The Elementary Principal’s Workday:
A Comparative Analysis of Performance Standards
and Principal Practice

Holly B. Richard, Ph.D.
holly_richard@ccpsnet.net
14710 Acorn Ridge Place
Midlothian, VA

Megan Tschannen-Moran, Ph.D.
James H Stronge, Ph.D.

The College of William & Mary

Presented at the Annual Conference of the
University Council of Educational Administrators

October 31, 2008
The Relationship of Performance Standards to Principal Practice

In an era of nationwide accountability for student achievement, school personnel are held directly responsible for educational outcomes. In the past decade, the principal has been increasingly recognized as having a significant role in promoting student success (Waters & Grubb, 2004). Evidence supports two significant claims with regard to the principal’s role: first, that the effect of school leadership is second only to that of classroom instruction, and second, that the impact of school leadership is greatest where it is needed the most – in challenged schools (Leithwood, Seashore-Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Highly effective principals are considered “the key to initiating, implementing, and sustaining school success” (Tucker & Codding, 2002, p. 253) and “imperative to high student achievement” (Anthes, 2005, p. 1). Principals are expected to promote and develop the school vision, empowering stakeholders to build and maintain the conditions necessary for the success of all students.

The Nature of the Principalship

The nature of the principalship has changed significantly in the past two decades, from primarily a managerial role to a combined role of management and leadership (Lashway, 2002a; Murphy, 2003; Shellard, 2003; Tucker & Codding, 2002). Despite the current emphasis on principal duties involving instructional leadership, however, principals remain responsible for traditional duties such as facility management, budget, school safety, and student discipline - tasks which continue to absorb a considerable amount of their time (Doyle & Rice, 2002; Lashway, 2002b; Tirozzi & Ferrandino, 2001). Due to the increasing number of responsibilities required of principals, it is not surprising to find that long hours are spent on the job. Elementary principals work an average of 62 hours per week (Groff, 2001), while in middle and high schools
principals spend successively greater amounts of time on the job (DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003). The increasing amount of time required of principals in addition to the increasing number of duties and complexity lead some to describe the job as “simply not doable” (Tirozzi & Ferrandino, 2001, p. 1). The Institute for Educational Learning (IEL, 2000) concurs that the primary responsibility of principals must be student learning (p. 1), but concludes that:

Principalship as it is currently constructed – a middle management position overloaded with responsibilities for basic building operations – fails to meet this fundamental priority…The demands placed on principals have changed, but the profession has not changed to meet those demands and tension is starting to show (p. 3).

Clearly, the expansion of the principal’s job description and shift toward instructional leadership responsibilities has dramatically changed the nature of the role: the principal must first and foremost facilitate student learning while balancing other non-instructional duties. Despite agreement that instructional leadership is a fundamental skill required of principals, however, few school leaders have had the necessary training for this role, particularly in a standards-based environment (Lashway, 2002b).

Clearly, in an era of accountability for student achievement and school reform, the principal plays a critical role in school success and navigating the challenges required for meaningful 21st century learning for all students. While the relationship may be indirect in nature and mediated through others, a significant correlation exists between principal leadership and student achievement, with an average effect size of .25 for all levels of schooling and .29 for elementary schools (Marzano et al, 2005). Conversely, strong school leaders who misdirect school improvement efforts can produce a negative effect on student achievement (Waters &
Grubb, 2004). Fullan (2002) concluded, “Effective school leaders are key to large-scale, sustainable education reform” (p. 16).

