

Phenomenology of School Leaders' Experiences of Ethical Dilemmas

Timothy Guy

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William Glenn

Walt Mallory

Kami Patrizio

John Ralph

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ABSTRACT

This research study explores the intersection of school leadership and ethics. This study used the hermeneutic phenomenological approach described by Max Van Manen (1990, 2014) to explore the question: How do school leaders experience ethical dilemmas in their role as school leaders? Hermeneutic phenomenology seeks to find the meaning of a phenomenon, which in this case is the experience of an ethical dilemma. Hermeneutic refers to the interpretive-reflective-analytical component and phenomenological refers to the descriptive concrete life-experience phenomenon component (Creswell, 2007; Van Manen, 1990, 2014; Vagle, 2014). This study looked at experiences recounted by four practicing school leaders and found that the experience of an ethical dilemma involves contemplating (cognition) the uncertainty (chance) about the moral merit (values conflict) of a situation and one's capacity (power) and opportunity (options) to act in response. The lived experience themes of time and being watched were also found to be of particular relevance. These hermeneutic themes were drawn from experiences that the school leaders who participated in the study shared during rounds of conversational and analytical interviews. "Lived experience is the starting point and the end point of phenomenological research...[which] is to transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence" (Van Manen 1990, p 36). The experiences include experiences of ethical dilemmas regarding student behavior, teacher supervision, program changes, decisions that other school leaders make, parents, and complex systems with multiple actors.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

This study looked at experiences of ethical dilemmas recounted by four practicing school leaders to explore the question: How do school leaders experience ethical dilemmas in their role as school leaders? The experiences were examined within the context of themes that emerged in the interviews and analysis and included cognition, chance, values conflict, power, opportunity to act, time and being watched. The experiences include experiences of ethical dilemmas regarding student behavior, teacher supervision, program changes, decisions that other school leaders make, parents, and systems with multiple actors. Exploring these experiences from the perspective of practicing school leaders is useful for understanding ethics in school leadership.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT.....	iii
LIST OF TABLES.....	viii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION	1
Purpose and Research Question.....	5
Delimitations.....	6
Definitions	7
Organization of the Study	9
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	10
The Ethics of Justice	12
The Ethic of Critique	16
The Ethic of Care	21
The Ethic of the Profession.....	24
Virtue Ethics	27
Contexts and Circumstances	32
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY	39
Turning to a Phenomenon.....	43
Orientation	43
Phenomenological Inquiry	44
The Research Question	45
The Phenomenological Reduction	47
Phenomenological Truthfulness.....	48
Iconic Validity and Evocative Writing	49
Engagement with the Phenomenon and Participants	49
Writing	50
Experiential Data Units.....	51
Rationale and Audience	52
Investigating Experiences	53
Data Collection	54
Conversational Openness.....	55
Reflecting on the Essential Themes.....	61
Revisiting the Phenomenological Reduction	61
Thematic Development.....	62

Rigorous Inquiry	63
Thematic Development.....	64
The Hermeneutic Interview	65
Essential and Incidental Themes.....	67
Describing the Phenomenon	67
Language.....	68
Writing as Method	68
Reviewing, Editing, and Rewriting.....	69
Transcript	70
Lived Experience Description (LED)	70
Anecdotes.....	70
Hermeneutic Phenomenological Text.....	72
The Pedagogical Relation to the Phenomenon	74
Oriented, Strong, Rich and Deep Descriptions.....	75
The Quest for Good Pedagogy, Not Best Practice.....	76
Balancing the Research Context	78
Limitations	79
Ethical Considerations	79
Summary of Procedures	81
Stage 1: Turning to a Phenomenon.....	81
Stage 2: Investigating Lived Experiences.....	84
Stage 3: Reflective Analysis	89
Stage 4: Phenomenological Writing	90
CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS.....	95
The Nature and Meaning of the Experience	97
The Common Theme of Cognition.....	99
The Common Theme of Chance	101
The Common Theme of Values in Conflict.....	105
The Common Theme of Power.....	106
The Common Theme of Exploring Options	109
The Lived Experience Theme of Being Watched.....	112
The Lived Experience Theme of Time	114
Experiences of Ethical Dilemmas.....	118
Ethical Dilemmas Regarding Student Behavior	118

Ethical Dilemmas Regarding Teacher Supervision	135
Ethical Dilemmas Regarding Program Changes.....	145
Ethical Dilemmas Regarding Decisions of Other School Leaders	152
Ethical Dilemmas Involving Parents	163
Ethical Dilemmas Regarding Complex Systems of Relations with Multiple Actors	167
Summary	171
CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION.....	173
Summary of the Study	173
Discussion of the Normative Literature	177
Summary of the Normative Literature	177
Findings Related to the Normative Literature	178
Findings Regarding the Ethics of Justice and Care	179
Findings Regarding the Ethic of Critique	181
Findings Regarding the Ethic of the Profession and Students' Best Interest	182
Findings Regarding Virtue.....	184
Findings Regarding Circumstances	185
Discussion of Phenomenological Findings	187
Summary of the Findings.....	187
Literature Related to the Findings.....	190
Cognition.....	191
Chance.....	192
Values Conflict	193
Power and Options.....	195
Time	196
Being Watched.....	198
Findings Relative to Other Phenomenologies.....	199
Implication and Recommendations.....	201
Discussion of Methods.....	204
Conclusion	206
REFERENCES	207
APPENDICES	213
Appendix A Guide for the Conversational Interview Exploring Experiences of Ethical Dilemmas.....	214
Appendix B: Study Participants' Lived Experience Descriptions (LEDs) of Ethical Dilemmas	218

Appendix C: Practicing Forms of Phenomenological Writing	274
Appendix D: IRB Approval Letter	276
Appendix E: Informed Consent Document.....	277

LIST OF TABLES

No.	Page
Overview of Concepts from the Literature Related to the Findings	179
Overview of Themes from the Findings Related to the Literature.	191

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

School is a significant part of the lives of children. It is where they go to learn academically but also where they grow and mature mentally, socially, and emotionally. School also has a central role in a community as parents and families are influenced by what happens in school and the activities and events that surround school. School also has a role in broader society as the preparation of students impact the overall quality of life in that society.

Accordingly, Fullan (2003) finds that with this broad role comes a moral purpose:

You don't have to go very far into the question of the role of public school in a democracy before discovering that moral purpose is at the heart of the matter. The best case for public education has always been that it is a common good. Everyone, ultimately, has a stake in the caliber of schools, and education is everyone's business. The quality of the public education system relates directly to the quality of life that people enjoy (whether as parents, employers, or citizens), with a strong public education system as the cornerstone of a civil, prosperous and democratic society (p 3).

The central role of school in the community might best be understood in historical context. Kafka (2009) found that in the late 19th century, because of developing compulsory education "schools were increasingly replacing the church as American society's central site of socialization" (p. 324). With the expanding role came responsibilities that extended beyond the three Rs. In an interview on NPR's *Fresh Air*, author Dana Goldstein (2014) talked about her book *The Teacher Wars* and said "This idea that teachers have a role to play in fighting poverty and inequity has been with us since the early 19th century."

Many theorists (Bolman & Deal, 2001; Ciulla, 2004; Fullan, 2003; Starratt, 2012; Sergiovanni, 1992) point to the role of leadership as a “moral imperative.” Bennis (2003) held that ethics was a key to leading and described that a difference between leading and managing is “managing means doing things right, leading means doing the right things” (Chapter 2, Section: Leaders, Not Managers, para. 1). Glanz (2010) also cited the importance of ethics in the pursuit of leadership excellence. He advocated for ethics as a core component of rational decisions and wrote, “The most egregious sign of mediocrity...is the absence of an ethical lens to guide strategic decisions” (p. 81). According to Starratt (2012), the importance of ethical leadership has never been greater. He wrote, “Given the present context of schooling, the continued neglect of the ethical side of the teaching and learning process is no longer an option” (p17). Given the importance of ethics in both schooling and leadership there can be little doubt but that school leadership is an ethical pursuit.

While there is clarity about the need to do the right thing, what is less clear is what the right thing is. Compounding the challenge for ethical leadership is the public arena in which school leaders operate. Kafka (2009) noted in her historical review of the role of the principal that in a democracy no public institution is left to the experts. The public discourse on what is best for children leaves school leaders in positions where the “right” course of action is unclear or disputed. For example, pundits and educational policy makers continue to debate the merits and shortcomings of prevailing paradigms (Finn, 2008; Ravitch, 2010). Proponents of accountability, standardization, and testing see these as vehicles for reform while opponents like Diane Ravitch (2010) have issued warnings that “efforts to reform public education are, ironically, diminishing its quality and endangering its very survival” (p. 242). The passion

inherent in the current policy debates reflects conflicting views about the right course of action; in other words, conflicting ethical views.

School leadership is complex. Gonzalez and Firestone (2013) described an education “tug-of-war” as principals “continue to feel a strong sense of internal accountability in spite of increasing external pressures.” Kafka (2009) identified that being a change agent in the community has long been part of the role of the principal. She found that the role of the principal has always demanded many hats and carried with it expectations for change and reform. The changing and complex nature of the current educational contexts presents unique challenges to school leaders. As Fullan (2001) notes, "The more complex society gets, the more sophisticated leadership must become. Complexity means change, but specifically it means rapidly occurring, unpredictable, nonlinear change. Moreover, the pace of change is ever increasing" (p. ix).

In a complex, changing, publicly scrutinized, and debated environment, school leaders are faced with addressing competing individual needs of members of the school community and addressing changes in culture and society that are also reflected in school such as immigration and information technology (Starratt, 2012). School leaders are responsible in an arena where needs and opinions vary and contexts are changing. The role of school leadership is laden with conflict and change. In such an environment, it can be no surprise that school leaders experience ethical dilemmas.

An alignment of a leaders’ ethics with that of the school or system in which he works may help minimizing moral conflict (Frick, 2011; Russel, 2008; Shipps & White, 2009). However, Frick (2011) concluded his study of *Practicing a Professional Ethic* with comments on how accountability and testing have created tension for leaders with conflicting views of

leadership and management. Moral confusion resulted from a disconnection between what principals envisioned their job should be compared with what it was.

Starratt (2012), Shapiro & Stefkovich (2011), and others offer theories on how to resolve ethical dilemmas by applying a multidimensional framework. There are four ethics that make up the framework and they are referred to as the ethics of justice, care, critique, and the profession. Each respectively takes into consideration an aspect of ethics; principles, relationships, power dynamics, and professional responsibilities. They offer these as solutions for how school leaders can contend with competing needs, make just decisions, demonstrate care, advance a social justice agenda, and account for the best interest of the students in their charge. Other scholars (Ciulla, 2004; Fullan, 2001; Sergiovanni, 1992) also offer theories of what it takes to be an ethical leader as well as prescriptions for how to develop leadership skill and character by focusing on the ethical dimension.

These studies that draw from these theories comprise much of the literature review that follows in the next chapter. However, the studies in Chapter 2 focus on but one way of exploring a concept—one based on a positivist approach. Van Manen (1990) wrote “no matter how practically compelling the contents of these books may be, they do not necessarily bring us any closer to the nature of [the topic of study] itself” (p. 47). For that type of understanding, we have to focus on the nature and meaning of the experiences of school leaders. A phenomenological method enables a researcher to approach a phenomenon freshly in order to be open to seeing what it offers. As Van Manen wrote:

The problem ...is not always that we know too little...but that we know too much.
Or more accurately ...that our common sense...suppositions, assumptions, and the
existing body of scientific knowledge predisposes us to interpret the nature of the

phenomenon before we have even come to grips with the significance of the phenomenological question, (1990, p. 46).

Decisions are not all easy, particularly when there is an ethical component. In managing and leading, principals are sometimes faced with ethical dilemmas where there appear to be conflicts between different views of what is right. This study focuses on school leaders' experiences of the ethical challenges that are inherent in the role of school leader; the leader struggles when the right action is unclear, is a matter of dispute, is a struggle to resolve, or in some other way presents as a dilemma.

Purpose and Research Question

The purpose of this study is to explore the nature and meaning of school leaders' experiences of ethical dilemmas in their roles as school leaders. It uses hermeneutic phenomenological methodology to develop pedagogic understanding of ethics as experienced by practitioners in their role as school leaders. Van Manen (1990) wrote "phenomenological research gives us tactful thoughtfulness: situational perceptiveness, discernment, and depthful understanding. The fundamental thesis is that pedagogic thoughtfulness and tact are essential elements of pedagogic competence," (p.156). This understanding is of value to both pedagogic practice and policy and, therefore, may be of interest to school leaders, aspiring school leaders, teachers, policy makers, preparers of school leaders and others interested in school leadership practice and policy. To fulfill this purpose, this study is designed to address the following research question: How do school leaders experience ethical dilemmas in their role as school leaders?

Delimitations

The participants in this study are school leaders, defined broadly as individuals with responsibility for leading schools, and included principals and assistant principals in elementary, middle, and high school. The specific ethical dilemmas explored were open to discussion with the participants. I approached practicing school leaders who I had come to know in my professional experience. Therefore, there was a geographic delimitation to the Washington DC and Northern Virginia metro area and included both public and private school leaders.

Within the broad scope of school leadership literature, I focused on the ethical dimension in the literature. The research studies I selected are predominantly from the past five years. However, I have also included the foundational research of theorists including Kohlberg (1980) and Gilligan (1993). The literature review that follows begins with a framework established by Starratt (1991, 2012) and Shapiro and Stefkovich (2001, 2011) and explores the frames of justice, care, critique, and the profession. It then expands the framework to explore ethics from the perspective of character and context.

This methodology includes the interpretation of experiences. The interpretation comes from the participants and the researcher. Thus, the results of this study represent a possible interpretation of the personal descriptions of the experiences of ethical dilemmas of several school leaders. The study is not comprehensive nor does it profess to be the only interpretation or suggest that the experiences of others will be exactly the same. The goal is to be illustrative, to facilitate a type of pedagogic understanding, rather than to provide generalized predictions or prescriptions for how one ought to think or behave (Van Manen, 2014).

Definitions

Consequentialist ethics: “According to consequentialism, correct moral conduct is determined *solely* by a cost-benefit analysis of an action's consequence” (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy).

Duty ethics (deontology): “Duty theories base morality on specific, foundational principles of obligation. These theories are sometimes called *deontological*, from the Greek word *deon*, or duty, in view of the foundational nature of our duty or obligation” (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy).

Ethic of Care: “The ethic of care focuses on the demands of relationships, not from a contractual or legalistic standpoint, but from a standpoint of regard for the very ‘givenness’ of the other” (Starratt, 2012, p 36).

Ethic of critique: The ethic of critique “directly begins to confront the structural injustice that penetrates their own society and the educating process itself... The ethic of critique involves a process of assessing the institutional performance of the school from the point of view of structural justice and injustice” (Starratt, 2012, p. 48).

Ethic of justice: “An ethic of justice provides some explicit response to the issue of self-governance. We govern ourselves by observing justice. That is to say, we treat each other according to some standard of justice that is uniformly applied to all our relationships” (Starratt, 2012, p. 39).

Ethic of the profession: “Our concept of professional ethics as an ethical paradigm includes ethical principles and codes of ethics embodied in the justice paradigm, but is much broader, taking into account other paradigms, as well as professional judgment and decision

making. We recognize professional ethics as a dynamic process requiring administrators to develop their own personal and professional codes” (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011, p.22).

Ethical dilemma: “A situation in which a person must choose between two courses of action of (apparent) equal moral importance, so that the choice necessarily entails the transgression of an important moral principle.” (OED, 2016, retrieved from http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/ethical-dilemma)

Hermeneutic phenomenology: “Hermeneutic phenomenology is a method of abstemious reflection on the basic structures of the lived experience of human existence. The term method refers to the way or attitude of approaching a phenomenon. Abstemious means that reflecting on the experience aims to abstain from theoretical, polemical, suppositional, and emotional intoxications. Hermeneutic means that reflecting on experience must aim for discursive language and sensitive interpretive devices that make phenomenological analysis, explication, and description possible and intelligible. Lived experience means that phenomenology reflects on the prereflective or prepredictive life of human existence as living through it” (Van Manen, 2014, p.26).

Pedagogical understanding: Van Manen (1990, 2014) described pedagogical understanding as the goal of phenomenological research. His 1990 book *Researching Lived Experiences* is subtitled *Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*. He offers the perspective that pedagogy goes beyond what educators do and how they act and includes a unique orientation and perspective connected to the experiences that comprise the very life and being of people who are educators. As an example, he explained that “no matter how challenging it may be to develop theories or models of learning, reading, doing mathematics, and so forth, no learning theories, teaching methods, or reading models will tell us what is

appropriate for this child in this situation. That is the task of pedagogical theory” (1990, p. 150).

He also offered,

Pedagogy is not something that can be ‘had,’ ‘possessed,’ in the way that we can say that a person ‘has’ or ‘possesses’ a set of specific skills or performative competencies.

Rather, pedagogy is something that a parent or a teacher continuously must redeem, retrieve, regain, recapture in the sense of recalling. Every situation in which I must act educationally with children requires that I must continuously and reflectively be sensitive to what authorizes me as pedagogic teacher or parent. Exactly because pedagogy is in an ultimate or definitive sense unfathomable, it poses the unremitting invitation to the creative activity of pedagogic reflection which brings the deep meaning of pedagogy to light. (1990, p. 149)

Organization of the Study

In Chapter 2, literature related to theories of school leadership ethics is explored. The framework for the review begins with the framework of Starratt (2012) and Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011) to explore the ethics of justice, care, critique, and the profession. This framework is then expanded to explore leadership virtues and education contexts. Chapter 3 describes the hermeneutic phenomenological methodology as described by Van Manen (1990, 2014) that is proposed for this study. Chapter 4, presents the hermeneutic phenomenological text which includes analysis of the anecdotes drawn from the lived experiences described in interviews with participants. Chapter 5, the final chapter, contains a discussion of findings.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

A study of ethics may be categorized into metaethics, normative ethics or applied ethics.

As indicated by Fieser & Dowden (n.d):

The field of ethics (or moral philosophy) involves systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong behavior. Philosophers today usually divide ethical theories into three general subject areas: metaethics, normative ethics, and applied ethics. *Metaethics* investigates where our ethical principles come from, and what they mean. Are they merely social inventions? Do they involve more than expressions of our individual emotions? Metaethical answers to these questions focus on the issues of universal truths, the will of God, the role of reason in ethical judgments, and the meaning of ethical terms themselves. *Normative ethics* takes on a more practical task, which is to arrive at moral standards that regulate right and wrong conduct. This may involve articulating the good habits that we should acquire, the duties that we should follow, or the consequences of our behavior on others. Finally, *applied ethics* involves examining specific controversial issues, such as abortion, infanticide, animal rights, environmental concerns, homosexuality, capital punishment, or nuclear war. (para. 1)

The goal of normative ethics with respect to school leadership is to determine the best way to conduct ourselves when confronted by the needs and challenges inherent in the role of school leadership. The literature on the ethics of school leadership reviewed for this study resides in this realm of normative ethics.

The primary framework for the review is one developed by Starratt (1991, 2012), expanded by Shapiro and Stefkovich (2001, 2011), and involves a multidimensional approach using the frames of justice, care, critique, and the profession. Kohlberg (1980) and Gilligan

(1993) provided some of the foundational theory upon which this framework was developed and are, therefore, included in the research review.

The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fieser & Dowden, n.d.) further subdivides normative ethics into the categories of “(a) virtue theories, (b) duty theories, and (c) consequentialist theories” (Section 2, para. 2). Justice, as described by Starratt (2012), Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011), and Kohlberg (1980), is a clear example of a duty theory (deontology) which bases morality and ethics on the adherence to rules or principles however care, critique, and the profession defy easy categorization. For example, is care an example of a characteristic that someone has placing it in the category of virtue ethics? Or is care a demonstration of a concern for an outcome for others placing it in the category of consequentialist theories (specifically utilitarianism)? In addition to the framework of justice, care, critique, and the profession, I have included a section of literature to focus on other research relative to virtue—the characteristics that make up a good leader—as this is a common theme of the school leadership literature.

Finally, I drew inspiration from Catholic teachings on ethics to explore relevant “circumstances” in education. The inspiration no doubt comes from my own formative experiences which include studying philosophy as a minor in at a Catholic liberal arts college as an undergraduate. In the Catholic tradition “the object, the intention, and the circumstances make up the ‘sources,’ or constitutive elements, of the morality of human acts“(Catholic Church, Catechism, 1997, Part 3, Section 1, Chapter 1, Article 4, para. 3). The object refers to the act itself; murder for example is considered an immoral or unethical object regardless of intention or circumstances. Intention is important as a secondary consideration; for example, the object of offering a charitable gift is tarnished by an intention of receiving accolades or aggrandizement.

Circumstances refer to the context in which the action took place. While I believe the elements of object and intention are sufficiently covered in the other sections of this chapter (particularly justice and the concept of the best interest of the students), I have included a section on the contexts of education relevant to the study of ethical experiences.

The six areas of the ethics of justice, care, critique, and the profession, along with the areas of virtue and contexts, provides a comprehensive framework for a background exploration of normative ethics for school leadership.

The Ethics of Justice

The ethic of justice is a paradigm based on principles. The ethic of justice holds that values such as freedom, truth, and equality should be recognized and protected in an ethical society and by ethical individuals, particularly leaders. Based on democratic principles, justice focuses on individuals in a society and balances each person's individual rights in the democratic society through an adherence to established norms, rules, and laws (Kohlberg, 1980; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011; Starratt, 2012). Deontology is an ethical approach that emphasizes adherence to ethical rules and values. Kohlberg (1980) applied a deontological perspective by identifying justice as the ultimate value in his theory of moral development; he found justice to be the only value that can weigh competing claims of other values. Starratt (2012) and Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011) each cite Kohlberg's theories of moral development in their description of the theme of justice in educational leadership.

Kohlberg's (1980) theories on justice in moral development were derived from his study of moral judgment and character that began with interviews with children 10 to 16 years of age. He followed them at three-year intervals over the course of 12 years and continued to build on

his research in follow-up studies across cultures. In his findings, he described 28 aspects of morality that serve as the basis for six stages of development at three basic levels.

At the preconventional level, justice is understood as right and wrong interpreted through external rewards and punishments distributed by authority or through protecting selfish interest in an exchange of quid pro quo (Kohlberg, 1980). While this level of moral development may be reflected in some adult individuals, he held this as a developmental stage that was not fully mature.

Kohlberg (1980) described a second level, which includes stages three and four, as the conventional level. Individuals at this level understand justice as a fulfillment of responsibilities inherent in the social contract. According to his theory, the understanding of being a good person for individuals at the second level implies conforming to and maintaining the social contract. Individuals seek personal virtues for their own value in order to be a good person rather than to avoid harm or seek personal gain. Rules, authority, law, and responsibilities help guide behavior and decision-making. Kohlberg (1980) wrote “A person at [this level] thinks law and order is justice or as one respondent said ‘if we have law and order, what do we need justice for?’” (p. 34).

Kohlberg (1980) also described a third level of postconventional justice in which “there is a clear effort to define moral values and principles that have validity and application apart from the authority of the groups” (p. 92). I find this level to be more consistent with the ethic of critique and therefore expanded on it later in this review.

Starratt (2012) and Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011) identified justice as one of several ethical perspectives but Kohlberg (1980) and other proponents of a principled approach to moral decision making turn to justice as the ultimate principle and argue that it reigns supreme among

all ethical values, virtues, and principles. Kohlberg (1980), espoused justice as preeminent and identified moral categories that he found universally maintained across cultures. In support of his theory, Kohlberg (1980) presented an explicitly reasoned argument supporting his thesis that “our major and most controversial claim is that the only ‘true’ moral principle is justice” (p. 63).

Justice has long been the subject of ethical theory going back to the roots of classic western philosophy. Plato’s (360 BC) philosophical writings demonstrate an affinity to a principled approach and to justice in particular. The theme of what is arguably his most significant writing, *The Republic*, is a quest for understanding of justice. This piece contains the roots of the cardinal virtues of wisdom, courage, and temperance with justice binding the relationship between the three. In the 1950s, Piaget placed logic at the pinnacle of thought and analogously placed justice at the pinnacle of social interactions. Pope Paul VI (1972) wrote a message for the celebration of the day of peace the title of which is now an oft-repeated adage—“if you want peace, work for justice.”

Justice, as an ethic that guides decisions and actions, aims to resolve ethical questions through a carefully reasoned search for the universal moral principles that guide decision-making (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011; Starratt, 2012). When conflicts arise between competing principles, the theory of justice provides the moral or ethical resolution of the conflict or dilemma (Kohlberg, 1971). An ethic of justice seeks to resolve explosive and emotionally wrought problems through logical and objective analysis of competing values and rights by removing the emotional component and relying on critical reasoning.

Consistent with the principles presented in an ethic of justice, Bon (2012) analyzed Supreme Court opinions in educational leadership predicated on the view that law establishes uniformly applied rules and standards for how we should treat each other in our communal

relationships. This includes how school leaders should treat the student population. She found the Brown and Plyler decisions to support a view that all children should have access and opportunity as an educational ethical imperative. Bon wrote:

The ethical principles explored in education leadership are complementary to and woven into the theories about justice, fairness, and equality (Rawls, 1971); freedom (Dworkin, 1996); and opportunity rights (Levin, 1981). This article, through an exploratory analysis of legal discourse in *Brown v. Board of Education* and *Plyler v. Doe*, revealed how legal and ethical principles may be interwoven as critical concepts. These concepts are referred to as the taxonomy of law and ethics and include—Educational Opportunity, Equality in Education, and the Fundamental Value of Education. (2012, p. 300)

Law and policy can articulate values and guide just and moral behavior and decisions. Thus, law and policy serve justice. Bon (2012) observed in her content analysis of *Phi Delta Kappan* articles related to *Brown* and *Plyler* that educational literature “did not solely focus on law; they emphasized and quoted the Court’s language , reflecting the intersection of law and ethics.” (2012, p. 301)

The ethic of justice at the conventional level is the first of three ethical paradigms explored in this section. I presented it first because of its relation to ancient classical philosophy and because Kohlberg’s (1980) theories were the launching point for Gilligan (1993) and others that followed.

School leaders who subscribe to the ethic of justice strive to teach individuals how to behave throughout their lives as members of communities. They rely on laws, policies, values, and moral principles to determine ethical behavior and they have strong connections to classic

philosophical answers to questions about good and evil and principles of moral behavior (Kohlberg, 1980; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011; Starratt, 2013).

The Ethic of Critique

The ethic of critique finds that ethics that rely on a law and order approach are too limited. Starratt (2012), Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011), and others describe the ethic of critique as another framework to resolve ethical questions which challenges rules, laws and policies by “awakening educators to the inequities in society and, in particular in the schools” (Shapiro & Stefkovich, p. 15). The ethic of critique is consistent with a complete view of Kohlberg’s (1980) developmental theory of justice at the post conventional level. Kohlberg defined justice at varied levels of development. In his research, he asked subjects to discuss their thinking regarding the Heinz dilemma: a scenario where a man’s wife is dying and in need of drugs to save her life but he cannot afford them and the druggist is unsympathetic. Should he steal the drugs? While justice from a conventional perspective dictates “don’t steal,” the principles of preserving life in disobedience of the law and in defiance of state authority is an alternate view that may demonstrate an ethic of critique. For Kohlberg, each instance involves a subject considering principles and weighing them, which is justice. However, Kohlberg (1980) identified that “this stage has utilitarian overtones” (p. 92) distinguishing it from the purely deontological perspective of justice at the conventional level. While Starratt (2012) and Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011) referenced Kohlberg in their frameworks describing the ethic of justice, they limited the application of his theory to the conventional level. However, Gilligan (1993) described Kohlberg’s moral maturity as the “...ability to bring deductive logic to bear on the solution of moral dilemmas, to differentiate morality from law, and to see how laws can be considered to

have mistakes” (Chapter 2, para. 12). Kohlberg’s higher levels of justice are congruent to the ethic espoused in critical theory upon which Starratt (1991) based the paradigm of critique.

The highest level of justice (stage 6), according to Kohlberg (1980), implied a more critical view than a strict law and order approach. He described:

The core problem which stage 5 cannot resolve is the problem under which conditions it is morally right or obligatory to violate the law. The principles of welfare and social contract are inadequate to resolve this problem. Stage 6 resolves the problem recognizing the primacy of justice over all other moral considerations, by recognizing that civil disobedience is justified if and only if it is preventing a legally condoned injustice (Kohlberg, 1980, p.62).

Traditions that allow for or encourage civil disobedience in the pursuit of ethical action include critique and social justice. In *Cultivating an Ethical School* (2012), Starratt described critique as “a third ethic that directly begins to confront the structural injustices that penetrate [educators’] own society and the educating process itself” (p. 48). Critique is a social justice perspective. It holds that moral behavior is action and change oriented with a focus on confronting and correcting inequities. An examination of the description of this educational leadership ethics paradigm includes a call to action in such forms as examining, seeking, challenging, confronting, changing, advocating, correcting, speaking, and giving voice. Theorists and researchers (Buskey & Pitts, 2009; Hoffman, 2009; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011; Starratt, 2012; Theoharris & Causton-Theoharris, 2008) posited that power, privilege, the status quo, current structures, rules, laws, and unquestioned patterns in society and schools, should be the subject of critique. The challenge to power should be on behalf of those who are marginalized in the status quo because of race, class, gender, or other criteria that affect social

status. A change agenda is inherent to critique as leaders recognize that “no organizational arrangements in schools ‘have to be’ that way.” (Starratt, 2012, p. 50) A pure utilitarian approach to decision making may suggest choosing the action that will have the greatest benefit for the most number of people, but the ethic of critique challenges leaders to also be attuned to those in the minority group who may be harmed by structural norms (Bohman, 2003).

According to the ethic of critique and social justice, true justice must be considerate of customs, institutions, and language as well as how those factors relate to laws and power relationships.

This is in contrast to relying on the law and order perspective of conventional justice. Critically analyzing which groups are advantaged or disadvantaged challenges the presumed legitimacy of social, institutional, and power structures and reflects an ethic that recognizes that “no social arrangement is neutral”(Starratt, 2012, p. 50).

Starratt cited critical theory as one of the foundations for his ethic of critique for school leaders. Critical theorists distinguish themselves as having the quest for human emancipation as a purpose of their study. Critical theory was originally associated with Western European Marxism and its critique of the economic power dynamics of capitalism. Today it is also associated with a broad range of philosophical schools of thought that profess to seek human freedom and decrease the powers of domination. Examples of these schools of thought include feminism, critical race theory, and post-colonialism. Critical theory is also evident in debates regarding globalism.

Social justice is a prevalent theme in educational ethics. Some researchers have adopted an activist attitude to argue that educational leaders should have, as their primary aim, a goal to be leaders for social justice. Hoffman (2009) believed that social justice and activism should be the guiding principle for principals and other leaders. She argued for a social justice stance in

her “call to action” (p. 392) research in which she interviewed social activists including a principal. She found that successful social justice leaders have political clarity, capacity, the ability to collaborate, and a willingness to take risks. She wrote:

Educational leaders need to understand the competing political, economic, and social forces in education, become less apologetic for their views, and become more confident in resisting the dominant discourses in order to advocate for those typically marginalized and powerless in society. (Hoffman, 2009, p. 392)

Theoharris and Causton-Theoharris (2008) conducted research in inclusion and framed it within the paradigm of social justice/critique. They argued that students with special needs require advocates in positions of power to help them participate in a system that often excludes them. The researchers found that to lead from a social justice agenda requires leaders to have a global perspective, bold vision, and embrace of their agency. Leaders also needed to develop and foster growth in each of those areas. Buskey and Pitts (2009) described a leadership preparation program that promoted a social justice agenda. They wrote of their approach to instruction at Western Carolina University and described the following questions they use to highlight assumptions of K-12 school leadership:

1. Have you ever purposefully subverted or sabotaged an order, directive, program or policy?
2. If not, could or should you?
3. If so, would you tell us about it? (Buskey & Pitts, 2009, p. 58)

They explored when, how, and why change agents working for social justice bucked the system by employing strategies of subversion. Buskey and Pitts (2009) indicated that asking about subversion clarifies ethics and values. Are there programs, policies, or practices that are

bad for children that you ignore, kill, or let die? Frick (2011) also observed incidents of administrators making decisions in opposition to professional consensus citing administrative discretion. Such instances included principals who “manipulated, massaged, or out-right violated school district policies or procedures, bought time by waiting out circumstances, took risks at the cost of organizational sanction, or lied in order to achieve what they believed to be in the best interests of a student.” (pg 345)

Even as school leaders have strived for social justice, it is important to remember that they are part of the power structure and of the status quo. Kafka’s (2009) historical review presents the principalship as a position of shifting power and acquiring and using the power as a guide for decisions. Kafka (2009) noted the role of social activism in the principalship has a long tradition. She found that, as early as the late 1800s, principals were able to “raise their status and authority by establishing themselves as local leaders” (p. 323) by getting involved in social and health services, charity drives, and civic action. Citing political rather than altruistic motives, she found school leaders’ involvement in social activism to be instrumental in building public relations and stated that in a democracy no public institution is left to the experts. Hence, she describes involvement in charity as a public relations strategy to gain power and autonomy (Kafka, 2009).

Helig and Darling-Hamond (2008) provided an example of a breakdown in the social justice agenda in their study that showed that schools “gamed” the high stakes testing policies by retaining and pushing out low-achieving students to avoid testing them. They noted:

An important question for the field is whether there is any way to protect low-income, low-achieving students—often students of color and recent immigrants—from bearing the

brunt of accountability strategies that impose test-based sanctions of the schools they attend. (p. 107)

School leaders who subscribe to an ethic of justice at the post-conventional level aspire to address inequities reproduced in schools that are similar to the inequities prevalent in society. They find answers to ethical dilemmas by engaging in discourse about class, race, gender and they give voice to those who are marginalized or silenced by the power dynamics and political structures in the status quo (Kohlberg, 1980; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011; Starratt, 2012).

The Ethic of Care

The ethic of care is a paradigm based on interconnectivity and relationships. According to the ethic of care, ethical behavior lies in tending to the needs of others by listening, inviting participation, and treating individuals with the love and respect everyone deserves as a human person (Gilligan, 1993; Starratt, 2012; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011). Both the ethic of care and the utilitarian approach to ethics ask, “What impact will this decision have on the stakeholders in this case” and “How can the most good be realized for the greatest number of people” (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011). School leaders who subscribe to an ethic of care seek answers to ethical dilemmas in empathy, connectivity, and compassion. The ethic of care encourages collaboration, loyalty, and trust (Gilligan, 1993; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011; Starratt, 2012).

Gilligan worked as a research assistant to Kohlberg in the early 70s but her 1982 book, *A Different Voice*, was viewed as a critique of Kohlberg’s moral developmental theory. While Kohlberg (1980) focused on justice, Gilligan (1993) heard another “voice” in her research—a voice of care and relationships. Starratt (2012), Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011), Nodding (2013), and others have used her theories as the foundation for the ethic of care.

Gilligan (1993) observed that the feminine perspective was absent or discounted in much of the research of the day. She observed a distinct feminine voice that she found in three studies that were the foundation for her book. The three studies were a college student study, an abortion study, and a study that explored rights and responsibilities. All three studies included the same set of questions about self, morality, choice, and conflict (Gilligan, 1993). Gilligan found that women approached dilemmas differently and tended to try to solve problems not through the application of a system of rules, but by making “conditions more salient” (Chapter 2, para. 15) to individuals involved who are positioned to help by appealing to empathy, loyalty, trust and interpersonal connections (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011).

While Gilligan (1993) originally presented her theory as an alternative feminine perspective or, more specifically, “a different voice,” theorists since have applied this perspective beyond gender descriptions and have viewed care as the most important ethical paradigm. Noddings (2013) commented on a change in title for the second edition of her book *Caring* which replaced the subtitle of *A Feminine Approach* with *A Relational Approach* noting that “virtually all care theorists make the relationship more fundamental than the individual” (Nodding, 2013, Preface, para. 2). She further commented that this change was made without losing the central role of women’s experiences in the development of the ethical frame. Nodding (2013) identified this ethic as “a rapidly developing normative moral theory” (Preface, para. 7).

In presenting his multidimensional model of ethical decision-making, Starratt (2012) placed particular emphasis on the ethic of care. He wrote:

I place this ethic first, because it is primary. Care is so fundamental, that without it humans would cease to be human. Humans can live with injustice; they can survive in structurally unjust conditions. But without being cared for, without being connected to

significant others in mutual expressions of caring, the prospects for existing as what we recognize as human beings seems impossible. (p. 36)

In his description of changing contexts in education, Starratt (2012) again described care as a paramount theme of ethics: “the essence of every concrete reality is its relationality to everything else“ (p. 10). In his conclusion to his chapter he outlined the various ethics in the multidimensional framework. He placed particular emphasis on care. The final paragraph of the chapter reads,

The ethics of caring brings us full circle at this point. Knowing our own failures to care for others, our own ways of rationalizing moral choices, our own reluctance to challenge questionable school arrangements, we are able to sympathize with the weakness in the human community. That weakness is part of being human. Despite our heroic ideals, we often act in distinctly unheroic ways. Hence, a sense of compassion for our wounded and fragile humanity is needed for one who would act ethically, compassion for him or herself, and compassion for others. We have to extend our caring to forgiving. The forgiveness extended, we then go on with the business of making things right. (Starratt, 2012, p. 54)

In her 2009 study of elementary school assistant principals, Troy (2009) asked what framework was used most often in the resolution of ethical dilemmas. She used the four frames proposed by Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011) and found that the ethic of care provided the solution most often. Helm (2010) explored the leadership dispositions of principals and administrators and found care to be one of five key dispositions for success along with integrity, courage, a strong work ethic, and the ability to think critically. These findings were independent of the Starratt (2012) and Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011) framework. Helm (2010) identified care as a

critical disposition, using the same term used by Gilligan (1993), Noddings (2013), Starratt (2012), and Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011). Glanz (2010) advocated for care in his research on strategic leadership in schools and communities.

The Ethic of the Profession

The ethic of the profession encourages ethical behavior in leaders who aspire to fulfill professional obligations and adhere to the expectations of the community and the profession in their role as school leaders. They try to find answers to ethical dilemmas by reflecting on professional experience and obligations to serve the best interests of the students and reflect on questions about roles, expectations, responsibilities, and professional codes (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011).

In the late 19th and early 20th century, one of the ways that “principals gained authority and increased their prestige” was “by working to professionalize the principalship” (Kafka, 2009, p. 322). They formed associations, (including The National Association of School Principals in the year 1916) and developed certifications to indicate they had acquired “specific knowledge and skills at a time when scientific inquiry was considered an essential aspect of any profession” (Kafka, 2009, p. 322). Today, professional organizations, such as the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA), publish standards for school leaders that include statements that explicitly cite acting ethically (ISLLC, 2015; NPBEA, 2015 ; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011).

Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011) identified the need for professional codes of ethics for education professionals. They noted that clear codes exist in other professions like law and medicine and cite the need for “guideposts for the profession” in education as well (p. 22). While embracing the ethics of justice care and critique, Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011) make a

distinction between the first three frames and a fourth paradigm they described as the ethic of the profession. They argued that the other paradigms are insufficient to address “moral aspects unique to the profession” (p. 19) so they extended Starratt’s three-paradigm framework to include a fourth. Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011) argued that, "The ethics of justice, critique, and care do not provide an adequate picture of the factors that must be taken into consideration as leaders strive to make ethical decisions within the context of educational settings" (p. 19). They proposed the addition of this fourth dimension “to fill this gap” (p.19). They develop the ethic of the profession to be reflected in the adage to serve “the best interests of the student” (p. 25) and in doing so identify a supreme ethic.

While Kohlberg(1980) argued that the ethic of justice was the preeminent principle by which to weigh competing claims, Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011) argue that the best interests of the student is the guiding principle by which to resolve clashes educational leaders face in deciding among personal codes, professional codes, and community norms. They likened the best interest of the students to medicine’s “first do no harm” and law’s “zealous representation” (p. 25).

Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011) co-opted Fullan’s (2003) moral imperative for school leadership in their advocacy for recognition of the ethic of the profession. They opined, "If there is a moral imperative for the profession, it is to serve the ‘best interest of the students. Consequently, this ideal must lie at the heart of any professional paradigm for educational leaders" (Shapiro & Stefkovich, p. 25).

While researchers, scholars, and associations have presented and proposed codes, there is no single code of ethics to drive education. Glanz (2010) laments this lack of ethical focus as an impediment to strategic leadership. Buskey and Pitts (2009) presented their research on training

with the code of ethics adopted from medicine and applied to education to first do no harm. Starratt (2012) presented a multidimensional model for decision making in education that included the ethics of justice, care, and critique. He described the model as a way to promote ethical schools and as a way to “guide the decisions, policies and activities of educators and the learners as they engage in the school’s threefold curricula of academics, personal growth, and citizenship”(p. 35). He intended the model to be “an ethical theory for practitioners” (p. 35) not theorists. Glanz (2010) used Starratt’s model of justice, care, and critique in his review of strategic leadership literature finding that social justice (i.e., critique) and care were necessary. Troy (2009) surveyed 81 public school elementary assistant principals and analyzed their decision-making using the four frames of justice, critique, care, and the profession. The multidimensional model is often presented to be specifically applied to education and, as such, may be considered the “guideposts for the profession” that Starratt (2012, p. 22) sought in a professional ethic.

Building consensus around the ethic of the profession and the best interest of the student is not fully supported in the research. Frick (2011) used the concept of the best interest of the student in his research. He used the multidimensional frame that includes professional ethics and the best interest of the student in his modified phenomenological study of 12 principals in southeast PA. He conducted an “empirical investigation (that) examined secondary school principals’ perspectives regarding ‘the best interests of the student’ as a viable professional ethics” and found that while the best interests of the students resonated with them as leaders, it did not serve as an injunction that universally addressed the ethical dilemmas these principals faced. Principals made judgments based on more complicated factors and nuances that were defined by specific contexts that limited the utility of this phrase. Some participants indicated

the phrase was void of meaning by virtue of being too generic—just happy talk—while others said that it was a worthwhile catch phrase to serve as a general guide with its flexibility contributing to its value. Frick (2011) observed that the genuine concern for the well-being of students seemed to be more evident in principals valuing students as human beings, which seemed more indicative of an ethic of care. Further, the phrase did not resolve the conflict of how to resolve situational dilemmas; for example, the best interest of one student or the best interest of the many may conversely seem more indicative of an ethic of justice. Frick (2011) identified other differences in responses to dilemmas that were based on different relationships, the needs of different individuals, and timing.

Interestingly, Kafka (2009) noted that principals in the early 20th century found a source of power in response to immigration, urbanization, and industrialization and adopted as a moral purpose the goal of “Americanization” (p. 324) for the wretched population. Whether this was in fact a goal that served “the best interests of the students” is up for obvious debate. I raise this issue to demonstrate that, within the profession, there are changing contexts. For example, Kafka’s (2009) historical review reflected values that were priorities over the years starting with today’s value of student achievement as something new and reform, which has remained relatively stable over the years. Another value she found was that as responsibility and authority for principals grew, autonomy and the independence of the principal were values held in education.

Virtue Ethics

This section focuses on character and virtue ethics in school leadership. “In regard to leadership, ethics has to do with what leaders do and who leaders are. It is concerned with the nature of leaders’ behavior, and with their virtuousness” (Northouse 2013, p. 424). The

intersection of who leaders are personally (identity) and professionally (role) contributes to an understanding of their leadership ethics and serves as the foundation for this exploration of research around the topic of character and virtue in school leadership.

There is a branch of leadership theory that focuses on traits (Northouse, 2013). The Great man theories suggest that those with exceptional traits rise to the top and assume leadership. Helm (2010) and Theoharris and Causton-Theoharris (2008) each focused on dispositions in their research. Helm's (2010) title was *Leadership Dispositions; What Are They and Are They Essential for Good Leadership?* Theoharris and Causton Theoharris (2008) also cited the words, critical dispositions, in the title of their study that explored a leader's personal disposition as a basis for ethics and leadership. These researchers found traits like integrity, courage, and vision were important characteristics in leaders. Helm (2010) also looked at essential characteristics in leaders and found integrity, courage, caring, work ethic, and critical thinking to be essential leadership dispositions.

Roberts and Sampson (2010) found "honesty is an important character trait" (Discussion, para. 5) in their research. Their method was to administer a survey that used a combination of Likert ratings and open-ended questions to students in a leadership preparation program. In my opinion, their discussion naively focused on being hurt or angry when lied to. Nonetheless, it was a study that explored morality from a perspective of a specific character trait—honesty.

Garrett-Staib and Maninger (2011) conducted qualitative research into ethical leadership in principals. They explored race, gender, years of experience, school level, training, district size, and fundamental beliefs as relevant to the identity of leaders. While I have criticisms for the conclusions they made based on their methods, I appreciate the fundamental question they

explored. Garrett-Staib and Maninger (2011) identified morality as an important characteristic in educational leaders by surveying four principals and asking their opinions on the matter.

Political preferences may also have relevance to ethical belief systems. Hoffman (2009) presented an argument for a social justice stance as a reaction to the influence of political philosophies that were influencing schools. Specifically she cited a conflux of neoliberal, neoconservative, and authoritarian populist views that promote an agenda of accountability for very different reasons including beliefs about market values, choice, traditional values, and conservative Christian authority. Hoffman's (2009) call was a political one, suggesting that political identity also influences ethical perspectives. Thus, the action and decision is shared—although the rationale for the action is extremely diverse.

The principalship is a profession and a leadership role. The relationship between an individual's ethical perspective and their leadership role may be a two-way street. A particular role may provide unique experiences, perspectives, and responsibilities that contribute to creating a professional identity. An individual's perspective may be influenced by his/her role in schools. I use these examples from my own experience. A special education committee that reviews an individual education plan (IEP) is regularly made up of different school specialists including administrators, regular education teachers, special education teachers and other specialists. Each offers a unique perspective that contributes to a collective decision (which hopefully is in the best interest of the student). Also, a classroom teacher manages discipline and behavior in his/her classroom but it is the role of the administrator to address serious discipline incidents and administer sanctions that a teacher does not have the authority to administer, for example, behaviors that result in suspensions. Handling serious discipline is a part of a principal's responsibilities. With the role and the responsibility of disciplinarian for major

offenses come unique perspectives, more frequent experiences, and a greater familiarity with school policy and practice.

