facilitate conversations with the local community about how to improve learning and achievement for all students, including English Learners and students needing additional support.</td>
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<td><strong>6A-4</strong></td>
<td>Facilitate discussions with the public about federal, state, and local laws, policies, regulations, and statutory requirements affecting continuous improvement of educational programs and outcomes.</td>
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<td><strong>6A-5</strong></td>
<td>Work with local leaders to assess, analyze, and anticipate emerging trends and initiatives and their impact on education.</td>
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**ELEMENT 6B:**
Professional Influence - Leaders use their understanding of social, cultural, economic, legal, and political contexts to shape policies that lead to all students graduating ready for college and career.

**EXAMPLE INDICATORS:**
6B-1 Advocate for equity and adequacy in providing for students’ and families’ educational, linguistic, cultural, social-emotional, legal, physical, and economic needs, so that every student can meet education expectations and goals.

6B-2 Support public policies and administrative procedures that provide for present and future needs of all children and families and improve equity and excellence in education.

6B-3 Promote public policies that ensure the equitable distribution of resources and support services for all students.

**ELEMENT 6C:**
Policy Engagement - Leaders engage with policymakers and stakeholders to collaborate on education policies focused on improving education for all students.

**EXAMPLE INDICATORS:**
6C-1 Work with the governing board, district and local leaders to influence policies that benefit students and support the improvement of teaching and learning.

6C-2 Actively develop relationships with a range of stakeholders, policymakers, and researchers to identify and address issues, trends, and potential changes that affect the context and conduct of education.

6C-3 Collaborate with community leaders and stakeholders with specialized expertise to inform district and school planning, policies, and programs that respond to cultural, economic, social, and other emerging issues.