The Emergence of Principal Performance Standards

Accountability for instructional outcomes has driven the development of standards for both students and school personnel in the past decade. Given the emphasis on instructional leadership, principals are held primarily accountable for positive outcomes in the form of increased student achievement while continuing to manage daily school operations. In response to the increasing demand for educational accountability, state and federal standards have been implemented in the past decade to monitor student achievement outcomes. Likewise, concerted efforts have been made to improve the preparation of school leaders through the development of uniform standards specifying the essential knowledge and skills needed by effective principals. While performance standards existed at the state level, the emergence of national standards has been “used to drive the preparation, professional development, and licensure of principals” on a larger scale (Tucker & Codding, 2002, p. 267). Multiple sets of standards emerged in an attempt to clarify the skills needed by school leaders to become highly effective (Anthes, 2005), including those of the Interstate Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), the Education Leaders Constituent Council (ELCC), the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), and Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) (Anthes, 2005).

The Interstate Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards, developed in the mid-1990s by the Council of Chief State School Officers in partnership with the National Policy Board for Education (NPBEA), have come into widespread use during the past decade with the vast majority of states using the standards as a basis for leadership preparation and licensure
(Shipman, Queen, & Peel, 2007). Still other states have developed standards apart from, but similar to, the ISLLC standards (Sanders & Simpson, 2005, p. 9). The ISLLC standards became the foundation for the School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA), a school leadership assessment required of aspiring school leaders in at least 15 states (Virginia Department of Education, 2004). The six standards included the primary leadership responsibilities, dispositions, and performances expected of school leaders, and served “as a common language, provide a model for state standards, and have become defacto national leadership standards” (Sanders & Simpson, 2005, p. vi).

Because the standards were written more than a decade ago, they have been recently updated to reflect the increased expectations and accountability for teaching and learning expected of today’s school leaders and have been renamed The Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008. The newly revised Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008 specify six primary educational leadership responsibilities which include development of a shared vision of school success, promoting a school culture conducive to learning and professional growth, effective management of school operations and resources, community collaboration, ethical leadership, and the ability to understand and influence the external factors which impact school success. The original ISLLC standards were intended to be a broad overview of the skills and abilities needed by principals rather than to “determine action” (Murphy, 2003, p. 31), yet the standards and SLLA have become a central part of school leadership training and assessment.

Despite the dramatic change in leadership demands and the increasing emphasis on leadership standards, however, there is little evidence that systematic changes have occurred in leadership practices (Cotton, 2003; Elmore, 2005). Likewise, while leadership standards have
provided clarification as to what school leaders should know and be expected to do, meta-
analysis of research suggests that some leadership practices proven effective in increasing
student achievement have been underestimated by the ISLLC standards (Davis, Darling-
Hammond, LaPointe, & Myerson, 2005). As empirical evidence accumulates on what specific
leadership practices prove most effective in promoting student achievement, Davis et al found
that there is a need to re-examine leadership performance standards, licensure criteria, and
leadership preparation in response. Clearly, effective principals matter. Therefore, the alignment
of performance standards with principal practice is critical for both current and aspiring school
leaders.

While a review of the literature reveals abundant research regarding expectations of
principals, significantly less empirical information is available in terms of actual principal
practices on the job and the manner in which these practices may vary depending on context
(Cotton, 2003). Likewise, the relationship of these practices to state and national performance
standards remains largely unexplored. It would be anticipated that the tasks performed by
principals in practice on a day-to-day basis would reflect these responsibilities to a significant
degree. While variance in the type of tasks performed and amount of time spent would likely
vary depending on the specific needs of the school, the emphasis on instructional accountability
evident in state and national standards is clearly indicated as a priority for principals.

The purposes of this study were to: (a) examine the nature of tasks and proportion of time
spent by elementary principals on work-related responsibilities; (b) determine the degree to
which tasks performed by principals differ depending on school demographics; (c) compare the
level of congruence of the tasks routinely performed by principals in relation to the Educational
Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008, and (d) compare the level of congruence of the tasks
performed by principals during the course of the school year to the self-reported tasks performed during a sample period of time.

**Method**

This study of the elementary principal’s workday included both quantitative and qualitative methodology to obtain data regarding the frequency and duration of tasks in which principals estimated that they are engaged during the course of a school year and the actual amount of time spent on these tasks during a sample workweek.