Roles go beyond titles. A principal's role may also be linked to a purpose since their role is defined to advance a purpose. Kafka (2009) observed that the role of the principal has changed over the history of public education. She reported in her research findings that "in the 1920s and 1930s principals were considered spiritual and scientific leaders (p. 325)." In the 1940s the principals' role as a democratic leader was elevated. In the 1950s principals strived to be efficient administrators. In the 60s, 70s and 80s they were change agents as they managed federal programs and the effective schools research. There is also the role of principal as community leader. Recall that in the section on critique and social justice, research was identified that found certain characteristics were important for social justice leadership including political clarity, capacity, the ability to collaborate, a willingness to take risks, a global perspective, and bold vision (Hoffman, 2009; Theoharris & Causton-Theoharris, 2008).

Alignment of personal and professional ethics and purpose is a recurring theme in ethics research. Russell (2008) cited alignment of personal and professional ethics as a key to being enthusiastic and engaged. She started her research with the identified traits of enthusiastic and engaged leaders and found that ethics had a role in supporting those characteristics as much as alignment of personal and professional mission contributed to leaders being enthusiastic and engaged. Russell (2008) did not cite a specific ethical value or perspective but did find that alignment of personal and professional missions results in leaders and those working with them being engaged and enthusiastic. Shipps and White (2009) cited conflicting forces that influence decisions including internal moral codes and a desire to do what seems best and most responsive to the students in a particular building as well as external political pressures linked to

accountability. The idea of varying personal codes may also be reflected in Troy's (2009) research. He used the four frames of Shapiro and Stefkovich (justice care critique and the profession) to analyze the decision making of elementary assistant principals and found that decisions were based on those ethics (with an ethic of care being most prevalent) whether they were deliberately planned or not.

The purpose of leadership training is to prepare leaders for the responsibilities and challenges of leadership including the acquisition of skills and the development of character through thoughtful reflection and scholarship. Buskey and Pitts (2009) described an objective of a principal preparation program to be to teach leadership for social justice purposes. They explored how subversion could be a strategy for doing good. Hughes and Jones (2010) explored the correlation between ethics training in school leaders and student performance and found leaders with a background in studying ethics saw higher performance on elementary reading, language arts, and math test scores. They also cited the need to prepare leaders to respond ethically to the pressure they face to demonstrate improved student performance in an era of high stakes accountability testing. Russell (2008) explored engaged leadership. She wrote,

If as Goleman contends, the more effective leader **is** one who is aware of his or her own feelings, is able to pick up on and acknowledge other's feelings, can inspire and influence and ultimately move groups forward, all in a positive manner; then those skills are the ones that need to be taught, practiced and modeled for leaders in training. (p. 106)

Other studies of ethical leadership provided recommendations for professional development to enhance ethical practices. Bon (2012) proposed a method of studying education law that integrates an ethical perspective in case reviews. Glanz's (2010) study of strategic leadership emphasized the need for a formal ethical basis for planning in every aspect of

education. Using Starratt's (2012) dimensions, he advocated for a need to develop a framework further.

Advocacy for training as a way to enhance ethical leadership is not universal. Several studies challenged the conventional wisdom of educational ethics training. As discussed earlier, Frick (2011) challenged the validity of the ethical axiom to make decisions in the best interests of the students and found that while principals used the phrase with some frequency, it insufficiently addressed the complexities of education leadership. It seems to me that Frick (2011) found that the phrase is akin to using phrases like do the right thing or do a good job as a guideline without having any indication of what the right thing is or what constitutes a good job. Garret-Staib and Maninger (2011) challenged the idea that ethical leadership was derived from leadership training in ethics. They found that "participants revealed that with little formal training in ethics there was at a minimum five areas of correlation between their roles as administrators and sound ethical practice" (pg 23). Without discounting the importance of ethics, their findings suggest it is more likely based on character than on formal preparation or training. Helm (2010) identified essential disposition for leadership but, instead of advocating for these to be developed in a leadership program, she suggested they be used as criteria in selection interviews with candidates in the entrance process for leadership programs.

Contexts and Circumstances

Sahlberg (2004) identified globalization as the key force behind many of the changing contexts in education including increased competition, standardization and accountability, privatization, commercialization, external control with decentralization of management, and information technology. He also identified the needs of globalization as the force driving a heightened focus on closing achievement gaps and equity, increased flexibility and innovation,

environmental sustainability, democratic and cultural values and ethics, and collective knowledge. Within the national context, Hoffman (2009) identified a conflux of political forces that have dominated educational discourse resulting in No Child Left Behind (NCLB); forces included neo-liberalism trust in market forces, neo-conservative standardization for a return to traditional values and authoritarian populists distrust of secular public schools. Kafka (2009) cited the market-based political beliefs that accompany globalization as the new context for school leaders and indicated:

Yet the history of the school principal demonstrates that although specific pressures might be new, the call for principals to accomplish great things with little support, and to be all things to all people, is certainly not. What is new is the degree to which schools are expected to resolve society's social and educational inequities in a market based environment. (2009, p. 328)

Starratt (2012) identified five interrelated trends that he wrote will “influence every country's educational process and how ethical issues are defined or ignored in that process” (p. 5). The first of the trends is globalization, which is understood as a reconstruction of the world into a global village with integrated economies, interdependent national interests, a rapid increase in immigration, and technologically enhanced accessibility to news and culture. These changes lead to a need for “schools to recognize their responsibility to prepare the young to participate as global citizens” (p.7).

The remaining four trends that Starratt identified were environmental degradation, the international information speedway, a shift to relationality, and an emergence of reflexive modernity. These emerging contexts “raise serious questions about traditional school pedagogy and therefore about ethical issues embedded in traditional school pedagogy” (p14).

The last two of the trends identified by Starratt's (2012) (i.e., the shift to relationality and reflexive modernity) suggest evolving sensibilities. Sensibility is a capacity for mental responsiveness and discernment related to moral perceptions and feelings (Collins 2014). New notions of social responsibility and human purpose are challenging the enlightenment thesis that hard science alone can solve all the world's problems. Esfahani-Smith and Aaker (2013) wrote an opinion piece published in the *New York Times* titled "Millennial Searchers." In it, they suggest that millennials appear interested in living lives defined by meaning found in making connections to others, giving, and having a larger purpose. These concepts are not entirely new and have been the subject of works like Viktor Frankl's (1946) *Man's Search for Meaning* and more recently in leadership texts like Bolman and Deal's (1995) *Leading with Soul*. Nonetheless, by some accounts, there is a 21st century resurgence to prioritizing the concept of meaning.

A more tangible and direct influence of globalization is the trend toward accountability. The goal of accountability is to ensure the effectiveness of teachers and administrators and to ensure progress is being made in closing the achievement gap. Schools across the nation are focused on the analysis of the data with respect to disaggregate groups to identify and correct performance gaps reminding leaders of the responsibility to tend to the needs of special education students. Accountability has particular implications for the eligibility and inclusion of special education students and thus carries with it social justice concerns (Lashley, 2007; Theoharris, 2008).

A criticism of accountability is the negative impact that measures have on individual students. As Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011) note, testing is used to evaluate institutions but "It is not only the institution or district that is affected, but the individual student as well. For students,

the number they receive on a high stakes test frequently determines their educational opportunities in the future,” (p. 138). According to Nelsen (2010), accountability has also changed the relationship between students and those working in the profession. He maintained that using student performance for staff evaluations has encouraged staff to look at students as a means to an end and has created a shift from what was viewed as a moral commitment to students to one of numbers and trends that serve personal interests. Helig and Darling-Hammond (2008), using quantitative analysis and interviews, found that schools responded to new high-stakes testing policies by “gaming” the system. They concluded that:

It is apparent that first-generation Texas-style accountability clearly created incentives for pushing out students from high schools and that schools responded to each shift in the incentives by finding new accountability loopholes to manipulate student placements and how data were reported about students. Students also detailed structural obstacles designed to encourage them to leave, such as excessive enforcement of attendance policies, repetitive class and grade assignment, and a generally non-supportive environment for low-achieving students. (p. 107)

Examples of gaming the system included over-identification of minority students as special education, exclusion from testing, encouraging dropouts, and missing scores.

Nevertheless, accountability has had support in the profession as a reform strategy. Nationally, the federal government ushered in a new age of accountability in 2001 with the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act under the title of NCLB which established expectations for states to develop standards and assessments for the purpose of improving student performance and closing the achievement gap. Consistent with the goals of NCLB, educational leadership organizations have adopted accountability priorities. As one

example, the National School Board Association identified standards, assessment, and accountability as three of the eight action areas to guide school boards to improve student achievement. As another example, the Virginia Department of Education (2012) identified its mission to be “to develop policies and provide leadership that improves student achievement.” To support that mission the board has seven goals, the first of which is accountability for student learning which reads:

The Board of Education will support accountability for all public schools by establishing policies that help schools increase the academic success of all students, especially those who are at-risk or in underperforming school systems. Incorporating student academic progress and narrowing of achievement gaps into the accountability system will provide for a more comprehensive identification of student achievement at each school. (VDOE, Virginia Board of Education, Goals for Public Education in Virginia: 2012-2017, goal 1)

The research of Hughes and Jones (2010) embraced accountability values and found that ethics training for school leaders resulted in improved student performance. They found that the advent of NCLB and high stakes testing added pressure to perform and increased the need for training in ethics. They found a relationship between ethics training and student achievement.

However, there is resistance to the changes from within the profession. Cranston (2013) identified a new orthodoxy in education that is driven by those outside of the school leadership profession. He proposed a framework to shift the debate about education to one that is framed and led by school leadership professionals and dominated by professional responsibility rather than accountability. Gross and Shapiro (2013) concurred in their work to reestablish a progressive alternative to repressive accountability regimes.

Frick (2011), Kafka (2009), Gonzalez and Firestone (2013), Derrington & Larsen (2012), and Shipps and White (2009) each note how accountability has influenced the locus of control. They describe the shift from the schoolhouse to greater central control and to the statehouse and the impact the shift has had on school leadership. Shipps and White (2009) interviewed two samples of 10 principals in the midst of dramatic accountability movement changes in New York City. They interviewed them three years apart and found that because of external accountability, the principals' focus shifted to external forces while moral and value commitments took a back seat as the shift to external forces increased. Shipps and White (2009) indicate:

The professional commitments of these new principals are being shaped in a policy environment that actively rewards attention paid to external accountabilities over internal ones. External accountabilities become strategic resources.... Exploiting an advantage in the competition for scarce human resources replaces moral compunction as a motivation to excel. (p. 370)

Kafka (2009) noted that the context of the principalship has become increasingly regulated and the source of authority is shifting. The source of this shift is a heightened focus on student achievement. The modern political environment of accountability has made highly individualistic ties to principals (Kafka, 2009).

As the political landscape of school leadership changes, some see it as a challenge to core values in education. Nelsen (2010) asked, "Can educators working within the currently dominant paradigm of the accountability movement maintain integrity?" The rise of the "international information speedway" (Starratt, 2012, p. 8) and the effect that digital technology is having on everything from the knowledge economy to digital political activism creates a new context and new questions for education that did not exist even a decade ago.

Gonzalez and Firestone (2013) described an education “tug-of-war as principals “continue to feel a strong sense of internal accountability in spite of increasing external pressures” (p. 383). Derrington and Larsen (2012) provided an example in a case study of a principal who struggled to meet the new expectations of the superintendent. The principal believed that the new expectations threatened to destroy a climate that he and others cherished. New measures threatened the jobs of key staff whose role in serving students with the greatest needs resulted in skewed test score results.

Frick (2011) concluded his study with comments on how accountability and testing have created tension for leaders despite the suggestion to let the injunction of the best interest of the students guide their actions. He stated:

The discrepancy between administrator views of what their job should be about and what the national discourse on testing is pushing their job to be is troubling...Policy pressures, at all levels, appear to force school administrators into a position of moral confusion that an often used injunction fails to remedy (p. 559).

These contexts are but examples of the circumstances that may be relevant to the moral and/or ethical experiences of school leaders. As these factors change and evolve, so does the moral imperative of school leadership and the role leaders have in leading ethical institutions.

The school leadership ethics literature includes a framework that provides a normative prescription for applying the ethics of justice, critique, care, and the profession to the role of school leadership. In addition to this framework, the literature review explored important traits for school leaders and influential trends that frame the contexts in which school leaders are acting.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to enhance the understanding of ethics as it pertains to school leadership by exploring the question: How do school leaders experience ethical dilemmas in their role as school leaders? The existing literature offered a framework for ethical leadership that relies on the ethics of justice, critique, care, and the profession. It also included traits that are important for school leaders and trends that frame the contexts of education leadership today. These studies offered one way of understanding ethics in school leadership—one based on a positivist approach. Van Manen wrote “no matter how practically compelling the contents of these books may be, they do not necessarily bring us any closer to the nature of [the topic of study] itself,” (p. 47). A phenomenological method aims to enrich pedagogic wisdom by providing a deep understanding of what the experience is like for leaders rather than by developing prescriptions for action.

The methodology used for this research study is hermeneutic phenomenology. Phenomenology is heavily rooted in an existential world view in which an individual’s experiences and perceptions are the foundation for knowing and understanding reality. Thus, to understand something relies upon the experiences and perceptions of individuals who have experienced that thing. “The phenomenologist is committed to understanding social phenomena from the actor’s own perspective. He or she examines how the world is experienced. The important reality is what people perceive it to be” (Patton, 2002, p. 69). The common foundation of the various forms of phenomenology is this interest in the meaning found in the exploration of experience. “Lived experience is the breathing of meaning” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 36). Experiences are the philosophical basis for our understanding, knowledge, and truth (Creswell, 2007).

Phenomenology is unique within the realm of qualitative methodologies. Within phenomenology, there are distinctions. A tradition that began in the early 20th century with Husserl, Heidegger, Scheler, and Stein has been influenced by different movements and traditions and has grown to a point that there is no one phenomenology (Creswell, 2007; Vagle, 2014; Van Manen, 2014). “Phenomenology is not a singular concept, idea or methodology” (Vagle, 2014, p. 51). Creswell (2007) highlighted two approaches in his text, *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design*. He describes Moustakas’ “empirical, transcendental, or psychological phenomenology” and Van Manen’s “hermeneutical phenomenology” (Creswell, p. 59). The former focuses on the creation of a composite description that represents the experience of several individuals. This study employed the hermeneutical phenomenology described by Van Manen (1990, 2014).

The hermeneutic approach includes an interpretive/thematic element of the phenomenon that is being studied (Creswell, 2007; Vagle, 2014; Van Manen, 1990, 2014). Hermeneutic refers to the interpretive-reflective-analytical component and phenomenological refers to the descriptive, concrete life-experience phenomenon component. Outlining the procedures and methods for a hermeneutic phenomenological study as described by Van Manen (1990, 2014) can be a challenge. As Vagle (2014) pointed out:

[Van Manen] is quite serious in his resistance to a priori steps and structures in the name of precision, exactness, and rigor, as he believes that devising a methodology to accomplish these attributes can stifle the very fabric of doing human science research in a hermeneutic tradition. (p. 57)

Nonetheless, the themes outlined by Max Van Manen in his 1990 text, *Researching Lived Experience*, are the framework for this chapter. Van Manen’s *Phenomenology of Practice*

(2014) and the writings of Moustakas (1994), Creswell (2007, 2014), Vagle (2014), and Patton (2002) serve as supplemental resources and support.

Van Manen (1990) framed his presentation of human science research in his text by beginning with a discussion of the meanings associated with methodology versus the meaning of methods, procedures, techniques and skills:

On the one hand, methodology refers to the philosophic framework, the fundamental assumptions, and characteristics of a human science perspective...which is associated with or implied by a certain research method. We might say methodology is the theory behind the method...On the other hand, the word 'techniques' refers to the virtually inexhaustible variety of theoretical and practical procedures that one can invent or adopt in order to work out a certain research method (Van Manen 1990 pp. 27-28).

In addition to the distinction for methodology, Van Manen (1990) also made distinctions between methods, procedure, and techniques but they are more subtle as each implies an activity, routine, or practice instead of a philosophy or way of thinking about a question or an approach to a problem. Techniques are like procedures but may imply "an element of expertise...connotations of expertise in a professional or technical sense" (p. 28). Just as the techniques used to design and interpret quantitative statistics requires technical knowledge and abilities, so do the techniques used to conduct lived experience and hermeneutic interviews and analysis. I use method, procedure, and technique interchangeably from this point.

Methodology informs essential aspects of procedures and technique. For example, the philosophical underpinning (methodology) for an interview dramatically influences the technique (methods) of an interview. Consider how different the interviews conducted by journalists versus therapists versus police detectives versus human resource specialists may be

despite a description of each as a set of procedures that involve questions and answers conducted in an office. “So when we speak of ‘interviewing’ or ‘analyzing transcripts’ ...then we mean special forms of interviewing and analyzing which may look procedurally common to other social or human science practices but which are methodologically quite different” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 28). Likewise, while there are certainly similarities between hermeneutic phenomenological analysis and other forms of qualitative content analysis or analytic coding, significant methodological distinctions exist. For example, in grounded theory, one may be interested in textual analysis and may look at the frequency with which a code appears. By contrast, in phenomenology, textual analysis may result in the discovery and expression of an anecdote, a single example, or a phrase that may serve our understanding of a truth that is found to be profound in its uniqueness (Van Manen, 2014, p. 250).

Van Manen’s (1990) six methodological themes serve as this chapter’s framework and “offer the kind of practical approaches that may be helpful in doing hermeneutic phenomenological human science research” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 30). The themes are as follows:

- Turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
- Investigating experiences as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
- Reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;
- Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;
- Maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;
- Balancing the research context by considering parts and whole;

Turning to a Phenomenon

Turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world is the first of the six frames that provide the structure for the presentation of the methodology. In this section, I present the philosophical foundations of the methodology including orientation, inquiry, the reduction, the nature of truth in phenomenology, and aspects of writing about the phenomenon.

How we make sense of our experiences, as individuals and collectively, defines our connection to the world (Patton, 2002). Phenomenologists refer to this connection as intentionality; “the inseparable connectedness between subjects (that is, human beings) and objects (that is, all other things, animate and inanimate, and ideas) in the world...It is used to signify how we are meaningfully connected to the world” (Vagle, 2014, p. 27). Careful study of an experience reveals the connection between the experience and us. “This requires methodologically, carefully, and thoroughly capturing and describing how people experience some phenomenon—how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others” (Patton, 2002, p. 104). Hermeneutic phenomenology is a form of phenomenology that includes the interpretation of concrete sensory lived experiences. The goal of hermeneutic phenomenology is to find and examine experiences in their uniqueness and to interpret those experiences to relate particular instances to universal understanding.

Orientation

The form of inquiry found in phenomenology has methodological implications for the orientation of the researcher and the nature of the research question. Van Manen (1990) explained orientation as a “vantage point in life” (p. 40). He referred to himself and described that his many vantage points include being a husband, a friend, and a person who enjoys reading

among other things. However, with respect to his research, “to orient oneself to a phenomenon always implies a particular interest...my orientation to the life world is that of an educator; I orient to life as parent and teacher” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 40). Interpretation is a personal act. “If we craft phenomenological research following Van Manen, our work is something we actively do [and] is an interpretive act and is never final” (Vagle, 2014, p. 56). Creswell (2014) explained that researchers position themselves to collect and interpret meaning and concepts from a phenomenon and in doing so should recognize how their own personal values, the contextual setting and interactions, and collaboration with participants are factors in the research.

I find my orientation to be that of an educator, an education leader, and a person who believes that education is at heart an ethical endeavor that serves the common good. My orientation stems from my 12 years of experience as a public school assistant principal and my 25 years as an educator, but also from my earlier formative experiences as a student who attended a Catholic college and a beginning teacher who taught at an urban parochial high school. The institutions in which I studied and worked contributed to my viewpoint that the purpose of education is fundamentally an ethical one; that is not to say it was a better or more ethical professional than others, but that I believe education to be a vocation of sorts and a calling to serve others as individuals and as a community and that education carries with it a sense of responsibility—what Fullan (2003) refers to as a moral imperative.

Phenomenological Inquiry

Van Manen (1990) wrote “An appropriate topic for phenomenological inquiry is determined by the questioning of the essential nature of a lived experience; a certain way of being in the world” (p. 39). Finding truth by turning to a phenomenon requires that I, as the researcher, approach an area of research:

not [as] a problem that needs a solution, but a mystery in need of evocative comprehension...much less to attempt to unravel a problem than to try to recapture something: to re achieve a direct contact with the world of [the area being studied] by awakening the soul to its primordial reality. (Van Manen, 1990, p. 50)

Since the area being studied “announces itself not as entity, behavior, feeling or emotion but through them,” the goal of phenomenological projects is not to reduce “concepts so as to dispel its mystery, but rather the object is to bring the mystery more fully into our presence” (Marcel, 1950 as cited in Van Manen, 1990, p. 50).

As the researcher, I must pursue an aggressive inquisitiveness related to my area of interest in order to demonstrate a, “turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 30). Van Manen (1990) wrote that in his orientation as a teacher and a parent “I have ample opportunity to have an eye of the experiences parents and teachers have. And yet, as I reflect on these experiences, it ironically becomes less clear of what the experience consists” (p. 41). To formulate a research question, “the phenomenologist must ask: What human experience do I feel called upon to make topical for my investigation?” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 41). Additionally, a researcher must “interrogate something from the heart of our existence, from the center of our being. Even minor phenomenological research projects require that... we ‘live’ this question, that we ‘become’ this question” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 43).

The Research Question

The research question for this study is “*How do school leaders experience ethical dilemmas in their role as school leaders?*” “The starting point of phenomenological research is largely a matter of identifying what it is that deeply interests you or me and of identifying this

interest as a true phenomenon” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 40). The research question requires clarity not found through an unequivocal statement with a null hypothesis to be tested but rather in the researcher's ability to show that the question is not only clear and understandable ”but also ‘lived’ by the researcher” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 44).

This, then, is the link between orientation and the research question. I am interested in ethics in educational leadership. This interest stems from my orientation as a school leader and educator who believes that I can fulfill my personal duty and responsibility to make the world a better place as an educator. This belief has grown from an interest in philosophy beginning as an undergraduate at a Catholic college and continued to develop in my early years teaching in a parochial school that had a strong commitment to a social justice agenda.

To identify a phenomenon consistent with this interest, I drew some inspiration from Phyllis Amori’s (2010) study that phenomenologically explored “how public school administrators experience moral leadership.” Amori (2010) also used Starratt as a reference to describe what she intended when she used the phrase “moral educational leadership experiences” (Amori, p. 125). She described this phrase to participants to mean experiences that included ethical misdeeds, ethical quandaries, unfamiliar terrain, messy human challenges, and/or those that involved serious human consequence. I limited the breadth of my inquiry to focus on the school leader’s experience of ethical dilemmas and hoped this would provide clarity for participants and lead to a deeper and more revealing understanding of the nature and meaning of the more narrowly defined experience. I assumed that every school leader has experienced an ethical dilemma of some kind in their role and, indeed, all of the participants had such an experience he or she shared in the study.

The Phenomenological Reduction

Phenomenology teaches us to turn “to the things themselves” (Van Manen, 2014). Van Manen credited and cited both Heidegger (p. 28) and Husserl (p. 50) for this phrase. Husserl and Heidegger are widely viewed as the founders of phenomenology. Rarely do we stop to reflect on the meaning of our daily experiences. “Phenomenology is the method to break through this taken-for-grantedness and get to the meaning structures of our experience. The basic method is called the (phenomenological) reduction,” (Van Manen, 2014, p. 215).

The phenomenological reduction involves two steps: the epoche (bracketing) and the reduction (Moustakas, 1994; Schwandt, 2007; Van Manen, 2014). Epoche or bracketing means to refrain from judgment and suspend the prejudgment that comes from applying theory to an experience. “In epoche, the everyday understandings, judgments, and knowings are set aside, and phenomena are revisited, freshly, naively, in a wide open sense” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34). This does not mean to ignore the understanding, biases, and assumptions of the theories discussed at length in Chapter 2, but rather to acknowledge that those studies focused on only one way of exploring a concept—one based on a positivist approach designed to provide advice, develop skills, and explore effective practices for making ethical decisions. However, as Van Manen wrote “no matter how practically compelling the contents of these books may be, they do not necessarily bring us any closer to the nature of (the topic of study) itself” (1990, p. 47). For that type of understanding, we have to focus on the experiences. Bracketing (epoche) is a method of approaching a phenomenon freshly to be open to seeing what it offers.

The problem ...is not always that we know too little...but that we know too much. Or more accurately ...that our common sense...suppositions, assumptions, and the existing body of scientific knowledge predisposes us to interpret the nature of the phenomenon

before we have even come to grips with the significance of the phenomenological question, (Van Manen, 1990, p. 46).

The second part of the phenomenological reduction is the reduction in which “each experience is considered in its singularity, in and for itself...and described in its totality, in a fresh and open way. A complete description is given of its essential constituents, variations of perceptions, thoughts, feelings, sounds, colors and shapes” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34).

Bracketing, it seems, is particularly relevant to the way we approach a phenomenological question by setting aside widely held assumptions. I recognize that my own beliefs about the ethical nature of school leadership are not universally held, so even while exploring ethical dilemmas, this belief must be set aside. A section later in this chapter will revisit the reduction within the context of reflecting on the phenomenon.

Phenomenological Truthfulness

“A phenomenological description is always one interpretation, and no single interpretation of human experience will ever exhaust the possibility of yet another complementary, or even potentially richer or deeper description” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 31). Both quantitative methods and some qualitative methods reference validity and reliability as a means to ascertain the “truthfulness” of data and findings in an empirical sense. “The task of phenomenological research and writing (is) to construct a possible interpretation of the nature of a certain human experience” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 41). While grounded theory looks for patterns to generalize, phenomenology embraces unique examples that illustrate enlightened understanding. Phenomenology allows for experiences to exist in uniqueness and for alternate interpretations to make sense of the experience. Instead of verifying through fact checks of an experience to find that it is always true (or has a certain favorable probability of being true)

under a given condition, unique examples are embraced. “Sometimes a single statement, from one participant, at one moment in time is so powerful that it needs to be amplified” (Vagle, 2014, p. 97).

Iconic Validity and Evocative Writing

The goal for the researcher is to find, explore, interpret, and present “an experience in such a way that the essential aspects, the meaning structures of the experience are brought back” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 41) and conveyed through phenomenological writing in a way that rings true to others. “We are trying to contemplate and theorize the various ways things manifest and appear in and through our being in the world” (Vagle, 2014, p. 22).

Truthfulness is measured by a researcher’s ability to bring us closer to understanding the nature of an experience in all its complexity and mystery (Van Manen, 1990). Van Manen referred to this type of truthfulness as “iconic validity” (p. 255) and contrasted it with empirical or factual validity. As Van Manen states:

It is important to realize that it is not of great concern whether a certain experience actually happened in exactly that way. We are less concerned with the factual accuracy of an account than with the plausibility of an account – whether it is true to our living sense of it” (1990, p. 65).

Engagement with the Phenomenon and Participants

The plausibility of an account will be a function of the phenomenological writing of the researcher as judged by others. Thus, strategies to promote phenomenological truthfulness will focus on the engagement of the researcher, the writing process, and feedback of participants; ultimately readers will judge whether the descriptions ring true.

Creswell (2007) summarized his stance on the validity in qualitative research to be based on “the ‘accuracy’ of the findings, as best described by the researcher and participants,” and “the account made through extensive time spent in the field, the detailed thick descriptions, and the closeness of the researcher to participants” (p. 207). The engagement of the researcher reflects the importance of orientation, as already discussed, but also the “prolonged engagement” that builds trust with participants. Vagle (2014) also described this type of validity that is specific for phenomenology. He wrote, “I have found entry into discussions of validity to be marked primarily by a consideration of the researcher’s sustained engagement with the phenomena and the participants who have experienced the phenomena” (p. 66). For this study, engagement with the phenomenon ties back to my orientation as an educator, educational leader, and as one who believes in education as an ethical endeavor. Engagement with participants and the fostering of trust will begin with the selection of participants. I connected with individuals with whom I had an established relationship to be participants in this study. Trust was fostered through the notices and procedures guided by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the time spent together, and the collaborative nature of the interview process.

Writing

Van Manen (2014) wrote, “The expressive method of the vocative... is probably the most challenging dimension of the phenomenological inquiry process” (p. 240). The writing process (described more in a later section) involves interpreting, editing, rewriting, rethinking, and more phenomenological analysis of experiences in a cycle that begins as transcriptions of a conversation and transforms into hermeneutic phenomenological text. “Good writing is almost always honing the text through rewriting” (Van Manen, 2014, p. 255).

Phenomenological writing also requires detail. “Rich, thick descriptions allow readers to make decisions regarding transferability” (Creswell, 2007, p. 209). The phrase “iconic validity” and Van Manen’s frequent description of the importance of evocative text and writing suggests an understanding of the researcher as artist (i.e., one who shows an enhanced image of the experiences that reveal the truth and meaning of the experience) just as impressionist paintings demonstrate a truth that is different from photographs but may be even more meaningful.

Phenomenology aspires for truth as intelligibility. The phenomenological researcher seeks to make the essence intelligible through the identification of the kinds of questions and answers through which “we can show the what-ness” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 46) of the experience back in our lived reality. An aim of hermeneutic analysis and writing is to use “discursive language and sensitive interpretive devices that make phenomenological analysis, explication, and description possible and intelligible” (Van Manen, 2014, p. 26).

Experiential Data Units

A data unit in phenomenology is an anecdote which is measured by its iconic validity rather than for its factual or empirical validity. A strategy to preserve truthfulness with this type of data is to verify with co-researchers by reviewing anecdotes to determine if they show what an aspect of the experience was like (Van Manen, 2014, p. 255). This is not to cross check for corroborating evidence of the facts, rather “in member checking, the researcher solicits participants’ views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations” (Creswell, 2007, p. 208). I asked participants to review and provide feedback on the transcripts, narratives, and phenomenological interpretations of the experiences they shared with me.

“Triangulation” is the process of using multiple sources to corroborate findings. This is not consistent with the methodological belief that understanding experiences in their uniqueness

provides a different type of truth and knowledge. I did not engage in triangulation or a formal peer review or debriefing process in which one seeks someone to fill the role of a confronting advocate to be an outside check on the process. However, in the spirit of these two notions, I asked participants to review the preliminary narratives and hermeneutic interpretations based on the accounts provided by another participant. Perhaps this is triangulation, peer review, or member checking in another variation or form. I see a distinction between asking, “Does this show what an aspect of meaning of this experience is or was like for you?” and “Does this show a plausible aspect of meaning in what you see as a possible experience of another person?” In other words, “How well can you relate to this description or interpretation that is not your own?” I also continued to consult with my advisor throughout the research and writing phase of the study.

Rationale and Audience

Despite all efforts, final judgment will rest with those who read the study and determine if it is relevant, relatable, and intelligible. Van Manen (2014) stated:

Perhaps a phenomenological text is ultimately successful only to the extent that we, its readers, feel addressed by it-in the totality or unity of our being. The text must reverberate with our ordinary experience of life as well as with our primordial sense of life’s meaning,” (p. 144).

It is my hope that a broad audience reads and finds this study to be relevant, relatable, and intelligible. Findings may be of value to leaders, aspiring leaders, those preparing leaders, policy makers, teachers, parents, students and other members of the school community, other phenomenologists, and the general public.

Investigating Experiences

Investigating an experience as we live it, rather than as we conceptualize it, is the second of the six frames that provide the structure for the presentation of the methodology. As described in the previous sections, hermeneutic phenomenology involves reflecting on lived experience. Thus while data includes both lived experience descriptions and hermeneutic interpretations, the methodology begins and ends with experiences. “The life world, the world of lived experience, is both the source and the object of phenomenological research,” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 53). This section focuses on strategies and techniques related to the collection of experiential data as a way of “investigating experiences as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 30). It includes a description of the interviews for data collection, conversational openness, and protocols that will be used.

Van Manen (1990) proposed a number of approaches to gather “lived experience material of different forms” (p. 53) including exploring personal experience, forms of language (idioms and etymology), protocol writing, observation, literature, art, and others. This study used the strategy of conversational interviews as the primary technique. I also practiced and piloted the analytical and interpretive research techniques by writing personal narratives of my own experiences. Asking other leaders to participate in interviews had two main advantages over asking them to complete a writing protocol. One is the ease and convenience for the participants, and the other was my ability to redirect focus if/when a participant slipped into a reflective attitude and did not focus on the experience itself (Van Manen, 1990, p. 64). The challenge was to refrain and discourage interpretive descriptions in order to focus on the details of the lived experience. For example, if a participant described someone in an account as being mad

(interpretive) my continued questioning about why he/she thought the person was mad helped reveal that he/she scowled, turned and left, slamming the door in the process (experiential).

Data Collection

I conducted two interviews with each participant. The focus of the first interview was to produce a lived experience description. In this interview, the object was to gather narrative descriptions of lived experiences. The second interview, discussed in the next section, was a “hermeneutic collaborative conversation” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 99) which involves a conversation about the meaning of the experience. In this section, I focus on the techniques for gathering data in a lived experience interview.

I conducted a series of conversational interviews with four school leaders to explore the research question: How do school leaders experience ethical dilemmas in their role as school leaders? Between the two interviews I had the conversation transcribed by a professional service. From the transcription, I crafted a narrative of the lived experience description. This narrative will be referred to from this point forward as the Lived Experience Description or LED to distinguish it from the transcript from which it was developed. The participants reviewed their own LED for iconic validity which became the foundation structure for our collaboration in a hermeneutic interview described in a later section. The review and hermeneutic conversation was repeated using an LED generated from another participant’s interview as well.

Each session lasted approximately an hour and a half with the first half hour dedicated to setting the stage and the remaining time to a taped conversational interview. Setting the stage included the selection of pseudonyms for schools and the participants. A professional service transcribed the tapes and/or digital recordings. I also maintained a journal of field notes to complement the recordings. Digital and hard copies of my interview materials were stored in a

lock-box that will remain in my home office. Transcripts were temporarily stored on my personal laptop. Once developed, I shared drafts of LEDs electronically with participants for their review and comment. I also shared drafts with one of my committee chairs to demonstrate the process.

Conversational Openness

With respect to conversational interviews for gathering lived experience data, Van Manen (1990) wrote, “Naturally, it is impossible to offer ready-made questions” (p. 67). He did not explicitly state why this is so naturally a condition in the text immediately surrounding this statement, but elsewhere he explains the methodological themes of uniqueness of experiences, bracketing, openness, insightful discovery, conversation and friendly relations with co-researchers.

The uniqueness of experience and the notion of bracketing preconceptions would suggest that to be truly open to another’s experience, an interviewer should not structure an interview in such a way as to establish parameters or boundaries on the experience. “A certain openness is required in human science research that allows for choosing directions and exploring techniques, procedures, and sources that are not always foreseeable at the outset of a research project”(Van Manen, 1990, p. 162).

Van Manen also described computer programs designed to conduct coding for thematic analysis as inappropriate for hermeneutic phenomenology that seeks “a process of insightful invention, discovery, or disclosure” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 79). Highly structured interviews work counter to the methodological belief that participants are co-researchers in a process of discovery and that this quest shared by “friends” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 98) is better served by conversation than formal interview. Van Kaam also eschewed highly structured methods in his

1966 text, *Existential Foundations of Psychology* under the belief that rigid methods “may distort rather than disclose a given behavior through an imposition of restricted theoretical constructs on the full meaning and richness of human behavior” (as cited in Moustakas, 1994, p. 12).

It seems that the ideal prompt would be simply to ask a participant to tell about an experience of an ethical dilemma. However, a question that is so open-ended may not be sufficient to provide clarity or direction. Therefore, while an open unstructured conversational interview is the goal, Van Manen nevertheless offers suggestions to conduct interviews, prompt discussion and conversation, and avoid common pitfalls. The *Guide for the Conversational Interview* that I developed based on Van Manen’s (1990, 2014) writing is included in Appendix A.

The participants and I decided on the specific conditions for the interviews in a mutually agreeable manner between us. The degree to which the participants were willing and able to abide by the criteria described by Van Manen (2014) and outlined below determined the extent to which we follow each condition, but I offered these as my suggestion along with the rationale.

Attitude. The details for conducting the interviews were guided by a desire to “develop trust and a relationship of personal sharing” (Van Manen, p. 315) to allow for a conversational tone instead of the formality of an interview. Questions needed to stay close to experience and were guided by a sense of wonder. I met answers with animation, openness, and alertness to emerging stories. To enhance trust and comfort in discussions, I used pseudonyms for the participants, schools, and other characters discussed in the recounting of experiences.

Where. I conducted interviews in a location mutually agreed upon by the participant and me. I suggested an informal setting. Two candidates met with me at my home. I met one candidate at their home on one occasion and at a restaurant near their school for the second

interview. The fourth participant invited me to meet with them in their office over a holiday when teachers and students were not scheduled to be in the building. The follow up interview also took place in their office during a regular school day. These settings allowed a climate conducive to conversational talking.

Who. I interviewed four school leaders. Van Manen (2014) suggests considering criteria based on experience. My knowledge of their ability to tell a story was based on a trust relationship along with their personability and articulateness. The participants reflected the population for this study broadly defined as school leaders. They included an elementary school principal, an elementary school assistant principal, a middle school assistant principal, and a high school principal. While three of the leaders worked in public schools, the elementary school assistant principal worked in a parochial school. I was interested in exploring situations in which school leaders experienced ethical dilemmas, which I expected was a common experience for all leaders. I was open to the possibility that someone either did not recognize or recall having had such an experience, or was unable or unwilling to share that experience but that was not the case with the participants I approached. Each acknowledged having faced ethical dilemmas related to their role as a school leader and shared the experiences with me.

I believe that participation in this research by current practitioners has pedagogic value as they may accrue a personal growth benefit from their reflection during their participation. They may also apply these benefits to practice. Current practitioners, compared to retired school leaders, may also be closer to the experiences and more pedagogically connected to the experience explored during the course of our conversations. As a result, they may better express and reflect a connection to the experience in a pre-reflective manner and thereby contribute to relevant and evocative descriptions. For these reasons, I selected current practitioners.

When. I conducted interviews at a time mutually agreed to the participant and me. Van Manen (2014) suggested choosing a time that allows a conversation to develop without hurry or urgency to allow for time and space that can contribute to conversational ease. The when of the interview allowed for a slow start that developed over time. To that end, two of the candidates chose late afternoon/early evening times to meet. One chose a weekend daytime and midday on a workday when his commitments allowed. One candidate chose a morning meeting time, once on a school vacation break and the other on a regular school day. Each allowed for a conversational tone.

Why. The purpose of the interview was to gather experiential descriptions. It was important to maintain a focus on the experience to avoid common pitfalls. For example, there is a tendency:

to seriously underestimate the unique challenge of the phenomenological interview. It is extremely difficult to get interviewees to tell an experiential account in pre-reflective terms. It is much easier to get a person to tell about and experience than to tell an experience as lived through. (Van Manen, 2014, p. 315).

For the productive interview, it was important to “keep the phenomenological intent clearly in mind... (and to) try to obtain concrete stories of particular situations or events” (Van Manen, 2014, p. 316). A list of prompts included in the *Guide for the Conversational Interview* (Appendix A) was used to prepare for the interview and to redirect when the participant began to generalize. I also conducted pilot interviews to practice and refine the interview technique.

Balance. Common pitfalls occur when the proper balance is not maintained in the interview in which experiential data is collected. For example, the length of the interview is important, but there is no objective measure to determine the length. Gathering a response that,

on one hand, is “skimpy or that lacks sufficient concreteness” or, on the other, is too “long winded [with] unmanageable quantities of tapes or transcripts” (Van Manen, p. 67) are both problematic. Likewise, both openness and focus were critical. While maintaining a conversational tone, “one needs to be oriented to one’s question or notion in such a strong manner that one does not get easily carried away with interviews that go everywhere and nowhere” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 67). While the interviews I conducted were unstructured, I approached them with more than just a general idea of how the conversations would develop using the conversation guide and each interview, beginning with the pilot interviews, informing the process.

While I, as researcher, led the conversation, bracketing means that interviews were not characterized by leading questions nor did I settle for superficial explanations that lacked substance. This would have resulted in a need for me to over speculate in reporting. I attempted to prevent language from getting in the way because words may be “laden with meaning” requiring follow-up without which there is only a “shallow association” for later reflection (Van Manen, 2014, p. 315).

Since this methodology relies on interviews, I believe that my skills as an interviewer sufficed. I relied on my preparation in studying the phenomenological method, pilot interviews, and my prior experience and training for interview techniques used in hiring, investigating, and interrogating to serve as reference points to deliver a refined interview technique for this study. While the interview and interrogation techniques are vastly different in many ways, each requires a particular focus and purpose, active listening, establishment of a certain rapport, and a questioning technique that mines deeply into the area being investigated. Vagle (2014) also suggested following the rules of improvisational theater for which he referenced actress and

comedian Tina Fey's four rules: say yes and agree with what is offered, say yes and contribute to moving the dialogue forward, make statements to lead the dialogue, and remember there are no mistakes, only opportunities.

Prior to the interviews, I reflected on personal experiences and conducted two informal pilot interviews to further clarify the focus and to practice the phenomenological technique. To stay oriented to the phenomenological method I followed Vagle's (2014) suggestion of re-orienting and prepared for each interviews. As Vagle stated:

Spend time thinking, writing, discussing, drawing, walking, running, biking, swimming, singing and dancing (I am not kidding) about it and once you are working your way through your interviews, continue to re-orient yourself as you learn with and from your research participants" (pp. 79-80).

Protocol prompts and redirections. While the methodology used in this study relied on unscripted conversational interviews, Van Manen (1990, 2014) used example questions at different points in his texts. Two key sources were his prompts for written personal narratives and ways to perform analysis on classic existential themes. I synthesized these resources and developed a guide for the conversations. See Appendix A for the *Guide for the Conversational Interview*. I did not use these questions and prompts in a structured interview process; they served as reminders for me to maintain orientation and focus for the conversational interview and were helpful in generating more vivid descriptions from participants and resulted in more evocative texts

I used the suggestions for prompts that Van Manen (1990) generated around the classic life world existentials of spatiality, corporeality, temporality, and relationality. He wrote "about any experience we can always ask the fundamental questions that correspond to these four life

world existentials...[which] are productive categories for the process of phenomenological question posing, reflecting and writing” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 102). These were the foundations for my probing questions.

In addition to using prompts, I was also aware of using patience and silence to give participants time to think, find the words to describe something and speak. The findings may also include what Van Manen (1990) described as the fleeting “eloquence that comes as a surprise” (p. 114).

Reflecting on the Essential Themes

Reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon is the third of the six frames that provide the structure for describing the study methodology. This section focuses on the themes and techniques used in the analysis of the experiences. It revisits the reduction and provides a description of theme development and phenomenological inquiry.

Revisiting the Phenomenological Reduction

As discussed in a previous section, the methodology of the phenomenological reduction involves two parts: bracketing (or epoche) and reduction. This chapter introduced the phenomenological reduction earlier within the context of ways of approaching a phenomenon and focused on the epoche or bracketing which teaches one to set aside preconceptions when approaching a phenomenon. This section focuses on strategies and techniques linked to the reduction itself. The reduction is the methodology for reflecting on the phenomenon. In the reduction, “each experience is considered in its singularity, in and for itself...and described in its totality, in a fresh and open way. A complete description is given of its essential constituents, variations of perceptions, thoughts, feelings, sounds, colors and shapes” (Moustakas, 1994, p.

34). The reduction influences the hermeneutic interviews, the researcher's analysis, theme development and findings by focusing attention on the experiences as the units of meaning.

Thematic Development

To consider each experience and describe it completely in hermeneutic phenomenology, involves the development of themes through reflection and analysis by attending to the lived experience descriptions generated from the text. For this study, the analysis began in the second round of interviews with participants. I continued the analysis through a combination of reflection and writing. While Van Manen (1990, 2014) described the research method as being a method of writing, this section explores the reflection and analysis that happened in concert with writing and which remains distinct only for considering methodological dimensions. In practice, separating my analysis from my writing is as impractical as it is inconceivable. Thematic analysis and reflection means applying the reduction directives to make sense of an experience and to remain open to the true meaning of the experience in “a process of insightful invention, discovery or disclosure” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 79). Vagle (2014) reminds one that insight might be found in unique experiences and examples. He wrote, “Sometimes a single statement, from one participant, at one moment in time is so powerful that it needs to be amplified” (p. 97).

While similar in some ways to techniques used in other forms of qualitative research, this is not a mechanical application of one-word codes or frequency counting that may characterize other methodologies (Van Manen, 1990). Rather, themes are structures of experience; or structures of meaning since the meaning is found in the experience. Another way of saying it is that themes are the point of the experience or the focus. Thus, thematic analysis is an attempt to identify the themes as a way of seeing meaning. The technique for the researcher is to “think of the phenomenon described in the text as approachable in terms of meaning units, structures of

meaning, or themes” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 78). Thematic analysis provides a structure for understanding and writing about the phenomenon or experience. It is our way of making sense of things in order to “get to the notion” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 88) of the area of exploration.

Another distinction to make between hermeneutic phenomenology and other forms of qualitative coding is an understanding of the complexity of a theme. For example, while grounded theory may also depend on a form of thematic analysis performed in coding text, phenomenology holds that “no conceptual formulation or single statement can possibly capture the full mystery of this experience. So a phenomenological theme is much less a singular statement...than a fuller description of the structure of a lived experience” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 92). So while other forms of coding “reduce” complex ideas into simple codes, the phenomenological reduction seeks to open up an experience by explicating a theme that aspires to reveal the full mystery and complexity of a phenomenon but that will ultimately “only serve to point at, to allude to, or to hint at an aspect of the phenomenon” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 92). The communication of these themes requires rich and evocatively written descriptions for understanding the experience in their complexity. Anecdotes, as described in the next section, are textual units that facilitate this kind of understanding.