**Participants**

The target population for this study was public school principals of schools in the United States containing two or more elementary grades from pre-kindergarten through grade six. The sample included 300 elementary school principals obtained through a randomly selected stratified national sample of 10,000 elementary principals, obtained through Quality Educational Data (QED). The sampled was stratified for schools containing less than 50% Title I enrollment and schools containing 50% or higher Title I enrollment. In the obtained sample, 61% of participating schools (n = 34) had a percentage of Title I enrollment below 50%, while 39% (n = 27) reported a rate at 50% or above. To facilitate a higher return rate of the research instruments, the researcher attempted to contact participants by telephone prior to data collection to obtain verbal consent for participation in the study.

The obtained sample resulted in 61 surveys returned from 32 states, for a response rate of 22%, and 36 workday logs returned from 24 states for a return rate of 12%. While all of the participants who completed the workday log also completed the survey, some indicated that they would not be able to complete the short answer workday log due to time constraints.
revealed a sample containing 66% female, 88% Caucasian, and 90% of participants who were above the age of 35, with the majority in an age range between 45 – 64 years. A majority (80%) had more than two years of experience – most often in their current schools. Just over a third, (34%, n = 21) had greater than 10 years experience.

All of the schools sampled met the criteria for inclusion in the study by having at least two elementary grade levels between grade pre-kindergarten through grade five. While the majority of participants with the title of elementary principal were employed in schools serving grades kindergarten through five, multiple grade level combinations were evident across the United States. These included schools that contained pre-kindergarten and/or grade six as well as 16% (n = 10) that contained grades kindergarten through eight or kindergarten through twelve. There were likewise wide variations in levels of student enrollment, ranging from 25% (n = 15) having less than 300 students to 13% (n = 8) having 700 – 900 students.

**Instrumentation**

A three-part instrument designed and field-tested by the researcher was used for the study. This included sections on demographics, a survey of the frequency and duration of workday tasks, and a short answer workday log.

**Demographics.** Part I of the study consisted of a brief survey to confirm school demographic status and characteristics of participants, including gender and amount of experience as a school principal. Participants were also asked the approximate proportion of Title I students in their school to confirm the proportions established in the sampling procedures.

**The Principal Workday Survey.** Part II of the study consisted of a 30 item multiple choice survey (See Appendix). Participants were asked to estimate the relative frequency and duration of time spent on tasks previously identified by field-study participants as occurring
during a principal’s workday throughout the school year. The questions were worded to reflect the Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008 and functions for each standard. Sample items from the survey are as follows:

ISLLC 1 (5 items)
- Communicate the school/school district mission/vision of learning with those in the school community (e.g., teachers, parents, community members)

ISLLC 2 (10 items)
- Promote a culture of trust, high expectations, and high levels of learning for students and staff

ISLLC 3 (3 items)
- Monitor/attend to school operations: transportation; cafeteria; facility; student attendance, health/safety, arrival/dismissal; building maintenance; grounds

ISLLC 4 (3 items)
- Promote positive community relations within school community

ISLLC 5 (3 items)
- Ensure fair and appropriate disciplinary practices with students and staff

ISLLC 6 (3 items)
- Provide advocacy for/meet needs of students and families using community resources; e.g., public health, social services, legal, welfare services

To confirm the congruence of the questions with the ISLLC: 2008 standards and functions, a panel of three experts in educational leadership and performance standards reviewed a Table of Specifications (Table 1) with all experts confirming the alignment of 27 of the 30 the research questions with the standards and functions. Three of the items included that were included from
categories found in the field study were judged by the experts not to align with any of the particular standards. The three items, numbers 19 – 21, were analyzed separately based on the expert judgment. These items included the following tasks:

- Item 19. Planning, scheduling, attending non-academic school events.
- Item 20. Attend school meetings, workshops, or training,
- Item 21. Engage in routine communication tasks unrelated to instruction (mail, e-mail, phone, memos, announcements, etc.).

The Principal Workday Log. In Part III of the study, participants were asked to complete The Principal Workday Log which consisted of a short-answer log divided into 15-minute time increments during an eight-hour workday for a period of five designated days during a specified time period. This enabled the researcher to obtain frequency counts of the tasks reportedly performed by principals as well as to obtain the amount of time spent on the tasks. The Principal Workday Log had been previously field-tested by elementary principals, where it was determined that due to the overlapping nature of the tasks in which they engaged that the log was most easily completed by participants in short-answer, paper-pencil format. Participants were instructed to complete the log for a period of five consecutive workdays and then to return it by mail in a prepaid mailing envelope to the researcher for coding and analysis. A total of 36 logs from 24 states were returned and were then hand-coded by the researcher and a second trained coder using a coding manual developed by the researcher. The frequency of tasks was coded on each participant using a numeric count in each of the 30 categories used in the Workday survey. Task frequency was counted by the number of occurrences, while task duration was counted by hours using time increments of .25 of one hour. A comparison of the ISLLC: 2008 standards, principal tasks, and congruent survey items is provided in Table 1.
Results

Time on the Job

The elementary principals who participated in this study reported working long hours. As expected, few elementary principals reported working the equivalent of a standard 40 hour workweek. Nearly all (93%) reported spending more than 45 hours per week on the job. Moreover, 16% reported working 60 hours or more per week.

Comparisons of Frequency and Duration of Surveyed Tasks

Part II of the survey consisted of 30 multiple choice items, with 27 of the items corresponding to the revised Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC: 2008.

Frequency of tasks. Principals were asked to estimate how often tasks were performed (frequency) during the course of a school year as well as the duration of time spent on each task. Responses were analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics followed by comparison of principal responses related to each standard in high and low percentage Title I schools. For the frequency of tasks performed by principals in low and high percentage Title I schools, no significant differences were found on the six ISLLC: 2008 Standards.

Duration of tasks. Examination of the duration of time estimated by principals in high and low percentage Title I schools revealed significant differences between the two groups on Standards 1 and 5 (Table 2). Standard 1 states that an educational leader “promotes the success of every student by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders” (CCSSO, 2008, p. 3). For this standard, principals at schools with high Title 1 enrollment estimated spending significantly greater amounts of time (M = 3.8, SD = .66) than principals at low percentage Title I schools during the course of a school year (M = 3.4, SD = .60), (t = -2.478, 46.37, p <.05).
Table 1: Comparison of ISLLC: 2008 Standards to Workday Tasks/Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ISLLC Standards</th>
<th>Workday Task Emergent Categories (from field study)</th>
<th>Survey Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Facilitates vision of learning shared and supported by the school community | Meetings/conferences  
Communications  
School improvement                                                                 | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5                                                               |
| 2. Promotes school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth | Meetings/conferences  
Climate  
Human resources  
Communications  
Professional development  
Assessment/pacing  
Staff evaluation  
School programs  
Monitor/observe  
School instructional programs  
Achievement/placement                                                                 | 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15                                            |
| 3. Ensures management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment | Planning/scheduling  
Meetings/conferences  
Human resources  
Communications  
Health/safety  
Building supervision  
Budget/finance  
Paperwork/mail/e-mail  
Transportation  
Facility  
Monitor/observe  
School programs/events                                                                 | 16, 17, 18                                                                   |
| 4. Collaborates with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources | Community relations  
Meetings/conferences  
Resources                                                                 | 22, 23, 24                                                                  |
| 5. Acts with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner                        | Special needs, subgroups  
Community relations  
Human resources  
Student discipline                                                                 | 25, 26, 27                                                                 |
| 6. Understands, responds to, and influences the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context | Meetings/conferences/ policy  
Advocacy for students, families  
Professional development – self                                                                 | 28, 29, 30                                                                  |

Standard 5 states that an educational leader “promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner” (CCSSO, 2008, p. 4). For this standard,
principals at schools with high Title I enrollment estimated spending significantly greater amounts of time than principals at low percentage Title I schools ($M = 4.2$, $SD = .59$), ($t = -2.221$, $59$, $p < .05$).