Rigorous Inquiry

Phenomenological reflection and analysis for “determination and explication of meaning” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 77) is a difficult task. The process of hermeneutic phenomenology is to explore those levels rigorously. Van Manen (1990) provided an example of digging for deeper meaning in a phenomenological way. He wrote, “for example, when I see my son’s teacher...I see a person who differs from other men and women precisely in that respect which makes me talk of this person as ‘a teacher’,” (p. 77). This level of meaning is something we constantly

generate and experience in our everyday lives but meaning is multidimensional and multilayered. A deeper exploration of what it means to be a teacher requires deeper analysis. There remains:

A difference between our pre-reflective lived understanding of the meaning of (an area of exploration) and our reflective grasp of the phenomenological structure of the lived meaning of (that area of exploration). To get at the later is a difficult and often laborious task. The insight into the essence of a phenomenon involves a process of reflecting appropriating, of clarifying, and of making explicit the structure of meaning of the lived experience. (Van Manen, 1990, p. 77)

Thematic Development

While eschewing mechanical applications of analysis, Van Manen (2014) described the process of reflection as “not a rule-bound process but a free act of ‘seeing’ meaning” (p. 320). However, he again offered a strategy. He proposed approaching the text three times, each with an eye to a different level of meaning. In his text, he provided examples (Van Manen, 2014, pp. 320-323) of this type of analysis that begins with a lived experience description and is reviewed at each level, i.e., the wholistic, selective, and detailed levels.

Wholistic. At this level, the goal is to attend to text as a whole. It is true that interpretations may vary by reader but that “does not make one interpretation necessarily more true than another” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 94). An interpretation must be reasonably plausible but insightfulness may be judged on a continuum.

Selective. At this level, the goal is to determine “what statement(s) or phrase(s) seem particularly essential” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 93). Here we look for rhetorical gems, the particularly evocative and those phrases that “possess a sense of punctum” (Van Manen, 2014, p. 320). This brings to my mind a colleague of mine in my first year of teaching who used a

reading strategy with students in which he asked them to read an article and highlight one phrase, sentence, or passage that spoke to them. The highlighted items became the foundation for class discussions on the topic of the reading.

Detailed. At this level, the goal is to reread again line by line and again ask, “What does this sentence or sentence cluster reveal about the phenomenon?” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 93). This reading approaches the method of other qualitative coding techniques; however, the intent is to ensure no gems or insights were overlooked or eluded in the analysis. Thus, the intent is not to ensure every statement is accounted for in a coding summation.

I used this approach in the hermeneutic conversations with the participants by asking them to comment on the text as a whole and to highlight significant phrases they found in the text. I also considered these approaches as I conducted my own analysis. In each rereading the goal was to identify and capture those things that show the meaning of the experience and to develop the experience thematically in “reflective, descriptive-interpretive paragraphs” (Van Manen 2014 p 320) in hermeneutical phenomenological writing.

The Hermeneutic Interview

For thematic development and analysis of the LEDs that I generated following the first conversational interview, I conducted a second, hermeneutic interview with participants. This strategy included the participants in a collaborative analysis so that the participants became collaborators in the discovery and exploration of the meaning of the experience and in some respects were co-investigators in the study (Van Manen, 1990).

Prior to delving into the hermeneutic analysis, I contacted each participant to ask if they wanted me to email or hand deliver copies of the transcript and asked for feedback on the validity of the LEDs as described in the previous section. Once the LEDs were validated by the

participants as accurate representations of their experiences, I scheduled the second round of interviews in which we shifted the focus to analyzing the experiences to discover the themes contained in them.

I arranged the second round of interviews following the mutually agreed upon protocol already described. Due to a scheduling oversight, Participant Four did not analyze any of the other participant's LEDs. I had Participant Two review Participant One, Participant Three reviewed Participant Two, And Participant One reviewed Participant Three. This closed the circle with each of the first three participants reviewing each other. I asked Participant One to do a second hermeneutic analysis of four so that the LED would be subjected to two participant's review, but I did not ask Participant Four to analyze any other participant's LED since all the LEDs had already been checked twice.

In each interview, I adopted the strategy of exploring the experiences from the wholistic and selective approaches. I began the conversations by asking the participants for their general impression of the narrative that initiated a discussion. I asked what spoke to them and what they found significant as they read the experiences they shared. During this part of the conversation, I took extensive notes. Then I asked each to reread their LED one more time to highlight any phrases that had special significance for them. While they read and highlighted, I continued to record thoughts in my notes. When they finished highlighting, we once again talked about the LED. This process took about 45-60 minutes.

When we finished talking about their LED, I presented them with a copy of the LED of another participant to read, highlight, and discuss with me. The first question I asked relative to the other participant's LED was whether they could relate to the experiences conveyed by the other participant. "Can you relate to this experience? Has something like this ever happened to

you?” I asked this as a variation on a form for member checking. Then, I engaged them in performing a hermeneutic analysis on that LED as well as by discussing it wholistically and by discussing the items they highlighted. This process also took about 45 minutes resulting in a second round interview of about 90 minutes.

Essential and Incidental Themes

In addition to the reduction, the aspects of theme development and the hermeneutic interview, another way to reflect on themes involved considering essential and incidental themes. “In determining the universal or essential quality of a theme our concern is to discover aspects or qualities that make a phenomenon what it is and without which the phenomenon could not be what it is” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 107). A strategy for doing this is imaginatively deleting a theme and pondering whether doing so fundamentally changes the phenomenon.

Describing the Phenomenon

Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting is the fourth of the six frames that provide the structure for the presentation of the methodology. Once I had gathered experiential accounts in conversational interviews and reflections in hermeneutical analysis for the identification and development of themes, the experience and meaning were integrated in the process of writing. “To write is to reflect; to write is to research. And in writing we may deepen and change ourselves in ways we cannot predict” (Van Manen, 2014, p. 20). In hermeneutic phenomenology, interpretation is a key element and writing continues the interpretive component. “Writing a phenomenological text is a reflective process of attempting to recover and express the ways we experience life as we live it—and ultimately to be able to act practically in our lives with greater thoughtfulness and tact” (Van Manen, 2014, p. 20). Writing

requires attention to the use of language, recognition of writing as a process and attentiveness to the cyclical relationship between writing, reflecting, editing and rewriting.

Language

Van Manen explained the role of language in this methodology. “Language is a central concern in phenomenological research because responsive-reflective writing is the very activity of doing phenomenology...To write is to write myself...[in an] untiring effort to author a sensitive grasp of being itself” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 132). The creation of a phenomenological text of the style involves an ability to be “sensitive to the subtle undertones of language, the way language speaks when it allow the things themselves to speak” and reflects an author who is also a true listener who is “attuned to the deep tonalities of language” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 111).

To be clear, this type of writing differs from the method promoted and described by Moustakas (1994) in his heuristic approach, which rejects the overt expression of an analytical component and, instead, proposes the creation of a composite description. Hermeneutic phenomenology embraces thematic analysis as described in the previous sections and this is reflected in the writing.

Writing as Method

Van Manen wrote:

Writing is our method...there comes a moment when a researcher needs to communicate in writing what her or she has been up to....the ‘research report’ which suggests that a clear separation exists...yet for...hermeneutic phenomenological work, writing is closely fused into the research activity and reflection itself. (1990, p. 124)

Reflection is deeply rooted in writing. A researcher’s ability to be insightful and thoughtful must be evident in writing that demonstrates not only the ability to see and think but

also the ability to show. Writing will measure the value of the research and the researcher's ability in these regards. We write, we think, we reflect, and, in the process, "the writer produces himself or herself" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 126).

Reviewing, Editing, and Rewriting

The effective and rigorous approach to the writing process included review and composition of multiple drafts. In both initial drafts and rewrites, the process included massaging the text in a search for words and structures that brought clarity and meaning in a continuous cycle of reading, thinking, reviewing, and writing. "To do justice to the fullness and ambiguity of the experience of the life world, writing may turn into a complex process of rewriting," (Van Manen, 1990, p. 131).

The completed hermeneutic phenomenological text that makes up the findings in chapter 4 resulted from several phases of reflection, analysis and writing. For this study, the process began with the writing of a literature review and the description of the methodology. Both underwent major drafts and rewrites in their development. In this research, I transformed lived experiences as described in the conversational interviews into hermeneutic phenomenological descriptions. The process I used followed Van Manen (1990, 2014) and involved several draft forms of the experience.

In expanding on accounts of lived experiences, Van Manen (2014) wrote, "We could either do a thematic reading of this *transcript* or first edit the transcript into a shorter *anecdote* by deleting excess material" (p 320, italics added). At another point he compared a lived experience description to an anecdote and wrote, "Here follows an edited *anecdote* version of the above *experiential account*" (p. 255, italics added). I interpreted this to allow a distinction to be made between a transcript, a lived experience description and an anecdote. This interpretation was not

explicit in Van Manen's description but I made the distinction to permit specificity in the methods. I wrote and preserved the following iterations of the lived experience.

Transcript

When I refer to a transcript in this study, I am referring to the direct written account of the conversational interview in which someone shared personal life stories. The creation of the transcript did not involve revisions but was a direct recounting of the conversation. It was a typed copy of the words that had been spoken. I engaged a professional service to transform the recordings of the lived experience interviews into a text form of a transcript.

Lived Experience Description (LED)

I am making an explicit distinction where Van Manen (1990, 2014) did not. I drafted a lived experience description as a full narrative account of the experience derived from the transcript for each of the four participants. It differs from the transcript in that it is a narrative account of what was conveyed in the conversation rather than a verbatim transcript of what was said. I reworded questions into opening statements and removed stammers and fillers that are common in conversational expression but which may be considered distracting in narrative reading. The LED was the foundation for the analysis for thematic development in the second round of interviews with participants.

Anecdotes

Anecdotes are more fully edited and transformed excerpts drawn from the LED of specific experiences. Each LED spawned five or more anecdotes. The anecdotes include distinct qualities that serve the purposes of hermeneutic phenomenological writing. Anecdotes serve as a way of showing, rather than telling. Anecdotes "tell us something particular while really addressing the general or universal" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 120). They are specific

illustrations rather than broad generalizations and thereby may be used to “characterize a way of thinking ... which was really too difficult to approach in a more direct manner” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 117).

Van Manen (1990) described anecdotes as a methodological device that serves multiple illustrative purposes and wrote that an anecdote:

- “is rather like a poetic narrative which describes a universal truth” (p. 119).
- “[should] be valued for other than factual-empirical or factual-historical reasons” (p. 119).
- “form(s) a concrete counterweight to abstract theoretical thought” (p. 119).
- “show(s) how life and theoretical propositions are connected...[and] thus ...possess a certain pragmatic thrust” (p. 119).
- “is a concrete demonstrations of wisdom, sensitive insight and proverbial truth” (p. 120).
- “[is] an icon that points at the thing which we attempt to describe” (p. 122).

By way of illustration of the power of an anecdote, Van Manen (1990) referenced Plato’s allegory of the cave as a powerful story that has prevailed for its demonstrative value, not for a factual accounting of an event. The allegory of the cave shows a philosophical perspective that is difficult to describe or understand without the illustration.

Van Manen (2014) describes the structure of an anecdote as very short and simple. An anecdote describes a single incident with important concrete details and may contain several quotes. The succinct nature means that it “begins close to the central moment” and “closes quickly...[and]...often has an effective or ‘punchy’ last line; it creates punctum” (Van Manen, 2014, p. 252). Anecdotes that are short, in first person and present tense, and demonstrate punctum (i.e., the point) are increasingly evocative as a result since first person accounts evoke a

sense that my experience, as a result of being shared, could be our experience (Van Manen, 2014). Anecdotes are included in the hermeneutic text and are offset with titles and references to the lines in the LED from which they were drawn. Anecdotes are not direct quotes of the LED or the transcript; rather they are a reworking of the text to fulfill the objectives described here.

Following the second round of interviews, I began my analysis with the development of anecdotes. I examined each LED to capture the portion of the narrative that described a specific experience of an ethical dilemma. As a result, each LED included five or more anecdotes, some were the major thrust of the conversation and others developed as offshoots to the main story that was conveyed.

Hermeneutic Phenomenological Text

The final product that I created in this research is the hermeneutic phenomenological text that reflects both the experiential description and reflective interpretation. The hermeneutic phenomenological text comprises the content of the findings reported in Chapter 4. The units in writing in the final hermeneutic phenomenological text included themes that reflected the interpretive component and anecdotes that reflected the experiential component. Van Manen (2014) offered suggestions for how to practice phenomenological writing while still qualifying that “I am not suggesting that draft writing is a step-by step procedure...but I believe that practicing phenomenological draft writing will help instill and internalize a phenomenological disposition” (p. 375). He then describes six forms of drafts that each involves a kind of questioning and guiding concern that he offered as helpful in conducting a phenomenological study. Note again, these are not linear or necessarily distinct but “a constant circling in all relevant directions that a phenomenological question may entice the author to extend him- or herself” (Van Manen, 2014, p. 376).

I created a notes page for each anecdote that I divided into six sections to address each of the draft forms. While some exercise involved only several phrases or sentence, others were several paragraphs and were rewritten several times. The intent of the exercises was to allow the focus of the exercise to linger and permeate the text (Van Manen 2014). The drafts include writing that focuses on wonder, experiences, themes, related texts, poetic language and insight.

In heuristic draft writing, the focus is on instilling wonder in the reader by exploring how consideration of even a common experience can raise deep and thoughtful questions to ponder but which may defy easy answers. These questions may focus on the meta level of the meaning of the experience. What is leadership? What is ethics? What is a dilemma?

Experiential drafts focused on the experience themselves. In mining the anecdotes from the LED, my focus was on the experiences of ethical dilemmas and the draft writing involved capturing that experience in an expressive and intelligible way. In my notes on each anecdote, I used the prompt, “school leaders know what it is like to...” to focus on a concise expression of the experience.

In thematic draft writing, the themes of the reduction are expressed as succinct phrasings and narrative passages that describe units of meaning (Van Manen, 2014). I drew from my notes from the second round of interviews to include themes identified by participants and then conducted my own wholistic, selective, and detailed analysis of the anecdotes to further develop themes.

Insight cultivating draft writing draws on other resources to find connections to other expressions of experiences. These expressions included other phenomenology, related academic literature, classic and popular literature, film and art. In my notes page I used a prompt of “This

anecdote is like the story of..." to remind me to think about and make connections that could help express an idea analogously.

Vocative draft writing consisted of attentiveness to the vocative language. My main focus for this was the phrases from the LEDs that had been highlighted and discussed as significant by the participants or that they used in their analysis that I found to be compelling. For example, in reading Participant Two's experience, Participant Three was struck by the phrase "we're like judging kings" and I was struck when another participant talked about "the illusion of power." These vocative phrases were preserved to include in the findings.

Finally, the goal of "inceptual draft writing" (p. 378) is to express reflections that may be particularly deep, insightful, or counterintuitive. Two examples provided by Van Manen (2014) include Sartre's concept of being "condemned to freedom" and van der Berg's question of who misses more of life; the healthy who take things for granted or the sick for whom moments are precious.

For the description of the methodology, I followed the framework that makes a distinction between reflecting on the themes and the process of writing, while in practice, the two were tightly interwoven. Van Manen (1990, 2014) expressed this in his presentation as well. The recursive process of reading, reflecting, and writing was a challenge that evolved into rereading, reconsidering, and re-writing for several iterations over several drafts. The end product consists of the findings found in Chapter 4.

The Pedagogical Relation to the Phenomenon

Maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon is the fifth of the six frames that provide the structure for describing the methodology used in this study. My orientation as a school leader is critical in describing the experience of a situation posing

dilemmas and its meaning. Van Manen (1990) demonstrated the meaning of a pedagogic orientation with an example of how different individuals might respond to seeing a girl skipping rope on a playground. To an ordinary civilian walking past the school, the experience may bring back childhood memories in a biographic glimpse of their own experience skipping rope as a child. An ethnographer may interview the child to discover the rules and social consequences of the game of skipping rope on the playground. However, a teacher, with a practitioner's eye, may be tuned into another meaning with respect to this particular child. The teacher may know the pressure to achieve this child experiences in a family dynamic and will notice how this child was skipping rope away from other children and with a tenseness and competitive stance. This does not result in a prescription for action but an understanding of pedagogic dynamics at play. Van Manen (1990) concludes:

No matter how challenging it may be to develop theories or models of learning, reading, doing mathematics, and so forth, no learning theories, teaching methods, or reading models will tell us what is appropriate for this child in this situation. (p. 150)

Oriented, Strong, Rich and Deep Descriptions

The characterization of qualitative research generally, and phenomenology specifically, as containing oriented, strong, rich, and deep descriptions approaches cliché in many research discussions. Often the condition is stated without any further description of what is meant. Van Manen (1990) describes oriented, strong, rich and deep descriptions:

To be oriented as researchers or theorists means that we do not separate theory from life, the public from the private. We are not simply being pedagogues here and researchers there—we are researchers oriented to the world in a pedagogic way. Our text needs to be strong. Whatever interest we develop in talking and thinking about children, teaching, or

parenting, it always needs to aim for the strongest pedagogic interpretation of a certain phenomenon...we should use our orientation as a resource for producing pedagogic understandings, interpretations, and formulations, and strengthen this resource in the very practice of this research or theorizing...The meaning of the lived sense of phenomena are not exhausted in their immediate experience. A rich and thick description is concrete, exploring a phenomenon in all its experiential ramifications....capture life experiences (action or event) in anecdote or story ,because the logic of story is precisely that story retrieves what is unique, particular, and irreplaceable...Depth is what gives the phenomenon or lived experience to which we orient ourselves its meaning and its resistance to our fuller understanding...As we struggle for meaning, as we struggle to overcome this resistance, a certain openness is required....Rich descriptions, that explore the meaning structures beyond what is immediately experienced, gain a dimension of depth. Research and theorizing that simplifies life, without reminding us of its fundamental ambiguity and mystery, thereby distorts and shallows-out life, failing to reveal its depthful character and contours. (Van Manen, 1990, p. 152-153)

The Quest for Good Pedagogy, Not Best Practice

Van Manen's (1990) text is subtitled *Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy* reflecting the importance he places on linking research to practice. His intent is not for phenomenology to end with the description but to influence pedagogy and action by providing deep reflections on the meaning of experience. He opines that deep pedagogical understanding can transform thinking and from that transformation, actions will flow. This transformation can be on a personal level, collectively within the profession, or politically. Van Manen (1990) opines that phenomenology validates lived experiences and moves us to a personal and lived

sense of thoughtfulness and awareness that continuously clarifies our understandings. By orienting to an educator's pedagogy, we get the most out of an intimacy between research and life because "it is done by, rather than for, the people" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 156). He states further:

If these words are to communicate more to us than the theoretic-didactic precepts of child-development literature, then we need to learn that pedagogic competence involves a kind of thoughtfulness, a form of praxis wherein the themes of the pedagogic significance of the (phenomenon under study) are experientially understood and actualized in real and concrete situations. (Van Manen, 1990, p. 159)

Van Manen (1990) contrasts "traditional behavior research [that] leads to instrumental knowledge" (p. 156) which may be reflected in the prevalence of lists of competency criteria for best practices with data-based decision-making with phenomenology that leads to "tactful thoughtfulness; situational perceptiveness, discernment, and depthful understanding...[which] are essential elements of pedagogic competence" (p. 156). Further, he wrote:

Our living with children in natural situations of parenting and teaching is much less characterized by constant choice and rational decision making than theories of the teacher as 'reflective practitioner' and 'deliberative decision maker' have made us believe. Rather, in concrete and particular contexts we much more accurately are involved in actions immediately and directly. (p. 156)

Interestingly, he did not simply suggest that phenomenological understanding is a different form of knowledge or even that it is a superior way of knowing but, perhaps as a harbinger of an anti-standardization and accountability sentiment, went so far as to suggest that contemporary approaches "are more often guided by the useful than by the good" (Van Manen,

1990, p. 157) and that “increasing bureaucratization of pedagogic institutions and the technologizing effect of educational research and knowledge forms tend to erode our understanding and praxis of pedagogical competence” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 157).

The topics we choose show how we orient ourselves. For this research project, my orientation reflects a broad curiosity about the nature of leadership practice. Theories abound on leadership practices and include description of leadership as being based on personality, style, skills, goals, change, relationships, instrumental efficiency, or ethics (Northouse, 2013). In this phenomenological study, I hope that I have described the nature and meaning of the experience of ethical dilemmas of some educators in positions of leadership. As Van Manen wrote:

If we are expected to do the right thing in our pedagogic relationship with children we may require an idea of pedagogic competence that makes pedagogic praxis possible.

However, to spell out the conditions of adequate pedagogic performance by formulating a concept, theory, or model of pedagogic competence is an idle endeavor, because such effort presumes that we know conceptually what is essentially unknowable in a conceptual or positive sense. And yet we do know in what directions the significance of pedagogic competence must be sought. (1990, p. 158)

Balancing the Research Context

Balancing the research context by considering parts and whole is the sixth and last of the frames that provide the structure for this description of the study methodology. A phenomenological research study describes a process of discovery that relies on a form of philosophical inquisitiveness that asks to be open to possibilities as they develop. “Human science of the type described in this book cannot be so readily captured in a research plan or proposal” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 161). In the previous sections I have described the methods,

techniques, and procedures I used within the context of a hermeneutic phenomenology methodology. This section looks at maintaining research balance by focusing on limitations and research ethics.

Limitations

There are fundamental distinctions between phenomenological and other positivist research of both the qualitative and quantitative varieties. Phenomenology strives not to be “trapped by a positivist perspective [in which] we confuse the meaning of teaching or parenting with what we see teachers and parents do” (Van Manen, 1990, p.149). Rather, phenomenology begins in experience to explore notions, meanings and truths that are elusive in other forms of research (Van Manen, 1990). These other research methods examine what education leaders do (or should do) while phenomenology explores who education leaders are in the core of their being. The objective of this research is not to develop a list of behavioral competencies or directions for actions when faced with an ethical dilemma but to explore an understanding of what that experience is like and what it means for a school leader.

The results of this study represent a possible interpretation of the personal description of the experience of several individuals. It is not comprehensive nor does it profess to be the only interpretation or suggest that all experiences will be exactly the same. The goal is to be illustrative to facilitate a type of understanding, but is not a generalized prediction of or prescription for how one ought to think or behave.

Ethical Considerations

I submitted and received approval to conduct the study by the University. Beyond the formal IRB considerations, ethical considerations include being aware of the effect the research can have on the subjects, institutions, readers of the research and the researcher (Van Manen,

1990). For a researcher, participation in a phenomenological research project can be transformational. “Phenomenological research is often in itself a form of deep learning, leading to a transformation of consciousness, heightened perceptiveness, increased thoughtfulness and tact, and so on” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 163). Moustakas (1994) described a similar result in his heuristic phenomenology approach. “It refers to a process of internal search through which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience... The self of the researcher is present throughout the process and, while understanding the phenomenon with increasing depth, the researcher also experiences growing self awareness and self knowledge” (p17). These are all positive. Neither Van Manen nor Moustakas mentions how the commitment to this sort of project makes demands on a researcher’s time and attention drawing him/her from other important focuses of work or family. Ethically, one may wish to consider the personal toll in balance with the knowledge reward for this type of project to align priorities to those things that are valued.

People who are interested in the work may also be affected by it. Note that in a previous section, this is part of the justification—that the work may result in contributing to collective and individual action as influenced by new understandings. “With virtually every question that matters there is also a social-and perhaps universal-significance,” (Moustakas, 1994, p.17). Positively, this can result in new hope, awareness and insight but there is also a possibility that a reader may negatively experience discomfort, anxiety or doubt (Van Manen, 1990). Acknowledging that a limitation of this methodology is that it offers plausible explanations of possible human experiences may limit the negative impression by removing any dogmatic undertones. Nonetheless, a researcher should not underestimate the impact of ideas.

Subjects invest themselves greatly in this process, and therefore may be more susceptible to both the positive and negative impacts experienced by readers. They also engage in intense

interviews that may enhance self-awareness but may also result in reliving negative or challenging situations that are equally unpleasant to encounter in this process as they were to live through originally. Van Manen (1990) reminds us of the moral obligation to participants to “prevent a sheer exploitative situation” (p. 98). While IRB procedures also serve to protect the research participants, the methodology of viewing participants as cooperative collaborators and friends will help guide the relationship and interactions.

Institutions may also be affected by this study. Van Manen (1990) uses the example of research whose results challenge current practices. I add that institutions are made up of individuals who, as already stated, may be inspired or made uncomfortable by encounters or participation in the research. Given that participants in this study are school leaders, the impact on institutions may be magnified.

Summary of Procedures

In this section, I will make explicit my research design based on the methodological themes written about in the prior sections. I used hermeneutic phenomenology to explore the experience and meaning of how school leaders experience ethical dilemmas in their role as school leaders. My interest in this area of research developed from my own experience as a student, a teacher, and a school administrator. My goal was to describe the experience of an ethical dilemma from the perspective of school leaders and to analyze the experiences for underlying meaning which can serve a pedagogical understanding of this aspect of school leadership.

Stage 1: Turning to a Phenomenon

To conduct this study, I first embraced a phenomenological mindset described in the earlier section. This mindset encompassed my beliefs about the connection between human

beings and experiences (intentionality), the importance of my life experience (orientation), and my attitude of being open to exploring the experiences of others (phenomenological reduction).

In the phenomenological reduction, I included bracketing (epoche) and getting to the heart of the experience (the reduction). Although I may not have set aside fully my preconceptions and biases, I used Chan's (2013) strategies to achieve bracketing so that I did not influence the participant's understanding of the phenomenon. I adapted the strategies in the following ways:

- I was mindful of the need to bracket and use field notes to record my thoughts as they occurred during the process so that I became more aware of them. I maintained a journal of my thoughts and impressions to help me record and heighten awareness throughout the process. I also maintained field notes during my conversational interviews although the field notes were sparse so as not to detract from the conversational tone that was the aim of the interviews. Following each interview, I added to my notes.
- I noted my orientation as an educator and a school leader and judged myself suitable from a pedagogic standpoint to do phenomenological research that explored the experiences of peers with whom I can relate. I consciously maintained my curiosity to help me remain open minded to the experiences of others in the research process.
- I refrained from structuring sub questions that may have constrained the research to the preexisting literature that I reviewed in preparation for designing the study. I also refrained from referring to the professional terminology of ethics of justice, critique, care and the profession. Additionally I refrained from referring to the virtues of leaders and trending contexts in education in the data gathering and analysis phases.

- I used a guide for the conversation (see Appendix A) that includes general questions to initiate a conversation about ethics and the existential dimensions of school leadership. I followed up with prompts for the school leaders to talk about experiences of ethical dilemmas. I also used probes for added details. Rather than using a structured script that dictates the scope and direction of an interview, I conducted unscripted interviews that use probes to guide the conversation. I tried to refrain from asking leading questions. During conversational interviews, I also tried to be mindful of language that is nuanced, subjective or open to interpretation and ask participants to expand descriptions when they used terms that were laden with meaning (Van Manen, 2014). I did this so that my own assumptions would not prevent deeper inquiry.
- While the hermeneutic analysis allows for and even argues for the value of my interpretations as a researcher, I began the analysis by gathering thoughts and impressions from the participants. Before I completed the analysis, I completed a round of analytic interviews with the participants during which they reviewed their own narratives and the narrative of another participant.
- I also completed specific reflective exercises to assist in the analysis.
- I shared the findings with the participants for their feedback on my aggregation of the interpretations and analysis.

The criteria for selection of participants were based on my existing relationships with school leaders. Conditions for participation were based on my assumption that school leaders experience an ethical dilemma and on my knowledge of their ability to be expressive about that experience. The participants were chosen from a population of school leaders I know, who were

willing to share their experience, and whom I believed would be able to articulate the experience intelligibly.

After I interviewed four participants I believed I had a wealth of experiences and saturation was achieved. The idea of saturation in qualitative research is derived from grounded theory methods and dictates, “you stop collecting data ...when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new insights or reveals new properties” (Creswell, 2014, p. 189).

Stage 2: Investigating Lived Experiences

To discover the nature of the experience of ethical dilemmas for school leaders, I conducted conversational interviews with school leaders about their experience with the phenomenon of ethical dilemmas. Prior to the interviews, I submitted an outline of the research protocol to the Virginia Tech IRB for approval along with the interview guides and the consent forms. Upon receiving approval, I began to interview participants (see Appendix D for the IRB Approval letter). The IRB-approved Consent Letter (included in Appendix E) was used in describing the study to potential participants and gaining their consent to be interviewed. I recorded the conversations on a digital recorder and contracted a professional to transcribe the conversations. The recorder and related memory cards and flash drives and paper copies of transcripts, consent forms, and identifying notes were stored in a locked file box in my private study at home. Once the study is completed, all recordings will be permanently deleted from the recorder and retained with other artifacts only on the flash drive or memory card stored in the locked file box. All the research artifacts will be permanently destroyed five years after the final defense of this dissertation.

Bracketing continued through the interview process. The focus of the interviews at that stage was on specific experiences. The interview guide that I created (see Appendix A) includes

reminders for preparing for the conversation, opening the conversation (consent and maintaining confidentiality), initiating the conversation about ethics and experiences, opening to a specific event, and further probing and prompting for experiential details.

The purpose of these conversations was to gather descriptions of lived experiences. I wrote more about this in the section found earlier in this chapter, *Investigating experiences as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it*. As the researcher, I was challenged to keep the interview focus on the experience rather than on the participants' thoughts about the experience. Van Manen (2014) provided these examples to illustrate the difference between the two types of descriptions.

Here are two simplifying examples of attempting an experiential description. Two different mothers are describing a moment of holding their children by the hand. The first account:

My youngest is hard to control. If I don't hold him by the hand, then he will just take off. He is just like his father that way. He took off a year ago and never came back. Well, good riddance. But I love my child, and I am always sure to grab his hand when we are in a crowded shopping mall or in a busy place. Even if he throws a tantrum. You know, I am not an easy mother. Sometimes I see parents who let their kids just run around. They have no control. Or they may be neglectful and irresponsible. Too often we hear about how accidents happen, or how children get lost.

The second account:

A couple of days ago I was doing some shopping with my 23-year old son in a local mall. At one moment, as we were talking and walking along, he took my hand. It seemed quite a sudden gesture. For a fleeting moment a memory came rushing back. A physical

memory. It felt like he took my hand just as he used to do, when he was a young child. It is such a special moment when a child simply takes your hand – but perhaps I never was quite conscious of it until now! So, I momentarily re-experienced the same feeling I used to have when holding my son’s hand when he was still small. It is wonderful to feel this lively hand in yours. I am not sure how to describe the experience: my own hand felt protective, connected, trusted together...so not alone! It is not the same experience as walking hand in hand with my husband – that is also nice, but in a different way.

Anyway, I felt so wonderful that my adult son so spontaneously went hand in hand with his mother in public! He did not seem embarrassed at all. In fact, if the truth be told, as we were walking hand in hand, I felt a bit awkward myself. But I did not tell him.

Here are two descriptions of the same phenomenon, although the latter is of the experience of holding hands with an older son. But in comparing the two descriptions we note how the first mother is giving us her opinions and views about taking a child by the hand rather than describing how she experienced it. The first mother does not describe a particular moment. In contrast, the second mother recounts a particular moment in time and she seems to describe more experientially the actual hand-in-hand event. (Van Manen 2104 pp. 53-54)

I designed the guide for conversation included in Appendix A to assist me in keeping the focus on the experience and the existential aspects of the experience (spatiality, corporeality, temporality, and relationality). I prepared for the interviews by journaling about my own experiences and by practicing the interview in a pilot with two retired school leaders. The purpose of the pilot was to test the procedures outlined in this section. I maintained procedural notes to document the pilot process and used them to validate and appropriately revise the methods.

I recorded the conversational interview, had it transcribed, and translated the transcript into a lived experience description (LED) to be used in the analytic interviews. The revision transformed the transcript of the conversation into a narrative. Content revisions were minor but structurally, I edited so that the description flows. Examples of the edits include the removal of the prompts and questions, removal of stammers and fillers, completion of sentences, and maintaining a structural flow that was continuous.

I checked the accuracy of the description through a member check and made revisions. I piloted the gathering of the description, the translation of the transcript into a narrative, and the analytical interview, but I did not write up the analysis or include any of the pilot materials in the findings.

In order to demonstrate how a transcript may be changed into an LED, I wrote the following hypothetical transcript by reverse engineering the LED provided by Van Manen (2014) that was cited earlier in this section as an example of a conversational interview about a particular moment described by the second mother. The goal of the translation was to develop a narrative flow and to facilitate intelligibility through editing and rewriting.

Interviewer (I): *So, I am exploring the experience of mothers holding hands with their children. Do you remember occasions where you were holding hands with your children?*

Participant (P): *Sure, lots of times; especially when they were young. I love to see people holding hands. I'm a bit sentimental. When I see an old couple walking along, holding hands it makes me smile. I like holding hands. But not everyone is that way; some folks are stodgy about any public displays of affection. You know, it is not allowed in some schools these days.*

I: *I see. I'm trying to focus our conversation on specific occasions of the experience, rather than a general discussion of handholding. I want to know about a specific time you held hands with your child: an occasion of the experience that stands out as*

an example for you. Can you think of a specific occasion, describe what it was like, and describe it as you went through it?

P: *Yes. Sure. In fact, it just happened a couple days ago when I was shopping with my 23-year old. We were walking and talking and he suddenly took my hand; just like when he was a kid.*

I: *Can you talk about the physical feeling of holding hands?*

P: *Yes. It's nice. Regardless of whether it's with my husband or with my children. They are different but both nice. There is liveliness in a child's hand when you're holding it.*

I: *Tell me about how you experience time when holding hands with your children.*

P: *What do you mean?*

I: *Well, there's an old quote attributed to Einstein that I think demonstrates this. He is alleged to have said, "When you're talking to a pretty girl, an hour can seem like just a couple seconds. But if you accidentally put your hand on a hot stove, a few seconds can seem like an eternity. That's relativity." Did holding hands affect your feelings of time in any way?*

P: *That's funny. I get it. So I'll say that there was like a time travel aspect to it. Holding hands in the mall brought me back to the same feelings I had when he was small. Those memories came rushing back. Is that what you mean?*

I: *Sure, if that's what it was like for you.*

P: *Yeah, memories... rushing back.*

I: *Describe your relationship with your child when you are holding hands.*

P: *I'm not sure how to describe the experience. It's special when your child takes your hand. Perhaps I never was quite conscious of it until now! I kind of felt protective, like when he was small. Protective and connected....and trusted. You know you're connected to your child so you're not alone.*

I: *Is there anything else you can add about this experience.*

P: *Well, it was wonderful and spontaneous, but truth be told, I felt a bit awkward too. But I didn't tell him that. He seemed totally comfortable: not embarrassed at all.*

The lived experience descriptions (LEDs) developed from the participant interviews were presented to the participant for feedback as a form of member checking. I made revisions based

on these suggestions. I anticipated (based on reading other studies) that edits for confidentiality or clarity would be suggested and I obliged and revised as requested. As these are the participants' stories, I did my best to express the story as they perceived it and yielded to their requests for changes in the LED. I felt this was essential to provide for validity of the experiential narrative. The four complete and final LEDs are included in Appendix B.

Stage 3: Reflective Analysis

To assist me in my reflective analysis, I conducted a second interview with participants in which I asked them to comment on the relatability of another participant's LED and for them to serve as co-researchers in my initial analysis of these experiences. I asked participants to review and comment on the LED of another participant to further confirm the plausibility of the experiences recounted. They expanded on how or what made the experience relatable which was useful for further developing descriptive language regarding the experience. I made notes where their language helped with expression of the experience or added an evocative element which assisted me in the next phase during which I edited to transform the LEDs into evocative anecdotes.

Following the member checking, the LEDs were subjected to textual analysis with the participants acting as co-researchers in identifying significant themes that I used to explicate the hermeneutic narrative analysis. Both the participant's own experience and the experience of one other participant were analyzed in this second interview. We identified and discussed themes through a holistic, selective, and detailed analysis of the LED as described in the prior section on *Reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon*. As the researcher, I am ultimately responsible for the analysis, but the participants assisted me as co-researchers by adding their perspective to the interpretation of the experiences.

The goal of the hermeneutic interview is to explore the nature of the experience. The truth is in the nature of the experience, not in the recounting of particular facts. Therefore, once I finalized the lived experience narratives, I was interested in hearing the impressions of others regarding the significance and meaning of the experience. Vagle (2014) wrote, “It is important to remember that one is not studying individual participants or the objects of their experience. Rather, one is studying one’s participants’ intentional relationship with the phenomenon under investigation.” (p. 129) Participants assisted me in exploring the experience and the meaning of the experience by analyzing their own lived experiences and the LEDs of others as well.

Stage 4: Phenomenological Writing

The feedback in the second interview provided me with a foundation for the analysis necessary for heuristic writing. I developed a phenomenological text following the methodology of Van Manen described in the prior section, *Describing phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting*. Following the round of heuristic interviews, I independently conducted a series of reflective writing exercises and further refined the lived experience narrative to create anecdotes for possible inclusion in the hermeneutic narrative.

Moustakas (1994) proposed a method that calls for the creation of a composite narrative that differs from the approach of Van Manen that I adopted. This approach calls for the creation of an analytic text that explores the essential nature of a phenomenon through demonstrative examples and heuristic writing. I used the feedback from the hermeneutic interview and further refined the LEDs into evocative anecdotes. Van Manen provided an example of a LED transformed into an anecdote that can serve as a concise and focused illustration of the essential nature of a phenomenon. The phenomenological question is, “What is it like to experience

Alzheimer's type of dementia in one's relationship with father or mother?" The lived experience description of an Alzheimer's moment as described by Van Manen (1994):

My father's Alzheimer's has gradually worsened. And it seems that his forgetfulness has gone through a variety of phases. Some of these are more disturbing than others. In the beginning, he often asked me the same questions or he repeated the same comments he had made just a few minutes earlier. For example, I walk into the room and he asks, "How old is Jason now?" (Jason is my son, his grandson.) More recently, he started to call me by my brother's name or even by my son's name, Jason. He even seemed to confuse me with some of his old friends. And yet, whenever I visit him, he seemed happy to see me. He always looked at me with a welcoming smile. His eyes lit up when he greeted me even if he called me by my brother's name. Of course, I didn't mind. So I joked with him and told him that I had lost some weight so he must confuse me with David, my athletic younger brother who is more handsome than I am. But yesterday, a strange thing happened when I walked in on my father. As I entered the room, he was sitting in his chair in the usual spot at the window. "Hi Dad," I said. "How are you feeling today?" He turned and looked at me but his eyes did not show any sign of recognition. He just glanced at me. His eyes were, like, empty, you know; he did not seem to realize who I was at all. It made me very sad. (MV)

What seems especially striking in this story is the experience of the unrecognized look: being looked at with empty eyes. An edited anecdote version of this experiential account focuses on the look. Material extraneous to this theme has been deleted:

Today my father's Alzheimer's dementia seems to have taken a dramatic turn. As I enter his room he is sitting in his usual spot at the window. "Hi Dad," I say. "How are you

today?” He turns, but he does not seem to see me. His face does not light up as it usually does. It is a strange look; with empty eyes. His eyes barely brush me: a glance without recognition. (RA)

When introductory or extraneous material is deleted, the edited anecdote is often shorter than the original account. Shortening of an anecdote may assist in making it more evocative (rather than drawn out). (Van Manen, 2014)

Anecdotes, however, are not the complete findings. The findings in Chapter 4 are of a heuristic narrative. The narrative integrated a number of descriptive and reflective elements including:

- The anecdotes which vocatively express examples of the experience
- Important themes discovered in the heuristic interviews.
- My interpretations as a researcher for which my journal contains my bracketed reflections, interpretive writing exercises and reflections on essential v. incidental themes and the four existential dimensions of experiences.
- My analysis of the phenomenon of ethical dilemmas in school leadership that extends beyond the specific experiences recounted and collected in the first round of interviews that refer to this phenomenon.
- Reports that support of findings in member checking and significant alternative interpretations offered by participants.

Once all the heuristic interviews were complete, I continued to write in my journal. The journal writing involved exercises for further reflection on the nature of the experience following the heuristic, experiential, thematic, insight connections, vocative and inceptual interpretations described by Van Manen (2014). Further descriptions of the focus for each type of writing are

included in Appendix C. My notes of the impressions and thoughts I had bracketed throughout the process were kept in my journal for use as a resource for this reflection. The literature review in Chapter 2 also served as a resource. I integrated the anecdotes and relevant themes that explicated the nature of the experience and the existing literature. As anticipated, my understanding changed and evolved as I went through this research process; these changes were also reflected in my journaling. Van Manen (2014) described the interpretive exercises that I completed following the hermeneutic interviews, but prior to writing my findings for Chapter 4, as follows:

Rather the intent of these exercises is that each draft keeps circulating in increasingly complex layers and directions. Every draft engages the style and intent of the other drafts. This is not so much a hermeneutic circle as it is a kind of constant circulating of all relevant directions that a phenomenological question may entice the author to extend him- or herself. Still, it speaks for itself that it may be helpful to start a phenomenological research-writing project with an attempt to draft a wondering set of paragraphs.

- Heuristic writing: what question? (instilling wonder)
- Experiential writing: what experiences? (pushing off theory)
- Thematic writing: what aspects of meaning? (phenomenological thematizing)
- Insight cultivating writing: what scholarly thoughts and texts? (insighting)
- Vocative writing: what vocative words, phrases, examples? (voking)
- Interpretive writing: what inceptual meaning? (deeper sensibilities) (Van Manen, 2014, pp. 376)

Further descriptions of these exercises are included in the Appendix C *Practicing Forms of Phenomenological Writing*. Van Manen (2014) described how these exercises should be synthesized in a comprehensive phenomenological narrative that fully explores the phenomenon. He wrote:

In my own experience, of assisting graduate students in the practice of phenomenological writing, these various components of draft writing may require a certain order; for example, it is helpful to first attempt a short draft of a few paragraphs that seduce the reader to develop a wondering orientation toward the phenomenon that is the topic of the phenomenological study. But, this sense of wonder needs to be sustained throughout the phenomenological text that emerges in the research process of the study. Again, draft writing is not a mechanical process – it requires a creative sense of logical and developing textual tact. (Van Manen, 2014, pp. 378)

Chapter 4 includes the findings as expressed in the heuristic narrative that integrates the themes and reflections described above. I shared these findings with my participants for one more round of comments and feedback prior to finalizing them. I included suggestions offered to refine the draft while relying on my judgment as researcher about the significance of alternate interpretations. I obliged requests for changes that ensured the ethical treatment of my participants and excluded or revised anything that they feared would harm them by being too revealing, that may betray a confidence, or any identifying characteristic that could compromise confidentiality.

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

This study used a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to explore the question “How do school leaders experience ethical dilemmas in their role as school leaders?” School leaders shared experiences of ethical dilemmas in a round of conversational interviews. I transformed the transcripts of those interviews into the “Lived Experience Descriptions” (LED) contained in Appendix A, *Study Participants' Lived Experience Descriptions (LEDs) of Ethical Dilemmas*. The LEDs were the foundation for a second round of interviews with the school leaders in which their own LED and the LED of another participant were subjected to analysis with me to explore the nature and meaning of the experiences. While completing the literature review in Chapter 2 provided me with some background for understanding ethical dilemmas in school leadership, this methodology challenged me to set aside my preconceptions by bracketing to remain open to the experiences and interpretations shared by my participants. Once the experiential and analytic data were collected from the participants, I completed the reduction by allowing myself to participate in the interpretation, which involved reflective reading and writing exercises. In this analysis, the reduction is completed.

These findings provide one possible interpretation of the meaning of school leaders' experiences of ethical dilemmas. While there is a degree of subjectivity as the interpretations are largely influenced by my own orientation as a school leader, I hope my orientation contributes to, rather than detracts from, the value of the findings.

Following the second round of interviews, I subjected the LED to significant editing and rewriting to construct “anecdotes” that focused on specific significant detailed experiences of ethical dilemmas. Those anecdotes are the experiential data that express the findings of this research. Each anecdote includes a reference to the section of the LED from which it was drawn.

I followed Van Manen's (2014) "suggestions for constructing narrative anecdotes that may assist in making a text insightful and accessible in terms of the phenomenological themes and understandings," (p. 254) which included collecting source material, interpreting the significant themes (in consultation with the source if possible), rewriting by deleting extraneous material, and editing to "strengthen and refine (edit) the anecdote further into the direction of the phenomenon and its theme(s)," (p. 255) with the goal to "arrive at a more plausible description of a possible human experience," (p. 256). Each LED interview was reviewed to identify and cull the concrete, vivid and detailed experiential moments provided during the conversation from other descriptions of "views, opinions, beliefs, perceptions, interpretations, and explanations of experiences," (Van Manen 2014, p 299). Thus, while each LED provided material for several anecdotes, each also contained material that served as background or consisted of general observations rather than specific experiences of ethical dilemmas.

The findings are presented in two parts. In the first section I introduce the themes related to the nature and meaning of school leaders' experiences of ethical dilemmas in their role as school leaders. The themes include cognition, chance, power, opportunity, time, and being watched. In the second part, these themes are explored within the context of the experiences from which they grew. Unlike a case study, the purpose of the research is to explore the experiences rather than the cases so the findings in part two of this chapter are organized around types of experiences rather than the participant who supplied the description of the experience. If you are interested in the participants' stories or in comparing the anecdotes to the source material, I refer you again to the LEDs found in Appendix C. The types of experiences in the second section include ethical dilemmas involving student behavior, ethical dilemmas involving

teachers, ethical dilemmas involving other leaders' decisions, and ethical dilemmas involving compounded factors.