Table 2. *Principal Duration of Tasks by ISLLC Standard: Comparison of Principal Responses in Schools with Low and High Title I Enrollment using T-test for Equality of Means*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
<th>Mean difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ISLLC 1</td>
<td>-2.523</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>.017*</td>
<td>-.414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISLLC 2</td>
<td>-1.262</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>.212</td>
<td>-.178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISLLC 3</td>
<td>-1.579</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>.120</td>
<td>.215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISLLC 4</td>
<td>-.712</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>.479</td>
<td>-.134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISLLC 5</td>
<td>-2.221</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>.030*</td>
<td>-.427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISLLC 6</td>
<td>-.300</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>.765</td>
<td>.044</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$p < .05$

*Principal Workday Logs*

The Principal Workday Log was designed to sample principal tasks performed during a routine workweek in order to compare the estimated frequency and duration of tasks with tasks actually performed during a sample workweek. In Part III of the Principal Workday Study, principals were asked to record the tasks in which they were engaged during a five day workweek in a log which was divided into 15 minute time increments. With the exception of survey question 12 that asked about the protection of instructional time, at least one occurrence of each of the 30 survey items was counted.

Examination of worklog revealed that the six highest rankings were identical in terms of both task frequency and duration. During the sample workweek, principals reported most
frequently performing tasks related to these categories and spent the most time on the same tasks in order of frequency/duration.

1. Communication
2. Organizational Management
3. Instructional supervision
4. Positive learning environment
5. Discipline, and
6. Accountability for a range of student learners.

Ranking of Workday Log items by frequency and duration is provided in Table 3.

In addition to the 30 tasks that were included on the surveys, seven emergent categories arose from the Principal Workday Logs:

1. Facilitate a positive climate with staff
2. Personal tasks/travel
3. Administrative Communication
4. School meetings
5. Informal staff communication
6. Crisis situations
7. Teaching.

The comparisons of task frequency and duration obtained from the Principal Workday Logs for the six standards, emergent codes, and the tasks unrelated to ISLLC: 2008 Standards and functions are illustrated in Figure 1. Three of the survey items were not considered directly related to the Educational Leadership Policy Standards, and were therefore noted separately.
Table 3. Ranking of Workday Log Items by Frequency and Duration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>rank</strong></td>
<td><strong>question</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 (tie)</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 (tie)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 (tie)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 (tie)</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 (tie)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 (tie)</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 (tie)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 (tie)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 (tie)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 (tie)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When viewed from the lens of the ISLLC standard, emergent categories, and survey items not representative of the ISLLC standards, the activity most frequently reported in the principal’s work logs was time spent on communication (Item 21: Engage in routine communication tasks unrelated to instruction (mail, e-mail, phone calls, memos, announcements, etc.). The second was tasks related to ISLLC Standard 3, Organizational Management. The third most frequent was ISLLC Standard 2, Instructional Leadership. And the fourth most frequent was ISLLC Standard 5, Acts with Integrity. When the focus changes to the duration of tasks, the order changes, such that ISLLC Standard 2, Instructional Leadership has the greatest duration, followed by communication. The task ranked third in terms of duration was ISLLC Standard 3, Organizational Management, followed by ISLLC Standard 5, Acts with Integrity. Three of the tasks delineated in the ISLLC Standards were engaged in less frequently and consumed less time
overall. These were ISLLC Standard 4, Collaborating with Families, ISLLC Standard 1, Developing a Shared Vision, and ISLLC Standard 6, Understanding and influencing the larger political and social context.

Of the emergent categories, attending school meetings was the most frequent and consumed the greatest amount of time. Informal staff communication and administrative communication were the next most frequent of the emergent categories, as well as those that consumed the most time. Personal tasks and travel consumed a small proportion of time, as did facilitating a positive climate with staff. Crisis situations and teaching were mentioned but were infrequent and consumed little time during the workweek sampled. Planning, scheduling, and attending non-academic school events (item 19) as well as attending school district meetings, workshops, or training (item 20) were tasks that consumed small amounts of the principals’ time.

While the survey results had revealed a discrepancy between high and low percentage Title I schools in the frequency and duration spent on Standards 1 and 5 by principals, the actual time during the sample workweek did not reveal significant differences. These divergent findings warrant further investigation, particularly in light of the short duration of time as well as the time of year sampled in the Principal Workday Logs.

**Limitations**

Limitations of the study include the time of year in which the study was conducted, particularly the time period in which principals completed the workday log, as at least some of the tasks completed by principals during this mid-winter time period would likely differ from those performed at other times of the school year. Likewise, the limited amount of time in which principals documented their daily activities must be considered a sample of tasks performed during a school year rather than a complete representation of an entire school year.
Conclusions and Implications

This study was a comparative analysis of principal performance standards in relation to principal practice. In general, the tasks noted in the workday logs of principals during the sample workweek revealed a positive overall alignment with the ISLLC: 2008 Standards and functions, although three of the six were most strongly represented in how the principals spent their days. One major exception to the alignment of the ISLLC: 2008 Standards and functions, however, was the category of communication tasks. Elementary principals clearly engaged in routine communication tasks with the highest frequency and duration of all of the tasks in which they were engaged during the sample workweek. The importance of communication tasks by school leaders is both intuitive and research-based as a necessary component of effective school leadership (Elmore, 2000; Fullan, 2001; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Marzano et al, 2005). The ability of school leaders to use effective communication skills, however, was conspicuously absent in the Educational Leadership Policy Standards and functions, ISLLC: 2008.

Typically, the number of task occurrences performed by elementary principals exceeded the amount of time spent on these tasks, confirming the fragmentation often described of the principal’s workday. The 30 functions/tasks examined in this study comprise a large part – although certainly not all of - the elementary principal’s workload. It is small wonder, therefore, that the principal’s workday is commonly described as fragmented in nature. This was confirmed by a 1998 survey in which principals serving schools with grades kindergarten through eight indicated that of 56 areas, time fragmentation was most frequently listed (72%) as a major concern (Protheroe, 2008, p. 49). In the past decade the additional requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) have been added to an already fragmented workday, and put “…intense pressure on principals to provide supports that will bring test scores up to adequate
levels within specific timelines” (Schomberg, 2008, p. 23). This will likely continue to exacerbate the principal’s already fragmented workday.

One area for future research is a closer examination of those factors that shape principal practice: levels of principal experience, training, gender, and school demographic conditions. Of particular interest would be more in-depth research of effective leadership practices in low and high percentage poverty schools. The use of qualitative case study methodology to compare the practices of effective principals in a variety of school settings such as those sampled in this study would add considerable depth to these findings.

An additional area of interest for further study would be the investigation of some of the specific factors revealed in this study which had a low ranking in terms of frequency and/or duration: what factors, for example, inhibit engagement in principal professional organizations and principal professional development activities? Protection of instructional time in the school is widely considered an important responsibility of effective principals yet was difficult to measure and did not appear in the workday logs during the sample workweek. How do principals best manage such responsibilities? Conversely, communication was found to be a task performed with a high degree of frequency and cumulative duration: how do effective principals best ensure effective communication among those in the school community?