The Nature and Meaning of the Experience

In this section, I introduce the themes drawn from the school leaders' experiences of ethical dilemmas. In phenomenological research, experiences are the essential unit of meaning. Throughout this chapter on the findings you will see notes referencing the lines in the source material, the Lived Experience Descriptions (LED), from which an experiential anecdote, a statement, or an idea was drawn. For example "looking at both sides of the coin" (292), indicates that you can find this statement on line 292 of the LED contained in Appendix C. Note that the reference is not necessarily a direct quote. As described at length in the methodology, excerpts of the LEDs were revised to create the anecdotes that are included here in the findings.

The themes grew from a heuristic analysis with the participants that I further developed in journal exercises to produce a possible interpretation. Phenomenological research acknowledges and embraces that the findings are but one interpretation. While this interpretation is informed by my own personal pedagogical stance as a school leader and my reflections on the experiences shared with me, it is also informed by the reflective analysis of the participants themselves. They shared their thoughts and impressions with me in a round of heuristic interviews. During those interviews, I did my best to bracket my own impressions and to remain open to their reflection on the nature and meaning of the experiences they recounted in an earlier round of interviews.

The Oxford Dictionary provides a definition of "ethical dilemma" that serves as a foundation for expanding on the themes developed in the research. This definition of an ethical dilemma is "A situation in which a person must choose between two courses of action of

(apparent) equal moral importance, so that the choice necessarily entails the transgression of an important moral principle.”

The themes developed through the hermeneutic analysis related to this definition include variations based in part on the difference between the definition’s nature as a situation and the study’s nature as an experience. Thus, rather than looking at a *choice*, the experience looks at *contemplation (cognition)* to arrive at a choice. While the definition includes *two courses of action*, the experience necessarily includes the context of *capacity (power)* and *opportunity (options)* that frame a multiplicity of available courses of action. The definition includes *equality of moral importance* while the experience includes *uncertain moral merits*. The themes of uncertainty and chance also apply to capacity and opportunity. While the definition includes *moral principles*, the experience also includes the context of *relationships*. The following statement parallels the definition and synthesizes a connection between the themes:

To experience an ethical dilemma is to contemplate (cognition) the uncertainty (chance) about the moral merit (values conflict) of a situation and my capacity (power) and opportunity (options) to act in response.

Additional insight into a school leader’s experience of an ethical dilemma may be enhanced by reflecting on the universal themes of lived experience, which include lived relations, lived body, lived space, lived time, and lived things (Van Manen, 2014, p. 302). While the school leaders’ experiences of ethical dilemmas includes each of these themes, the findings of this study show special significance for the lived experience themes of lived relations (being watched) and lived time (time). Adding these to the themes contained in the statement in the previous paragraph yields a summary of the themes that help us to understand the nature and meaning of school leaders’ experiences of ethical dilemmas including the common themes of

cognition, chance, values in conflict, power and options, and the lived experience themes of time and being watched. This section is intended to serve as an introduction to those themes. In the next section, the themes will be explored within the context of the experiences from which they were drawn.

The Common Theme of Cognition.

This theme may be so obvious as to result in it being ignored carelessly. Ethics resides within the mind and the experience of an ethical dilemma that requires a school leader to engage in any one of a myriad of cognitive acts including to ask, wonder, think, contemplate, reflect upon, pause to consider, or in some other way be conscious of, an ethical question. The cognitive nature of the experience is evident in the school leaders' comments that the experience included "looking at both sides of the coin" (292), "I might hesitate or I might think about it" (1323) or "questioning of myself" (2062).

The path of consciousness was not always direct. School leaders recounted how thinking about one thing led to thinking about something else or another aspect of that thing. The study participants shared that wondering about an ethical dimension may begin with thinking about something else and circuitously be brought to the mind. For example, one participant shared that his secretary handed him a list of people who were going to be absent the next day. This triggered thoughts about how instruction suffered when teachers were absent. That thought triggered a consideration of how to limit absences which then triggered recollections of conversations he had with teachers approving absences in advance for important family considerations which then triggered thoughts of the dilemma of how do you balance the need to support the staff with the need to provide the best instruction for the students. The trigger for

thinking about this as a dilemma was not ensured nor was it directly presented as a dilemma. (1532-1591)

A cognitive act of thinking of an experience as an ethical dilemma is informed by considering counter examples in which a school leader describes an experience that was not experienced as dilemmas because the school leader did not hesitate to mull it over or think about the other elements that are included in the nature of the experience. For example:

Evaluation is easy for me. It's the right thing to do. Student discipline; I have no issue with that. When a student gets in trouble, I always see the positive because now everybody knows the issues and we can respond with ways to support the student (2331-2335).

Because there is no need to pause and reflect, these experiences are not experiences of ethical dilemmas for a school leader who thinks this way about those specific situations. Perhaps the school leader resolved these issues in a prior experience earlier in her career and what was once a dilemma served to clarify values and ever since has been clearly understood and is not in need of revisiting or rethinking through. Hence, there is no contemplating a values conflict or an experience of a dilemma.

Consider this in contrast to how a school leader might experience making a decision about how to use a closet. This decision might be presumed to be a routine managerial task and therefore almost certainly one that does not involve an ethical dilemma. But consider that a school leader could pause to contemplate the closet within the context of how to maximize limited resources, making it an ethical dilemma. He might weigh the merits of housing a place for reading resource files versus a place to store props for the theater thus requiring a resolution to the conflict of the merits of instruction in those two areas. This may evolve into thoughts of

the value of arts education in an age where high stakes accountability testing seems to put a premium on math and reading over other disciplines. Perhaps the theater teacher asked for the space and is responsible for the school leader being aware of an unused closet space in the first place. If it occurs to the school leader to be a situation involving a conflict of values (among other themes) an ethical dilemma may exist. So one school leader may contemplate a dilemma and thus experience an ethical dilemma where another might not or vice versa. Either way, the school leader needs to contemplate ethics in order to experience an ethical dilemma.

The Common Theme of Chance

There is no experience of a dilemma that does not involve uncertainty. Chance is a key term in the phrasing of some dilemmas. Should a student be given a second chance? Should a new teacher be given a chance to improve? Given the complexity of the challenges some students face, what chance is there that the school leader can make a difference? If a school leader has certainty about the action that should be taken and certainty about an outcome of a decision, then he/she is not faced with a difficult choice. Consider the following two experiences.

“Of all the cars to hit on today” (308-313). The drug-sniffing dogs actually hit on the daughter of the assistant superintendent's car. They didn't find anything. All of us knew she doesn't do anything. The girl is a star athlete, a great student, and had a full ride to college. We're like, of all the cars to hit on today. And then of course, every car you hit, you had to call parents. So we had to call and be like, um, just a heads-up, this is what's going on and he laughed. We're like, we didn't find anything, don't worry.

What are the elements that prevent this situation from being experienced as a dilemma? There is an inconceivable notion that this student could be involved in the use of drugs given her

status, achievements, and reputation in the school as being a “great student” and “star athlete” which are supported by the results of a search that came up empty. Mistaken or not, there is certainty. The laugh and the assurance not to worry hint at a relief that our beliefs were not upended. All that was experienced was a slight nuisance, not an ethical dilemma.

“You’ve got to change your socks, man” (278-288). There’s a kid who was coming to school high all the time and I tricked him. I know it sounds terrible but one day he was wearing socks with marijuana leaves on them and I said, “Hey, you’ve got to change your socks, man,” and he said, “Well, I’ve got another pair in my car.” So I said, “Well, I’ll escort you to your car.” And the second we got to his car and he opened the trunk I noticed the smell of marijuana. So I brought him in, called the SRO right there, did the search on his car, and got him out. Throwing the book at him would both get him the help he needed and also remove him from our school environment.

Like the first example, this anecdote conveys a certainty but, unlike the first anecdote, the school leader was a certain of the student’s wrongdoing in this case. There is a hint of a dilemma as the school leader notes that “it sounds terrible but,” which signals that despite the conclusion that his actions were beneficial to the student and the school, he may have questioned the means. But the certainty of wrongdoing on the part of the student quickly resolved that issue as the school leader viewed the context as an opportunity to act.

In experiences in which the school leader did not experience uncertainty and did not hesitate because of concerns about right and wrong or the potential outcome of his actions there is no dilemma. While you, as a reader, may wish to contemplate dilemmas by adding some conditional supposing into these cases—don’t “good” kids also experiment with drugs and alcohol—to do so requires you to infer or impose or critique either the facts, the interpretation of

the facts, or the values that are in play. Each of those possibilities raises questions in your cognitive process and raises questions of uncertainty. However, there was no uncertainty in this school leader's experience. Therefore, it was not an ethical dilemma because cognitively the facts were clear, the values were clear, and the course of action that he would take was clear.

In addition to uncertainty about the facts and issues, a school leader may experience uncertainty about a course of action. What is a school leader's power and capacity to respond to the situation? (The themes of power and capacity are explored more in sections that follow.) Einstein is quoted as saying, "God does not play dice with the universe" to express a belief that cause and effect account for why the universe behaves the way it does. Stephen Hawking countered that "Not only does God play dice, but... he sometimes throws them where they cannot be seen." Hawking argues that complex systems include elements of chance, meaning that actions only lead to probabilities or possibilities of reactions. School leaders facing ethical dilemmas wonder what will happen after they take an action. Their hopes and intentions may be tied to those action but they know that surprises may lurk around the corner.

"We're just rolling the dice" (1225-1227). There was a time when I thought that a kid shouldn't be admitted and the principal said yes, then a year later he's here, and doing just great. So we're just rolling the dice. I mean, you just never know.

If a school leader is looking for a way to change a student's behavior he may consider how the student might respond to leniency or severity. Shown leniency, a student may feel either a sense of indebtedness for the second chance given or a sense of recklessness for getting away with it. Severity may be effective in teaching a lesson that there are difficult consequences to the choices a student made or may evoke only anger, detachment, and disenfranchisement that fuels

future confrontation with authority. How confident can even a thoughtful, analytical leader be that the effect of an action will be the one that was intended?

When the outcome is uncertain, the school leader experiences a dilemma. A higher degree of uncertainty is linked to the complexity of an ethical dilemma. A school leader's hope for the best possible outcome acknowledges the dimension of chance in the resolution of ethical dilemmas. School leaders expressed that they make decisions with the best information that they have at the time of the decision hoping something will or will not happen but there is an element of chance involved.

***“So I called one of my colleagues”** (2065-2075). So I called one of my colleagues once when I was just having a horrible, horrible week. I get frustrated and question myself and I didn't know where to go. And am I making the right decision? Is that the right thing to do? She and I talked on the way home. I asked, “How do you do it? How do you make it through all this?” And she said “You know I struggled for many years but at the end of the day as I make my drive home I think about my day and I ask myself if I did the very best that I could today? If I can say that I have then I have a clear conscience about what I have done.”*

There are many decisions that you make that are just so difficult and all I can do is call somebody on a phone and try to make sure I'm making the right decision. It's hard. So are you making the right decision? I don't know. At the end of the day, I hope I am. I'm impacting students' lives, impacting teachers' lives, families....

Uncertainty plays a role in both the ethical issues and the prediction of results. But chance and surprise also play a role in the final resolution. Sometimes the best resolutions seem to stem from an element of luck or chance.

In reflecting on the experiences, a school leader commented that school leaders make a thousand decisions a day and that if one is questioned, that's not so bad. This comment evokes chance to the degree that the odds seem in the leader's favor but the odds also suggest that given the sheer volume of decision, something is bound to go wrong.

The Common Theme of Values in Conflict

As with the themes of cognition and chance, there is no dilemma where there is not a conflict of values. There are other difficult situations that a school leader faces but what distinguishes an ethical dilemma from other difficult situations is the presence and recognition of conflicting values. If a school leader does not see conflicting values, then he does not experience an ethical dilemma.

Values conflict was a theme in Arthur Miller's 1949 play *Death of a Salesman*. The main character is a father named Willie. In the fourth scene of act one, a character named Bernard asks why Biff did not come over to study. Biff is the main character's son. Instead of correcting his son, Willy criticizes Bernard for being nerdish and, after Bernard leaves, assures his son Biff that being liked and being good looking are more important than attending to your studies and asserts that Bernard is not as well liked as Biff. Later, in Scene 7, Willy's distorted values again come into conflict as he tells Bernard to help his son cheat and he rationalizes incidents in which his son has stolen, mistreated others, and disregarded the law. Willy says that Biff is fine and the problems are not important because they are not about things that should be valued. Success, good looks, and being liked should be valued over hard work, kindness, or trustworthiness.

The school does not only express values but also aspires to teach values to the students in the school, which can be difficult where conflicts of values exist. Disagreement, both about what

values to instill and how to instill them, are aspects of values conflict. When parents engage with the school with a different set of values, dilemmas arise. Who says what is best for the child? The term “helicopter parent” has come into vogue to describe the parent who constantly hovers over his or her child to watch and protect the child. In the analytic interview, one participant shared the term “snowplow parent” to describe the parent who is constantly shoving anything in his or her child’s way to the side to clear an easy path for the child.

A dilemma may tie together many issues at once increasing the complexity and number of values to take into consideration when experiencing an ethical dilemma. A student disciplinary issue may easily include issues of teacher effectiveness in classroom management, relationships, special education needs, instructional time, policy, parent relations, and even race, gender, and socioeconomic class. With each issue comes a set of values to consider: inclusion, loyalty, mercy, etc.

The Common Theme of Power

While cognition, chance, and values conflict speak to the nature of an ethical dilemma, a school leader’s power, influence, and authority (or the lack of any of these) are significant factors in how they experience ethical dilemmas. A dilemma calls a school leader to action (or deliberate inaction) and challenges his capacity to bring about the best possible resolution however he defines it. Without an ability to act, there is no dilemma, only the opportunity to bear witness. To be powerless in a situation involving issues of right and wrong may require us to recognize that life is not fair. To have power in a situation is to have the opportunity to influence the outcome.

The power of leadership is also accompanied by leadership responsibility. In Henry IV, Shakespeare reminded us that “uneasy lies the head that wears the crown” (Act III, Scene 1).

The experiences that follow demonstrate that school leaders are aware of the responsibility they carry in the experience of ethical dilemmas in phrases like “If the decision is mine, and truly mine,” (1627) and “It’s just like you’re the judging king,” (965). The element of power can contribute to a school leader’s experiencing a situation as a dilemma when he/she, and he/she alone, is in charge of making the decision.

School leaders' powers come from both the authority of their position and the influence they earn because of their skills. School leaders shared stories that show that they do not rely solely on the authority of their position. They recognize that their influence is impacted by earned relational respect.

It's the little things to show I support and care about teachers. It's having those private conversations and building those relationships....but really it's being visible, being present and showing teachers and students that I care about them (32-36).

I have to show that I am an educational leader or teacher leader because a teacher is not going to respect someone who hasn't taught or who taught and wasn't successful in their classroom or doesn't know what they're talking about (101-104).

Using power is a factor in the experience of ethical dilemmas. School leaders spoke of leveraging relationships or cashing in earned chips in the resolution of ethical dilemmas. They also spoke of the value of messaging to clarify values so that others know where they stand on issues.

School leaders also know that there are limits to what they can and cannot control. There are conditions outside of their control, which have an impact on a situation. In resolving a dilemma, a school leader may consider what they can and cannot influence in a situation. For example, in one of the experiences included in the next section, a school leader shared:

He's never going to stop smoking. Sanctioning him is not going to make him quit. He told me at the end of the year that he was smoking since he was nine years old (266-268).

In the analytic interview, a participant commented that the illusion of power was part of the experience of ethical dilemmas. Being perceived as having power or authority where there is little or none because the source of the power lies in a directive passed down by a superior or a policy or even by the actions of a subordinate. Principals are held accountable not only for the decisions that come from above, but also for decisions made by teachers, coaches, bus drivers, and everyone else in the building. You may see me as the face of this action, but it is not my plan we are discussing. Linked to this are the feelings of frustration and anger at having been put in a situation you did not make and do not control. In the analytic interviews, one participant was struck when reading his own narrative about how angry he came across when describing his frustration with other people's decisions. In one of the experiences to follow, a school leader recounts: *Even though I didn't make any decision and it was done for me, it's all my fault. Either way, I'm doomed (2112).* Too much responsibility and the school leader may feel the weight of the crown. Too little power and the school leader may feel anger or frustration with the futility of leadership.

The role of school leader also carries with it a shared association. Members of the school community may view school leaders as a collective—the subject actor of many sentences. The school administration is doing this, the school administration is not doing that, the school administration won't allow this, or the school administration is requiring that. Members of the leadership group may work in concert or at cross-purposes. Either way the actions of any one become the responsibility of all. “The school” acts through its agents, the school leaders.

Sometimes the team approach is recognized and embraced as individuals find a way to work effectively within the group.

***“Play mom versus dad,”** (82-90). We had a funny situation last year where I was a male assistant principal and there was a female assistant principal and there were kids that tried to play mom versus dad with us. Kids would come to see me if there was a discipline issue. But what they didn’t realize was that I could quickly send her a text or call her to let her know what was going on behind the scenes and find out what she thought about a consequence so I could be on the same page.*

Contrast that with another participant’s relationship with a peer administrator where the efforts seem more at cross-purposes:

***“We end up with things being unfair”** (599-607). So we had students coming in late all the time. Unfortunately, the other assistant principal is in the Flintstone age with some things but I’m doing my job. So if you’re late, I’m giving it back to you. We’re supposed to follow the handbook, which calls for suspension for habitual tardiness. But she decides not to enforce it and we end up with things being unfair. Teachers and parents challenge us because one child is suspended and another in the same situation is not. You know, I try to stick to the rules and do what I am supposed to do so no one can come at me. But as a result, we don’t have the best relationship.*

The Common Theme of Exploring Options

A dilemma implies a choice between actions or between action and inaction. A school leader may be faced with difficult situation in which they feel they have no options, ergo that situation is not a dilemma. Options and power are linked in the experience of a dilemma. A

school leader must have both the capacity to act (power) and the opportunity to choose between courses of action (options) in order to experience an ethical dilemma.

School leaders described the satisfaction of “finding an out” from particularly difficult predicaments. In the analytic interview, one school leader noted that an experience “with grace, luck and cunning lead to a fortuitous solution.” On the other hand, they also worry about what will happen if things go bad.

Thinking about options for action and the probability of different outcomes was described by a participant as the act of playing out scenarios in his head. School leaders are expected to be problem solvers. This includes creatively solving problems expressed as ethical dilemmas and making decisions about what to prioritize as they turn their time and attention to it. In this example, a private school leader reframes an ethical dilemma regarding an order to refrain from strict discipline enforcement out of concern for enrollment into a call to redouble efforts in keep current students in the school.

***“It’s actually a retention problem”** (1284-1300). We’re not a school that’s begging for children to enroll. You know, we’ve met our budget. We have maintained or increased year after year. We have 200 students this year and last year we had 207 students. The administrators meet on a weekly basis with the school board and we were just told in our meeting last week that financially we can’t lose any more students. That just rubs me the wrong way because if there’s a child with horrible behavior--I don’t think we have any but if that was the case -- we just can’t afford to lose them. It’s not a good feeling. I did a big presentation for the first time this year going over enrollment stats with the teachers to get them to understand that we don’t have a problem with getting new students. It’s actually a retention problem. If we’re capable of keeping a higher*

percentage of our current students, we'll be successful. I tell the teachers that we have to work on this.

The school leader anticipated a potential for a dilemma stemming from the board's instruction that they could not lose any students. If a student were to act out in a way that warranted expulsion, the leader would be faced with the dilemma of ignoring the directive not to remove the student or ignoring the code of conduct. Rather than relying on the chance of this unlikely occurrence, the school leader reframed the problem. By looking at retention, instead of discipline or enrollment, the school leader broadens and preserves options for discipline in face of the financial constraints.

The theme of exploring options is closely tied to power and chance. A school leader may consider an option of how to influence a student to change his/her behavior. One option is to discuss expectations and appeal to a student on an interpersonal level to do the right thing. School leaders recounted experiences of ethical dilemmas in which they tried to change behavior by appealing to students to change behavior. The success of this strategy relies on the school leader's ability to connect with the student and leverage the relationship as an expression of influence (a type of power). But even a highly effective school leader knows that this strategy may or may not be successful, leaving a school leader wondering if the student will change.

School leaders described how they know that to be effective requires creative approaches. They also know that there are times to listen and times to talk, times to suggest and times to direct, times to rely on policy and times to rely on relationships. One school leader said that it is important to have a perspective of knowing that you did your best with the information you had at the time, that is, to accept that the options and factors that you know about are the only ones that you can use in your deliberations.

A school leader's experience of an ethical dilemma is characterized by thinking (cognition) about the uncertainty (chance) of the moral merit (values conflict) of a situation and his or her capacity (power) and opportunity (options) to act in response. The universal themes of lived experience include lived relations, lived body, lived space, lived time, and lived things (Van Manen, 2014, p 302). While the school leaders' experiences of ethical dilemmas includes each of these themes, the findings of this study show special significance for lived relations (being watched) and lived time (time).

The Lived Experience Theme of Being Watched

Van Manen (2014) wrote, "The existential theme of relationality may guide our reflection to ask how self and others are experienced with respect to the phenomenon being studied," (p 303). This study found that an important relationship exists for school leaders experiencing ethical dilemmas in their awareness that their judgment was subjected to the judgment of others. That is, school leaders felt the eyes of students, teachers, parents, and their peers and supervisors on them as they grappled with dilemmas.

One school leader referred to his experience as a military pilot prior to becoming a school leader and the adage that when struggling with a decision, keep in mind how it will read in an accident report or how will it sound when you are called to sit before congress and explain your actions. School leaders perform in a highly public and highly scrutinized environment and are seen and known as being in the role in which they serve both in school and out in the community.

"I represent my school" (204-212). I was at the gym on Wednesday, people there know me, they know what I do for a living, and someone asked me if we have a robotics team because they want to get involved in a robotics team out where they live. I said, "I bet

our coach knows all about the teams and schools near you and I can reach out to him.”
Everywhere I go I represent what I do. I represent my school. I represent the community that I support.

There is an added layer of scrutiny to making decisions in the public eye when there is an awareness that others who may not share the same values are watching. Being watched and having others judge your judgment means that others can second-guess you. This can be a supervisor who makes decisions about your suitability in leadership or a parent who has heard something about you already and is watching to judge whether you care about their child or if they think that you will treat them fairly according to their standard. Regardless of where the eyes are watching from, as a public figure, others will talk about the school leader and assign motive to his or her actions. The school leader’s reputation is formed not only by what he does but also by what others are saying about him.

Watching is not a one-way street. School leaders are also watching the decisions that other members of the school make and, in turn, judge their judgment.

Linked to the theme of power, the theme of being watched acknowledges that influence may depend on interpersonal perceptions. Being a school leader involves remaining both highly visible and standing slightly apart. While it is important to maintain positive social relations, it may also be important to preserve a distance as a boss and supervisor. School leaders have a unique role in the school, one that may be lonely.

“Where is that line?” (2294-2305). As principal, I’ve learned not to have friends in the building and that can be lonely. Where is that line? They can’t be your friends. I learned that the hard way. I get along well with my APs and we do go out to lunch and I would

probably be their friends outside of school but... They're friends with each other. They get together socially to do things together but I don't.

There was a happy hour the other night and everybody asked me if I was going and I said no. I'm not going. You know I'll probably go next time and have one drink and then leave. Relationships can weigh on you. You want to have positive ones but you're still the ...

A specific aspect of the theme of being watched is the face-to-face encounter, which involves a specific kind of watching. The issue of facing someone is described in the experiences of ethical dilemmas. School leaders described situations where it was difficult to face someone or where they were grateful not to have to face someone or, in a corollary, where someone seemed to avoid facing them or was two faced in their encounters by being nice to their face and antagonizing behind the scenes.

The Lived Experience Theme of Time

To understand what it is like for school leaders to experience ethical dilemmas is to consider the dimension of time. One aspect of time is its limited supply. School leaders know what it is like to remain active all the time and to be pulled in different directions. One participant shared:

There is never enough time. If I ever get a calm moment in my office, I almost feel like I am slacking. I must be doing something wrong. (1478-1479)

Another one described:

My workday is so crazy that I never know what I'm going to do. Finding time to eat lunch can be a challenge. (144-145).

School leaders know that the pace of school leadership is not only fast during the workday, but it is continuous and stays with you during the time that you are not “at work.”

“It never goes away” (2021-2035). On Friday, we had a two-hour early release. I left at my normal time, I got home, I was supposed to go to a basketball game at night, and I was exhausted. It all just hit me. I lay down next to my dog and all of a sudden it was an hour later and I thought I have to go to a basketball game. It just never leaves you. I’ll wake up at two in the morning and think I have to do this and do that. It just doesn’t stop. I think my dad put it best. He was in a high stakes job with the Federal Government and he was very high up but he said he was always able to leave it at work. Then, when he retired, he became a teacher and he said, “It never goes away.” It’s with you 24/7. I always think about that kid or how I could help that person. I’m always thinking about what more I can do for somebody else. Often if a conflict is happening or is starting to brew, I’m thinking about it and I’ll wake up in the middle of the night. I’ll take an Advil PM some nights because I just can’t think. I just have to let some things go because I have to get sleep. Spring is the worst because of all the things I have to go to; honor ceremonies, end of the year celebrations, spring sports who do well and keep going to the finals late in the year, etc. So that’s when it gets to be really difficult.

Time is a factor in all school leadership work, including the work that involves facing dilemmas. As time passes, an ethical dilemma changes. A situation may be brewing and developing, but it is still in the future. In which case, a school leader may be trying to anticipate (cognition) what may happen (chance) or how he could proactively respond (power and capacity). Presently, a dilemma may include a degree of urgency as it demands time and attention be diverted from other tasks and responsibilities. In the present, a school leader’s

experience of a dilemma may begin with a pause or a hesitation that signals there is something to consider. While the definition of an ethical dilemma suggests choosing between option A or option B, the context of time allows that A can become A' or A'' and option C and D may open up even as option B disappears. Time changes the context of the dilemma and thus changes the way school leaders think about them and the options they perceive.

Time is also a consideration for choosing between options as school leaders consider the possible short term and long-term impact of a selected course of action on a student or on their own time. What will the decision mean for the student tomorrow, or next week, or five years from now? What will the decision demand of me in terms of time, effort, work, and attention? The context of Friday afternoon at 2:30 PM versus Tuesday morning at 10:00 AM may have some bearing on how a school leader feels about and reacts to any problem, including the experience of a dilemma.

Once a decision is made and the experience is in the past, hindsight allows for a new perspective. School leaders shared experiences where they found with the passage of time that their judgment was wrong or where they did not recognize something as a dilemma until the moment had passed. In the analytical interview, one participant shared that had they decided differently, they might never have thought of an experience as involving a dilemma.

Experiences in the past may include an emotional dimension. To revisit the concept of the heavy crown discussed in the section on power, experiences may stay with a school leader for a long time and may involve carrying a burden.

“I’m just not going to talk about them” (2326-2345). There are two situations that I’m not going to talk about that have affected me greatly. I’m just not going to talk about them. I want to share but I just can’t. People can be mean not knowing the other side.

And you can't tell the other side of the story. You can't say someone's business or why you made a decision because it would compromise their story. There are situations that are just he said / she said when you weren't there. I try to make the right decisions. One last year was very difficult and what pains me the most is that they'll never know the other side.

On the other hand, a clear perspective on time can help alleviate pressure when experiencing an ethical dilemma and allow a school leader to avoid rash decisions. One participant began the first interview with “hopefully I’m not dealing with something super ethical in the sense of life and death” (1332) acknowledging that most school issues, though important, are not life and death. Another shared:

“All the time in the world” (2076-2084). Another principal taught me that nothing in education is an emergency so take the time to make the decision. I used to be really quick to the draw because I just wanted it to be done. I remember earlier this year where I made a decision and I thought why am I brushing this so quickly. I have all the time in the world to make this decision and to make sure it's the right one for this student and that I keep their best interest in mind and that I follow all the rules. So I was able to call people and explain my situation and what I planned to do. Then I called another person to ask, “Am I hitting all of the rules?” So I checked with different offices of the people that I needed to talk to. And I tried to get all the facts first. And that's the best that I can do.

Time is an important theme in school leaders' experiences of ethical dilemmas. It describes the context of the pace and the continuity of the job. It affects the perspective of a dilemma before, during, and after an experience. It is a consideration for the impact of a

decision in the short term and long term and it demands that school leaders maintain an awareness of it to control it rather than to be controlled by it.

Experiences of Ethical Dilemmas

The themes in part one were drawn from the experiences of ethical dilemmas that the school leaders who participated in the study shared during a round of conversational and a round of analytical interviews. “Lived experience is the starting point and the end point of phenomenological research. The aim of phenomenology is to transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence” (Van Manen 1990, p 36.). In this part, we turn our attention back to the experiences to better understand the nature and meaning of school leaders’ experiences of ethical dilemmas in their role as school leaders. The experiences are organized by type, beginning with experiences of ethical dilemmas regarding student behavior and continuing with experiences of ethical dilemmas regarding: teacher supervision, program changes, decisions that other school leaders make, parents, and complex systems with multiple actors.

Ethical Dilemmas Regarding Student Behavior

School leaders know what it is like to administer student discipline. Codes of conduct, policies, and even laws exist that are intended to guide school leaders in this task. Administrators are responsible for interpreting and using appropriate discretion in applying these rules. There is a human dimension as school leaders use their influence to encourage or discourage certain behavior, apply their knowledge of students, and perhaps even leverage their relationships with them. They take into account what they know about a student and how a sanction may affect them personally. At the same time, they have to consider what is best for the school as a whole. Excluding a student from the school community is no small matter. School leaders are faced with situations in which they must decide whether a student’s conduct warrants

removal from the school community. They also must consider whether such punishment will teach/influence a child to change his or her behavior, harm the student in any way, deter others from behaving in a similar fashion, or change the climate of a classroom to permit teaching and learning to take place.

“She stopped using enough to get through her clean program” (379-429). The hardest cases to deal with are with the kids that you would never expect. We had a girl who was a senior, A/B student, quiet kid, never in trouble a day in her life. During the first drug search, we go into her truck and there's a Santa Clause hat, and inside the Santa Clause hat is a pipe, a bag of marijuana and a couple lighters. So we bring her out to the car and ask, “Is this your car? Do these things belong to you?” She says, “Yeah.” So I collect all of it, bring it into the school and turn it all over to the school resource officer. I bring her into my office and my first question is, “So what's going on?” At that point, there's not a lot to hide. And her response was, “I was hanging out with a friend and it's just what we were doing and I left it in my car and didn't think anything of it.” She was in our nursing program and wanted to be a nurse. It was in there with all her nursing equipment, her stethoscope, etc., all the stuff that she had planned to go on and study. I said, “This means I'm going to call your parents and it's going to be a ten-day restriction and a referral to the superintendent and he'll probably place you at the alternative site for the semester.” She says, “I know.” She took it really well.

When the parent came in that's when it actually got tough because the mother realized the restriction and that her daughter would have to go to an alternative education site and she said, “My daughter is not going to school with those kids.” She had the belief that the kids down at the alternative site were somehow worse or different than the kids at

school. So, I had to explain to the parent that; yes, your daughter will graduate with the rest of her class; yes, she will get all the credits she needs to graduate; yes, she will go at her own pace, but at the same time she's not down there with 'bad' kids. They're still children. Children make mistakes.

Graduation for this girl was on the football field with everyone else. She came back with two months to go in the school year because she did everything that was asked of her.

Does that mean she stopped using? She stopped using enough to get through her clean program. Everything we do isn't a hundred percent successful.

We may wonder if this experience is an ethical dilemma. Clearly, it was difficult for the school leader who shares that the unexpected nature of the situation and facing the parent was what made it difficult. The unexpectedness implies the themes of both cognition and chance. But the infraction and the prescription for a sanction were not in question and there is no suggestion in the recounting of this story that the school leader struggled with whether or not to impose the sanction since options were not present.

Facing the parent who sees the sanction as a permanent label on her child as she is sent to a placement with "those kids" was a challenge for the school leader. How does the school leader resolve the dilemma of imposing a sanction of exclusion while still demonstrating care for the student? The mother, witnessing her child's exclusion, may be more upset that her child has been branded a wrongdoer than she is about the infraction. The contention that there are no bad kids and that everyone makes mistakes and that it all worked out okay since she graduated with everyone else suggest a rationalization to minimize the harm inherent in the punishment while emphasizing forgiveness and moving forward productively in the future.

Were there more discretion permitted and options available regarding if and how to respond to this infraction might the decision have been more of a dilemma for the school leader? Given discretion, a school leader might weigh the effect of the sanction on the student's reputation and her relationship with her parents and her peers, on her curricular opportunities and her plans of becoming a nurse, and on the likelihood of the sanction changing her behavior, as well as against the positive results of deterring other students, getting her to stop using, and removing drugs from the school environment.

Drugs are known to be bad for a school environment and the policies and sanctions are intended to make that message clear so there is often little discretion permitted regarding the school leader's response. That is likely the intent of explicit policies that do not allow interpretation or discretion. This same is not true with regard to tobacco. While prohibited by school policy, tobacco may be used legally off school grounds by students of a certain age. Discretion is available to the school leader in terms of defining what constitutes a student using or possessing tobacco while at school. In the case that follows, the question of what good will be served in the strict enforcement of a policy is raised clearly resulting in a dilemma. School leaders know what it is like to weigh the likely results of their decisions as they decide how and when to use administrative discretion.

“I saw the open pack of cigarettes just sitting on his dashboard” (238-375). There's a kid at the high school I worked at last year who really struggled. I heard that when he was a freshman, he was a terrible student. There were days he'd come into school without his shirt on just because that's how he rolled. But from what I knew, he was a really nice kid. He was 18, but as school-people know, that doesn't matter in a tobacco free school zone. The school was cracking down pretty hard because we'd find chewed

tobacco everywhere. It was even on our ceiling. With tobacco violations, the sanction was three-days out. Whether they were 18 or 15 didn't matter. They got all their work and worked online at another location for three days.

We went out to the cars in the school parking lot with the drug dogs in October and the dogs hit on a car that happened to be next to his truck, which had his last name plastered on the back of the cab, which made it easily identifiable. I saw the open pack of cigarettes just sitting on his dashboard. The cigarettes were just out in plain sight.

I thought; he's 18 but he still had cigarettes in the school parking lot. By policy, I could easily send him out for three days but what good is that going to do for me. All it's going to do is piss him off and ruin my relationship with him so that he's not in a mindset where he wants to come to school. It's taken other people working with him for three years to get him to the point where he will come to school and be pleasant to the teachers. He is never going to stop smoking. He told me at the end of the year that he had been smoking since he was nine years old. Sanctioning him is not going to make him quit.

So, I didn't call him down to my office. I pulled him aside in the hallway to talk to him. I feel like my office is a place to have a serious closed-door conversation. Instead, I went and found the kid down in the auto shop, pulled him off to the side in the hallway where no one was and I said, "Look, man, here's the deal. I went out to your car and saw cigarettes there. It's stupid. I can't do anything about that. I'm not going to see you stop smoking. Do me a favor. I don't want to get you in trouble for this. Can you put the cigarettes in your glove compartment when you get to school so that we don't see them?" And he answered, "I gotcha. Like, I get it, you're good."

In some ways, following policy to the letter is doing what's best for kids. And in other ways doing what's best for kids is -- I wouldn't say looking the other way because I guess if he had been smoking a cigarette in school or chewing tobacco in school, we'd have to come after him -- but giving that leniency where it's appropriate because there's that idea that what's fair or what's right isn't the same for everybody.

The school leader had to decide how to use his power of discretion and choose between options, whether to proceed formally and impose a three-day sanction that excludes the student for a period of time or show leniency. He struggled with the decision and weighed the positive and negative impact of the options and considered the chances of a positive outcome because it was not immediately clear.

Cognition is evident as the school leader thinks about the situation and the potential outcomes of different scenarios and as he wonders, “what good is that going to do for me.” Interestingly, in the conversational interview, this experience was preceded by a general conversation about a segment of the student culture in a suburban/rural school division that the school leader worked at the prior year. This discussion indirectly leads to the school leader thinking about a particular student in that subculture and an ethical dilemma involving him.

The school leader knows the policy and the circumstances in the school that validate a strict enforcement of that policy. Reasons for the school leader to adhere to a strict interpretation include fulfilling an administrative responsibility of following and administering policy, maintaining a clean school (free of tobacco on the ceilings by deterring this student and others from using tobacco in school), and discouraging the particular student from using tobacco altogether—to encourage him to quit.

But the school leader also knows the student involved and his history and progress. He considers the possibility of the negatives effect on the student's attitude toward school and the adults in it including the attitude toward the school leader who makes the decision to sanction and thus becomes the face of the sanction and the person who delivers the message of exclusion.

The decision not to strictly enforce does not mean that there is no action taken. Reasons to adhere to a strict interpretation are discarded based on the likelihood that the sanction would not serve the intended goals; the tobacco was not in school and, in the leader's judgment, the student was never going to stop smoking. The attitude toward school is understood to have larger implications for the future success of this student over time and, further, his attitude might make an impression on peers. The school leader can use his capacity to leverage his relationship with the student using mercy to secure a bond of trust with which the leader hopes the student will feel beholden and, therefore, live up to the trust and expectations of this person in authority in the school who has demonstrated to me that he is on my side. Now the school leader may have earned some cache for future use to influence this student where the stakes may be higher. Evidence of using this event to strengthen the personal connection in a show of mercy and leniency is felt in the private meeting in the hall, a moment of shared understanding. You've been given a break, now fly right and do well for me.

The rationale was different in the case of the nursing student for whom the finding was that she could still succeed despite the alternative assignment or even had a better chance of success because the alternative assignment allowed her flexibility to focus on the CLEAN program. The nursing student seems to immediately acknowledge her violation and accept the consequences while, in this case, the school leader worries that the student's precarious attitude toward school may be too delicate to survive a sanction. Perhaps that is also just rationalization

to distinguish the case where discretion was possible from one where the policy was more directive.

School leaders know that individual children can cause disruptions that interfere with classroom instruction. The decision to exclude a student from public school versus private school varies. In public school, exclusion for conduct violations by alternative placement, suspension or expulsion, are usually the result of a specific incident. Whereas in private schools, a summative review of a student's case may look at patterns without relying on a single incident to determine whether or not to exclude a student or welcome the student to begin or continue at the school. This dilemma revolves around the issue of whether interventions can help one student to change his behavior so that he is no longer disrupting the many. When do school leaders decide that they are powerless to help a student change and decide, instead, to remove the student for the good of the class or the school?

“Well, do you feel that he has improved?” (881-962.). I would say that my role as an admissions director for a parochial elementary school is all about the dilemma. You know, do we admit this child or not?

A parishioner of our church brought her child in for a shadow day with the first grade and told us “Here’s my son. He’s totally okay with behavior.” She dropped him off and in the morning he seemed okay and then all of a sudden he would not listen, started throwing tantrums, stood on chairs, and said things. The classroom teacher and the teachers that had cafeteria duty noticed and reported the behavior. I thought, “What in the world is going on?” I brought the student to the office and tried to talk to him but he wouldn’t talk. He sat there quietly, and then when I asked, “Should I call your mother?” he said “No,” and then just continued to sit there pouting.

We invited the child back for a second day to try again and the same thing happened so we told mom that it was not going to work. Our counselor spoke with her to try to help her and to find out additional information regarding his behavior. He never came for the last school year.

This school year I received an e-mail in May where the mom said, "I am still interested in your school." I said, "Well, do you feel that he has improved?" I'm not going to go by what I saw a year earlier. I believe he deserves a second chance. It's been an entire year. She told me that she sent the child to the Midwest where her brother is the principal of a school so that he would be able to watch over her son. For a year, he lived with his uncle and went to school while mom stayed here. He flew back at the end of the year to live with his mom again. He applied, was admitted and registered for this school year without the shadow days because he had been out of town for the year and he didn't fly back into the area until the summer and because mom reported that he had made improvements living with his uncle who was the principal of the school that he attended. We saw the exact same behavior that we saw before. He was extremely disruptive to the class and it wasn't fair to the teacher and the other students. They weren't learning because he was defiant, not listening, not following instructions, pouting, and standing on chairs. It was a different teacher but the same behavior that we saw when he visited last year. When the class lined up, he would pout with his back against the wall and refuse to move.

So we got our team together to address this - the social worker, the other assistant principal, the principal, and me. We asked certain teachers to step up; our music teacher and physical education teachers seemed to have a relationship with him. We were trying

to use activities to get him excited by saying, "If you behave yourself we'll give you some more time with PE class." So we brought different people in to help to see if they could get him talking and moving.

From the confidential psyche evaluations, it is clear that the mother had paperwork that he was doing education evaluations. You know, we have a special team in our school to review cases of students that have behavior or academic issues.

We started after Labor Day and I believe he made it about three weeks. He went through the process. The social worker observed him again. We met with the mom a few times and were at the point where we were going to ask the mom to find another school.

Actually, I believe she beat us to the punch and decided to take him out before we formally expelled him. He left in September. That was two months ago. We haven't heard from mom since he left but she is still a member of the parish as far as I know.

It was personal to me because he didn't have a father at home. You know, I went through the same situation with my father not being around. Thank God for my grandfather. But when I see these males coming in and there's just no male at home with them I always wonder, can we help? Can we make an impact?

The decision in this case is not whether there is a policy that has been violated that calls for a sanction of exclusion, rather the school leader considers the options of keeping or excluding the student giving consideration to the possibility of outcomes that he will either improve or continue to disrupt the class. A values conflict is present in determining if the needs of the one outweigh the needs of the many. The school leader wonders whether the school had the capacity to help a student with chronic behavior issues, and how many chances should the school provide a child to show that he/she can comply with behavior expectations. The dilemma comes from a

personal connection that the school leader feels with the student—or at least with the student’s situation as a child growing up without a father figure present. By watching the child, the leader sees himself and identifies with the child making a connection that causes the situation to be personally relevant.

There is an element of frustration with the parent who it seems misrepresented her son's behavior. Part of the experience of an ethical dilemma for school leaders stems from the frustration they feel with people who put them in the difficult situations. There’s an element of, "why did mom put me in that spot in the first place?"

A slight variation on the theme of the active removal of a child from a school setting is the more passive act of not letting them stay. Pareto’s 80-20 principal applies to allocation of time and attention in school leadership; that is, 80% of your time and effort will revolve around 20% of the school population. School leaders know that a single student with chronic behavior issues can both disrupt the learning environment of a classroom and place a high demand on administrators for time and attention. How should a school leader resolve a dilemma when he is deciding between the good of the one and the good of the many and realizes that he is one of the many who would benefit from a decision going one way rather than the other?

“I’m interested in getting a transfer to stay here” (1592-1741). Mary was a fifth grader who had been in the school for at least four years and frankly Mary was a real pain; a discipline problem but not a particularly bad student academically. She was not identified for special education yet but we had signed off to evaluate her because her behavior was getting worse. She was not a violent kid and she didn’t really have problems with other students per se but Mary would go into her class - a looping classes so Mary has been in the class for two years with the same pair of teachers - and push

these teachers' buttons. She would kick back, put her feet on the desk and say, "I'm just not doing anything today", and snap, that set the teacher off. Some of my other staff would just say, "Go back to that table over there and I'll come back and talk to you later but these teachers would call for an administrator to come and get Mary and take her away. So I would come down and get Mary and ask, "Mary, what are you doing?" and she'd reply, "Well, I didn't want to do anything." Well, I don't need to get a call and come down to pull her from class just because she's not doing anything. So not only is she a challenging kid but she had probably two of my weakest teachers as far as being able to deal with her kinds of behavior.

Mary's mother came to us in October and said, "We've moved out of zone and I'm interested in getting a transfer to stay here." The mother talked to the secretary who just brought the request back to me but the mother didn't talk to me. And I'm going to be honest, I was grateful that I didn't have to face her. She just brought it in. Normally this paperwork comes in and you make the call right away for everyone's sake. But I sat on it for a little while. I had the request on my desk for about five days. When I got it I thought, "Oh boy, I'd love to turn this down." I thought about it for a while and then I did turn it down but I fully expected her to come back with an appeal.

I've been a principal for ten years and I can count on one hand the number of transfer requests I've turned down. But I turned her down for a couple reasons. One: I have two teachers who would love nothing more than for Mary to be gone. I knew if I turned her down that those two teachers who she's been driving crazy for the last 18 months would think, "Oh, our principal cares about us, he's watching out for us." Also, there is no doubt that Mary had an impact on the class climate. If we could remove her, it would be

a good thing for that class. I'm sorry but that is just a reality. I did it for another reason. I personally wouldn't mind Mary being gone. So, had she been in a different room with stronger teachers I might not have even thought about it. But I knew it was going to solve my problem of having to deal with the multiple calls I had for her behavior. If I could just take her out of the mix, I could deal with the other kids and other issues and that would be good for me and the other administrators. It would just reduce the workload.

Now did I think it was a bad thing for her to go? I actually thought it might be a good thing for her to go. She gets support in our school from a special counseling service that qualifies for Medicaid kids. And I knew the other school she was going to had those same services right in house so I knew she'd get that support. I also did think that a new set of faces, a new group of kids, would not necessarily be a bad thing. So while I don't think I was hurting her particularly, I do know that I think I was helping our school, which I think was helping many other kids at the same time. And then I thought I would get the good of supporting the staff. And there's just a lot on us as an administrative team and if I can take somebody out Well, I got rid of 'em. It was kind of, let's give it a shot.

The two teachers directly involved came and said "Hey I heard that Mary is leaving" and I said "Yeah, maybe...maybe." I might have said that I was thinking about it. I might have said that because normally this paperwork comes in and you make a call right away for everyone's sake, the family's sake and everyone else. But I sat on it for a little while. The decision was mine, and truly all mine. Not one person in the school ever came to me to say you should have approved that. But nobody really said one way or the

other. I was able to turn it down because we've been closed to transfers due to high numbers. I could have easily discounted that and just done what I want because it's site based. However, I could use that as the excuse in the memo.

What I expected to have happen is that mom would complain to the central office and they would say "What do you think" and I would say, "OK, we'll take her." When I signed the letter, I'm pretty sure I told the secretary to let her know she could appeal.

The secretary said, "If you have a problem with this you can take it up the hill." I fully expected them to come and at least want to have a conversation with me and quite frankly if she came in and said, "Look, she's been here for so long and her friends are here and she really doesn't want to go." I probably would have said, "Yeah, she can stay." But it didn't happen. They didn't fight it. And then Bingo, the beginning of November rolls around and she went to her new school. So it worked out.

The transfer is all paper work so you literally just take the file and you don't make copies of it or anything, you just put it in the courier and send it over. Also, because we signed off on her evaluation we needed to do it even though they moved her to a new school. I think they pushed it up and everyone did their piece before she left. The kid's last day was in the first week of November. I'd like to follow up with the other school and see how she's doing.

You could try to debate this but it might be a stretch. You could make the argument that going to a new place with new people gave her a chance to have a new start that maybe would reset her and maybe make her try to work a little better and be more successful and work on her schooling. You could make that argument. I'm not sure I'd believe it.

The general theme of cognition was experienced in the distinct moment where the school leader paused. He shared that “*Normally this paperwork comes in and you make the call right away for everyone’s sake. But I sat on it for a little while*” (1728) to think about the options and the impact. It also gave him an opportunity to try a creative solution with which he hoped to get the benefit of being seen as supporting the teachers without actually denying the request. This would be accomplished by granting the request when it was appealed. Unpredictably, there was no appeal and it did not work out according to the anticipated scenario.

Looking back on the decision, the school leader recognizes that rationalizations will not alleviate the school leader’s feeling that, given a choice between what was better for a class, the teachers, and the administrators, and what was in an individual student’s interest, the decision for the many may have still not been ethically correct. He described how the situation continued to “bug” him despite an outcome that seemed to be good for everyone including the student. Perhaps the school leader’s sense of responsibility toward and ownership of the child and her problems make it harder to turn her away. Does doing so leave a residual of guilt (earned or not) for having done so? Or does the knowledge that things were definitely made easier for himself make the decision feel selfish and raise doubts that he misused his power despite the fact that the student may very well be as well off or better off in a new environment?

Uncertainty and chance are key factors in making this difficult situation a dilemma. That which the school leader predicted did not happen with regard to the parent’s appeal. The school leader knows that the parent would prefer the student to stay in the current school but how can the school leader determine the likelihood that the student moving to another school will be better, worse, or the same as the student’s current situation? If he knew with certainty that it was going to be better, there would be no dilemma in denying the request. Likewise, if he knew it

would be worse, he may not have relied on the parent's appeal and may have granted the request easily. The dilemma comes from the uncertainty. What could happen? How likely is it to happen?

School leaders know that some students struggle to fit in and that they can act out in ways that are counterproductive. Peers have limits of what they will tolerate in each other. Students can identify individuals who come across as being too brash, mean, or provocative and the ugly things one student does or says can result in being socially shunned, isolated, and alienated. School leaders might wonder if they can identify and influence the root causes of the behavior to help the student comply with social norms and relate better with peers or if such behavior should also be sanctioned by the school authority to fulfill the responsibility of providing a safe and productive learning environment. Can we identify the root causes or is doing so simply enabling bad behavior? How much time should we allow a student to get with the program before excluding them?

***“It was because of the stuff that would come out of his mouth”** (992-1048). We had a fourth grade student that came in and we just had no idea that he was going to have such serious issues. He earned a very bad reputation for himself quickly. He didn't last two weeks.*

I remember walking into our gymnasium during recess. He was a member of the fourth grade class and the third to fifth graders were in the gym transitioning out as the sixth through eighth were coming in. As I walked in the door, I saw one of our model students with a basketball under his arm turning red and yelling at this boy. I wondered, “What did this boy do?” So I grabbed him because I knew that he would say and do things that picked the nerves on people that fast.

On the second or third day that he was with us, the entire class moved away from him at lunchtime. The entire class didn't want to sit by him. I never witnessed anything like that before. It was because of the stuff that would come out of his mouth. In addition to the curse words he told one student "I will take the meat off your bones," or something like that. Of course, he didn't really mean it as a threat, but he said things that provoked. Our school is a very tight-knit, family-oriented school. He changed those dynamics up. He didn't change the students, but one student can steer a class off course. The teachers said, "I can't do this anymore." He had some documented issues with ADHD but we've had other students with documented behavior issues like that who were really successful. He was a very bright young man but he was super impulsive and all over the place. He was brought down to the office several times. The principal talked to him. The other assistant principal talked to him and I talked to him. I had a heart-to-heart conversation with him where I told him, "Stop trying to impress the students here. They are not like that. I don't know if you're doing this to try to be cool but that does not work here in our school." I tried to help him. I told him to think about his mother. Would your mom approve of your behavior? This is a Christian school so think about God. Would God like what you're saying and doing? So I tried that route but in every class he went to the teacher was like, "Oh, my goodness."

He did not make it through the week. I believe it was day four that he was expelled. I told the principal that we normally give students at least a week to get the hang of things and said we should give him some more time. It was another situation with a single very successful mother, but the father was not around. The grandmother or mother came in for the tour. I had showed them around and I hoped that we could do something but he

only had this small window in which to prove himself. I was not happy with the decision to expel him after day four. If he had one more day and a weekend maybe there would be a change. It was a mix of things that made this hard for me; primarily that we have a custom and when I asked the question he wasn't treated as fair as he could have been.

This experience of an ethical dilemma begins with a cognitive act described at the end of the anecdote. The school leader shared “*when I asked the question, he wasn't treated as fair as he could have been,*” (1047). The school leader's unhappiness with a decision stemmed from his belief that there may still be a chance. He may feel that with just a little more time and a little more direction, the child could possibly, even if it is unlikely, change and get with the program but “*he only had this small window in which to prove himself*” (1023). Allowing for even a remote chance might have made the fair addition of time and effort worth trying. A dilemma for the administrative group to consider as a collective may be how much time should be allowed for student to “get with the program” before excluding him or her. However, for the individual school leader there is also a question of how much to express dissent in the group and how hard to advocate on behalf of a student within the administrative team. In diminishing extremes a school leader who thinks a child is being treated unfairly can threaten legal action, quit in protest, go over a supervisor's head, argue, advocate, express disagreement, or remain silent and accept the judgment of another administrator or superior. Just how hard should I push and how closely should I follow the party line?

Ethical Dilemmas Regarding Teacher Supervision

Supervision is a context of ethical dilemmas for school leaders because students are not the only people for whom the school leader has responsibility. Nor is the school leader the only

person in the school with a responsibility to students. School leaders know what it is like to try to provide for valuable teaching and learning for students and a supportive work environment for the staff. On occasion, these needs conflict. A school leader may want a teacher to be present at a time that they are not available. At other times, a school leader may wonder if the students would be better off if a teacher were permanently gone.

School leaders know that the personal needs of teachers occasionally supersede the instructional needs of the school. The expression “life happens” or *c’est la vie* in French acknowledges that there are things we cannot control. Personal lives and demands outside of work may sometimes prevent a teacher from being in school. Managing teacher absences requires attention to arrange for substitute teachers and lesson plans. However, a school leader may face a dilemma regarding how strongly to discourage absences. When asked to approve an absence that allows someone to be out, the leader knows that instruction will suffer. On the other hand, not approving an absence requested by a teacher may place unreasonable work demands on the teachers. The illusion of control is reinforced as the school leader notes that his ability to deny a request for leave is limited. *“Let’s say you turn somebody down. If they really have to or really want to go they’ll call in sick and that’s worse”* (1583). School leaders also know that small issues, like a single request for leave, can snowball into larger issues, as when too many teachers are out on one day.

***“It matters who’s here”** (1532-1591). I was just talking to my secretary and I saw that seven people are out tomorrow. Every day I get a print out of all the subs scheduled for the next day, I saw a teacher’s name on the list again, and I knew she’d been out today and then I remembered what it was.*

It might have been a month ago that she made the request. She came to me in my office and said, "Look, I need to take this Thursday and Friday off. My husband needs to have this operation and I need to drive him to the hospital and I want to drive him back and I want to stay home with him and it's going to be three days and it's going to be over the holiday." She couched it with "I know it's Thursday and Friday and I know you say you don't want us to take Fridays off however, um, I really need to be there for him and help him."

My brain is going, "Who the heck am I going to get to teach that class? Who's going to be the substitute?" And I almost always say yes you can go even though a part of me is dying inside because I'd really rather have her in school.

Now I could have taken a hard line and said, "No, you can't take leave over a vacation. You need to talk with your husband and try to find a different schedule day because it's not what's right for kids." In my heart of hearts I know for those two days when she's out, the instruction is not nearly as good as when she's there. It just isn't and that stinks. But at the same time, I need an environment where the staff feels supported and I want them to come to me with whatever issues they have. Very rarely will I stop someone. Now I have people who are taking off tomorrow. It's Friday and a holiday week. The trouble is I got individually hit by these requests and with my "support the staff" hat I agreed to them all, thinking it will all be fine. Then a day like today rolls around and I opened up the list, looked at it, had a whole bunch of staff members out and I think "What the heck is going on here?" Then I go back and recall that each one of these people approached me over the last couple of months.

If they come to me and say, "I need to take Friday. It's really important for this," what I'll say is "Ok, put it in now and make sure we get a good sub in that room." So then they know I'm watching that aspect of it. I like to remind them; "It matters who's here. We're not the checkout clerk at Wal-Mart. It matters. You may be just a teacher's assistant, but it matters. Those kids know you; they look up to you; they want you; they need you and if someone comes in to sub, they don't know anything. So it's not just your day or my day, what really matters of course are the kids' days."

But I have said no. I had someone who wanted to take a whole afternoon off because she wanted to take some test and I hesitated and looked at her askance to convey my understanding that it was optional. She actually backed down and said, "No, no I don't want to do that. I don't need to do it that badly. I'll do it at another time." So, I am mindful of what I'm being asked.

At other times, a school leader may wonder if a particular teacher is the best person to have in the classroom. School leaders have the responsibility of teacher supervision and evaluation. But school leaders know that teacher performance is not always static. School leaders may wonder about how their time, effort, and capacity help a teacher improve. This is particularly true for new teachers for whom experience in the classroom and the guidance of other educators can result in dramatic changes. But there is an element of chance, as those changes are not assured. School leaders know how hard it is to predict how a beginning teacher will change and grow over time and how hard it can be to find truly gifted teachers for certain subjects. Will this teacher improve? Knowing that this teacher will need help to improve, am I able and willing to provide that help within the context of my other responsibilities that also demand my time and attention? Is this teacher's growth a priority for me? Do I, as a school

leader, have the power to help the teacher improve? What will happen to him/her if I don't give them a chance? What will happen to the students if I do?

“That would have been my most difficult thing” (515-526). I had a teacher last year who was just unbelievably bad at her job. Not the worst I’ve seen but she couldn’t manage a classroom to save her life and taught honors kids in a difficult subject. It was her second year, so she was still on a probationary contract. There were flashes here and there that showed that maybe she could get better and she was licensed in a hard-to-find subject area. And even though her evaluation wasn’t spectacular, there was that dilemma that I know that it would be best if she was not working here but this is her livelihood. I also know that replacing her doesn’t mean we’re going to get anybody better. I thought “Let’s see how it goes in the third year-- let’s put her on a plan of assistance and see how the third year plays out,” when I knew in my heart that I probably should have leaned towards a different direction. The plan of assistance for a probationary teacher is a hard call. So I took the chance to make her better but it’s off my plate now. That would have been my most difficult thing to deal with this year if I hadn’t changed jobs and I was not looking forward to it.

The theme of chance is evident in cases where the school leader is willing to take a chance on a teacher or decides not to take a chance on a teacher. Even if the school leader decides to take a chance, other factors can sideline the plan. *“So I took the chance to make her better but it’s off my plate now” (524)* because of an unanticipated job change. What is the chance that the new person assigned to evaluate this teacher will also determine there is a need for improvement and that they have the ability to help the teacher improve? Will a new person be able to make that determination early enough in the year for it to make a difference?

When a school leader has doubts about an established teacher, it becomes more complicated. This is especially true where the teacher is highly visible and well thought of by the community. A school leader may question the decisions of a teacher and ultimately question whether it would be better if the teacher were no longer at the school. School leaders know what it is like to struggle with teachers whose decisions they disagree with and the dilemma of whether to let those decisions stand, to reverse the decision, or whether the teacher's judgment is so off as to warrant job action. In the former case, the school leader knows what it is to be held responsible for a decision made by a teacher and to be the face of every decision made in the school. In the latter case, the school leader knows what it is to risk a personal conflict founded on a professional disagreement.

School leaders are not expected to be the most expert in every area of instruction in the building. They rely on the expertise of other professionals with whom they work. But when the trust breaks down, school leaders may struggle more in areas where they do not have the deep background necessary to anticipate and personally direct a school program. Their power is a function of their self-efficacy and knowledge in the instructional area. This means that a dilemma may involve issues of control and authority, helplessness and responsibility, collaboration and conflict, or governance and rebellion.

Theater and the performing arts supervision include a unique set of dilemmas. Values of free speech and artistic expression, individual sensibilities, and school appropriateness come into conflict in artistic works that push boundaries. The high visibility and strong affinity students in an activity can feel for their faculty leaders contribute to a complicated power dynamic of position and influence in the school that involves the watchful eyes of students and parents in both official (e.g., boosters) and informal capacity.

“She had made an announcement on Friday” (2086-2224). *In my first year as principal I had a theater director who did whatever she wanted but the community saw her as a highly acclaimed professional. Our school community is up for the performing arts. Our band is probably the top in the country. Our theater is acclaimed. There is a lot of visibility in those programs. I’m more of a sports person. I get the whole rah-rah but she didn’t follow the rules and unfortunately, I didn’t know to what extent she didn’t follow the rules. What you don’t know, you don’t know.*

To begin with, according to the division, I, as principal, am the only one allowed to sign contracts. I found out that she was signing her own contracts. So I brought her in to talk about it and to tell her she couldn’t do that. Meanwhile, she had already announced to her class that they were going to be doing a particular play and we have a high school theater critic and journalism program so the word was out among the kids. I didn’t think anything of it except for concerns about following the procedures.

She made the announcement on a Friday and right away my assistant principal and I started getting calls from conservative members of the community and the calls and emails continued non-stop all weekend long. Well, it turns out that the play was rather risqué to say the very least. It was about teenage suicide, revolting against the parents, and it had a group masturbation scene on stage. I’ve never said that word aloud and found myself saying it to my mother one day when I was telling her about the play. I blushed from head to toe. People were challenging us with, “How dare you do this?” and I thought, “Oh my God, what did I do?”

I talked to my AP and she said, “I don’t know anything about this play,” so we both read the play and agreed it was not appropriate for a high school production. We talked to

the teacher and I said, "You can't do this. This is too risqué," and she replied, "It's already been announced. What are you going to say?"

We met with the students it was really difficult because I had to have a conversation with them about what was inappropriate about the play. They were excited to do this play because it was cutting edge and of course, that is what theater kids want to do. And I had to talk to them about this being a school production and the fine line between being creative and following school rules. They didn't want to hear it. So I was the wicked witch of the West. Then the rights advocates all start coming in. They expressed that this is what theater is all about and how dare I limit free speech.

Even though I didn't make any decision, it was all my fault. I'm doomed. I'm damned if I do and I'm damned if I don't. I didn't know what to do so I called over to my assistant superintendent and said "I need some help" and he said, "Well, it's a fine pickle you're in."

I called the play company that we buy the rights from and my contact said that we had twenty days to sign the contract or another company would pick it up and we would not be allowed to do the play. So I said "Good," and I kept it quiet. I let the time lapse and the other theater company, not a high school, picked it up. So then, it didn't matter and I didn't have to make a decision either way. That was just luck.

After everything, the theater program ended up winning the high school critic program award for best play but they spent an astronomical amount of money and some of the other things that happened behind the scenes were horrible. And during that time, I was defined as being pitted against the theater community. The following year the theater teacher and I didn't have such a bad year. She knew that I had to sign the contracts but

then it became another thing as she pitted me against the boosters because of the way the finances were being handled.

I'll say the last year was horrendous. I finally had a parent complain about her in an anonymous letter that explained it was anonymous because of fear of reprisals from the teacher. The letter described all these unethical things she was doing like not coming to school on time and keeping the kids here until two in the morning for rehearsals and getting students and parents to lie and cover for her so no one could find out. Every single time I tried to intervene it was dismissed as being because I didn't like the theater community. I tried to communicate that my concern was about following rules that are in place for a good reason. It's not good for kids to be out until two o'clock in the morning when they have school the next day. I put a limit that they couldn't be here after ten o'clock and I got some flak for that. Once again, the teacher's influence had the community interpret my decision as "You don't like the theater."

I worked with this teacher for three years. And during those three years, she would look me in my face and lie to me. She usually came to me as a nice person and then went down to the AP. They met weekly. I was always a day late and a dollar short on her. She was always one-step ahead because I didn't know enough about productions. So I learned and my AP and I worked through everything but she would always do one thing we just weren't prepared for because we just didn't think like that and she always thought of something. For three years, this was a contentious thing.

Finally, she knew her time was up with me and that I was just going to watch her, document everything for her evaluation, and hold her to every rule. So she decided she was going to quit. She made it a big production by announcing it at the awards

ceremony at the end of the year. She made it all about her and I hoped people would see through her. She made a long speech about the great things she had done and how the administration had blocked and obstructed her the whole way. She told me “You’re going to get a big backlash. You’re going to get so much crap because parents are going to be upset that I’m leaving.” I didn’t get one thing.

Still, it has taken a lot of time, money and effort in the aftermath of her leaving. I had to find a teacher that could come in behind her, clean up the physical mess she made of the theater to restore it and make it safe, and rebuild relationships with parents and students who thought I was a horrible, mean person because that’s what the teacher told them. So we’re rebuilding the program. We put on a great production this fall and they did it fabulously. It was rather risqué but I had the faith in the teacher to do it appropriately and I didn’t have one complaint. Those were some really tough times. That was really hard.

Complex circumstances allow for the metamorphosis of the dilemmas school leaders face. This experience was initially described as a dilemma about whether to permit the play to go on or not. The eyes of the community were weighing in and watching as the school leader described the theater critic journalists, the conservative members of the community, and the rights activists each of whom presented a conflicting set of values. That dimension showed that dilemmas include frustration with a person for creating a dilemma and how school leaders look for options to find an out, i.e., a creative way to resolve a situation. In order not to choose between the initial undesirable options, a school leader may look to find or create new options. In this case, luck also played a role in helping to resolve the first dilemma of whether or not the play would be produced as the school leader was quietly able to let the contract lapse.

The dilemma expanded because of additional problems about which the school leader became aware. Ultimately, it seems it was not a dilemma for the school leader to see the teacher leave, but that was not the case in the beginning. Time had an effect on how the situation was perceived. At some point in the three-year time span, the school leader switched her perspective and opinion of the teacher. In the beginning, it seems that she considered the teacher a challenging person to work with but allowing for trust in her expertise, and because she was well thought of by others, was worth the extra trouble. By the end, she viewed her as someone who needed to leave and the school leader was willing to make the effort in documentation to make that happen. Perhaps there was also a change in the power differential as a new principal initially facing an established teacher transformed into an established principal facing a dilettante. Clearly, the switch from the frame of tolerating her to resolving she should leave suggests that, at some point in time, the perspective involved a dilemma. The school leader must have asked; Are the teacher's flaws worth tolerating to preserve the teacher's strengths or do I have the power and capacity to take her on?

Ethical Dilemmas Regarding Program Changes

School leaders also face dilemmas when they try to implement programmatic changes. A colleague of mine once said, "People don't like change. Change is painful for them. School leaders are the bringers of the change; therefore we are the bringers of the pain." Just how hard do you push? To some degree, this question is practical. If you push too hard, the pushback may rise to a revolt. But to some degree it is also an ethical question; how hard should I make things for some people (i.e., teachers) in order to improve things for others (i.e., students)? One might ask whether a "my way or the highway" approach is warranted, effective, or an ethical use of power given a set of circumstances? Further, to what degree does a school leader believe there is

a benefit in shaking things up in order to promote a sense of urgency in the mission and to discourage complacency on the part of the staff? How does that comport with an expressed value of caring for staff? How does a school leader resolve this question? School leaders know what it is like to explore options and the potential outcomes of change. They know a variety of ways to use their power and influence to effect change and may feel dilemmas associated not only with whether they should shake things up, but how they should shake things up: using influence, authority, position, political maneuvering, manipulation, collaborative discussion, etc. School leaders know that their action and words are watched and weighed by teachers who watch and listen in anticipation of change.

“I affectionately call that lobbing a grenade into the staff lounge” (1487-1529). I have a school that is struggling academically. I have about 40% of the students qualify for free and reduced lunch. About a quarter of my students are English Language Learners (ELL) and we’ve done some pretty big trainings to change how we teach so we can reach these kids and improve our reading scores. So I do consciously work on that. I do consciously think about how we’re doing stuff. I think consciously about how I’m going to present stuff to the staff.

For instance, we have a 4th and 5th grade loop. Which means that a teacher teaches 4th grade one year and then the next year she teaches 5th grade then goes back to teach 4th grade again so she has the same group of students for two years. We also compartmentalize at my school. That means that if I have two teachers, one will do math and science and the other will do reading and social studies. And then they’ll flip-flop during the day whereas a classic elementary teacher teaches all the subjects. Well, I haven’t been convinced that instructionally - when you look at SOL scores - this has

necessarily been giving me the benefit it should. But if I want to make a change next year, I sometimes start with steps now. I just did this; I said in a leadership meeting two weeks ago that I just want you to know that we're looking at compartmentalization and looping. I want to make sure we're doing what's right; what's best for kids. Well I affectionately call that lobbing a grenade into the staff lounge because I have a number of staff that have only taught math and science for five or ten years. Moreover, they defend the practice and say that it's all about relationships or this and that. And I respond, "Yeah, but the scores aren't backing it up. We should be doing better than we are." So my big message was to make sure that everything is on the table and there are no sacred cows. Everything is about what's right for kids.

Lobbing the grenade was not at all difficult. It was a very conscious decision. Again, if there is something I want to change or play with or adjust I'll float it as an idea. If you're the grade level lead I might just say "Hey look I'm just thinking about maybe changing this," just to talk about it. There is no time line on this, but let's allow people think about it and let's make that be part of the discussion. They're trying to come up with reasons why I should do this or why I should do that. That's fine. It was a very conscious decision to float the idea. I'm not going to make any big decision for 6-9 months and chances are I won't do anything differently. However, the added benefit of lobbing that grenade--and this is a little manipulative but that's okay--is that suddenly they are going to be worried about their job. If they want to keep doing what they are doing they better be doing a good job and prove to me that they can be the best math teacher for these 4th graders and the best language arts teacher for these 4th graders. So in some ways it was kind of a little cattle prod to say don't get super comfortable here,

we have kids that need to learn. So if being someone who only teaches math isn't going to make a difference in math scores than why are you only teaching math? And it was more than that too. I'm conscious of those kinds of things when I do them; well, I'm going to throw this grenade and maybe it'll shake them up. But big picture-wise I still want them to be part of the process.

Interpersonal relationships in a school between the school leader and the teachers are important. Effective school leaders are known to have strong interpersonal skills. Nonetheless, people take change personally and resistance to the change can become personal for a school leader. School leaders struggle with dilemmas that pit professional goals against personal relations. How should a school leader respond when a person viewed as a colleague and friend clandestinely opposes and complain about them because of a programmatic change he/she doesn't like or want? Should a school leader face them and confront or approach a teacher who does not talk to them directly about a concern or disagreement but who goes over their head to complain about them to a supervisor?

“The third year the ugly just comes out” (2225-2292). I think that part of being a new principal is that when you come in people are optimistic. All these teachers come down and talk about the last principal implying that they are so happy you are there. The first year is a honeymoon. In the second year, you're building your relationships and you start to see both some of what you want to see and a little bit of the ugly. And the third year the ugly just comes out.

I'm following the changes that the school division wants me to implement with respect to developing operating curriculum teams. I would like the department to work as a collaborative team and not just have one person tell everybody this is what you do. “This

is what I've done, here's a packet, go for it." I want better. But this year has been difficult because there are teachers who don't want to have operating curriculum teams or the weekly collaborative team meetings that go with that structure. Despite the fact that everyone in school leadership has said we're going to implement this practice, they wondered "Are you really going to make me?" Yeah, I really am.

There is a particular teacher who has been here for a long time and is very well respected in the community. She is not the team leader but she's been here for twenty plus years and I think she went to high school here too. She is a parent in the community and used to be an administrator in the building but went back to teaching.

She complained about me making the department meet weekly and work as a curriculum team and it's put a strain on what was a positive relationship up until about a month ago. She never talked to me about any of her concerns. She has been very nice to my face but I found out that she's not being that nice behind my back. She just went right ahead up the chain; all the way to the top, to write something about me to say that I was doing something that she didn't like. She went to my boss and my boss talked to that teacher before ever alerting me and then asked me to make a consideration. And I said "What consideration? Tell me what I should change. This is what we in this division profess to believe about how we should operate in our system for the success of every student so there is no consideration." And now he is in a pickle because he knows I'm right.

Still, she's trying to get people to go against me. She wants the department team to run the way she wants it to run; to keep it the way it's been and she's trying to drum up enemies for me by building divisions to find out who's in her camp and who's in my camp. My relationship with the math team leader is great but she is not a conflict person

and I don't want to put her in the middle so I've avoided it. I just told her about it so she would know but I made it a non-issue and she said, "I've been hearing a lot of conversation but she won't talk to me about it. She knows what side I'm on."

It's hard to know that there are people out there that really can't stand you. I think that they might like me personally but they don't want to have that change and it becomes personal. It's not pleasant and I don't want it to be like that. It kept me up for a couple of nights and now I'm just like screw it. If that is her idea of professionalism, then so be it. We had a positive relationship so I wondered why she didn't talk to me. I think it is because she's afraid to. So I have to have that strength in me to know that it's okay that people don't like me. And sometimes that's hard. That's what's been a struggle lately. This is on-going and right now, I'm annoyed with her. The thing is, she's having a fight that only she knows about. She doesn't have a way to win so I don't know what her point is. I just don't know. It bothers me because I like her as a person but I don't like what she is doing as a teacher. I haven't decided how or if I will respond. If she wants, she can be professional and come and talk to me. Meanwhile, I have to weigh if I have to go and talk to her eventually. I don't know if I will or not. For now, I think that there is nothing that I should do so I just let it go. But I wonder if there is something I should do. Should I even approach it? Do I have to gather my allies first or do I just talk to her directly?

It might resolve itself because she said she's leaving at the end of the year. My assistant superintendent warned me that she's probably going to get parents involved and have them come down on me because we're going to lose her as a teacher. Possibly. They also said that about the theater teacher.

The school leader is trying to implement a change that not only complies with the division directives but is also a change the school leader believes expresses the values of the division and will result in positive change. In other words, the school leader buys into the change the division wants. This is in conflict with some staff.

In implementing the change the school leader is aware of being watched by both her superiors who want to know if the school leader can effectively implement new programs and to whom a staff member has complained and also by the teachers who want to know that the school leader is sympathetic to the difficulty of change and was satisfied with the existing operating traditions. With a teacher's complaint to the boss the school leader may wonder if she will be supported or second-guessed.

Effective implementation strategies include the use of interpersonal skills and political capital for leveraging relationships. Thus, professional issues can transform into personal issues. Feelings about the program influence whether the leader is liked and respected.

In the 16th century, Machiavelli wrote, "It is better to be feared than loved" (Chapter XVII) in his leadership thesis *The Prince*. This question is revisited in two pivotal scenes of Chazz Palminteri's *A Bronx Tale* (1993). The film involves the relationship between a father (Lorenzo) and son (C.) and a neighborhood gangster (Sonny) who the son admires. In one scene, C asks Sonny if it is better to be loved or feared. Sonny responds, "That's a good question. It's nice to be both but that is very difficult. But if I had my choice, I would rather be feared. Fear lasts longer than love....It's fear that keeps them loyal to me." This response is consistent with Machiavelli's argument for effective leadership but Lorenzo knows the difference. Early in the film, he tells his son to stay away from Sonny and the son argues back that people in the neighborhood love Sonny. Lorenzo replies "People don't love him. They fear him. It's not the

same thing.” The struggle for connectedness and respect can weigh heavily even on school leaders and may mean there is a personal cost to the school leader who tries to impose change to do the right thing. As the school leader notes, “I have to have the strength in myself” (2267).

Effective implementation also includes authority and position and the power that comes with it. “She can’t win” (2285) so in reliance of this should/can the school leader take steps to reconcile? She may consider that confronting the teacher could be viewed as aggression and decide it is better to remain open but not confront. It may also be that acknowledging the situation is not pragmatic because doing so gives voice to a complaint. The school leader addressed the issue with the supervisor who reported the complaint by challenging him. With regard to the teacher, the school leader reasons that since it was not brought to me directly, I have not said no to what I have not been asked to do. In this experience, we also see the process of mulling it over and considering options and values and the hope for creative or fortuitous solutions that may come about as “she said she’s leaving.”

Ethical Dilemmas Regarding Decisions of Other School Leaders

There are times that a school leader is singularly responsible for a decision and other times when they do not make a decision but are still attached to it as a member of the leadership team. In the first case, authority and control contribute to the experience of dilemmas as they feel like a “judging king” (965) who wears the heavy crown of leadership described in Shakespeare. In the other case, school leaders may experience dilemmas stemming from a struggle with decisions that other school leaders make. To be part of an administrative team means that at times school leaders present the illusion of being in charge when someone else really is in charge. In a formal chain of command, assistant principals defer to principals and principals defer to superintendents and that is not always easy. Consider the plights of Sancho

Panza as Don Quixote tilted at windmills or of Ishmael as Captain Ahab chased the white whale. In a similar fashion, superintendents rely on the decisions of their principals and principals rely on the decisions of the assistant principals and that, too, is not always easy. Values conflicts rest on issues of respect and trust and contribute to the context of a dilemma. Interpretations of policy and the intent of policy are not always the same. How can differences in these interpretations by different school leaders be resolved? School leaders may struggle with how to exercise their own administrative discretion and how to respond to the exercise of administrative discretion expressed by others. How do school leaders experience dilemmas caused by the decisions that other school leaders make? School leaders know what it is like to feel responsible for the decisions of other school leaders and to question how and when to express an opinion, advocate a position, or direct a behavior, or defy a directive, or chose not to react.

Two examples follow. Both describe frustration with another school leader's decision. In the first experience, an assistant principal describes the dilemma of coping with and responding to a principal's decision and whether and how to express dissent with the principal's decision. In the second experience, a principal describes the dilemma of responding to an assistant principal's decision and whether or not to intervene in a matter that the assistant principal is managing by directing that the student remain in the main stream supported classroom despite the disruptions.

***“They were just graphically violent in nature”** (457-514). A teacher brought a student to the office and reported that the student was doing a group project and had posted some inappropriate images in a shared group document on Google drive at school. They weren't sexual. They were just graphically violent in nature. The picture was of one student holding a gun and shooting the brains out of another student, just really*

inappropriate - especially for a middle school seventh grader. He pulled the image off Google images and dropped it into the Google document that another guy in the group was working on and the other kids in his group reported it. So he was brought down to the office and it happened that both the principal and I were there. He came back and we had the referral and the image so we had a conversation with the student and asked him, "Why is this wrong? What were you thinking when you did this." And he said that the Walking Dead (a TV show about zombies) was coming back and that he thought the kids would be interested in the zombie stuff. And we asked, "How does this project relate to that? Do you see why it's inappropriate?" It seemed to me that he was using the explanation as a cover and that the real intent was to get a rise out of his group mates. We ask teachers who do referrals what they think the intent was in an infraction and one of the options on the form is peer attention. The student was a special education student and wasn't super popular and he wanted to get a rise out of his friends. After we explained it to him, he kind of got it.

Part of our decision-making process involves assigning the consequences and the standard consequence for that – which we talked about with students at a team meeting – would be to restrict your computer usage and assign detention. The principal is actually the one who assigned the consequence. He didn't think the regular restriction was appropriate and thought it was more important that the kid learn from this and asked him "What do you think your consequences should be? How could you learn from this and why should you not do stuff like this? How can you be safe on the Internet? Why should you be careful with what kind of images you post places? What could people think of you? If you post images of violent stuff online, people might wonder if it's a sign that

maybe you're going to do something inappropriate and then it gets much worse." So his consequence was to make a poster and explain it.

I was part of the process but the principal decided this case. I felt frustrated because he was the one who set the rules and then they didn't apply and it seems like the place I work now is so afraid of legal action, especially on the special education side of things, that it's almost impossible to consequence a special education student. You really have to handle them with kid gloves. It's particularly frustrating because I'm still learning how the school operates.

The teacher seemed okay with our decision. I think he was just happy that it was handled. What's a detention really going to do? Still, I felt conflicted about the principal's decision. I think that my struggle every day is reconciling what's best for kids with what is the policy. Ninety nine times out of a hundred, what's best for kids and policy seem aligned but it comes up.

"Start thinking about thirty others" (1923-1948). *When my assistant principals are talking to parents, I want them to know what I would say. I have a kid who was in the mainstream classes and was totally disruptive. But of course, he is special ed and he has his rights. He's been in our school for a long time and we've know about it but it's been ratcheting up and getting worse and worse. Still, the teachers are so nice and they don't want to get him in trouble. We know there's something he just can't control but also wondered when it was just bad behavior and when was it the disability.*

I sat my AP down and I said, "Look, I understand that this child has his rights but you have to start thinking about thirty others." He was so disruptive that the class couldn't keep moving forward. I had a teacher in tears. She walked into the room one day, she

looked at me, and she started crying. And I said, "While I know you are focused on the one you have to think about the thirty." And then I called in the person running the meeting with the parent and I said these are the expectations. It is not to say that his education is not important. He was still going to get his education but he can't keep disrupting this classroom. They went in knowing what I would say. If I didn't start this my first year I wouldn't be able to have those conversations and the open dialogue; I didn't just go in and say bam this is what's happening. We had a little family fight and I had to talk to that person and say what about the thirty? And she just looked at me and said, "You're right. I wasn't thinking about the thirty. I was thinking about the one student and all of his rights."

Both he and the special education teacher who supported him were out of the classroom frequently meaning he was not getting the benefit of instruction during those times and the other special ed kids in the class weren't getting the benefit of the extra support. We had a behavior plan in place that showed how often he was being taken out of the classroom for disruptions so the parents were able to recognize the need for a change in setting. He's had a change to self-contained, which was the better thing. In the small group environment, he's been able to stay in the classes longer so it worked out.

How should school leaders respond when a decision is taken entirely out of their hands and they disapprove of the other person's decision? How does it feel to lose authority but still have to face the community as a leader with responsibility for a decision you did not make?

"It was like nothing happened" (430-433). *Several years ago when I was working in another division the assistant principal and I found marijuana in the backpack of our valedictory speaker and he was out for a three days out-of-school suspension and then*

came back and it was like nothing happened. And you still hear people in the community say that he's out in his backyard just smoking with his parents.

Dilemmas resolving around the decision to exclude a student were explored in an earlier section but are revisited here as we explore a dilemma where one school leader thinks the needs of the many warrant excluding a student and another school leader (with more authority) holds onto the hope that the one student is worth the chance. Time will tell who ultimately predicted correctly. Experience may strengthen a school leader's ability to resolve a dilemma, but it may also reinforce uncertainty as the notions of chance and uncertainty in predicting outcomes of decisions are revealed. Sometimes a school leader is confident in a position and has frustration with others who disagree. But school leaders know that sometimes, in a values conflict, the others turn out to be right. What makes a situation a dilemma is that it is unclear what the outcome might be and it is unclear what the correct course of action may be. Just because a decision is made does not mean that a school leader does not second-guess his own decision. Recall how in the experience titled *"I'm interested in getting a transfer to stay here"* ended with the school leader sharing his feeling that *"You could make that argument. I'm not sure I'd believe it."* Nor does it mean that the right decision was made and that hindsight does not provide clarity where only uncertainty reigned in an earlier time.

***"He just needed more time"** (963-990). A first grader was registered last year. Within two weeks of becoming a student here, we noticed something. He came into the classroom and was defiant. He didn't want to talk to the teacher and he didn't want to listen. We wondered; what is going on? He shadowed the kindergarten teacher during a visit the year before without any problems but now in first grade he's not even acknowledging the teacher. She would say something to him and he wouldn't respond. If*

she told the whole class to open their books to page whatever, he'd do that. But if she addressed him directly, he wouldn't do anything. If somebody else (like me) came in, he may listen. I thought this is very, very wrong.

So we did a little investigating. Our social worker spoke with him and with the mom and found out that the parents recently split. His mother is black, his dad is white, and we found out that as a result of the split he just had something against white people. He just would not talk to any of our Caucasian staff.

As it turns out, the kindergarten teacher he shadowed was African American and the student was fine but then when he was here with a Caucasian first grade teacher it was a different story. And I remember I was the biggest advocate for not admitting him. I said, "This is not going to work." I said, "We cannot have this student disrespecting this teacher." We met and we discussed this as a team and I said that he needed to go. The principal said, "No, give him some more time."

Now he's one of the best students in second grade. So that's why it's like a back and forth kind of thing. I was the one saying that he should definitely go but you just never know. It's just like you're the judging king. You decide if this is going to work or not. Now that I look back, I'm glad that he didn't go. I'm glad he's here and obviously, he just needed more time. He's a great child. He has a younger sister that came in the building this year in Pre-K. He just really, really changed. That was last year school year.

A colleague habitually professed that the challenge of education is preserving optimism despite experience. Educators generally, and school leaders specifically, want to believe that all students will grow and mature but sometimes experience seems to suggest otherwise or that the pace of the growth does not meet expectations. How should we respond when we are at a loss as

to how to help a child? When, if ever, is the right time to recommend a student be excluded or placed in an alternative setting or school? What if our school leadership colleagues disagree? Do our continued efforts result in enabling unwanted behavior?

In the musical *West Side Story* (Wise, 1961) members of a gang sing a song that lampoons a system that repeatedly excuses their actions and absolves them from responsibility due to family circumstances, psychological problems, poverty, and other factors. One verse ends with the phrase “deep down inside there is good” while a later offers the alternative that “deep down inside he’s no good.” Should students be held responsible for their behavior? Should school simply provide an opportunity for students to learn and grow or can schools compel students to learn and grow and behave accordingly. Questions of a student’s capacity, drive, and responsibility feed ethical dilemmas. You can lead a horse to water. Can school leaders also make them drink?

A theme in *The Death of a Salesman* (Miller, 1949) is a parent’s distorted and idealized view of his children and his inability to see how his own values may have corrupted his children. Over the course of several scenes, Willy (the father) rationalizes bad behavior and mocks other good behavior (e.g., work hard, be honest) as he argues that being liked and being good looking and being successful matter more than hard work and trustworthiness.

Because of close professional working conditions, school leaders may be more attuned to each other’s limitations and shortcomings. How is a school leader to respond to a bosses’ show of favoritism? Perhaps it is easy to see the favoritism and bias that others show. Are we equally aware of our own biases?

“She’s the one saying yes” (1049-1082). *We have a student in our school right now that is in the fifth grade. He should be in sixth grade. I really feel for the mother. She’s a*

single mom. His older sister, who's in seventh grade, is like an angel. She's perfectly fine but this young man has issues. I liked him when he originally came to us as a second grader but he struggled. He had a scream he would do in the classroom that sounded like a pterodactyl. One of our more experienced teachers tried with him but she'd get to the point where she was like "Oh, my God. I can't do that." And I would tell her "Yes you can. You do it all the time. There are some years you'll get these students. You can do it." And he improved some but after fourth grade we did not allow him back in because of his behavior that included bullying and disrespect.

After being gone for a year the mother wanted to bring her children back. Me personally, I was like, no, I want the older sister but the boy can go. The children are Ethiopian. Our principal is also of African descent and many of the teachers feel that she shows favoritism for the Africans in our school - the majority of who are Nigerians and Ethiopians. Our student population is about 80% African-American but I'm talking about families coming from African culture, not American culture. The principal let the student back in even though he failed every subject last year in his other school. I saw his report card and this child failed literally everything and had to repeat the grade. He didn't even get a D in one subject. I told the principal that my vote is no based on behavior and academics. She decided to let the boy back in anyway. I told the boy in front of the mother "My decision was no and do you know why? It is because of your behavior and grades." I pointed at the principal and I said, "She's the one that is saying yes. Make sure you understand that." Now, is that the best thing to tell the boy? I don't know, but I wanted to make sure he understood. That was at the end of August.

Yesterday he was sitting on the side of the wall in gym not able to play because of a behavior concern. He had a field trip earlier this year where the teacher said that there was no way in the world would she do that again. The mother has to come from now on. Another time, he hit a student who was in the seventh grade and has an IEP. He just punched him. Of course, the other boy's father came in very upset. We don't tolerate fighting but I understand that when the door closed with the principal to discuss the consequences and sanctions the mother broke down crying. But think about everybody else in the classroom.

In some cases we struggle deciding how to use our own discretion, but in other cases we may struggle when we see others using their discretion in a way in which we disagree. There may be a conflict in values in the difference between what we think is right and what our colleagues think is right. But there can also be uncertainty about what someone else holds as a value; that is, there can be a difference between what we think is right and what our colleagues think we think is right. School leaders know what it is like when colleagues mistakenly interpret their values and make decisions they presume the school leader will support when the opposite is true, when the school leader's values have been misinterpreted and misapplied. A narrow interpretation and blind obedience of a policy or practice can miss the intent of a policy or practice.

For example, safety is a buzzword in schools. School leaders know what it is like to have a concern for safety in their school. While most issues that a school leader face are not life and death, safety concerns carry weight as a result of what is at stake. Safety concerns demand we act now. But can we overreact and project safety issues where there really are none? School leaders are sometimes asked to determine whether a threat made by a student is transient or

substantive and, following that determination, to decide the correct course of action to prevent a threat from being acted on. Does it require severe punishment, or a change in placement, or something more, or something less?

“Why are we doing this?” (1958-1972). I had one disagreement that I think surprised the assistant principals. I had a boy who was talking about a teacher. After he left her class, he said, “Gosh I can’t stand her. Does anybody want to go down with me and I’ll kill her?” And so that teacher said she wanted him removed even though she said that she wasn’t threatened by him. She had talked to my assistant principal and she said I’m not threatened but after thinking about it, I want him removed. My AP removed him without ever having a talk with the parent and I said I disagree. What is he learning from it and what is this teacher learning from it? Luckily, after it was done the parent agreed that he should be moved. So it didn’t come down but I believed that he can’t be moved until you have a student / parent / teacher conversation to determine how we can make it better. How can we make sure that you feel safe going and what did you do wrong? And they were surprised and they said, “You always say safety first.” It is true that I always think of safety first but nobody felt threatened so why are we doing this? The decision had already been made so I wasn’t too pleased with that one. So we had a disagreement about that. I was surprised by the reaction about it from my AP. He said, “What does it matter? I did it. It’s done.” And I thought “Oh, we will stop right there. You’re wrong.” Those kinds of things still do happen. But you know, we move on and we learn a little bit more because my job is to prepare them. To have them think about the other side. Now everybody’s on the same page. I think we are. I would say that we have a very cooperative working environment.

Ethical Dilemmas Involving Parents

One participant shared that everyone in a school system “*has to be in the same boat*” (553) and another one described efforts to get everyone on an administrative team “*on the same page*” (1923) so that everyone “*gives out the same message*” (1884). And while that may be a challenge given the number of professionals in a building, the school community is broader than the professionals working in it. Parents certainly bring their own set of values, perspectives, and aspirations for their children and may have strong feelings about what constitutes the best interest of their child. School leaders hope that they are on the same page as parents with regard to strategies that encourage students to behave appropriately in school including the value of sanctions that are intended to teach students. While school leaders rarely subscribe to a “*spare the rod, spoil the child*” approach, they do know what it is like to engage with a parent who defends their child against the school and tries to change the school leader's decisions rather than partner with the school in expressing disapproval and trying to change behavior.. One participant noted:

“Harmony” (567-571). For the harmony of a school, it’s everyone working together for that child. No one is perfect, but we can have a professional relationship. I’ve learned you don’t necessarily have to like someone to work toward the same end. I don’t go to work to be friends with people. I’m there for the children.

This is true between the professionals working together but also the parents who the schools ideally collaborate with in decisions about teaching children how to behave. Unfortunately, school leaders know what it is like not to be on the same page as a parent when a child acts inappropriately in school and the parent deflects to protect their child from a sanction and blames the school for the conduct or challenges the school on a decision. While the concept

of “helicopter parent” has become familiar, one school leader referred to the “snowplow parent” who doesn’t hover over his/her child but pushes in every direction to clear a path for them to do as they please. To what degree does this empower children and to what degree does it enable them? The dilemma of how do I deal with a difficult parent when we differ on what values to impart is one dimension while another is when we differ on ways to impart those values to a child. What power and opportunity to develop character in a student does a school leader have when it seems that a parent is working at cross-purposes?

“She tried with me and it did not work” (1116-1152). Sometime in October I was a sub in a fifth grade class that included a boy who the principal allowed to skip forward a year. Many of us wondered if the principal went through the protocol with the Archdiocese. According to her, she did go through the protocol. In my opinion, he is not mature enough even though he is extremely bright. So I was subbing a religion class, a great class discussion was going on, I looked over, and he was distracting his group members. I told him to stop and he continued. I gave him another warning. Long story short, his classmate got up and said, “He made me stab myself in the hand.” He was playing and not listening. So I wrote up the detention. I did an incident report stating exactly what happened. I called the parent. The mother was defensive and tried to convince me over the phone to change my decision to assign a detention but I stuck to the decision. So then she came up to the school and she wanted to meet with me and because I know her attitude, I told her “If you want to meet, we’ll meet with the principal.” I am glad I did that because I don’t trust her. I want all three of us present. She basically said, “How could you write that if you did not see it?” So I said, fine, I’ll change the detention form and I changed it. But I told her that he still has to serve the detention.