Finally, just as effective principals seek continual improvement in their schools, so should policymakers and principal preparation programs seek ongoing understanding and improvement of policies and performance standards which form the framework of principal practice. As aspiring school leaders complete leadership preparation programs and enter the induction phase of school administration, what is the degree of congruence with their classroom and practical leadership preparation experiences? One area not investigated in this study was the
role of assistant or vice-principals in carrying out school leadership responsibilities: do they engage in the same tasks as school principals, and does their practical experience in this role translate to the qualities needed by effective principals of the future? Future research in the area of principal practice must consider the rapidity of change facing schools in order to best prepare future school leaders for the challenges ahead.

References


http://ccsso.org/content/pdfs/State%20Policy%20Framework%HQA.pdf.


Appendix A. The Principal Workday Survey

Part I: Survey of Demographic and Participant Information

School Identification number (assigned by researcher): ________________

A. Demographic Information (select one response for each item)

1. What is your title?
   Elementary principal____ other (write in)___________________________

2. What grade levels does your school serve?
   K – 5____ PK – 5____ K – 6____ PK – 6____ K – 2____ 3 – 5____ other____

3. What was the student enrollment of your school as of September 30, 2007?
   <300____ 300 – 499____ 500 – 699____ 700 – 900____ >900____

4. What was the approximate percentage of Title I enrollment in your school as of September 30, 2007?
   0 – 20% ____ 21 – 40%____ 41 – 60%____ 61 – 80%____ 80 – 100%____

B. Participant Information

1. What is your gender?
   Female____ Male____

2. What is your highest level of education?
   Master’s degree in education____ Master’s degree with additional graduate coursework____ Educational Specialist (6 year program or equivalent)____ Doctor of Education (Ed.D)____ Doctor of Philosophy(PhD)____ Other____

3. What is your age?
   24 – 34____ 35 – 44____ 45 – 54____ 55 – 64____ 65 or greater____

4. What is the total number of years you have served as a principal?
   Less than 1 year____ 1 – 2 years____ 3 – 5 years____ 6 – 10 years____ >10 years____

5. For how many years have you served as a principal of your current school?
   Less than 1 year____ 1 – 2 years____ 3 – 5 years____ 6 – 10 years____

6. What is the average number of hours that you work per week as a school administrator?
   <40____ 40 – 44____ 45 – 49____ 50 – 54____ 55 – 59____ 60 or greater____

7. With which ethnic group would you identify yourself?
   White, not Hispanic____ Hispanic____ Asian, Pacific Islander____
   Black, not Hispanic____ American Indian, Alaskan Native____ Other____
**Part II. Principal Workday Survey**

Directions: Please indicate (a) the frequency with which you engage in the following tasks during the course of a school year, and (b) the relative amount of time that you spend engaged in the task using the scale of 1 – 5 below.

**Frequency of task**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) rarely/never</td>
<td>infrequently</td>
<td>occasionally</td>
<td>often</td>
<td>very frequently-daily/almost daily</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Duration of time spent engaged in task....**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(b) no time</td>
<td>very little time</td>
<td>a moderate amount of time</td>
<td>quite a bit of time</td>
<td>a great deal of time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Communicate the school/school district mission/vision of learning with those in the school community (e.g., teachers, parents, community members)
   (a) Frequency 1 2 3 4 5
   (b) Duration 1 2 3 4 5

2. Analyze or otherwise use data to identify, monitor, and assess progress toward school and/or school district goals
   (a) Frequency 1 2 3 4 5
   (b) Duration 1 2 3 4 5

3. Develop and implement a school improvement stratégic plan
   (a) Frequency 1 2 3 4 5
   (b) Duration 1 2 3 4 5

4. Engage in other tasks related to promoting ongoing, sustainable improvement
   (a) Frequency 1 2 3 4 5
   (b) Duration 1 2 3 4 5

5. Monitor and assess progress toward school improvement objectives
   (a) Frequency 1 2 3 4 5
   (b) Duration 1 2 3 4 5

6. Promote a culture of trust, high expectations, and high levels of learning for students and staff
   (a) Frequency 1 2 3 4 5
   (b) Duration 1 2 3 4 5