But she responded “No that’s not fair.” She tried to say that goofing off in class that ends with someone being stabbed in the hand shouldn't warrant detention. I said, “The boy is to serve the detention.” She tried with me and it did not work. I kept my ground and the principal was supportive. I told the principal, “Here's another one with your same parents again.”

I made the meeting with the parent short – probably seven minutes - because I had aftercare responsibilities that day. I told her, “I’m a get to the point person so let's get to the point.” I said, “I have things to do. I'm not sitting here and talking in circles.” I tried to be professional, but I'm very blunt and I tell the truth. She and her husband know their son and know that he has a behavior problem. It's no big secret, but instead of trying to work with the school or accept the fact, they spend most of their time trying to dig him out of the situation by coming up to the school or meeting the principal. I said, wait a minute, it doesn't work like that.

Sometimes the child’s behavior is not at all the issue. School leaders know what it is like to struggle with a parent who does not behave in a way that comports with the school leader’s expectations. School leaders depend on maintaining positive cooperative relations with parents in the interest of working together for the child making any confrontation with a parent difficult. Still, school leaders can and do expect parents to abide by the rules of the school. So when a parent ignores or defies school rules, how should a school leader respond? And what is the school leader’s responsibility to broker conflict between parents and other members of the school community when it is not a rule that is broken but an expected social norm of politeness or respect?

“It’s more challenging managing the parent than the child” (1177-1209). *It’s more challenging managing the parent than the child. The child understands his place for the most part. However, he also must feel that if he does something bad; mom and dad will most likely try to get him out of it. It’s very rare, but if there is ever an issue with behavior, mom is not happy and she tries to change things without a care about what our policies and practices are. The main questions I’m asking myself is, how did it get this far? I mean, to be honest, the principal allowed this to happen. It’s one thing to have parents that are very involved but ...*

The principal has the final say in everything so she’s in control. I always give my opinion and there are times that I have gone over the principal to go to the pastor and there are times that he will stick with her decision and there are times that he will stick with my decision. And I don't necessarily like doing that, but I don't think about me. I think about the school in general.

I also admire the principal. She has more years of experience than I do but it upsets me when our teachers feel that the principal does not support them. And there are too many instances of that.

One teacher told me that she was home upset and crying because of this mother. And there was another mother who was also harassing her by e-mail. It's too much. And the principal is not backing the teacher up on it. The principal is not telling either parent that this is unacceptable and must stop. Our teachers work too hard. It is disheartening for them to feel that their main leader does not have their back. I don't feel good about it and that's one of the reasons why I'm not the biggest cheerleader for our principal. She may feel that she is really making the best call by keeping that parent happy so she won't

complain. You know, it's one of those things. Being in school leadership, you see this all the time; it is taking place now, it has taken place in the past and will take place in the future.

Ethical Dilemmas Regarding Complex Systems of Relations with Multiple Actors

School communities include students, teachers, administrators, parents and many others. Ideally, everyone is working in concert for the benefit of the child. But at other times, things don't function as smoothly or ideally as a school leader might prefer. Schools are complex systems and all the parts need to function accordingly. School leaders know what it is like to see the system dysfunction because of the interactions of several parties. Recall how in "*I'm interested in getting a transfer to stay*", the school leader cited the combination of a student with behavior issues and staff members who struggled to manage students with behavior issues.

Authority may avoid conflict in the short term by adopting a permissive attitude, but does this result in enabling undesirable behavior in the long term? What happens when some people in the school take responsibility for enforcing school rules while others are more lax in enforcement? How does that inconsistency reflect on the reputation of each, with the lax person being seen as either lazy or nice and the strict person being perceived as mean or responsible? School leaders know what it is like to experience compound frustrations due to behaviors on the part of some people that violate school rules and behaviors of others that allow that to happen. In these cases, school leaders may wonder if they should remain vigilant or relax. Should they be active stewards who preserve the stated values of the school or preserve the peace by maintaining an informal and lax collegiality with other adults who disregard the rules?

"Well the other vice principal said that I could do it" (1157-1172). There is a parent that will come upstairs to the top floor where we have our grades four through eight even

though we have a strict policy that visitors are not allowed upstairs. No one that has not completed the training or the background check should be in the hallway. Not only does she come upstairs but a teacher said that she saw her standing at the door of a classroom listening in. Approximately three weeks ago, I was doing the math lab in a classroom and she just came in the classroom to bring her son's drum set for our music program. So I addressed her and said, "You cannot be up here. Leave it downstairs." The child can't carry it on his own because of whatever is happening with his back but I told her a month ago to leave it downstairs. Then two weeks ago, I saw her again and I said, "I told you before that you can't bring it up, leave it in the office, I have no problems bringing it up." Then she replied, "Well, the other vice principal said that I could do it." So now what? The other assistant principal 'forgets' the rules of the school and allows this parent to go on and do whatever she wants. So I explained to her again that it was a mistake. I said, "You cannot be upstairs. There are no other parents here." It's like this parent thinks that she has free range and it's not right. It's not fair.

School leaders know what it is like to have a single difficult case take their time and attention from the rest of the school and to be held responsible for situations that are out of their control. They also know the difficulty of coordinating outside social services for families whose children are struggling in school or who fail to report to school. School leaders may face a dilemma with regard to how much effort to invest in battling families who do not comply with expectations and with the outside services that share responsibility for ensuring compliance. At what point can a school leader say, "I've done all I can do in this situation."

"Mom got custody back from the courts" (1742-1801). *The mother of the Smith children lost custody of her four kids about five years ago. The kids have all been living with her*

mother, their grandmother. The kids were doing okay in school; not great but okay. One of them was having some challenges. Mom had been incarcerated and came out this summer and we saw a difference in the kids. A short time later mom got custody back from the courts and the child who had been struggling started to have a real hard time. We were evaluating him for an emotional disability. We were having to clear classrooms and bring him out; kicking and hitting and we suspended him a number of days. Mom was getting frustrated with us but we're not a medical facility. We didn't say this to her. We're a school and we're trying to teach. Anyway, she came in one day and said, "I want all my kids' stuff. We're moving."

I originally thought hallelujah because she's a very difficult parent. I had shouting matches in the front office with the mom where I said "Ma'am can we go back to my office so we can talk?" and she responded "No, you're not going to take me back I'm going to sit right here and talk to you." So the exchange took place right in front of God and Country. I can do it, don't get me wrong, but some things I'd rather do, some things I'd rather not.

We asked her "Can you fill out this transfer paper work?" but she said, "No I don't have time. I'm taking the kids and we're gone." We asked if they were going to another school in this county and she said, "Yeah, we're going to another school and we'll be okay." So boom, they're gone. This was a Thursday or Friday a few weeks ago.

We expected that mom would take them right away to register at a new school but she didn't. We've had these four kids a long time and we understand them and feel this attachment to them but one in particular is totally destroying a classroom. What do we do? Time passes and we're still hoping that the mother will go to another school and

register and she doesn't do it. More time and still she doesn't do it. Then she did call up a school and I thought, "Good, she's putting them in school," but she didn't. So now, we're in a quandary because we're still the ones who have their files so we're on the hook for their attendance and schooling. We're carrying their absences now. It's complicated further by the school calendar. November and December include many days where there is no class; holidays, voting, teacher workdays and stuff. The kids have only been out 10 or 11 days now but it's been almost a full month. Well, two or three days ago we called the attendance office and said, "Okay guys what do we do here?" because we're concerned. We don't know where she is with the kids. The social worker or guidance counselor is making phone calls to mom but we get a lot of run around and stories. And then the attendance office goes out to try to find mom. They call up mom and make contact.

There are pitfalls if you come into a story late in the game and the attendance office is not aware of the whole custody issue where mom lost custody and then got custody back. Mom has well documented mental health issues. The first time the attendance officer talked to her, she got a very nice story; the kids have been sick and everything is fine now and I'm going to register as soon as I get a copy of some paperwork. And then the attendance officer called us and said, "Hey I had a really nice talk with the mother" and we're like "Oh my gosh. No! No! No! You need to set firm boundaries." We had to say, "I'm sorry but she was lying to you all the way." Just today I ended up calling CPS; Child Protective Services. I hesitated on this a little bit but I called because we're worried about the kids. CPS said, "We don't deal with educational neglect." I found that surprising. They say it falls back on the attendance people. So I then went back to

the attendance people to get on them and said, "Look we have to figure this out because these kids have got to be in school." Allegedly, the attendance people are expert in this. While we're not worried about them physically right now, we are worried about them educationally. They're still not in a school. We're doing everything we can to try to get them back in school, not necessarily get them back to our school because she's not going that way but at least try to get them into a school. But again, I had that same feeling. I know if we don't get these kids back into a good, positive environment, with them learning, they are going to be guaranteed dropouts in ten years and obviously we don't want that. And I do see it with those eyes. I don't look at it in the short term. I look at it in the long term.

Summary

This study explored the meaning and nature of school leaders' experiences with ethical dilemmas. The findings included two parts. In part one, the major themes that were derived from a hermeneutic analysis of experiences shared by school leaders were presented and described. The major themes are summarized in the following statement: *To experience an ethical dilemma is to contemplate (cognition) the uncertainty (chance) about the moral merit (values conflict) of a situation and my capacity (power) and opportunity (options) to act in response.* In addition to the major themes, two lived experience themes, time and being watched, were also introduced and described.

Part two focused on the experiences themselves as the major finding of phenomenological research. School leaders' experiences of ethical dilemmas involving students, teachers, programs, other leaders, parents and multiple actors were included in the findings and

discussed using the themes of part one. The lived experience descriptions (LED) that provided the source material for the anecdotes in part two are included in Appendix C.

Findings in phenomenological research provide one possible interpretation of the experience being investigated. My interpretations are informed by my own experience as a school leader and by the shared perspectives and insights of the participants in the study. I hope my orientation contributes to the value you as the reader place on the findings.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

This chapter presents a summary of the study with a brief overview of the content of the preceding chapters. It also provides a discussion of the multidimensional framework described in the literature and a discussion of the phenomenological findings. The chapter concludes with sections that explore the implications, recommendations and a reflection on the research method itself.

Summary of the Study

The role of the school leader affects the lives of the students, teachers, and other staff in the school he or she leads as well as the broader community whose members are invested in the happenings at school. School is often central to the community and the impact of the school leader on the community is realized in the short term, as school is part of the day-to-day experience of the community, and in the long term because by working with children, school leaders affect their futures individually and collectively. Thus, school leaders affect the long-term quality of life in a society.

Many leadership theorists (Bolman & Deal, 2011; Ciulla, 2004; Fullan, 2003; Sergiovanni 1992) subscribe to the belief that good leadership entails a moral dimension reflected in a moral purpose or a moral imperative. These scholars offer theories that describe the necessary components for ethical leadership and include consideration of the skills and character necessary for leadership. In the specific case of school leadership, theorists (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011; Starratt, 2012;) agree on the importance of ethical dimensions and offer a framework for ethical school leadership that includes consideration of the ethics of justice, critique, care, and the profession. Their theories and studies address the normative approach to school leadership ethics; that is, they provide a prescription for how leaders, in general, and

school leaders, specifically, ought to approach ethical situations. However, conflicting societal values as applied to education mean that there continues to be a lack of clarity about what is the right thing is. Education policy theorists (Finn, 2008; Ravitch, 2010) differ in proclaiming the right thing with regard to education leadership. Further, phenomenologists offer the philosophical consideration that “no matter how practically compelling the contents of these books may be, they do not necessarily bring us any closer to the nature of [the topic of study] itself” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 47). The school leadership literature presents a normative/prescriptive/positivist approach to school leadership ethics. What it does not provide is a clear understanding of what ethics means to school leaders or how they apply it to their role as school leaders.

This study used a phenomenological approach to explore experiences where issues of ethics are conspicuous, namely, in experiences school leaders had with ethical dilemmas. A phenomenological methodology explores the nature and meaning of an experience. This study explored the question: How do school leaders experience ethical dilemmas in their role as school leaders? Understanding this experience will contribute to our understanding of ethics in the role of school leadership.

I adopted hermeneutic phenomenology as described by Max Van Manen (1990) to explore the research question. Phenomenology is a methodology that focuses on experiences as the root of understanding. Hermeneutic refers to an analytical component of the research and phenomenology refers to the centrality of experiences of phenomenon. This methodology is rooted in a philosophical tradition consistent with existential beliefs that our experiences are central to who we are, what we know and believe, and how we connect with the world around us.

My experience as a school leader (orientation) and my interest in the topic of leadership ethics were obviously important in the development of the research question for this study and for the findings. Phenomenology offers an understanding of the nature and meaning of an experience based on the interpretation of the participants and the researcher who engage in a rigorous process of exploration. Phenomenological truth is not verified by fact checks but by a plausible interpretation that is intelligible and descriptive that resonates with the experience of others, and that is “true to our living sense” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 65). You, as reader, will ultimately determine the degree to which these findings succeed in developing your understanding of the phenomenon.

I engaged four school leaders in a series of two interviews. All participants were principals or assistant principals at the kindergarten–12th grade levels whom I’ve known from my 20 plus years as an educator. In the first interview, I gathered experiential data in recorded conversational interviews using a conversation guide (see Appendix A). The school leaders related experiences they have had of ethical dilemmas. In the data gathering phase, I followed the requirements of the phenomenological reduction and bracketed my own thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and opinions on the topic (*epoche*) to allow my participants’ experiences to be fully expressed. A professional service transcribed the interviews and then I transformed the transcripts into the lived experience description (LED) narratives included in Appendix C. The LEDs were member checked to ensure they preserved confidentiality and to confirm they accurately reflected the experiences related in the interviews.

In the second round of interviews, participants analyzed their own LED and the LED of another participant and shared their reflections on the important themes that were discoverable in the experiences. With regard to the other participants' LEDs, I also asked if they could relate to

the story told as another check on plausibility. I then continued with further analysis and writing using the feedback from the participants and my own reflections. I transformed the LEDs into a series of anecdotes, completed journaling activities and completed the reduction proper with a close analysis of each of the anecdotes derived from the LED and crafted the findings by integrating the anecdotes, the analysis of the participants, and my own analysis. Each phase included extensive editing, rethinking, refining, and rewriting.

It is my hope the findings will help to generate understanding of what it is like for school leaders to experience ethical dilemmas, but it should not be taken as either comprehensive or prescriptive. The findings are one possible interpretation of the meaning of school leaders' experiences of ethical dilemmas. I also hope that my orientation as an educator and school leader contributed to the value of the findings.

I summarized the themes developed through the hermeneutic analysis in the following statement that synthesizes a connection between the themes: *To experience an ethical dilemma is to contemplate (cognition) the uncertainty (chance) about the moral merits (values conflict) of a situation and my capacity (power) and opportunity (options) to act in response.*

In addition to these themes of cognition, chance, values conflict, power, and options, I found special significance in the lived experience themes of *time* and a specific type of relation which I described as *being watched* and included discussion of each in the findings. School leaders' experiences of ethical dilemmas included situations regarding student behavior, teacher supervision, program changes, decisions other school leaders make, parents, and complex systems with multiple actors.

Discussion of the Normative Literature

This section of the discussion compares the findings with the existing literature on school leadership ethics. There are significant differences in the normative and phenomenological approaches. Nonetheless, the findings of this study are considered within the context of the existing normative literature on the ethics of justice, care, critique, and the profession as well as the additional dimensions of virtue and circumstance.

Summary of the Normative Literature

The ethics described by Starratt (2012) and Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011) provide a framework that encompasses the majority of the literature on school leadership ethics. They describe the ethics of justice, critique, care, and the profession. The ethic of justice is a paradigm based on principles and includes a Kantian/deontological/legalistic approach to ethics. Kohlberg's (1980) theories of moral development also center on a principle of justice and serve to inform the literature. The ethic of critique extends beyond the conventional justice paradigm to describe an ethic in which true justice requires one to examine inequities inherent in the existing power structures and allows one to break from the status quo and challenge the existing power structures. Social justice efforts that allow for civil disobedience in the pursuit of justice acknowledge that what is lawful and what is right are not always the same. The ethic of care is focuses on interconnectivity and relationships. According to the ethic of care, ethical behavior lies in attending to the relational dimensions of ethics. Consistent with a utilitarian approach, care looks at the impact our actions have on others around us. Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011) added the ethic of the profession to the framework proposed by Starratt to address "the moral aspects that are unique to the profession," (p. 19). With this frame, they advocated for the use of

“the best interest of the student” (p. 25) as a guidepost and as a singular “moral imperative” (Fullan, 2003) to lead school leaders as they apply ethics.

In addition to the framework presented by Starratt (2012) and Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011), the literature includes another important theory of leadership ethics, which is virtue ethics (Northouse, 2013). Virtue ethics in leadership focuses not just on what leaders do but also on who leaders are as unique individuals who bring a set of personal values to their role and for whom alignment of personal and professional ethics is an important factor (Russell, 2008). The ethic of the profession and virtue ethics straddle the divide between normative ethics and applied ethics and describe not just a general prescription but also one that takes into account the specific context.

Influenced by a classical approach to the topic of ethics advanced by a Catholic tradition that includes the exploration of objects, intentions, and circumstances in the study of ethics, (Catholic Church, 1997), I included literature that focused on circumstances in education that give rise to ethical questions. I reasoned that the other topics sufficiently explored the categories of objects and intentions. The literature references globalism and accountability as two related, relevant contexts in education.

Findings Related to the Normative Literature

Despite the incongruous nature of the literature as compared to the phenomenological methodology of this study, the concepts presented in the literature were represented in the findings. Table 1 displays the concepts explored in the literature review and how the findings concur or differ from the literature. Once again in this chapter direct quotes from participants' LEDs area indicated with a line number that corresponds to the lines in the LEDs included in Appendix C.

Table 1
Overview of Concepts from the Literature Related to the Findings

Concepts	What does the literature say or imply?	How did findings concur?	How did findings differ?
Justice	Consider principles to resolve	Participants considered principles	Participants described ethical frames as dispositional
Care	Consider relationships to resolve	Participants considered relationships	Participants described different frames as the source of (rather than the solution to) dilemma
Critique / Social Justice	Consider inequities in power structure to resolve	Participants expressed issues related to social justice	Few participants expressed social justice as a consideration School leaders have a role to uphold status quo
The Profession	Consider the best interest of the student to resolve	All participants cited the best interest of the students as guide	Participants expressed inherent conflict in considering the best interest of the one or many in decisions
Virtue	Bring personal values to the role	Participants expressed values they hold	The methodology is limited to self-described and aspirational conclusions The research focused on dilemmas thus values were often expressed because of non-alignment
Contexts	Support or challenge broad policy and trends	Participants expressed issues associated with change agenda	Participants expressed issues of personal significance for parties involved Participants did not express dilemmas associated with broad policy or trends

Findings Regarding the Ethics of Justice and Care

The ethic of justice and the ethic of care were present in school leaders' descriptions of experiences. Justice was evident in expressions of consideration of policy and was particularly evident in an anecdote about cigarettes on the dashboard and other experiences related to

enforcement of drug policies, attendance policies, and admission criteria. Principals also described values not expressed in policy such as school appropriateness and freedom of expression. Care was also evident in descriptions of the importance of relationships with students, teachers, other school leaders, parents, and others.

However, participants did not describe the ethics in the frames as being part of a multidimensional analytical approach. Two of the participants offered descriptions of themselves that align with the justice/care framework with one self-identifying with care and another identifying with justice suggesting they viewed the ethics as part of their disposition; this is perhaps more consistent with the virtue theory of leadership. The first participant offered, *“The relationship piece is the most important for me because if everyone trusts me and everyone knows I’m working for what’s best for kids and what’s best for the building then I’m in good shape”* (120-122) while the second said, *“I’m a huge rules driven person. If I stick to the rules and I do what I’m supposed to do, no one has to come at me”* (605-606). The contrast in these self-descriptions begs the question, do individuals have pre-dispositions to one or another frame. The answer to this question may provide a coupling to the literature's concepts of the different ethical frames and virtue ethics and may be an area for future research.

Further, while participants showed an ability to consider both frames, it seemed that rather than applying a multidimensional analysis to add perspectives to a situation, they identified the ethics of justice and care as alternative values in conflict and, as such, were the source of an ethical dilemma. School leaders contemplated whether to apply a strict interpretation of policy (justice) or rely on relational influence (care) in a given situation. *“It’s looking at both sides of the coin. In some ways following policy to the letter is what’s best for kids and in other ways it’s giving leniency where it’s appropriate because what’s fair isn’t the*

same for everyone” (292-297). The findings further suggest that these ethics compete and may be considered values in conflict when a school leader opts to choose between them. In the normative literature, theorists suggested that situations should be looked at from different perspectives but the frame chosen to resolve the situation is ignored as an expression of a value. *“Ninety nine times out of a hundred what’s best for kids and what policy is seems aligned it comes up”* (512-513) .

Findings Regarding the Ethic of Critique

School leaders did not explicitly express issues of social justice in recounting experiences of ethical dilemmas except perhaps in the case of the parochial school principal who was described as showing unfair favoritism for students who shared her African culture.

Interestingly, this issue of race was within the context of African culture favoritism in a school where the majority of students in the school were Black but of American culture.

While participants discussed a variety of values, a common solution under consideration to resolve situations experienced by participants was whether to exclude or include a person in the greater school community. Who is entitled to be part of “our” school community? Inclusion is an important theme in the social justice literature especially with respect to special education advocates who argue that students with disabilities should not be singled out or unduly removed from mainstream environments. Historically, school segregation similarly involved the issue of inclusion as existing structures allow for exclusion based on race. The experiences recounted by the participants often involved questions of exclusion: whether a student should be excluded for discipline or general behavior or because of established admissions criteria; if a teacher should be excluded/removed because of the leader’s assessment of their proficiency or because of their willingness to adapt to programmatic changes; in school vernacular, to get on the bus, or even

the degree to which parents (especially difficult parents) are welcomed as part of the school community or considered disruptive or distracting to it.

This observation is not a criticism of decisions to exclude or to suggest that suspending someone for drug use at school is akin to the racial discrimination that was part of segregation but to acknowledge that ethical dilemmas often included the question of whether to exclude or include. Future research that focuses on conditions under which school leaders removed students from a school community (e.g., for behavior, to meet specific learning needs, for alternative instruction, for curriculum program participation, etc.) or on situations where exclusion was considered and rejected might further inform our understanding of ethics in education. When do we as school leaders decide that a student is no longer welcome to be part of the rest of the school community?

Power is a theme of the findings of this study and power relates to the dimension of critique. School leaders are a significant part of the power structure of a school system. Community norms exist and school leaders represent the status quo of power structures. School leaders are expected to uphold the standards of the community meaning that the findings of power may have special significance with respect to critique. The theme of power is reminiscent of the Western cliché line “This town ain’t big enough for the both of us.” When does the school administrator have a responsibility to remove a disruptive element in the same way that the movie sheriff runs the villain out of town? Critique reminds us “no social arrangement is neutral” (Starratt, 2012, p. 50).

Findings Regarding the Ethic of the Profession and Students' Best Interest

Consistent with literature regarding the ethic of the profession and the adage, serve the best interest of the student, all of the participants cited the best interest of the students as a

guiding principle for ethical school leadership. Participants used phrases that included: “*Let’s do what’s best for kids*” (46), “*We have to work together for what’s best for this child*” (571), “*A guiding principle of school leadership is that you need to be doing what’s right for kids*” (1326-1327) and “*What guides my decision is what’s best for students*” (2064).

Carrying over the consideration of inclusion discussed in critique, it seems clear that the adage to serve the best interest of the students does not resolve conflicts inherent within it. The professional ethic of serving the best interest of the students does not resolve the question of whether school leaders should adopt a pure utilitarian approach, which considers the most benefit for the greatest number, or consider the needs of the one in the context of critique. The riddle in the phrase, the best interest of the student, is the question of the needs of the one or the needs of the many. School leaders expressed this dissonance both in the analytic interviews as *Star Trek* (Salin, 1982) was evoked with a reference to Spock and Kirks respective advocacy for “the good of the many” and “the good of the one”. Participants qualified the phrase “the best interest of the students” by including consideration for “*what’s best for kids and what’s best for the building*” (122) with the building meaning the community as a whole, “*I understand that this child has his rights but you have to start thinking about thirty others*” (1928), and “*The first thing that comes to mind is what did I do that was right for kids? Maybe it wasn’t necessarily the best for that kid but it was the best for my staff. That’s the balance.*” (1320-1321) with consideration for the staff influencing a broad swath of students. “*I’ve thought of where I try to decide what’s best for an individual child and what’s best for my school and my staff who are working with 800 kids. So did I maybe not do what’s absolutely best for this one particular child but I know it’s for the greater good of the whole school*” (1328-1332) So the best interest of the many might be rationalized to be served by doing what helps teachers or administrators be more effective with a

broader group. The lack of clarity of the phrase, the best interest of the students, was a finding of Frick (2011) who had several participants question the utility of this phrase and who found that particular cases involved complex considerations.

Further confusion develops when we consider not only the question of one or many but also the question of what is good for the one. Hence, the themes of chance and options that were developed in the findings of this study have a bearing on the dilemma. That is, if I resolve that I want to make a decision that is in this student's best interest, I may still not be sure about what action will yield the best result. In the best interest of the child should I apply a strict interpretation of policy or should I rely on relational influence? What chance does each course have on changing behavior for the better in the short term or in the long term?

Findings Regarding Virtue

The findings were consistent with the literature regarding virtue ethics; however they are not conclusive based on the methodology that gathered perceptions and reflections of self. This study did not seek to explore the values necessary for successful or moral leadership, but despite the focus not being on the virtues of school leaders, the participants shared aspirational or intentional values for which they strive. It would not do to conclude that the school leaders demonstrated these values because the methodology does not support such conclusions, but they did express principles they valued. The values school leaders expressed they tried to demonstrate included: hard work, responsibility, honesty, professionalism, caring, respect, trust, public service, optimism, being present, and being knowledgeable. Alignment of values is the antithesis of a values conflict, which was a theme of the findings. Since this study explored ethical dilemmas, it is not surprising that conflicting values were a focus. School leaders described both their frustration at not being aligned and their efforts to become aligned. "We

started working on things and noticed that we all had to figure out where are the things we believe in” (1903-1904) to get on the same page. Something that struck me during the research was not just the values expressed but also the earnestness with which each of the leaders approached the responsibility of leadership. They personalized and identified with their job and role to the degree that it was not just a thing they did but, to a large degree, it defined who they were. This finding may be amplified because of the phenomenological approach which focuses on pedagogic understanding.

Findings Regarding Circumstances

The findings were not consistent with the literature regarding circumstances. Perhaps as a reflection of my presumptions as a researcher, the literature reviewed considered big picture issues and trends in education. Based on my presumptions and research, I expected that the big policy questions that revolve around education, like accountability and globalism and technology, would be reflected in the school leaders’ recounting of experiences of ethical dilemmas. However, the school leaders’ experiences reflected a more intimate focus involving specific people in specific circumstances rather than a global perspective.

As an analogy, school leaders’ experiences were in the weeds or in the trenches and were not framed around the much-debated themes of education policy such as accountability or globalism. Like James Joyce’s (1932, 2010) hero Bloom in the novel *Ulysses*, school leaders conveyed the day-to-day struggles which are of paramount importance to the actors involved but to which much of the rest of the population would hardly take notice or might even consider banal.

Understandably, the school leaders were not detached observers but were intimately involved in situations that were emotionally difficult for the parties involved. When a child is

placed elsewhere for a drug violation, the vast majority of the school community is oblivious to it happening. To the student and their family, however, this is very likely a major life event and the school leader is an integral part of that experience for them; to face a parent under these or other conditions is significant. The aspect of being face-to-face with someone was part of the findings.

However, the big picture educational reform debates hardly find their way into this world except as movements resulting in program changes. This study did not include instances where school leaders described subverting programs as a values expression for a broad educational agenda (see Buskey & Pitts, 2009). One participant described a dilemma involving a teacher clandestinely resisting changes to the operation of curriculum teams in the school. The school leader described the dilemma about how to deal with the relational aspect of a teacher who went over the leader's head to complain about the changes without engaging the leader in a conversation about concerns. From the school leader's perspective, getting the teacher on board with the program changes was difficult and challenging but was not the source of the dilemma. The relational aspect was. Nor was the program change described within the context of changing expectations for broad philosophical debates regarding professional collaboration. Rather, it was implicitly understood to be what was best and was prescribed by the division and, therefore, did not involve a question of what to do or why to do it. Hence it did not involve a dilemma. Only the relational piece was uncertain, with values of friendship, frankness, and trust, as well as uncertainty of the best use of power and authority in whether or not to acknowledge the resistance and complaints that went over her head.

Discussion of Phenomenological Findings

This section of the discussion compares the themes that make up the findings of this phenomenological study with existing normative literature and the few related phenomenological studies in the literature. In effect, this section transposes the discussion of the prior section by beginning with the themes of the findings and comparing them to literature. In contrast, the previous section began with the concepts framed in the literature and compared them to the findings. Hence, there is some overlap as one side of the coin relates to the other. However, while the findings support to some degree at least some of the concepts presented in the existing literature, the converse is hardly true. The literature barely accounts for the major themes of the findings. In most respects, the findings were broader than the content of the literature.

Summary of the Findings

As stated in an earlier section of this chapter, I summarized the themes developed through the hermeneutic analysis in this statement that synthesizes a connection between the themes: *To experience an ethical dilemma is to contemplate (cognition) the uncertainty (chance) about the moral merits (values conflict) of a situation and my capacity (power) and opportunity (options) to act in response.*

I also found special significance in the lived experience themes of *time* and a specific type of relation, which I described as *being watched*. School leaders' experiences of ethical dilemmas included situations regarding student behavior, teacher supervision, program changes, decisions other school leaders make, parents, and complex systems with multiple actors.

The findings included cognition as a theme to reflect that school leaders' experiences of ethical dilemmas reside in the mind. School leaders experienced dilemmas when something caused them to stop and think about a situation as involving an ethical conflict. The path to

thinking about ethics was not explicit or direct. That is, similar circumstances did not always trigger similar considerations. School leaders described counter examples where, under similar (but not identical) circumstance, they did not think about a situation as involving an ethical dilemma.

School leaders' experiences of ethical dilemmas involved the theme of chance and uncertainty. Where there was certainty about values or actions, school leaders did not experience dilemmas. Uncertainty about values, the facts of a case, the options for responses, and the potential effect of an action or decision each contribute to a school leader experiencing a situation as involving a dilemma. Chance was also a theme relative to the resolution of dilemmas where luck seemed to provide a school leader a way out of a dilemma. For example, a school leader was able to let the time to sign a contract for a controversial play selected by a maverick director lapse, rather than directly reversing or nullifying it.

As with cognition and chance, there is no ethical dilemma if there is no values conflict. School leaders may experience other difficult situation, but it is the values conflict that defines a situation as one involving ethics. Recognizing a values conflict is a cognitive act that ties these themes together. Values conflicts may arise as an individual wants and needs to compete and may also arise as the school aspires to teach values. Disagreements of what values to instill and how to instill them are a source of conflict related to student codes of conduct particularly as "snowplow parents" strive to clear a path for their children's success.

Is tardiness a character flaw with respect to responsibility? What sanction is appropriate to correct that flaw? As school leaders think about the uncertainty of moral merits, they also think about the uncertainty of their capacity as a function of their power and possible options. A dilemma calls a school leader to action. Without power or options, a school leader is reduced to

witnessing an injustice rather than facing a dilemma. Power comes from both the authority of the position and earned relational respect. There are limits to what a school leader can control and sometimes the power of a leadership position is only an illusion based on a directive or a consensus of other leaders. School leaders are sometimes the face of a decision they do not control.

The theme of options reflects the scenarios that school leaders consider to find a way out of a dilemma. Options tie to cognition, power, and chance as school leaders think about their ability to influence a situation. For example, a school leader may consider two options for changing a student's behavior: one based on a strict application and interpretation of a policy in the code of conduct and another based on leveraging relational influence. Should I sanction, or implore a student not to let me down? The decision may depend on both an assessment of my power to sanction as compared to my power to influence and a consideration of the chance that a student will improve their behavior as a result. Will he respond to a sanction as a consequence to avoid or as a reinforcement of negative attitudes to authority? Will he respond to an interpersonal appeal as a reason to live up to an expectation of trust or as a reinforcement that he can get away with something?

The lived experience themes of being watched and time were also significant themes of the findings. Being watched refers to school leaders, acting in the public eye, having awareness that their judgment was subjected to the judgment of others up and down the chain of command and in the broader community. Given the personal nature of the dilemmas, being face-to-face with someone was also a significant part of the experience of ethical dilemmas. Time was a theme as school leaders described their role as a school leader. They shared that time is a limited resource and the responsibilities of the job are with them all the time. How school leaders think

about dilemmas changes over time as circumstances change and as time permits opportunities for reflection and contemplation either in anticipation of a situation that is brewing or in hindsight of a situation that has passed. Time is also a consideration as school leaders consider the short-term and long-term impact of their decisions. One leader shared his awareness that a student who does not learn to read in early elementary grades is at a greater risk of dropping out of high school.

Literature Related to the Findings

Table 2 outlines the admittedly tenuous connections between the themes of the findings and the existing literature. As stated in the beginning of this section, the findings brought in a broader range of considerations, which the literature widely ignored.

Table 2

Overview of Themes from the Findings Related to the Literature.

	What do the findings show about school leaders' experiences of ethical dilemmas?	What does normative literature say or imply about this theme?
Cognition	The experience involves being conscious of ethical considerations	Resolution of a situation involves a reasoned analytical approach
Chance	The experience involves uncertainty about the other themes of values conflict, power and opportunity and uncertainty about how actions and luck will impact outcomes	A reasoned analytical approach will allow a school leader to identify a solution with certainty and predict the result of the decision
Values Conflict	The experience involves direct conflicts between values and conflicts regarding the manner in which to promote values	Consideration of different paradigms will reveal solutions to dilemmas
Power	The experience includes the condition that a school leader has the power to act on a situation	Power is an aspect of the paradigm of critique
Opportunity	The experience includes the condition that a school leader has options for action	
Time	School leaders continuously identify with their role, find time to be limited, think about the short and long term impact of their decisions and identify that situations and they way they think about them change over time	Implied to be stable and static for analysis in unchanging case study
Being Watched/ Facing	The experience includes operating in a public role, having judgments judged by others, and dealing with difficult circumstances that deal with individuals where face to face interactions may be emotionally charged	Relationships are foundation for the ethic of care

Cognition

The findings included cognition as a major theme. Cognition included becoming conscious of the ethical dimension of a difficult situation and the act of mulling it over. The multidimensional perspective involves cognition as a reasoned analytical approach to a situation in order to resolve a dilemma. A significant difference between the findings and the literature is related to recognizing a situation as involving an ethical issue in the first place. In the experience

relayed by participants, it was not clear what triggered a situation as warranting ethical consideration. Rather, ethical considerations seemed to brew to the surface or pop up inexplicably connecting the theme of cognition to the theme of chance. Further, school leaders did not uniformly concur on what constituted a situation involving an ethical dilemma. For example, one participant offered that they found student discipline to be easy because, *“When a student gets in trouble I always see the positive because now everybody knows. We now have every support for that student,”* (2334-2335) while another shared that *“Reflecting on moral and ethical dilemmas makes me think of instances where you know something goes against policy or you know it goes against what’s written but at the end of the day you want to do what’s best for kids....What I struggle with ethically now is the way consequences are levied,”* (449-457).

Becoming conscious of ethical considerations seems to involve a degree of chance which is discussed more in the next section. The normative prescription for a reasoned analytical approach ignores the cognitive act of framing a situation as one involving ethics. Since the themes of this study are interconnected, cognition is a related factor in the themes of power and options as well as time and chance and is discussed further in the following sections. .

Chance

The findings included chance as a major theme. Chance refers to uncertainty about other themes including values in conflict, power, and opportunity, as well as how actions and luck will affect outcomes over time. The normative literature suggests that a reasoned analytical approach will allow a school leader to identify a correct solution with certainty and predict the result of the decision. The multidimensional perspective ignores chance as a factor and suggests a rational approach will allow reason to predict results. By contrast, the findings include chance as a

required condition of experiencing an ethical dilemma. There is no dilemma where there is certainty: certainty of values, certainty of action, and certainty of outcomes.

For example, a participant conveyed a situation that arose when dogs were brought in to search for drugs in student cars in the parking lot and hit on the car of a student who was well respected and the daughter of a school official. The participant conveyed, “*All of us knew she doesn't do anything*” (309) and the subsequent search found no drugs and the parent was notified of the event and told, “*this is what's going on and he laughed,*” (312) because certainty ensured there was no dilemma in the event. Compare this to an experience of an ethical dilemma that a participant concluded by observing “*This goes back to those dilemmas where you just never know – it's like you're the judging king wondering is this going to work or is this not going to work,*”(964-965). This participant later shared that “*There was a time when I thought that a kid shouldn't be admitted and the principal said yes and then a year later he's here and doing just great. So we're just rolling the dice. I mean, you just never know.*” (1225-1227)

The normative literature suggests that a reasoned analytical approach will offer rational certainty in the face of ethical dilemmas. By contrast, the findings suggest that uncertainty about the facts of a situation, moral merits, options for action, and the ability to have impact are significant in the experience of ethical dilemmas, which a rational approach does not necessarily resolve.

Values Conflict

The findings include values conflict as a major theme. Experiences of ethical dilemmas involved direct conflicts in values and conflicts regarding the manner in which to promote values. Values in conflict is the only theme directly addressed in the normative literature. The multidimensional frame proposes that consideration of different frames of values will reveal

solutions to dilemmas. However, the multidimensional frame ignores that values conflicts are inherent in multiple frames. The suggestion that consideration of different perspectives will help resolve situations contradicts the reality that the different perspectives are in fact the source of the values conflict. In presenting the multidimensional framework, Starratt (2012) wrote “the themes are not incompatible, but on the contrary, complement and enrich each other in a more complete ethic” (p. 53).

Participants described the different frames as the source of values conflict. For example, in describing a decision not to apply a strict interpretation of the school tobacco policy when cigarettes were seen on the dashboard of a student’s car, a school leader considered the ethic of justice and the ethic of care as different and contradicting alternatives. Should he apply a strict interpretation of policy (justice) and administer a sanction as a fair response, which discourages unwanted behavior in the school, or should he apply a relational (care) approach to strengthen bonds to signal to a student that has struggled over several years to conform to expectations that school is a welcoming place. *“It’s looking at both sides of the coin. In some ways, following policy to the letter is doing what’s best for kids. And in other ways doing what’s best for kids involves showing leniency where it’s appropriate because of that idea that what’s fair or right isn’t the same for everyone”*(292-297). *“I think that my struggle everyday is reconciling what is best for kids with what is the policy. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred what’s best for kids and policy align, but it comes up”*(511-513).

As another example of values in conflict, participants each shared frustration stemming from values that conflicted with parents regarding values to uphold and ways in which to promote values. One participant shared alarm that an underage student was reported to be seen by other members of the community regularly smoking with his parents in his yard The

community members also speculated that what they were smoking may have been marijuana. Another indicated that parents “*know their son and know he has a behavior problem. It’s no big secret, but instead of trying to work with the school or accept that fact, they spend most of their time trying to dig him out of the situation,*” (1148-1150). A third conveyed difficulty in resolving a situation where a parent recently regained custody of her children after being released from prison and subsequently pulled her elementary aged children from school and did not reenroll them elsewhere. The last participant described snowplow parents who shove aside anything that obstructs a clear and easy path for the child. While values frames are a central idea in the normative literature, the findings show that a variety of frames contributes to the formation of a dilemma rather than the resolution of a dilemma.

Power and Options

The findings include power and options as themes related to a school leader’s ability to act in response to an ethical dilemma. Without the ability to act on a situation, a school leader does not experience a dilemma, rather they are simply observers. Except to the degree that power is a dimension of critique, the multidimensional ignores power and opportunity. A reasoned analytical approach does not resolve what I have the capacity to change or acknowledge that my power varies with circumstances and is not dependent solely on my positional power. Rather, the findings show that power and opportunity vary with the situation, experience, skill, creativity, and luck. For example, school leaders distinguished circumstances where policy was directive and required compliance and situations where discretion allowed leeway and choice of presenting options thus allowing for a dilemma. While the normative literature prescribes looking at a situation from different perspectives, it fails to include consideration of what is within the school leader’s capacity to do. Power, both positional and

relational, is not constant and changes over time and within the context of a situation. Likewise, options are not explicitly delineated; they rely on a leader's creativity, his or her ability to imagine scenarios, and, to some degree, chance.

Time

The findings include time as a lived experience theme. School leaders continuously identify with their role. They recognize time as a resource. Time is a theme as school leaders consider the impact of their decisions in the long and short term. Further, as time passes, situations evolve as do the perspectives school leaders hold regarding a situation. For example, I posit that a principal's power changes over time and suspect this may have been a factor with respect to an experience that a participant conveyed about a rogue theater teacher with strong community support who poisoned relationships within the performing arts community for the principal and ignored policies and pushed boundaries. The principal described difficulties over a three-year relationship that eventually resulted in the teacher resigning. It seems to me that a resignation in the principal's first year was unlikely. The teacher was already well established and managed to test the power and authority of a new principal who may have suffered irreparable harm if she ousted a popular teacher early on. However, as time passed, the dynamic shifted as the principal's authority, program expertise, and reputation grew— offering additional options for how to respond.

The multidimensional framework ignores the significance of time. The literature that suggests that a school leader ought to apply a multidimensional framework of justice, care, critique, and the profession in the resolution of ethical dilemmas seems to presume that school leaders experience ethical dilemmas in a static state and can apply reasoned analysis to reach a conclusion. There is a significant difference between the model that suggests a school leader can

and should sit down and reason through a dilemma and the findings of this study which showed that school leaders' experiences of time involve pauses, evolving conditions, and days of mulling over a situation before, during, and even after a situation is active. Decisions about how to respond to a situation were not described as involving rational analysis of syllogisms or action/reaction cause and effect formulas as might be found in logic or where someone is looking for an engineering solution.

As an experience moved through time, school leaders continued to question and second-guess themselves as the events unfolded. Experiences are not static. The stories shared by the participants often involved experiences of time that defy positivist analysis. The experiences recounted were more akin to cognitive states that a school leader is in than to actions that he or she would take or to a decision that he or she would make. For example, one participant repeatedly mentioned that an experience "bugged" him and that perhaps if he had decided differently he might never have viewed it as an ethical dilemma.

Consideration of ethics as an issue may wax and wane as power and options allow discretion or present opportunities or as time permits reflection and something triggers a thought that there is something going on here and I should stop to consider what it is that is causing me to pause. In *Blink*, Malcolm Gladwell explored snap judgments of experts who "rely on the thinnest slices of experience" (Chapter 2, location 781, Amazon Kindle version). Regard to time and certainty, the experience of an ethical dilemma seems to be Blink's antithesis with but it shares the dimension of the experts' experience of blink judgments as something that defies easy description. Gladwell described Vic Braden, a tennis expert whose uncanny ability to predict a double-fault as a ball was being served but who was frustrated because he did not know how he knew. I recognized that cognition was an important theme in this research but did not see either

a deliberate approach to consider each situation as one that involved ethics or a causal relationship that resulted in school leaders contemplating ethics. It seemed to pop up, instinctively perhaps, reflectively perhaps, but not analytically. No one said, “I sat down to work it out and got a pen and paper and made a list.” Nor did every situation involving student discipline, teacher supervision, or program changes invoke a consideration of ethics.

Being Watched

The findings include being watched as a lived experience theme. Being watched is how I describe the key relational lived experience that school leaders encountered with regard to ethical dilemmas. Being watched recognizes that school leaders’ decisions are scrutinized by supervisors, teachers, students, parents, and other members of the broad school community. A specific type of being watched was described in face-to-face encounters.

Multidimensional ethics includes relations, which is the umbrella to this lived experience theme, but it confines relations to a consideration for the dimension of care and it ignores relations as a context. Being watched as a theme more broadly conveys the significance of the public scrutiny that school leaders experience as they strive to resolve ethical dilemmas. The emotional intimacy of the people involved in a situation is impacted by chance (do I have a relationship) and may be the source of conflict (personally friendly, professionally subversive). Relationships may also be reflected as a form of power as school leaders leverage their influence in relationships. The normative prescription considers how my relationship impacts or influences others within a paradigm of care without reciprocally recognizing relationships are a two way street. Nor does normative prescription consider that how I am influenced by relationships is also a factor, particularly as I am scrutinized. For example, a school leader discussed how it was difficult to form friendships at work given that she is seen by others as a

boss. Even collegial relationships do not prevent professional conflicts as seen in a situation where a friendly teacher nonetheless was building opposition to a program change initiated by the leader.

Findings Relative to Other Phenomenologies

The literature review in Chapter 2 cited two studies that included a phenomenological approach (Amori, 2010; Frick, 2011). A direct comparison to Amori's (2010) phenomenology of public school administrators' experiences of moral leadership is plausible despite the differences in the way themes are labeled by Amori as compared to this study. Amori's (2010) phenomenological themes included: student centered (best interest of students), struggle (wrestle with self), frustration (thwarted), demanding (long lasting and revised), pragmatism and compromise, personal risk and courage, sense of mission, and obligation. As her goal was to explore moral leadership and mine was to explore ethical dilemmas there are similarities in the findings and distinctions that result from the differences in focus and the practice of bracketing in the present study which sets aside prior assumptions for a fresh look at an experience.

Amori's (2010) themes of student centered, sense of mission and obligation each correlate to my findings and the theme of values that may be in conflict in a dilemma. Amori's research did not exclusively look at dilemmas thus the values explored did not require conflict to be included in the topic and, as a result, she explored each out of the conflict context. On the other hand, Amori's (2010) theme of struggle was an integral component of this study and was consistent with the cognitive process and the quest to resolve a values conflict.