7. Engage in tasks related to development, pacing, and/or monitoring of curriculum
(a) Frequency 1 2 3 4 5
(b) Duration 1 2 3 4 5

8. Promote a positive learning environment for/have positive interactions with students
(a) Frequency 1 2 3 4 5
(b) Duration 1 2 3 4 5

9. Formally and/or informally supervise instruction
(a) Frequency 1 2 3 4 5
(b) Duration 1 2 3 4 5

10. Engage in tasks related to student placement and monitoring of student progress
(a) Frequency 1 2 3 4 5
(b) Duration 1 2 3 4 5

11. Promote the instructional and/or leadership capacities of staff
(a) Frequency 1 2 3 4 5
(b) Duration 1 2 3 4 5

12. Engage in tasks which maximize and protect instructional time
(a) Frequency 1 2 3 4 5
(b) Duration 1 2 3 4 5

13. Promote the use of effective instructional technology for teaching and learning
(a) Frequency 1 2 3 4 5
(b) Duration 1 2 3 4 5

14. Plan and implement school/school district staff development activities
(a) Frequency 1 2 3 4 5
(b) Duration 1 2 3 4 5

15. Engage in tasks related to student assessment
(a) Frequency 1 2 3 4 5
(b) Duration 1 2 3 4 5

16. Monitor/attend to school operations: transportation; cafeteria; facility; student attendance, health/safety, arrival/dismissal; building maintenance; grounds
17. Engage in tasks related to human resources: hiring, evaluation, licensure, etc.
   (a) Frequency  
   (b) Duration 

18. Engage in tasks related to school finance, budget, grants, or other resources
   (a) Frequency  
   (b) Duration 

19. Planning, scheduling, attending non-academic school events
   (a) Frequency  
   (b) Duration 

20. Attend school district meetings, workshops, or training
   (a) Frequency  
   (b) Duration 

21. Engage in routine communication tasks unrelated to instruction (mail, e-mail, phone calls, memos, announcements, etc.)
   (a) Frequency  
   (b) Duration 

22. Promote positive community relations within school community
   (a) Frequency  
   (b) Duration 

23. Promote and sustain effective parent/caregiver relationships
   (a) Frequency  
   (b) Duration 

24. Engage in tasks to facilitate business and community partnerships
   (a) Frequency  
   (b) Duration 

25. Ensure accountability for the success of a range of student learners; e.g., second language learners, Title I, special education, gifted students
26. Ensure fair and appropriate disciplinary practices with students and staff
(a) Frequency 1 2 3 4 5
(b) Duration 1 2 3 4 5

27. Actively model reflective, ethical, and legal practices with others
(a) Frequency 1 2 3 4 5
(b) Duration 1 2 3 4 5

28. Provide advocacy for/meet needs of students and families using community resources; e.g., public health, social services, legal, welfare services
(a) Frequency 1 2 3 4 5
(b) Duration 1 2 3 4 5

29. Participate in local, state, and/or national professional organizations or events that promote student success
(a) Frequency 1 2 3 4 5
(b) Duration 1 2 3 4 5

30. Engage in reflective or professional development tasks which assist in development of future leadership strategies; e.g., change leadership, adapting to changing demographics, etc.
(a) Frequency 1 2 3 4 5
(b) Duration 1 2 3 4 5

Sample of The Principal Workday Log

The Principal Workday Log

Directions: During the designated time period, please indicate in short answer form (words or phrases) the tasks in which you are engaged during 15 minute increments (e.g., teacher observation, parent conference, check e-mail, classroom walkthrough, Title I meeting, etc.). After completion, please return the Principal Workday Survey immediately in the enclosed, prepaid envelope.
Thank you for your participation!
Please complete the following workday log between the dates of __________ and __________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time of day</th>
<th>(Note task/activities completed &amp; duration below for a one day period).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt;7:00 a.m.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:15 a.m.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>