Amori's (2010) themes of demanding, pragmatism and compromise, and risk and courage relate, although not directly, to my themes of power, opportunity, and time. Amori describes one aspect of demanding as the quality that it sticks with you and is long lasting, both

qualities I categorized within the theme of time. Amori (2010) described pragmatism and compromise as involving the quandary that a school leader needed to pick situations in which to take a stand because excessive invocation of the leader's will "could lead to a loss of power and position" (p. 245) connecting it to the theme of power. Risk and courage is connected to power but also to the themes of opportunity and chance. Courage also specifically referenced facing people and situations, which I explored in the theme of being watched.

In Amori's (2010) study, frustration included experiences where others thwarted public school administrators. My study explored this thematically in opportunity and experientially in the specific experiences of dilemmas regarding program implementation, other school leaders, and parents.

Frick (2011) used a "modified phenomenological research method suited for an educational research context...to capture administrators' perspectives and experiences" regarding the phrase "the best interest of the students" (p. 527). The present study was consistent with Frick's (2011) major findings that school leaders expressed the value of doing what is good for children, a genuine commitment to children, but there were also differences in both what was considered the greater good for children and how to achieve it.

Direct comparisons between the findings of this study and Frick's (2011) study fall short because of differences in methodology and research focus. The modified phenomenological approach used by Frick (2011) approximated a qualitative method for validating theory. Frick (2011) lead school leaders through vignettes to explore accountability and perspectives about the expression "the best interests of the student." This study differed in that I used a more traditional phenomenological approach that included a reduction with bracketing which dictated that the experiences be recounted openly rather than be led by the researcher. Hence in this study, the

discussion of broad educational policy contexts were not directly referenced, while Frick (2011) found “tension between accountability requirements and what administrators’ notions of ‘best interests’ might be for a student generally being in favor of most accountability practices,” (p. 541). However, “the means by which these ideals were to be achieved were questioned,” (p. 541). Further, while the phrase is appropriate as a broad guide for decision making and a bottom line philosophy however, he found instances where the phrase was used as “a rhetorical ploy” (p. 547) and considered them within a given situation to be “tied to circumstances, place, timing, and whether the topic under discussion related to one student or many students,” (p. 547). The question of one or many was also apparent in this study. Further, two of Frick’s (2011) participants “were doubtful of the maxim’s meaning and utility” (p. 548). In this way, the present study concurs with Frick (2011) in recognizing that school leaders express the best interest of the student as an overarching guide but find conflicts prevail in the specific contexts. This is particularly true with regard to uncertainty about what will be best for a child and whether to consider the one child or the many children for whom the leader has responsibility.

Implication and Recommendations

It is difficult to reconcile the positivist/normative content of the literature review with the phenomenological/existential findings of this research study because of the different foundations upon which each is built. The nature of research that seeks answers to questions of how we ought to behave yields a different kind of knowledge than research that seeks answers to questions about what is it like to experience a phenomenon.

A major assumption for this study was that experiences of ethical dilemmas are universal. In the methodology I entertained the possibility that an invited participant could say that they had no such experiences, but that did not occur.

Van Manen (1990) wrote “phenomenological research gives us tactful thoughtfulness: situational perceptiveness, discernment, and depthful understanding. The fundamental thesis is that pedagogic thoughtfulness and tact are essential elements of pedagogic competence,” (p. 156). It is my hope that this study succeeds in providing the tactful thoughtfulness of which Van Manen wrote and that the understanding it generates is of use to school leaders and others who work with school leaders. For school leaders the findings of this study may instill confidence and it may be a source of abstract connections. At least two of the participants talked about the value of collegial networks and of having someone who understands school leadership with whom to talk. While reading this study may be like participating in a one sided conversation, it still may serve to affirm or challenge readers’ experiences and enhance the understanding of experiences that all school leaders share. In this way, the study will serve pedagogic practice. The findings may also be of value to those who work with school leaders. Understanding the perspectives of school leaders can be helpful to the teachers, counselors, and other professionals working in the school. It can also be helpful to the preparers of school leaders in leadership programs and to policy makers who frame the conditions in which school leaders’ work. The findings may show areas in which the reader shares something in common with the school leader and can identify with them as a result. It may also highlight differences that make the school leaders’ experiences unique or different.

As an additional recommendation, I revisit the idea expressed that school leaders seem to take comfort in affiliation with others who understand what it is like to be a school leader but who is not a supervisor or direct colleague. Efforts to promote affiliations may be served both by professional associations and by continuing education cohorts which assemble leaders (or

aspiring leaders) in environments where important concepts can be explored and lasting connections with other school leaders can be developed.

I hope this study inspires future research. Suggestions for future research include the two suggestions presented earlier in this chapter; to explore whether school leaders have predispositions to certain ethical perspectives and to explore situations and conditions in which school leaders decide to remove/exclude a child or, conversely, where they consider removal and choose not to remove. While there was discussion of the types of dilemmas school leaders experienced, this study did not claim to provide saturation in the types of dilemmas school leaders face, nor was that the intended or stated goal of this research project, which focuses on the experience of ethical dilemmas. Future research that focuses on identifying the values that are the foundation for a conflict is an important component of understanding the nature and meaning of the experience of ethical dilemmas.

Angle (2016) explored types of ethical dilemmas present in business leadership. Shapiro & Stefkovich (2001) presented issues as scenarios in their book but the selection of topics seems to be a representative sampling rather than a comprehensive inventory. I can offer a sampling of issues that occurred to me as a result of this study including: inclusion, personal versus institutional values, allocation of resources (especially time and how equality, equity, and adequacy relate to resources), when does the means justify the ends, how power is used to serve, collaborate, guide, direct or impose a leader's will, and change versus preserving the status quo. However, this is a sample with a suggestion that research could develop a comprehensive list to the point of saturation.

Future research may also expand upon one of the many themes that was discovered in this study. For example, researchers could take a closer look at how or when school leaders

contemplate and/or recognize as relevant or not relevant a conflict in values in a situation. Also a study of school leaders' self-efficacy in the assertion of values as a reflection of their power, creativity and a school leader's skill in generating creative solutions for difficult predicaments may also be useful. Research could also explore a phenomenology of what it is like to experience being watched as a school leader who operates in a public and highly visible forum.

Finally, future research could focus on the experience of ethical dilemmas by other actors in a school setting such as teachers, policy makers, parents, etc. The study could focus on the response of each actor to the expressed experiences of the others. How school leaders respond to the expressed experiences of teachers with ethical dilemmas and vice versa is another potential area for study.

Discussion of Methods

As a final comment, I reiterate the difficulty in reconciling the findings of a phenomenological study to the findings of literature that explores a topic from a normative/positivist perspective. I offer the analogy that I hope further clarifies the difference. There is a difference between baking a cake and the experience of eating a cake. Sure, both involve sugar and interesting flavors and icing and utensils of kinds. However, the experience of eating cake may involve the presentation, the occasion, the company, and the setting as important relative to the experience. The cake at a wedding or at a child's birthday is more than the recipe used to put it together.

My interest in phenomenology grew from my research question. Prior to becoming a school administrator, I taught high school math. I consider myself to have an aptitude for quantitative approaches, but my area of interest did not lead to a quantitative question despite early consideration for surveys that measured ethical dispositions. The domain of ethics is

clearly in the abstract philosophical realm and I chose an approach that I felt best suited the topic. But choosing a methodology that is so abstract presented its own set of challenges. While I considered that I would need to invest hours of time, attention, and effort to become expert in my area of research it did not occur to me that by choosing phenomenology I would also be committing to becoming expert in a complex, challenging, atypical, and abstract methodology. For example, in the beginning of Chapter 3, I quoted Creswell (2007) as he described the difference between Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenology and Van Manen's (1990, 2014) hermeneutic approach. The differences in the approaches is reflected in fewer than six lines of text in this study but understanding those differences enough to distinguish between them and make an informed choice between them required hours of reading and analysis of highly dense text before beginning; or quite honestly, after missteps stemming from a misunderstanding of phenomenology as being similar to other qualitative methods. Then, once grasped, being able to articulate the intention and concrete procedures of the methods for this research in Chapter 3 was also a challenging and rigorous endeavor.

Conviction for the value of pedagogic understanding is central to this method. The strength of this method lies in the effective gathering, description, and analysis of lived experiences of school leaders. If successful, this type of knowledge might bestow upon the researcher and the reader the wisdom that has taken these school leaders years to gain. However, the limitation is also that the data are experiential and thus existential. It is not concrete, does not presume to predict nor even suggest duplication will result in the same findings. The truth of the study is as abstract as the methodology and its value is ultimately determined, not by the content contained within, but by the response it invokes in the reader. To what degree do these findings resonate with you?

Conclusion

A thorough understanding of school leaders' experiences of ethical dilemmas serves to inform a broader understanding of the role of ethics in school leadership. While normative approaches to school leadership ethics exist, understanding the nature and meaning of the experience offers a fresh perspective on a topic where theory abounds but pedagogic understanding may be limited. The pedagogic understanding offered by this study may serve to enhance the relevance of the existing theories as practitioners contemplate ethical dilemmas in their role as school leaders and recognize the experience for what it is. Understanding ethical dilemmas may serve to clarify at least one dimension of the complex and challenging role of school leadership. As ethics is arguably the most significant dimension of leadership and is what distinguishes leadership from management (Bolman & Deal, 2001; Ciulla, 2004; Fullan, 2003; Sergiovanni, 1992; Starratt, 2012), this study may serve the broader goal of improving the understanding of school leadership and even leadership in general. The study may also contribute to enhancing the expertise of school leaders whose role and responsibilities are significant in their communities and central in the molding of tomorrow's society.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A Guide for the Conversational Interview Exploring Experiences of Ethical Dilemmas

Appendix B Study Participants' Lived Experience Descriptions (LEDs) of Ethical Dilemmas

Appendix C Practicing Forms of Phenomenological Writing

Appendix D IRB Approval Letter

Appendix E Informed Consent Document

Appendix A Guide for the Conversational Interview Exploring Experiences of Ethical

Dilemmas

(Derived from Van Manen 1990, 2014)

Preparing for a conversation.

In addition to the re-orienting strategies described in the methods section of this study, I will explore the leader's school website with special attention to documents posted by or about the participant. Note that this will not be done as a triangulation activity. In fact, phenomenological protocol requires that I bracket any judgments, hypothesis or conclusions I might make as a result of this activity to focus on the experience from the perspective of the participant. My intent is only to familiarize myself with the school to facilitate conversation starters and to build trust with the participant that I have prepared.

Initiating a conversation about an experience of an ethical dilemma.

These questions are intended to be examples of starters; to begin the conversation and serve as background questions that get the participant thinking about ethical questions and thinking in experiential terms by invoking one or more of the existential categories;

- About ethics: What is it that guides, or should guide school leadership? Is there an education equivalent to medicine's "do no harm"? Should there be? What should it be? If you were given a large sum of money to spend as you wish in your school, where would you apply it and why? What are examples of issues that you have had to deal with? What types of things have you had to deal with that resulted from conflicting priorities? Do you remember any particularly difficult situations that you had to deal with in your first year or two as a school leader?
- Spatiality: Tell me about the spaces in and out of school in which you find yourself working. How would you describe these spaces in terms of how you experience each of them?
- Corporeality: Describe yourself and the members of your school community (kids, parents, and teachers) physically. How and what do you feel physically as you go about in your role as a school leader? What physical aspects do you observe in others or project in your experience?
- Temporality: Tell me about how you experience time as a school leader; daily, annually, over the course of your career. Tell me a little about your past experiences and how you came to be a school leader.

- **Relationality:** Tell me about the school community and your experiences with different relationships in the school community. How would you describe the school climate in terms of relationships between people at your school?

Question that open to a specific event, experience or phenomenon.

Experience is the foundation of phenomenological research. These questions and prompts begin the exploration of the experience of ethical dilemmas.

- Prompt directly to talk about dilemmas: I'm interested in hearing about instances where you, in your role as a school leader, have experienced a ethical dilemma. Have you ever experienced an ethical dilemma in your role as a school leader? What made the experience an ethical dilemma? What was at stake?
- Prompt for details and particulars: Focus on a particular example or incident of a ethical dilemma you experienced. Think about a specific instance or situation, the people involved or a precipitating event in which you found yourself experiencing an ethical dilemma. What was it like? Be concrete. Try to focus on an example of the experience which stands out for its vividness, or as if it was the first time. Tell me all about it. What was at stake?
- Describe it as you live through it: Begin at the beginning. How did the dilemma first present itself? Tell me everything you remember about the experience. Describe it from the inside, like a state of mind; the feeling, the mood, the emotions. Now let me say this, even if you are not 100% sure of the facts and you think you may be wrong about some parts I want you to tell me about it as you remember it anyway. How did the dilemma resolve? Did it end abruptly or linger? What was it like afterwards?
- Remain oriented: "What is the nature of this phenomenon...as an essentially human experience."(Van Manen 1990 p 62) Avoid as much as possible causal explanations, generalizations, or abstract interpretations" (Van Manen 1990 p64)

Probing for details using the four existentials

- **Spatiality:** Prompt for descriptions of the space in which the activity or experiences took place; not an empirical description that involves lengths, heights and distances, but descriptions that might evoke a sense of space experience. Think about how different spaces can influence a feeling; consider the feelings of being in a cathedral, an elevator, a comfy chair, a desk, a bank, a farmhouse, etc. Ask: Where were you for this experience? Describe the space. If you were in more than one space, describe each.
- **Corporeality:** Prompt for descriptions of how the participant physically reacted to the activity or experience. Think about how one might physically respond to being in a dentist's chair, or being called on the carpet by a boss, or being stared at (by a stranger, a menacing character, or a lover.) Think about how it feels to be hugged by

- a child, or sit on a beach, or take off in a plane. Ask: How did you respond physically, consciously or unconsciously to the ethical dilemma? What was your body's response when this experience took place? Did the experience involve something physical (an activity, movement, body language, facial expressions) of you or others? Think about your five senses and talk about what you saw, touched, heard, smelled and tasted. What did you do, feel or think about? Did you experience physical changes over the course of the experience? What were those changes?
- **Temporality:** Prompt for descriptions of how the participant experienced time subjectively during the experience. Think about the expression "time flies when you're having fun" or how the minute hand crawls ahead slowly in a boring meeting or class. Think about how time is experienced by a child as opposed to a senior citizen. Ask: How did you experience the passing of time during the experience? When exactly did this happen? When or how long did it present, develop, resolve? Was this something you predicted or anticipated beforehand? Did you have time to think about it as it was happening? Had anything like that happened before or since the incident you described? What was different or unique about this time? How has the passing of time influenced how you remember the experience or carry it with you?
 - **Relationality:** Prompt for descriptions of the interpersonal interactions, social factors and shared or conflicting purposes and values. Think about the different roles, responsibilities and orientations of stakeholders in a school community and how each may have a need or position. Ask: Who else was involved in this dilemma (supervisors, teachers, parents, students, community members...)? Who said what to whom? How did the other people involved respond to you, the situation and each other? How or who presented the ethical dilemma to you? How would you describe the relationships that existed, developed or changed as a result of the experience for you or others? Were there people who were friendly or confrontational, obedient or defiant, cooperative or resistant, sad, happy, angry, scared? Did you talk to anyone about the experience as it was happening? Did anyone help you or influence you during the experience? What percentage of school leaders do you think have experienced this kind of dilemma? Would they do the same thing you did?

General prompts

Questions that may help redirect the conversation to an experience or move the conversation along include:

- **Redirect:** What were you doing? What did you say? How did it feel?
- **Continue:** What happened next? What else do you remember about the event? You may also repeat the last sentence they spoke to prompt them to continue.

- Avoid trying to beautify your account with fancy phrases or flowery terminology(Van Manen 1990 pp 64-65)

Probing for details

Can you give an example of what you mean by that? What was it like? Vagle (2014) suggested as a strategy to “pay attention to moments in which you assume you know what something means, and then open it up through questioning...’I have an understanding of the phrase you just used, but can you tell me what it means to you?’” (p 81) So you say that you (acted, thought, or experienced something), tell me more about that. Also follow up with language that is “laden with meaning” as described in the previous section. (Van Manen 2014)

1 **Appendix B: Study Participants' Lived Experience Descriptions (LEDs) of Ethical**

2 **Dilemmas**

3 **Participant 1**

4 It's been a long journey for me to be a school leader. It's something I
5 never thought I would do. I wouldn't say never thought I would do, but
6 something that I wasn't planning to do for a while. I love being in the classroom.
7 I still like being in the classroom. I still love teaching.

8 I taught for a couple years in the Midwest. I moved to the Mid-Atlantic and took
9 a job at an amazing school and had a really good time. With each new job, I became such
10 a part of that school community. Then I kept taking on leadership roles. First it was
11 through student counsel, then it was for student activities, and then one day an
12 administrator approached me. He asked me "Hey, are you interested in being the dean of
13 students? We have an opening." I thought about it and said yeah.

14 With that came the commitment to take classes and I really liked the idea that I
15 could effect change for more students than just the 120 or so I had in my class. When
16 you teach, you only see a small subset of the population. You get to know them really
17 well. What I'm finding out as an administrator is I get to see more of the population, but I
18 might only have a personal relationship with ten to twenty students as opposed to the
19 hundred or so that were in my class. And that's a shift for me and it's very interesting.

20 Over time I realized that just being a teacher on an administrative assignment
21 wasn't enough and I worked to be an assistant principal and got a job in a high school last
22 year. I'm now working in a middle school.

23 It's a very interesting time to be a school leader. It really is. I was thinking this
24 morning about how much has changed in the last ten years; even for what it means to be a
25 teacher in a school. It's no longer enough to go in and manage your class and teach the
26 content. Now you're always analyzing data, always trying to implement new programs.
27 There's so much that's expected of you now that at times it can be frightening and
28 overwhelming. So I really feel like my job as a school leader is to make the lives of the
29 teachers as easy as possible and to put them in positions to succeed and to give them the
30 tools they need to succeed.

31 There are teachers in our school who were complaining that they didn't have
32 access to a program. The division I was working in lost the licensure. They could only
33 afford enough licenses for the high school and they really wanted this program so – I sat
34 down and wrote a grant for them. And we got it already and they're really excited.

35 So it's just the little things to show I support and care about teachers. It's having
36 those private conversations and building those relationships. I'm a relationships person. I
37 try to get along with everybody for the better or for worse. There's times I have to have
38 difficult conversations and that's not easy, but really it's being visible, being present, but
39 also showing -- well, teachers and students, too. I have to show the students that I care
40 about them. That means to show them actively by going out on the playground and
41 playing with them at recess. They really like that. At the high school, it was showing up
42 at their events or being around at lunchtime and pulling them aside and having those
43 conversations and showing that I am there. Then, even if there's a discipline issue, I can

44 say to them, “I see where you're coming from. Let me talk to you about better options”
45 as opposed to “What you did was wrong and here's the consequences.” “Let's talk about
46 the appropriate way to handle it next time so you don't have to come see me. You can
47 come see me if you want to... you can have a conversation and vent your frustrations,
48 but, you know, I'm there to support you.” And I'm there to support teachers, and if you
49 do those two things well the school will grow.

50 I think the number one ethic for school leadership that I always live by is; let's do
51 what's best for kids. Every decision that I make as a school leader has to be made with
52 that frame of reference in mind. Whether it's implementing a new program, a discipline
53 decision I make, even really difficult things like whether or not to renew the contract of a
54 teacher, it's let's do what's best for kids.

55 For example, last year when I was working at a high school and we had some
56 teachers that if I had a child, I wouldn't want my child in that teacher's class. So we try to
57 do everything in our power every time we met to make sure that individual either grows
58 as an educator or doesn't work for the school division anymore because that's not what's
59 best for kids.

60 Say we go to the online grade book. Is that best for kids? Of course it is because
61 they can monitor their progress on a daily basis. We bring all these new technology
62 programs, and why is that? It's best for the kids. Well, it's best for kids because, number
63 one, that's how they're going to learn to work in the 21st century; but, number two, it
64 allows them to experience things that they couldn't experience if we were doing stuff in a
65 regular classroom setting. For example, if we're doing an online science or math
66 demonstration, maybe those are things that would take too much time if we weren't using
67 simulation, and so those are things that are best for kids and that's why it's bringing it in.
68 That's why I do it. So I really think that is the underlying ethic of everything we do.
69 Every decision that gets made, it may not make people happy, but if it's what's best for
70 kids, you can sell it.

71 The number one most important relationship in the school for a school leader is
72 the relationship with the administrative team. I've been very fortunate in every school
73 I've worked at and every administrative team I'm part of to get along very well with the
74 other people on the team and understand where they're coming from and helping them. I
75 have not been in a position where I'm the principal, but it's important having someone
76 else whose vision I can support and whose leadership guides where the school is going.
77 It's about how we're going to support their vision and leadership. It's also about being
78 able to get along and bounce ideas off of people. It's really, really important. If I have a
79 sticky discipline issue or I have an issue where I'm observing someone and something
80 doesn't seem right it helps talking to someone who I trust and saying, “This is what I saw.
81 What do you think is going on?” or “Can you just pop in and do a quick walk-through
82 with this teacher to see what's going on in their classroom?” Or if I've got this big testing
83 puzzle to figure out, to be able to sit down and say, all right, here's everything we've got,
84 can we sit down together to figure this out because I don't want to screw anything up
85 because this is my first go-around or there are these other constraints I need to be aware
86 of and I don't know the different personalities and we've got to be really careful about all
87 this. So it's important to have those relationships with the colleagues on the
88 administrative team so that we act as a cohesive unit and are not working against each
89 other.

90 We had a very funny situation last year where I was a male AP and there was a
91 female AP and we were really good friends but there were kids that tried to play mom
92 versus dad; not successfully. In good cop, bad cop relationships, and I tend to be much
93 better at being good cop just because of my personality and the relationships I've built
94 with the kids, which we'll go into in a second, but they'd come see me if there was a
95 discipline issue. But what they didn't realize was that I could always quickly send a text
96 message or a G chat or make a quick phone call to the other AP and let her know what's
97 going on behind the scenes with the kid not paying attention or whatever the issue was, to
98 talk about what's really going on and find out what she was likely to give them as a
99 consequence so I could be on the same page. So having that relationship is really
100 important, but also a relationship with the students is extraordinarily important. Students
101 need to be able to trust me. They need to be able to come to me if there's a problem or if
102 there's an issue. They need to see that they're supported.

103 For example, if a student brings up an allegation they're being bullied, I need to
104 show them that I'm taking it seriously or if a student just wants me to see them at their
105 athletic event and then they'll ask me if I was there. If I say, "Well, I remember when
106 you did this in the last half of the game," they're happy to see that. And it's that
107 relationship that goes a really long way if at another time I have a sticky situation or I'm
108 having a difficult situation; I can say, "All right, let's sit down, here's what's going on." If
109 I can have that built-in relationship and they know I care about them they'll know that
110 I'm coming at it from that angle as opposed to being a little bit heavy. And then, of
111 course, there's a relationship with teachers. I have to show that I am an educational leader
112 or teacher leader because a teacher is not going to respect someone who hasn't taught or
113 who taught and wasn't successful in their classroom or doesn't know what they're talking
114 about. When I go into a walk-through and I say something, it always has to be positive. I
115 always have to frame it in a positive way - not necessarily all the time, but definitely at
116 the beginning. Say, "Okay, what you did was really cool. Explain this to me or what do
117 you think went well. What do you think went poorly?" Elaborate on those things. And
118 get teachers the things they need. If they need resources or time or support in their
119 classroom management I try to make sure that I support them. Even if they don't agree, I
120 defend my decision and explain why or how to help them avoid the situation in the
121 future.

122 There's also the relationship with the community, which is about being visible,
123 responding to inquiries or requests or questions with immediacy, listening to parents'
124 point of view and listening to community members point of view. And even if it doesn't
125 reconcile with the school's point of view, explaining why.

126 Sometimes the hardest conversation I have is "I can't tell you what happened
127 because that's a FERPA violation." I can't even tell you how many times I've had to say
128 that to a parent. They want to know what the other kid got. Well, I can't tell you that.

129 There's also the relationship with the school staff. The most important person in
130 my school is the secretary, and if I get that person on my side then I'm in really good
131 shape because she runs the building and can get me things that I need and knows what I
132 want. The relationship piece is the most important for me because if everyone trusts me
133 and everyone knows I'm working for what's best for kids and what's best for the building
134 then I'm in good shape.

135 Time for a school leader is tough because every day I go in with a game plan, and
136 I would say nine times out of ten I'll complete fifty percent of what's on my game plan
137 and it's because things happen. That's kind of what I love about school leadership. I just
138 never know what the next day is going to bring. When I was teaching a classroom, I'd
139 have a lesson plan, and things may hiccup or jump or skip around a little bit but
140 especially after I'd taught for a while I could anticipate what's going on. There were
141 times that I would teach the same class two or three times and I'd repeat myself, and the
142 days -- I knew what to expect. There may be some interesting things that happen and it's
143 a great time, but as a school leader I never know what the day is going to bring. I never
144 know what time I'm going to be able to leave that night. I never know what time I'll be
145 able to get to my e-mail or answer the phone or return a phone call and that in a way is
146 very, very stressful. There was an article yesterday that reported that the same people
147 who have the cluttered Inboxes are the ones who get ahead because they prioritize better
148 and they get their e-mail later. And I'm one who always tries to keep their Inbox empty.
149 It's learning to kind of step away from that, but it's also making time. If I need to spend
150 two hours with a student today to get them back on track and calm them down about an
151 incident that happened and talk to their parent and make sure they're ready to go back to
152 class then that's two hours I didn't have booked for that student, but they're the two hours
153 that are the most important two of hours of my day.

154 And then on the other end of the spectrum is the time that I want to spend with
155 my family when I go home. I go home and every other night I have to write a report or
156 do something that's going to take me an hour and a half. My wife asks "Why are you
157 doing this now? Why didn't you do this at work?" But my workday is so crazy that I
158 never know what I'm going to do. I never know. Finding time to eat lunch can be a
159 challenge as is taking time for myself. One of the things that I'm finding is that I need to
160 find time to exercise because in the last really two years since I've stepped into school
161 leadership my fitness has gone down quite a bit. That's not to say I was the most fit
162 individual to begin with but I don't have time to go to the gym or when I'm done with
163 work I'm exhausted and just want to go home and plop on the couch. And it's all about
164 time.

165 My actions are about making time for those who need my time and making sure
166 that I make the time for those tasks that are absolutely must dos. As an administrator I
167 have those must dos. I must do my teacher evaluations. I must handle discipline issues.
168 I must supervise lunchtime. I must be out there. There's certain things I must do, and
169 carving out those blocks of time to make sure I get those things done relies on
170 relationships. If I need to have a conversation with a teacher for an hour to go over
171 something, I need to make sure that I know that they're comfortable coming down at a
172 time when they're available and working with the secretary to make sure they make them
173 get down in my office and leaning on those people to do the chores, to do the things, I
174 can't do myself. I have to have those relationships to trust people to handle those other
175 things, like trusting the school counselors to work on scheduling issues or handle
176 conflicts between students so that I can handle the chores I need to handle.

177 Being physically visible is the most important thing. It would be very easy with
178 all the things that I have to do between meetings, writing grants, evaluating teachers,
179 doing all the paperwork, to spend the whole day in my office and be busy and productive
180 the whole time. But it's more important that I'm up and walking around so my presence

181 is felt in the building. I had a teacher this year say to me, "It's nice to have an
182 administrator actually come into my classroom and see what's going on." And I know
183 it's not the fault of our principal because there were some staffing issues last year that he
184 couldn't always be where he wanted to be, but saying to him, "Oh, okay, I do see that you
185 want me to see the cool things you're doing and you want me to celebrate the cool things
186 you're doing. "

187 Another type of presence is having an online presence and our division wants us
188 to tweet out everything cool that's going on and share that with the division. And when I
189 share something cool that a teacher does and they tweet back, that's really fun. There's a
190 physical part of making teachers feel welcome. We have a brand new teacher this year.
191 She's not new to teaching but she's new to our division and she taught in a less affluent
192 part of the state and came wanting to do a poetry unit, reading poetry with her students
193 and wanted to have a coffee house where students present their poetry projects and read a
194 poem they memorized and wanted to turn it into an event where they serve juice and
195 doughnuts and cookies just to have a coffee house atmosphere. And she asked me to be a
196 barista. I said "I'll be a barista, but how are you paying for all this? Who's footing the
197 bill?" She told me she was doing it. So I asked "Did you ask someone if we can support
198 that?" She didn't even think about that because that's not something that they had done in
199 the past. So not only was I there to serve, but I managed to help the school pay for it. And
200 I took her down and showed her the process of finding funds to pay for something that is
201 a worthwhile educational activity. And so it's about being there.

202 It's also being around after school. It's being out front every morning to greet the
203 kids or being out by the buses in the afternoon to send them on their way home and
204 making sure they get across that crosswalk safely because it's a really poor layout. It's just
205 important to be physically present, but at the same time to take care of yourself. Where
206 do I need to be to be most effective in my job? And that's in the classroom or in the
207 lunchroom. One of the things I actually like doing right now is going down and playing
208 with the PE kids. They were doing something and I had a pass to give the teachers on the
209 other side of the gym. They were doing some dodgeball game where you just run. I ran
210 through the gauntlet and probably took a couple shots. That's probably why I'm not quite
211 right but when they saw me doing that, it goes a really long way.

212 So the office, bus, cafeteria, out in the hallways, and in classrooms are all
213 important places for a school leader. Those are the big places to be during the day
214 because that's the place that kind of sells. I don't know if sells is the right word; shows
215 your authority and supports your vision of what you're doing.

216 Weirdly I do my best thinking -- I have about an hour commute in to work and
217 back from work, and I do a lot of my best thinking in that quiet time in the car. I do a lot
218 of thinking before I fall asleep. At night when I'm lying in bed I think I need to do this or
219 that's a good idea on how to do that, and then I don't write it down so I forget it when I
220 wake up in the morning. Having that time to step back away from the school and
221 decompress; that's a great place to solve problems.

222 I do a lot of work from home in the evenings, a lot of my written work, which I
223 guess is the administrator's equivalent to lesson planning or grading papers. It's done at
224 my kitchen table. And then also when I think I'm getting away. For example, I was at
225 the gym Wednesday and people there know me because I do those group workouts and
226 they know what I do for a living and they asked me if we have a robotics team and I said

227 that I know the high school does. I don't know about the middle school, but the high
228 school has a robotics team and I know the coach and he's been there for a very long time.
229 So they want to get involved in a robotics team out where they live. And I said "Well, I
230 bet you because our coach has been here for so long, he probably knows all about the
231 teams and schools near you and I can reach out to him for that." It's everywhere I go I
232 represent what I do. I represent my school. I represent the community that I support. I'm
233 the biggest supporter of the school division that I work in. I know it's an outstanding
234 school division. I wouldn't have left and come back had it not been for my belief of how
235 good a school division it is.

236 It's interesting that the division I'm currently in does not always look fondly upon
237 the division I left and it has been like that for a while, but I like the experience wherever I
238 go. I like to think of myself -- a chameleon is not the right word -- but I can fit in
239 anywhere. The place I worked at last year had a group of kids who were "the farm kids."
240 They were kids whose parents were farmers. They wanted to work on a farm. They
241 weren't bad kids, but they were essentially known as the redneck kids. The redneck kids
242 were my favorite kids and the redneck kids loved me and I'm not a redneck at all. I
243 couldn't tell you the first thing about a car or how to fix an engine or a tractor or
244 anything. I've never done chewing tobacco in my life. But for the kids that were there,
245 that was their lives. They were up at five milking cows and they could tell you the best
246 way to give a cow a haircut to make it more attractive at the County Fair. I had no idea
247 what they were talking about, but I got along because I genuinely showed interest and
248 showed I cared about them. It's being able to kind of fit in anywhere and being part of
249 that place and identifying and having ownership of that place - not just when you're there
250 but kind of when you're away from it and celebrate it.

251 It's funny. The County Fair is in the summer and I was hired the week of the fair.
252 All the administrators go to the fair and scoop ice cream. They told me that I didn't have
253 to scoop ice cream. "It's okay. We understand that you're new and you have other things
254 going on. You have a long commute, etc. So next year you'll scoop ice cream." Well, by
255 the time the fair rolled around the next year, I was already gone. But their fair is like the
256 event in the community. The kids tried to sell me their livestock. The kids sell their
257 livestock and you can buy a whole cow for three grand and get it processed and
258 everything. My kids brought me venison last year. I've still got some frozen in my
259 freezer. Two tenderloins for New Year's Eve, yeah. I'm just a foodie so I love that.

260 It's interesting that I was thinking about the redneck kids. There's a kid at the
261 school I worked at last year who really struggled. From what I knew, he was a really nice
262 kid. He was a senior, getting ready to graduate, and had already received a scholarship -
263 which isn't the right word but the best way to describe it - to be a diesel mechanic. Diesel
264 mechanics make a ton of money. So, he was going away. He got into this program and
265 was going to do an apprenticeship and then be a diesel mechanic. And that's what he was
266 going to do, and you know what? That's what was best for him. He needed to graduate
267 high school. That's all he needed and he took the minimum number of classes to get all
268 the credits he needed. I heard that when he was a freshman, he was a terrible student.
269 There were days he'd come into school without his shirt on just because that's how he
270 rolled. And there were days he'd fly the Confederate flag on his truck because that's how
271 he rolled. It was interesting with him. He was 18 but as school people know that doesn't
272 matter in a tobacco free school zone. It's just the way it is. It's the law. And the school

273 was cracking down pretty hard because we'd find it on our ceiling. There was chewing
274 tobacco just everywhere. Also, as a school, we brought drug dogs out to the cars. Now,
275 this kid was not using illegal drugs. He was just a smoker and he did chewing tobacco.
276 That was his thing. But it went against school policy. With tobacco products, it was
277 three-days out. We didn't suspend kids, but we sent them to a different location. It was
278 the equivalent of what would be an out-of-school suspension for three days automatic.
279 Whether they were 18 or 15 didn't matter. Three days out of school. But they went to a
280 site downtown. They got all their work and worked online for three days.

281 The first time we did the drug dogs, it was probably October. We did it twice a
282 year, once in the fall and once in the spring. We went out to cars with the dogs and I saw
283 the open pack of cigarettes just sitting on his dashboard. Now, he was 18, but he still had
284 it in the school parking lot. I could easily, send him out for three days. I brought him in
285 and asked myself what good is that going to do for me. All it's going to do is ruin my
286 relationship with this kid. It's going to piss this kid off, so he's not in the mindset of
287 where he wants to come to school and right now it's taken other people working for three
288 years to get him to the point where he will come to school. He'll be pleasant to the
289 teachers, yes. He'll do what he has to do and go for the day. He's a football player and a
290 good one and that was part of his draw, but he's never going to stop smoking. It's not
291 going to make him quit. He told me at the end of the year that he was smoking since he
292 was nine years old.

293 So I pulled him in and said, "Look, man. It's stupid. I can't do anything about that.
294 I'm not going to see you stop smoking. Just do me a favor, can you put the cigarettes in
295 your glove compartment when you get to school so that we don't see them?" Now, is that
296 the right thing to do? Is that what policy dictated? No. But was it what was best for that
297 kid? Absolutely. Because now I've got a relationship with him where he knows I'm
298 looking out for his interest and I've got him on my side because he knows I'm not going
299 to come down on him for something that he finds silly or minor. Also, I've got him
300 where he feels school is a place where he can go. He's on track to graduate. He can keep
301 working that way. So, yeah, could I have thrown the book at him? Easily.

302 There's another kid, same division, who was coming to school high all the time,
303 and I tricked him. This is going to sound terrible but he used to come to school and
304 bother teachers and disrupt class all the time. He was just a pain in everyone's rear. And
305 he needed help. I knew he wasn't bringing drugs into the building, but I knew he probably
306 had some in his car. So one day he was wearing socks with marijuana leaves on them,
307 and I said, "Hey, you've got to change your socks, man," and he goes, "Well, I've got
308 another pair in my car." So I said, "Well, I'll escort you to your car." And the second we
309 got to his car and he opened the trunk, I noticed the smell of marijuana. So I brought him
310 in and called the SRO right there and did the search on his car and got him out and got
311 him the help he needed. And it was just the complete other end of the spectrum. That is, I
312 need to throw the book at this kid because it's going to help this kid along. Now, did it
313 work? Somewhat. It removed him from our school environment.

314 But, another big thing is that there's a home environment that you're not so.... It's
315 another 'place' to talk about for the kids, their home environment is more important
316 really than their school environment to determine their educational success.

317 But it's kind of looking at both sides of the coin. In some ways, following policy
318 to the T, to the letter, is doing what's best for kids. And in other ways doing what's best

319 for kids is -- I wouldn't say looking the other way because I guess if the first student had
320 been smoking a cigarette in school or chewing tobacco in school, we'd have to come after
321 him -- but giving that leniency where it's appropriate because there's that idea of what's
322 fair or what's right isn't the same for everybody.

323 With the first case about drug dogs and the cigarettes we were just out in the
324 parking lot and the dogs hit on a car that happened to be next to his truck and his truck
325 had his last name plastered on the back of the cab which made it easily identifiable. Each
326 time we did the drug dogs I would say we averaged four to five hits on cars. The first
327 time there were three successful hits because after they hit they can get a false positive.
328 Each administrator is actually paired with an officer. And the administrator actually
329 searches the car first until they find something and then the officers can search.
330 It has to do with probable cause. Our threshold for a search is lower than the law's
331 threshold for a search. So administrators just need suspicion. Law officers need probable
332 cause. So the dogs hit a car.

333 It's funny. The dogs actually hit on the daughter of the assistant superintendent's
334 car. They didn't find anything, so all of us knew she doesn't do anything. The girl is like
335 a star athlete, great student, had a full ride to college. We're like, of all the cars to hit on
336 today. And then of course every car you hit, you had to call parents. So we had to call
337 and be like, um, just a heads-up, this is what's going on and he laughed. We're like, we
338 didn't find anything, don't worry. But it's pretty interesting.

339 So when the dogs hit this is what happens. There's a runner. They bring the
340 student out. They ask them if it's their car. We know it's their car because we run the
341 tags and do a match. And we ask them to unlock it for us, and they always do for some
342 reason. And then we go ahead and search the car. And, I mean, we do a very, very
343 thorough search of the car. Each search takes probably 20 to 30 minutes, unless we find
344 something right away. In a couple of them we found stuff right away. Sometimes the
345 dogs pick up like dirty gym clothes. It's pretty rank. But when we find something, we
346 bring them in and search the car, and for us sometimes it was just the scent was there
347 because they probably were doing it but there's just no evidence of anything in there. And
348 then other times, you have kids that have copious amounts. We had a kid with literally --
349 he was probably dealing. He had so much marijuana in his car and at that point they don't
350 come back. They do not come back to school. They go to our off-site location and they
351 finish their school in there with whatever credit they need at whatever level we can
352 accommodate them and that's it.

353 I don't think the dogs affect my relationship with kids. They're so used to the
354 dogs. I remember when we brought the dogs on in my current division, I think it was one
355 time, maybe twice and there was a huge backlash from the community and a lot of the
356 students about even bringing in the dogs because of what it represented and what's it
357 going to do to the kids that have it and so on and so forth. But at the other division,
358 they've been doing it for so long that the kids were just used to it. And the other piece of
359 the puzzle is that unless the kids get a hit and actually has stuff on them the kids don't
360 really know about it. From a percentage standpoint the dogs usually don't hit. They do
361 bring the dogs in the building. The students are in the classroom. We're in a lockdown
362 drill, but they're so used to it, it doesn't have any adverse effect. And the kids who get in
363 trouble for having illegal drugs on them have illegal drugs on them. So that relationship is
364 not bad.

365 There's one kid who you would have never thought he would have anything on
366 him and his mom was in tears in my office because we found marijuana in his car. And
367 this year he would have come back because he had never been in trouble a day in his life,
368 and it was his cry for help and so his parents were happy to be out of the dark and he was
369 kind of thankful. And there are other kids for whom it is a cry for help, so it really doesn't
370 -- it doesn't go to damage the relationship. Now, if I was pulling kids in and getting them
371 in trouble for no reason, I think that would go a lot further to damage the relationship
372 than the kids who obviously had illegal substances on them.

373 Every case is different but when the issue was so cut and dry that there was not
374 any personal conflict for me. It was ten days off-site restriction and referral to the
375 superintendent for possession. Automatic. And then he would make the determination.
376 At the same time, though, there were kids that when you go to the meeting with the
377 superintendent as administrator you advocate for them and there were other kids that you
378 would advocate to keep out because they needed more help or you would advocate to not
379 bring them back because not only was it a destruction of their lives, but they weren't
380 helping the school environment. They were negative to the school environment. I guess
381 it kind of does go into that dilemma of what you think of a kid based on the relationship
382 with that kid. Some teachers have this all the time "I don't like this kid because he's
383 annoying in my class or he doesn't do any work" or they say they don't like this kid for a
384 reason. You know, as an administrator, I think I sometimes feel the same way. There are
385 not a lot of kids I genuinely dislike. There are always a couple of kids that get under your
386 skin in some way, shape, or form, and whether it's because despite the million times you
387 talk to them, they can't continue to follow the rules, they don't listen to what you're going
388 to say or they don't take your advice or they don't work to build that relationship with you
389 because it always starts off as a negative. Those are the kids that in the end if something
390 does happen you're not going to advocate for them.

391 And it's hard to say. I don't want to say it because I don't want to say, oh, I play
392 favorites, but there are students who at the end of the day if something were to happen
393 I'm not going to advocate on their behalf and I don't want to say that, but it's true. And
394 that sucks to say.

395 Going back to the kid with the cigarettes in his car in the parking lot, I actually
396 pulled him aside in the hallway to talk to him. I didn't actually bring them in the office. I
397 really feel like my office is a time where I can have a serious closed-door conversation,
398 but it also depends on my relationship with kid. I actually went and found the kid down
399 in the auto shop, pulled him off to the side in the hallway where no one was, and I said,
400 "Look, man, here's the deal. Like, I went out to your car and these are there. Do me a
401 favor. I don't want to get you in trouble for this, put them in the glove compartment."
402 And he's like, "I gotcha. Like, I get it, you're good." That's the space where the
403 conversation took place. Whereas, the kid that I pull in for possession, that's a
404 conversation I have in my office because there's the discipline consequence and there's a
405 need to have access to call the parent by the phone and to be able to do paperwork
406 because I've got a ton of paperwork to do.

407 I handled maybe three drug cases over the course of the year, just drugs alone.
408 The dogs come in twice with maybe four or five hits each time but you still have the
409 duties with the other assistant principal and the principal. So maybe it was four or five.
410 Some are cut and dry but some others are harder. The hardest ones are actually the kids

411 that you would never expect. We had a girl who was a senior, A/B student, quiet kid,
412 never in trouble a day in her life. First drug search we go into her truck and there's a
413 Santa Clause hat, and inside the Santa Clause hat is a pipe, a bag of marijuana and a
414 couple lighters. So we bring her out to the car and ask, "Is this yours?" She says, "yeah."
415 "Is this your car? Is this yours?" "Yeah." So I collect all of it and bring them into the
416 school and turn it all over to the school resource officer. I bring her into my office and
417 usually my first question is, "so what's going on?" And at that point there's not a lot for
418 them to hide, and as administer if you're dealing with a situation where I suspect the kid
419 of doing something but I don't have proof I might ask "So do you know why you're down
420 here?" That's usually the first question. But in this case it's, "what's going on?" And her
421 response was, "I was hanging out with a friend and it's just what we were doing and I left
422 it in my car and didn't think anything of it." It was in there, of course -- she was in our
423 nursing program and wanted to be a nurse. It was in there with all her nursing
424 equipment, her stethoscope, etc., all the stuff that she had planned to go on and study.
425 We had the conversation and I said that this means I'm going to call your parents and it's
426 going to be a ten-day restriction and a referral to the superintendent. She says, "I know."
427 She took it really well. And we keep them in our office and we keep them supervised
428 with a person. If I have to step out, I'll have another administrator or one of our office
429 personnel come in and just -- he would just sit with her or counsel her, just sit with her.
430 They get a referral for her to a program which involves drug testing upon entry and they
431 don't get removed from the program until they clean test. They get tested every so often
432 to make sure they're not using, and that's part of the condition for reentry into the school.
433 So the counselor comes in and works through that with her parent. Then when the parent
434 comes in that's when it actually got tough because they realized the restriction and the
435 parent said, "My daughter is not doing this because they go to an alternative education
436 site and my daughter is not going to school with those kids." She had the belief that the
437 kids down at the alternative site were somehow worse or different than the kids at school.
438 What's amazing to me is some of the kids at the alternative site are down there because
439 they just want to finish faster. It's not because they can't handle regular school. Some
440 kids are down there because they can't handle the regular school environment and need to
441 learn online at their own pace or function well. We have this school for if they're credit
442 deficient and they're only making up their credits, but that's only about a third or half of
443 the kids. The other half of the kids are down there because they got in trouble or they just
444 want to get ahead and finish. I have kids come begging to me, "Please let me go to the
445 alternative education site, please let me go down there. " So, I had to explain to the parent
446 that; yes, your daughter will graduate with the rest of her class; yes, she will get all the
447 credits she needs to graduate; yes, she will go at her own pace, but at the same time she's
448 not down there with 'bad' kids. There's really no such thing as a bad kid. There are kids
449 who make mistakes and you have to remember they're children. They're still children.
450 Children make mistakes.

451 To clarify the time they spend off-site; they get restricted to their off-site location
452 for ten days and within those ten days, they have a conference with the superintendent to
453 determine if there is a longer placement. Whenever they get possession of drugs, they get
454 placed at the off-site location for the remainder of that semester. That's his usual
455 determination. Sometimes it goes longer. One of the very first kids, the kids that was
456 probably dealing, he got caught in October and he was placed down there until March

457 because it's usually like a semester long placement. So if it's halfway through, they'll go
458 halfway through the next semester. But when they're down there and they have that
459 placement down there, they're not allowed to set foot on school grounds, and he
460 trespassed on school grounds so he got put out for the rest of the year and then ended up
461 withdrawing from the school division and went back to the school division he came from.

462 Graduation for this girl was on the football field with everyone else. She came
463 back with two months to go in the school year because she did everything that was asked
464 of her. Does that mean she stopped using? I mean, she stopped using enough to get
465 through her clean program. Everything we do isn't a hundred percent successful, but I
466 contrast that to several years ago when I was working in another division the assistant
467 principal and I found marijuana in the backpack of our valedictory speaker and he was
468 out for a three days out-of-school suspension and then came back and it was like nothing
469 happened. And you still hear people in the community say that he's out in his backyard
470 just smoking with his parents. It's a very interesting contrast and a lot of it may have to
471 do with socioeconomic factors and going from a rural school division with a wide variety
472 of socioeconomic status, but mostly middle to lower-middle class, parents who work all
473 the time and who are not as educated. They know their rights and responsibilities, but
474 they're not going to do everything in their power to protect their children. They'll protect
475 their children from harm, but a lot of them still have the belief that you learn by making
476 mistakes. And a lot of these parents have made mistakes in their lives. A lot of the
477 parents have done drugs or served time. I know that because they tell me.

478 The kid with the cigarettes, I never met his parents. His parents weren't around.
479 He "lived" with his dad, but he was really an emancipated minor or just emancipated at
480 that point because he was 18. But he would go home, but we didn't know where he was
481 going to.

482 And that's the other thing is students in the division where I am now, the second
483 their kid gets in trouble they run to their lawyer and find out how my child's educational
484 right is being violated. Whereas, in this other place, my kid made a mistake and there's
485 not that sense of entitlement. It's very much my kid is entitled even if he screws up to
486 being the treated to the best of everything to ensure that he's okay as opposed to my
487 student screwed up, throw the book at him.

488 Reflecting on moral and ethical dilemmas makes me think of instances where you
489 know something goes against policy or you know it goes against what's kind of written
490 there, but at the end of the day, you want to do what's best for your kids. I wouldn't say
491 there are particular policies I struggle with more than others because it's a little different
492 in the middle school level. It really is. I feel like at the middle school level, the mistakes
493 the children are making aren't as egregious. You don't find as many cases of students
494 using illegal drugs or incidents of sexually-related inappropriate behavior at the middle
495 school level. Especially where I am because the children are very -- sheltered is not the
496 right word-- but I don't see that as much.

497 What I struggle with ethically now is the way that consequences are levied
498 because I've had this other experience. We had a student this year that was looking up
499 inappropriate images on the Internet at school. They weren't sexual. They were just
500 graphically violent in nature. And the standard consequence for that -- even when we
501 talk about it with students would be if this happens we have to restrict your computer
502 usage and there's a detention along the way or some other consequences. But then a

503 student does it and we don't follow that. Instead the kid has to make a poster explaining
504 why it's important to be.... So a teacher brings the student to the office and reports that
505 the student was doing a group project on Google drive and had posted some pretty
506 graphically violent images. The pictures had nothing to do with the project. I don't
507 remember what the project was, but the picture that was in there was one student was a
508 guy shooting the brains out of another student with a gun pointed at him. Just really
509 inappropriate; especially for the grade level of middle school they were at. I think it was
510 a seventh grader. There were four kids in the group and this one just pulled the image off
511 Google images and just dropped it into the Google document another guy in the group
512 was working on and the other kids reported it because it was pretty graphic. So he was
513 brought down and it happened that both the principal and I were in the office. And he
514 came back and we had the image and we had the referral and we were having a
515 conversation with the student and we were asking him, "Why is this wrong. Explain to
516 me, what were you thinking when you did this." And he was saying that the Walking
517 Dead was coming back and that he thought the kids would be interested in the zombie
518 stuff. And how does this project relate to that? Do you see why it's inappropriate? It
519 seemed to me that he was using the explanation as a cover and that the real intent was to
520 get a rise out of his group mates. One of the things we always ask from the teachers who
521 do referrals now is what do you think the intent of the student is, and one of them is to
522 obtain peer attention. He was probably trying to attain attention from his peers. It ended
523 up the student was a student who was a special education student, who wasn't super
524 popular, and he just wanted to get a rise out of his friends. After we explained it to him,
525 he kind of got it. But part of our decision-making process involves assigning the
526 consequences - the principal is actually the one who assigned the consequence. He didn't
527 think the regular restriction was appropriate and thought it was more important that the
528 kid learn from this and asked him what do you think your consequences should be or how
529 could you learn from this and why should you not do stuff like this? How can you be
530 safe on the Internet? Why should you be careful with what kind of images you post
531 places? What could people think of you? If you post images of violent stuff online,
532 people might wonder if it's a sign that maybe he's going to do something inappropriate
533 and then it gets much worse, so he -- his consequence was to make a poster and explain
534 it.

535 I was part of the decision-making process but the principal decided this. But the
536 rules -- the thing is that he was the one set the rules and then they didn't apply and that's
537 frustrating because especially as someone who's still kind of learning how a school
538 operates I've only been there a month or two. Coming from a place where the rules were
539 the rules and if X happens, then Y. Here if X happens, then it's A, B, C, D, E, F, or G or
540 whatever I decide. Even though we were told that if X happens, then A. And that's
541 frustrating. And the other thing that frustrates me, too, is that the place I work now is so
542 afraid of legal action, especially on the special education side of things, that it's almost
543 impossible to consequence a special education student unless they do something
544 extraordinarily serious. You really have to handle them with kid gloves.

545 I had no relationship with the kid with the images. I did not know him at all. And
546 the principal didn't really know him either. The teacher seemed okay with our decision. I
547 think he was just happy that it was handled. And it kind went with the themes we're
548 working towards in our school. What does it mean to be caring, to be knowledgeable in

549 your learning, etc. so we tied it into school themes. So he was okay with that. I don't
 550 think he really felt like -- like, what's a detention really going to do? At the end of the
 551 day, you can even go back to my days as the dean of students. Just because I give a kid a
 552 detention for showing up 20 minutes late to school doesn't necessarily mean that the very
 553 next day that kid's not going to be 20 minutes late again. It's, you know, what's the point
 554 of the consequence? I think that's where we need to step back. Why do I assign this
 555 consequence? I assign this consequence because I want it to change behavior. And
 556 having the principal make this decision was what -- that was the source of conflict,
 557 whatever is the source of the dilemma. That really ties it together. I think that my struggle
 558 every day is what's best for kids with what is the policy. Ninety nine times out of a
 559 hundred what's best for kids and what policy is seems aligned but it comes up even when
 560 it comes to teaching and learning.

561 I had a teacher last year who was just unbelievably bad at her job. Not the worst
 562 I've seen but she couldn't manage a classroom to save her life and taught honors kids in a
 563 difficult subject. It was her second year, so she was still is on probationary contract. And
 564 there were flashes here and there that showed that maybe she could get better, and she
 565 was licensed in a hard-to-find subject area. And even though her evaluation wasn't
 566 spectacular, there was that dilemma of I know that it's best if she's not working here, but
 567 this is her livelihood. And I know that at the end of the day replacing her doesn't mean
 568 we're going to get anybody better. Let's see how it goes in the third year-- let's put her on
 569 plan of assistance and see how the third year plays out when I knew in my heart I
 570 probably should have leaned towards a different direction. The plan of assistance for a
 571 probationary teacher is a hard call. So I took the chance to make her better, but it's off my
 572 plate now. That would have been my most difficult thing to deal with this year if I hadn't
 573 changed jobs and I was not looking forward to it.

574 **Participant 2**

575 I think a moral or ethical dilemma is a situation that involves class; for example, a
 576 different family, a different class, ethnicities; also, race, fairness and relationships. So I
 577 think of situations where you may have teachers or staff that feel like they're being
 578 treated unfairly or feel like the school leader is not treating families fairly based on a
 579 close relationship with a family member – it is not a problem to have close relationships
 580 with families but if the close relationship results in unfair treatment of others it is..
 581 However, it's just one of the ways that comes up; based on anything that they may have
 582 in common or that they actually put against that family member or school leader who
 583 aren't actually given the benefit of the doubt versus someone else.

584 I don't know if there are exactly ethical guidelines for school leaders because of
 585 course in the school we're taught what to do in given scenarios. However, I think it all
 586 really depends on what that person in school leadership is supposed to do. Me personally,
 587 being a Christian, the way I was brought up, I put God first with everything. So it's
 588 always in my mind; put God first. I do try my best to treat people how you want to be
 589 treated. But everyone knows I'm a hothead at times, but I do honestly and constantly just
 590 think, okay, things may happen. So what leads me in making my decisions are the
 591 Christian values that I do have.

592 And also what I've learned. This is my fourth year in administration for both my
 593 day job and my evening job. I literally received a promotion for both. This is my fourth

594 year and I've had great examples. I remember as a kid and attending school myself,
595 observing and watching administrators. So that is what I do.

596 My Christian values are important for me as a school leader. Specifically, respect.
597 Now, that's huge. You have to have respect in school both ways in my opinion. So as a
598 leader, I should be respected but I should also give respect to the staff, to the students, to
599 the parents, and to stakeholders. That's huge. That's definitely huge. Besides respect, I
600 would also say responsibility. I believe there are several other traits in there but if you're
601 respectful... Honesty is also huge. We find that some people are honest and some people
602 aren't really honest. Also, I would say values are part of your goals. Now, everyone has to
603 be in the same boat because we're in a school system. We're here for the children and
604 many times... Unfortunately, we see it happens all the time. There are some people that
605 are in a place but they're not really there for the children and they have other things in
606 mind. You know, that's when some of these traits just really start to dwindle. They're
607 really looking out more for themselves than the overall mission. Because a paycheck is a
608 paycheck... It goes back to the Christian values that I have. I have faith in God. Look,
609 this is where he wants me. This is why I'm here. If I'm doing something that undermines
610 school leadership or undermines my supervisors or others to put myself ahead, I can't live
611 with that. There's no way I could do that. But we all know the politics game. It's
612 everywhere and then this is part of it, I guess.

613 There are relationships that are important for school leaders. For me, as a vice
614 principal, not the principal at the school, I try my best to have a great relationship with
615 everyone that's involved with the upbringing of that student. So I'm talking about my
616 colleagues, my supervisor, the pastor who runs the entire school, the School Board, and
617 other individuals as well. Then, there is the parents too. So it's all those great relationship
618 so everyone understands that for the harmony of a school it's everyone that's working
619 together for that child. I want to say, no one is perfect, but we could still have a
620 professional relationship. I've learned that you don't necessarily have to like someone. I
621 don't go to work to be a friend with people. I'm there for the children. I'm there for the
622 kids. Look, we have to work together for what's best for this child that's in the building.

623 Colleagues include teachers, other faculty and staff members of the school; our
624 cook, the janitor, and our counselor (who's actually outsourced through a different
625 organization.) So I strongly feel that anyone who enters our doors, they're there for our
626 students. We have to have a working, professional relationship. And I'll be honest, are
627 there some parents that I just don't like or is there a colleague that I just don't like? Yes.
628 However, that's my personal opinion about them. However, is that colleague of mine
629 doing a wonderful job in a classroom of students? Yes, he or she is. There are just a few
630 things that I just may not be wild about them, but they are getting the job done in a
631 respectable manner. The same with parents. There are just some things that are like,
632 "Hmm, I'm not wild about you, but this child has come here and is learning and you're
633 providing a home for that child, and he or she is coming to our school. So, that's fine."
634 That's just my personal feeling. But those relationships that you have must remain
635 professional at all times and I do struggle with that as a school leader myself. I'm very
636 blunt. My wife will say, I get to the point, "Do you like my hair?" "No." "What's
637 wrong?" "No, that's not right." It happens. I'm a work in progress. I might take years and
638 years and years, but I am a work in progress.

639 So the team that we have in my school, we all work very well. There are some
640 parents, for example, where we decide okay, you take this situation or you take this
641 situation. There are three school leaders that are in the building all the time in my school,
642 two assistant principals, one principal, and the pastor in a different building.

643 My relationship with the principal and the other assistant principal is a little
644 different. To be honest, I have some issues with my supervisor. She actually took over
645 being principal a few years back and I personally feel that she's lacking in many areas. I
646 don't feel that she's as knowledgeable as she should be, and we're talking about some of
647 the basics. I've been to work and I feel strongly, I'm going to do my job. I'm going to do
648 what I need to do for my students. And I build this relationship by trying to keep
649 everything respectful. We both... Well, I had a blow up with her last year, sometime last
650 year. It's about a year ago. And it's just that whenever-- if I'm given a task, I work very
651 hard to do that task to the best of my ability. And so I took over doing the attendance for
652 the school. I had an issue because I felt like every child should be accountable. So we had
653 students who were coming in late all the time. Unfortunately, we're talking about my
654 other colleague, the other assistant principal who's in the Flintstone age with some
655 things, but I'm doing my job. So if you're late, I'm giving it back to you. You're supposed
656 to follow the handbook. That child should be suspended. So then she decides not to
657 suspend the child and then I think about the fairness. And then that's how teachers talk.
658 That's how parents talk. Why is that child not being suspended, but this child is being
659 suspended? You know, that's why I stick to rules. I'm a huge rules driven person. If I
660 stick to the rules and I do what I'm supposed to do, no one has to come at me to jump on,
661 hey, I'm ready to blah, blah, blah. I stick to the rules. That's how I personally feel. So we
662 don't have the best relationship. She is years -- how many 20 , 25,-- years older than me.
663 She has more experience than me in administration. And I believe that all of us have
664 faults, but even my other supervisors know there are some concerns that we have, but I
665 guess that's what makes a team. You know, you have those weaknesses. You have those
666 strengths. You put everybody together, and that's what makes us. Being perfectly honest,
667 I'm not the biggest fan of my supervisor. Now, my other colleague has a type of
668 personality that she has been at our school for over 30 years and she just doesn't follow
669 through with many things. She messes up quite a bit, messes up quite a few things on a
670 regular basis, and also likes to pass the buck. Many times someone would come up there
671 and address her and she doesn't want to deal with it. She wants to pass it on. You know,
672 she's lazy. I'm not the biggest fan of hers, but the reason why a lot of people like her is
673 the personality. That really wins a lot of people over. I had a situation where I was sitting
674 at the desk and I'm working. A parent was talking to her at the counter and a parent asked
675 for one document that's in the folder and she will quickly say, "Oh, well, the secretary is
676 not here, so we have to get it for you Monday." I had to stop and say, "Well, we have the
677 files right here." And it's just too much of that happens which concerns me in my other
678 position as admissions director. We also received complaints about this person. That front
679 office must run effectively and efficiently and you have to provide that customer service.

680 And I must say that everyone must speak professionally all the time and she does
681 have issues with her speech as well. At our school we do have that mix of parents. We
682 have those that are low income, but we have those that are making several hundred
683 thousand dollars. And parents come in and they're just like, "What was that that was just
684 said?" I try to assist and I try to help, but it's one of those situations where she really --

685 she's set in her own ways, so I would not be shocked if our supervisor really got on her
686 about something but often it's just accepted as who she is. I know that she's not going to
687 be there too much longer anyway, so I'm just thinking about the future, thinking down the
688 road because it's still the entire school. That's why I've taken some of her projects away
689 from her when she hasn't been able to do them effectively. And there's also concerns
690 about her even having a job, but I believe that the powers that be are trying to keep her on
691 because she wants to retire in 2017. But, once again, it's the personality that keeps her
692 going. She's a very caring person, you know, very supportive, great family but many
693 people who come in and observe would just simply say, "Wow, so you're the vice
694 principal? How did that happen?"

695 It's just one of those situations there. But we all work together. As I'm getting
696 older and I just look back at things and I realize I take a lot of stuff to heart because I'm
697 very serious about whatever projects that I'm working on. I just work very hard trying to
698 do the best job I can do. But I get frustrated when I see other people who aren't doing the
699 same; who I don't feel are really putting their best foot forward. So that's one of the other
700 concerns I have.

701 Are far as workspace goes, oh, my goodness, I can't stand being in the front
702 office. Literally, I do not like the front office. I entered the front office last year and the
703 reason I entered the front office last year is because I used to work downstairs in the
704 library. In the library I had a desk that once was one of our colleagues, who died in a few
705 years ago.... So when she died, I actually started to work at her desk. It was perfect. It
706 was quiet. No other class would come in for work. Except with our library art instructor
707 who would make sure they weren't too loud, weren't disturbing. I was able to make my
708 phone calls, read and send e-mails to prospective parents, and do my follow-ups. I loved
709 it. Up in the front office, it's just very chaotic at times. The other vice principal is
710 extremely loud talking. There's an administrative assistant who joined us two years ago.
711 She's also loud. I'll say that she's very nice. She gets the job done. She also has
712 frustrations as well because of our principal and our colleague -- I never heard her say
713 anything about me that she did not like, but she knows -- everybody knows I'm truthful.
714 You know, come and tell me. I don't like hearsay. Let's talk about it. Let's work it out,
715 you know.

716 The secretary, the other assistant principal, and myself, we're all in one room. The
717 principal has an office off our room and there is also a restroom and sickbay through one
718 door off the main office.

719 Three desks and a counter; we have a large counter. It's approximately, if I was to guess,
720 maybe about ten feet wide and a nice decent height. So it's not the largest space. It
721 actually would be -- it might be approximately the size of a person's living room. So it's
722 not -- not the largest. I don't have the privacy like I would like to have. I was offered to
723 take over a space last year in our teacher's lounge, and the only reason why I didn't is that
724 I thought about my colleagues. If I took over that space in the teacher's lounge, then our
725 head of the math department and our Spanish teacher wouldn't have a space because they
726 now occupy that space, and I said, no. I said, I want and I feel -- because it will be
727 interesting, but I put them ahead of me and said, I will deal with the office.

728 Several times in a telephone call, I'm like, "Guys, bring it down." The office is
729 busy. Parents are coming in, children are coming in, and teachers are coming in. I really
730 do not like conducting business in there. So now that it's enrollment season I have tours

731 that come in; I'm on the phone; I'm talking with the pastor. So I would go to the cafeteria
732 in certain periods and make my calls from there where it's quieter. Because
733 professionally, you know, just hearing such loud talking at times –

734 Our meetings take place in our classrooms. So we have morning meetings twice a
735 month. They take place in one of our classrooms. We also have office meetings with the
736 principal, assistant principal, secretary, and me. Those will be in the principal's office.
737 Then we have a volunteer that would watch the office and answer the telephones for us.

738 It's nice sized building. It is a very large building. It used to be a former high
739 school, so we are very, very blessed. Our building holds 225 students, but we have
740 additional space that many “elementary” schools do not have. So we have a gymnasium
741 at the school. We have a full-sized stage. We have a cafeteria downstairs and then we
742 have other offices throughout the building, as well as classrooms. We have from Pre-K3
743 to 8th grade and each has their own classrooms. It's a very nice campus; five buildings on
744 campus, going to be six building; plenty of space. I never heard one parent have a
745 complaint about our facilities. Education all takes place in the school, then we have our
746 church, the rectory, the convent, and we also have another building where our pastor
747 stays; our tuition manager and the daily chapel are in that building. And now we're in the
748 process of having a math and science resource center building. We'll start groundbreaking
749 this week. Where our school is located, to have all this property is just amazing.

750 That's why when I market the school, I market that we have a campus, that we
751 have all the facilities. Our students do spend time in the rectory with the pastor. We all
752 attend mass together on feast days or every Friday. Maybe we'll use the daily chapel for a
753 class retreat that we have in our building or if you want to meet with the pastor over
754 there. So there's a chance to give our students some exposure to our different areas.

755 Time goes by extremely, extremely fast. Extremely fast. And it's wild because
756 growing up as a kid, I had few responsibilities, so the day would just go on forever.
757 However, during the daytime, it's very quick. As a school leader, depending on what
758 happens and what takes place, we're pulled out of something that we're working on. We
759 may have an emergency with the teacher. You might have a telephone call that may last a
760 while. You may have a meeting that you have to attend and all the other duties that we
761 have. It just seems like it's really not enough time during the day, especially depending on
762 what you're working on. There's several projects that are taking place. Right now it just
763 started and I really hate being behind, but if I'm asked to sub a classroom or I'm asked to
764 do a reading for a student, who has a CAT plan (Catholic accommodation plan) or a
765 student with an IEP who must be read to for a test, that takes a lot of time as well. So
766 when time is taken away as you're planning or organizing, we who are the school leaders
767 can never count on doing all your work at the school. But there are certain things that you
768 can only really do when you are physically at the school; checking student files to make
769 sure all of their admission items are turned in, faxing authorization forms to schools,
770 doing tours for the parents who are interested in the school, etc. You can't do those from
771 home. But time just -- it just takes off. You know, the last time that I felt that time was
772 going slow was when I was actually teaching in the school.

773 There are times that seem to go slow and times that seem to go quick. It's really
774 when I'm teaching because I'm so focused and I do very well with the computer. I view
775 those spreadsheets. I'm very organized, so spreadsheets, whatever task I'm working on,
776 cause and effect, how can I make this better, how can I make this work the best way.

777 However, when I'm in the office working on something and the telephone is ringing, you
778 have to answer that. You're lucky if you pick up that phone and you're only on there for a
779 minute. There's very few times that can really happen. If the person wants to talk to you,
780 you're on there for a while. You know, you have a student running in the halls, they need
781 something, a faculty member needs something, so if my colleagues is on the telephone --
782 the whole point is, whoever comes in, we're going to address you. I don't have that
783 personality to say, I'm the vice principal, the Secretary will do it. No, if you come in the
784 door, we're going to assist you. Now if I'm working on something specifically, it's more
785 respectful for me to just move away from the office and go somewhere else to work. But
786 it's very, very busy. Time just goes by very fast. Our 45-minute periods for the teacher,
787 they're in there for quite some time behind their closed door doing their instruction.
788 However, in the office is a completely different story. You know, it's not quite the same.
789 It's just seems, you know, the hands of the clock just go by, go by, go by. You look up
790 and it's like, okay, that's another day.

791 So I do a lot of school work at my second job and at my house I do a lot of work
792 as well. Maybe sometimes at my second job because I'm a supervisor there as well -- we
793 have our peak seasons; the beginning and the end. Sometimes in the middle it's extremely
794 busy. Other than that, out there as a supervisor I have five teachers a semester and about
795 70 students and everybody....

796 But I have my own room. I always have my own room and, of course, the teachers have
797 their own rooms as well. We also have a computer lab that we use. We're renting one of
798 the schools in the County. But all of the other sites in our program have moved to a
799 campus. The room I work in is a classroom and I use the teacher's desk. So it's not some
800 place that I leave things but I bring my stuff, I do my work there and then I pack up and
801 leave.

802 I'm not the smallest person that you see. Many times I'm associated, especially as
803 a male, with certain tasks that need to be done like moving something and setting up
804 tables and chairs. I'm the only male in the office. There are females that are in the office,
805 the principal, the assistant principal, and the secretary. For years there have been very
806 few of us. This year now, there are actually seven males in our building but if they're
807 teaching then they're not able to assist so I will go and grab some kids or the janitor and I
808 will get things. I'll set up our large tables. This year we launched our new carpool lane in
809 front of the school and we ordered stop signs, stop slow, and I'm out front with the cones
810 setting up for as long as I could until we started our math lab program on October
811 6th. Now we have the parents that are out there. One parent helps with the carpool lane
812 most days and sometimes a faculty member will assist but sometimes there is no one out
813 there now.

814 Physically, the size that I am and being a male, I'm used all the time. If I was
815 trying to crawl in something that's very small I'm not able to fit in that, but just having
816 that presence because in some schools you do not see many males. At the elementary
817 school level, it's very hard to find many males. In our school we're blessed because
818 another concern that we have is where are your African-American males. It's very hard to
819 find African-American males in the elementary school level and we have seven
820 associated with our school. So parents come in and they're like "How many of you all are
821 here?" And it seems like the other parochial elementary schools in the area don't have as
822 many African-American male teachers and staff as our school. The school staff within the

823 school is about 28 people. If you count the pastor and tuition manager and secretary and
824 a few others, I would say it's more like 33 or 34 . So the ratio of males is very, very low;
825 about one to five? However, when I started and the staff was 24 the number was maybe
826 one to three. But then if you add everybody, it's like closer to one in five. The Taiwan
827 teacher, counselor and Director of Research Education are all females. The regular grade
828 teachers and teachers for other course - I hate the word specials when you're talking about
829 science lab, art teacher, technology, librarian – are also all females. So that's where that
830 number just really comes up.

831 Well, four years ago I was offered the position of assistant principal. One of the
832 reasons I was offered the position is because I came out of the classroom. I first came to
833 this school as a middle school mathematics instructor. I had been there for two years. I
834 quickly found out that I just don't like this level for classroom instruction. I'm not wild
835 about it. I enjoyed my previous four years at the high school level. I started with the
836 freshmen and eventually worked with juniors and seniors. Then before I left that school I
837 said "Wow, I really enjoy working with older students." So when I came to my current
838 school, I taught middle school math to sixth to eighth graders, which are an entirely
839 different breed. But the high school math experience -- I think the principal knew that I
840 really was not wild about this level, and so she recommended me to become a resource
841 teacher. So then I started to work on an advanced math program and also a program to
842 help students who were struggling in mathematics. So I was doing that very well, but
843 once you're a resource teacher and you do not have a classroom, you are called on for
844 quite a bit. So then I began taking on other tasks, such as being the English Language
845 learner testing adviser. I was the yearbook coordinator with another colleague. I did
846 student counsel. So there were several of those duties. So I strongly believe that the way
847 that I ran some of these clubs or the way that I was able to operate some of the different
848 jobs and tasks that were thrown at me must have opened up the eyes of my direct
849 supervisor and the main supervisor. And then one of the tasks that I started to do -- I
850 honestly don't remember whether the principal ask me or I did it on my own..... I didn't
851 have anything to do with admissions at all. I had nothing to do with it, and all of a sudden
852 I started taking parents interested in the school around the building. I can't remember if
853 he she asked me to do it. I'm thinking she must have asked me to show the parents
854 around. So I really just took that and just ran off with it. Actually my colleagues teased
855 me. They played the Gilligan's Island song and would say a three-hour tour because I was
856 literally taking you all around the building. I had the plot. We'd go in the parking lot; look
857 at this building. I mean, I was doing what I was told to do but was also having great
858 conversations with the parents. Eventually, I had to try to keep it to an hour because even
859 in our school building, I can give you an hour tour like literally just walking around
860 talking and getting a chance to meet the teachers. So, once again, I believe the
861 supervisors did like that. Then one Saturday, I was there at the school and I was just
862 printing something. That's when the pastor asked me if I'd be interested in a vice principal
863 or director of admissions position. So, of course, I was excited and, of course, a little
864 nervous. I was like, huh, and everything like that. I guess, you know, the pastor, as well
865 as the School Board and principal liked the additional things that I was doing; the things
866 with the food drive, and other tasks like that. I guess they liked my organization.

867 Then once I became an administrator and I started to look back at it I think I
868 understood why they all needed me in this position. One of the reasons was no one was

869 really doing or keeping up with the data regarding enrollment. Some of the data they
870 were keeping up with, but they really weren't. One of the issues in our school is a local
871 government voucher program for students who are low income. When I was offered the
872 position we had over 70 percent of the student body was recipients of the opportunity
873 scholarship program. Now, the concern with that is if the program ends, our school could
874 shut down because then we're only talking about 20 to 30 percent of parents that are able
875 to pay for the child's tuition. So when I saw that data, I said, whoa, there's an issue here
876 because the principal was just letting anybody in. You know, come in, come in, come in,
877 come in, come in, come in. Now I wish I had been around before that to hear these
878 conversations. I know that the board was not happy with those decisions. That's a very
879 high percentage. So I took the position over. I started looking at the data and I said, look,
880 you have to do some things with marketing a little bit differently. And we have a
881 handbook that came out through our school system about marketing and I'm very strong
882 in marketing, so I'm proud to say that four years later we're now at 22 percent. So we
883 have drastically dropped, dropped, and dropped over the past four years where we are not
884 looked at with concerns about the school having too high of a percent with government
885 vouchers.

886 So that definitely was hurting our enrollment. I believe that the building was 225.
887 The other vice principal said at one time they had students 240 students in there, but we
888 never fell because of the vouchers and in most recent history because anybody was
889 coming in, but we had to monitor that. I do work hard on our reports that cover the
890 enrollment, the percentage of the leads, and so forth. I do an enrollment comparison
891 report for the four years that I've been there and I mark to see why.... We counted how
892 many students that we had to register in each month of the year. I try to take a look at the
893 trends. Is this a good month? Is it a heavy month? What's the impact of our initiatives
894 that we all agreed upon; our early bird special that we tried and other tactics that I tried?
895 I still do what I did before, but I think that's what really got the attention of the
896 supervisors; that and also being a male. It's really huge. To be an assistant principal, you
897 do not have to be Catholic. The other assistant principal, now, she's not Catholic. You
898 know, she's a different denomination from Catholic and I've grown up in Catholic schools
899 from kindergarten to twelfth grade so I felt that was very attractive as well to the powers.
900 That and this other part that they liked – the high school that I attended and graduated
901 from got very pumped up about the Thanksgiving food drive. Being involved in that was
902 my proudest moment as an educator. It was so much fun. It's great to do and I began
903 learning leadership skills as a student in high school. So I never imagined that I would be
904 in administration at that time.

905 My responsibility is still mainly admissions, but in the vice principal role. My role
906 depends on what comes up. I do evaluations. Sometimes I do student discipline because
907 one of the things that was very confusing now that there are two of us is the organization
908 and the order of command in things that will happen. But my colleague was a pass-the-
909 buck type of person. Our teachers would be confused. They would say, "Who do I go
910 to?" The year that I took that position, I took over discipline and my principal was very
911 supportive. You know, her name was not on suspension letters. It was my name. My
912 name was on detention notices. So I took it off of her. I told the pastor I was a little
913 surprised, but I appreciated her being honest. And we cleaned house. Our school was not

914 an off-the-hook type of school. But, of course, it's a school. Then you have issues here
915 and there so I was very strict. I was on it.

916 My colleague – not to bad-mouth her - but at one time she was very, very strict.
917 She had the voice of authority and so forth. But she really doesn't enforce in the way like
918 she used to do. So she's not being fair. Something will come up, this and that will happen,
919 and that's why I brought this up because the teachers were confused; who do I go to, who
920 do I go to, who do I go to.? Still they were confused. So I backed up. You know, I said,
921 look, she's your first point of contact. Send everything to her. However, if I told someone
922 I would take care of it if someone comes to me, which happened a lot. They will say, W.,
923 we know you're going to do what's right. They'll come to me. So I will respect that to
924 support the teacher. However, I said, “Look, go see her, that's the first contact.” And she
925 would take it to the principal directly because I know that it was confusing because it's
926 not like we have a...

927 We are both assistant principals; I'm also the admissions person, my colleague is
928 an assistant principal, and also the aftercare director. We have a huge aftercare program.
929 You know, we have positive things about it and we have negative things about it. Once
930 again, it's how she's running the program that she needs assistance with versus a school
931 saying vice principal of activities and a vice principal of curriculum and so forth. The
932 curriculum piece we all work on together. Teachers and the staff and the students and at
933 times it's like why are there two of us that are in there. So I feel like, once again, saying
934 to the powers that be.... There's more than one person that makes the decision, so
935 obviously try something to see if this can help out and we've been very successful. When
936 I took it over, it was not I as a team. It's all of us. I told the teacher our enrollment is
937 where it is because of y'all. I said my job is easy because of the hard work that you all do
938 and the word goes around and that's why we have had strong enrollment for the past four
939 of years of my position. The first year it was 70 students, last year it was 72, this year we
940 have 62 students. We also have to strategize about retention. But being in a city with
941 many military and government families we have so many going in and out. We have
942 others decide to move on their own, but I track that data. I track to see; who didn't
943 register by a certain date, how many do we have left, why are we talking to them.
944 Teachers talk to them to get information too. So that's one of the biggest things, but I
945 touch this all the time. It's y'all. Y'all are doing this, not me.

946 You know, y'all did it. Y'all get them in the door. I will take it from there to talk
947 with them or speak with them. I will bring them to you and this is how we continuously
948 grow. Now, I would like to get to 225, but we also deny several students every year. You
949 can't accept anybody and there is a process that we have.

950 The grades in the school are Pre-K to eighth grade. Our school is very historic.
951 There's so much history with the school. It's been around over 100 years. There's quite a
952 bit of history. We have some families that have been there for five generations as a
953 student and parishioner. My grandmother went to the school. Her youngest sister went to
954 the school. Her younger brother went to the school. The other two younger siblings did
955 not go to the school at that time because they weren't around. But it's the fact of like,
956 wow. So it may not be the actual same physical building because the other original
957 building is down the street and around the corner. But it's a very, very strong parish and a
958 very, very strong school. That's not where I went. I went to a different elementary school.

959 I would say that my role as admissions director is all about the dilemma. You
960 know, do we admit this child? Do we not admit this child? Once again, I go by Christian
961 values. Of course, I have to go by history, my own personal beliefs. I tell the parents
962 when they're coming in that our teachers are professional. They have experience. I tell the
963 parents straight up that if their child is not having a major behavior problem and is on
964 grade level that I do not foresee it being a problem. Of course, there's the paperwork and
965 recommendations. We ask for the transcript and the records and such and such. All that
966 must take place.

967 So one of my specific cases that took place, I believe it was last year. So the
968 mother was dishonest with me. She says, here's my son. He's totally okay with behavior.
969 And his mother is a parishioner of our church as well. I said, okay. So the child comes in
970 for the shadow day. So for the first day in the morning he seemed okay and then all of a
971 sudden he just started having tantrums. I mean, we're talking about standing on the chair,
972 not listening. He would say something.... This is a first grader so that's six years old, and
973 it's like, what in the world is going on. He just would not listen. So we invited the child
974 back in for a second day, and the same thing happened. So we told her that this is not
975 going to work. Our counselor spoke with her trying to try to help her. She also wanted to
976 find out additional information regarding his behavior. Long story short, he never came
977 for the last school year.

978 This school year I received an e-mail around May, and the mother actually took
979 this child to the Midwest where her brother is the principal of a school so that he'll be
980 able to watch over her son. They tried that. So then she said, I really am still interested in
981 your school. I said, well, look, do you feel that he has improved. You know, I'm not
982 going to go by what I saw a year earlier. I believe he deserves a second chance. It's been
983 an entire year. Long story short, child registered, came in, and we saw the exact same
984 issues that we saw before so we had to expel him unfortunately. And from the
985 confidential psyche evaluations she had paperwork and he's doing education evaluations.
986 The teacher is not asking him to do anything crazy like jump off a building. He really was
987 struggling. And we also talked about the concern that we can't have that child in the
988 classroom. It's not fair to the teacher. He's extremely disruptive to the teacher and to the
989 other class members in the school in the classroom. They aren't learning while they're
990 sitting there observing this student that's not listening - that's just standing there pouting
991 or standing on the chair. We could have solved this with the social worker. We had the
992 paperwork. You know, we also have a special team in our school and they refuse cases of
993 students that have behavior or academic issue. And the other thing -- I would say it's also
994 personal because he doesn't have a father at home. You know, I went through the same
995 situation with my father not being around. Thank God for my grandfather. But I was --
996 when I see these males coming in and there's just no male at home with them. It's always
997 wondered why, well, can we help. With so many males in our building, can we help to
998 make an impact, on this student? So that was one of the stories.

999 So to restate it: He came in the beginning of kindergarten or the beginning of first
1000 grade to try to be enrolled and at that time we said, this isn't going to work. This was
1001 based on the observations of the teachers and then all of us during his shadow visit. In a
1002 shadow day, the parent will come and drop the child off. And so the child was to be
1003 placed in second grade for next year. That child would actually shadow his or her current
1004 grade. And so that child has every single class off that day. The child is in recess. The

1005 child has lunch with us. The child is literally a student, you know, for that entire day and
1006 that's how our teacher can assess that child's behavior, as well as the regular assessment
1007 of the school work that he or she is currently on. Oh, my goodness, a shadow student
1008 sees a number of teachers. We have eight periods every single day. I'm not exactly sure
1009 how many "specials" that may have taken place that day. It could have been none or it
1010 could have been up to three. But other teachers that had cafeteria duty definitely noticed
1011 the situation, and then when the same child was a student here – oh, and every teacher
1012 had this child. It was the classroom teacher who first reported what she observed with the
1013 student. We brought the student to the office. We talked to him. We also observed the
1014 lunch and the classroom and recess.

1015 I tried to talk to him but he wouldn't talk. He asked... He would sit there. He
1016 would sit there quiet, and then when you mention, should I call your mother, then he may
1017 say, no. He'll just sit there and he'll pout. That was on the shadow day. You know, and
1018 that's why unfortunately his name went through the entire building. Everyone knew who
1019 this kid was. But that's not norm at our school. It shouldn't be any school. Our children
1020 listen. So that shadow visit didn't go well but we actually gave him two days. Where
1021 there's a behavior concern we may go up to a week, up to five days.

1022 When he was admitted this school year he just came right to us because he was
1023 out of town. So he didn't fly back in to the area until I think it was around July at the
1024 earliest. And that's where mom reported that he had made improvements living with his
1025 uncle who was the principal of the school that he attended. So he lived with the uncle and
1026 went to school with the uncle for a year while mom stayed here. So he flew back to live
1027 with the mom again going to this school. He was admitted without the shadow days. He
1028 left -- it was in September. We started after Labor Day and I believe he made it no more
1029 than three weeks; maybe more than three weeks. He went through the process. He was
1030 observed again by the social worker. We met with the mom. He was just defiant. He
1031 wasn't doing any -- he was a replica of last year. It was a different teacher but the same
1032 behaviors that he was doing; not listening, not following instruction. When the class lined
1033 up he's pouting with his back against the wall refusing to move. So then we got our team
1034 together to address this; the social worker, the other assistant principal, the principal, and
1035 myself. And then there were times because we would ask our -- I hate the word special
1036 teachers. But in our music teacher had a relationship with him, physical education too.
1037 We were trying to use activities to get him excited in terms of saying, if you behave
1038 yourself we'll give you some more time with PE class. So we'd bring different people in
1039 just trying to help to see if they could get him talking, to get him moving. And, of course,
1040 safety is always number one. You stand in the hallway, you're also by two exits. We don't
1041 want him to run out the door.

1042 So that's -- that's what we tried, and he just -- we continued to have meetings with
1043 the mom and asked the mom -- actually, I believe she beat us to the punch where she
1044 decided to take him out before we formally expelled him. Because that's the great thing
1045 about Catholic school, we're going to try. You know, we're going to look at resources.
1046 There's outside help. We want to try. That was two months ago. He was an only child and
1047 we haven't heard from mom since he left but she is still a member of the parish as far as I
1048 know.

1049 In another situation I was the one saying, this child should definitely go people.
1050 Not this child, but a different student. This goes back to those dilemmas where you just

1051 never know -- you know, it's just like you're the judging king, is this going to work or is
1052 this not going to work. A first grader was registered last year. A young man that comes
1053 into the classroom and all of a sudden he doesn't want to talk to the teacher and he doesn't
1054 want to listen. They were like, what is going on? So, it was getting involved to a point.
1055 He was very defiant and wouldn't talk to her. And our social worker spoke with him. The
1056 social worker spoke with the mom. So he is interracial. His mother is black and his dad is
1057 white. So we found out that the parents split shortly thereafter, and now he just has
1058 something against white people and if you look at him, he looks more white than he does
1059 black. But he just ... he would not talk to any of our Caucasian staff at all. He would not
1060 talk to -- even for the black staff, he would say very, very few things. So it's like doing an
1061 investigation with this kid. This is the shadow date that he actually had with us. I'm sorry.
1062 That's a lie. The shadow date wasn't that bad. When he became a student, within two
1063 weeks that's when we noticed this with these simple questions. What's going on because
1064 he shadowed the kindergarten teacher? The African American is fine and then he's here
1065 with a first grade teacher that's Caucasian. Where did this come from? And I remember, I
1066 was the biggest advocate: I said, this is not going to work. I said, we cannot have this
1067 student disrespecting this teacher. He's not acknowledging her. You know, she would say
1068 something to him and he wouldn't do anything at all. If she tells the class to open to page
1069 whatever, she said he'll do that. But if she addresses him, he wouldn't do anything. If
1070 somebody else (like me) would come in there, he may listen. I'm like, this is very, very
1071 wrong. So we met and we discussed this as a team and I said that he needs to go. The
1072 principal said, no, give him so more time. So we're in a situation now where he's one of
1073 the best students in second grade. So that's why it's like it's a back and forth kind of
1074 thing. You know, this whole team approach... Because for me personally, now I look
1075 back and say, no, I'm glad that you didn't go. I'm glad he's here and obviously he just
1076 needed more time. That was his definite concern. He really had to have more time. Great
1077 child. He has a younger sister that came in the building this year in Pre-K . He just really,
1078 really changed. That was last year school year.

1079 And then another case that took place this year... Talk about trying to stay calm
1080 and professional. We had a student that came in and the student was in the fourth grade
1081 and just had no idea that he was going to have these serious -- The mom looked us up. I
1082 gave her the tour. He still attended the county school and she says, well, the kids said he
1083 was kind of large for his size. I said, ma'am, trust me, I'm six-foot-three, 360 pounds. One
1084 of our eighth graders is six-foot-three, size 16 shoe. Thank God he's not 360. He's a big
1085 guy. He's tall like me. So I don't understand what the concern is. You know, I said, we
1086 are very -- we have all types and sizes here at the school. So the child came in. He's very,
1087 very smart. However, he just had a mouth on him; the things that he would say. He talked
1088 a lot. Now, she did admit that he talks a lot, which I appreciate, and the mom and I met
1089 with the fourth grade teacher. She said, oh, okay, no, no come on, bring him in and, once
1090 again, we'll give someone a try, we'll try him out. So after he stayed there, he didn't last
1091 two weeks. I'm sorry. Was it two weeks or a week? I believe it was only a week and there
1092 were accusations of him cursing at another student, saying certain things. I mean, he
1093 really made a very bad reputation so quickly.

1094 I remember walking into our gymnasium during recess. At that time both clusters
1095 were still in there because our recess was by cluster. So he's a member of the fourth grade
1096 class. So third to fifth were in there. Then it was sixth through eighth. So I guess third or

1097 fifth was transitioning out. And as I walked in the door, I look and one of our model
1098 students has the basketball under his arm and is like turning red just yelling at this boy.
1099 I'm like, oh, my God, what did this boy do. So I grabbed him because he picked the nerve
1100 on people that fast. He would say things. He would do things.

1101 Our school is a very tight-knit, family-oriented school. He changed those
1102 dynamics up. He didn't change the students, but there was such a huge change that took
1103 place because of him being there because of what he would say -out of his mouth -that it
1104 was just upsetting so many people. He was constantly -- the teachers said, I can't do this
1105 anymore. He was brought down to the office. The principal talked to him. The assistant
1106 principal talked to him. I would talk to him. So the reason why I said the concern was he
1107 did not make it through the week. I believe it was day four that he was expelled. Like I
1108 told the principal, I said, you know, we normally give these students at least a week.

1109 To try -- we tried to give him some more time. Another situation, single mom, no
1110 dad. You know, very successful mother, but this father -- you know, the father is not
1111 around. The grandmother or mother came in for the tour. I showed them around, once
1112 again, just hoping that we could do something, but he only had this small window and on
1113 his -- I believe it was his second or third day he was with us, the entire class moved away
1114 from him at lunchtime. The entire class didn't want to sit by him. I never witnessed
1115 anything like that before because it was some of the stuff that would come out of his
1116 mouth. He -- besides the curse words, I believe that he told one student that I will take the
1117 meat off your bones, you know, something like that. Of course, he didn't really mean it
1118 like that, but it was just he was saying things. And I had a "hear-to-heart" get-to-the-point
1119 conversation with him. I told him, "Stop trying to impress the students here. They are not
1120 like that." You know, and I said, "I don't know if you're doing this to try to be cool but
1121 that does not work here in our school." You know, I tried to help him. I always tell the
1122 students with behavior issues to think about your mother, your father; think of -- you
1123 know, this is a Christian school, Catholic-- think about God. "Would God like what
1124 you're saying? Would God like what you're doing? Would your mom approve, would
1125 your dad approve?" So I tried that route, but every class he went to, every teacher was
1126 like, oh, my goodness. You know, one student can steer them off course. But when you
1127 have these teachers from a five-year to a 40 -year experienced teacher, just immediately
1128 comment that there's something going on here. He did have some other issues that we did
1129 see documentation for, but, once again, it's like in the past. You'd have students that were
1130 documented that may have an issue. However, they were really successful. So we try. It's
1131 just that I was not happy with a decision after day four. That's it. You know if you have
1132 one more day... We have a weekend.

1133 God, I'm trying to remember the documented issue. He did not have an IEP. It
1134 was ADHD. He was ADHD. That was one of them. I can't remember what the other one
1135 is. I believe it was mainly just ADHD because he was a very bright young man. But it's
1136 just -- he was just all over the place. Wow, gosh, super impulsive. Yeah, he just --

1137 It was a mix of things that made this hard for me. What made it hard going back
1138 to the whole issue with morals is that we have a -- when I asked the question, I don't
1139 believe that he was treated as fair as he could have been.

1140 We currently have a student in our school right now, and the principal let the
1141 student back in. This student failed every subject last year and the school year, too. The
1142 student is currently in the fifth grade. He should be in sixth grade. He's currently in fifth

1143 grade, but when the student was with us as a fourth grader we did not allow him back in
1144 because of his behavior. Everything from bullying to just being disrespectful, and then he
1145 would be quiet. And I really feel for the mother. Once again, it's a single mom. Now, this
1146 child here is Ethiopian. At our school we have a very, very high percentage of Ethiopian
1147 parents. His older sister, who's in seventh grade is like an angel. She's perfectly fine, but
1148 this young man has issues. And I liked him when he came. He came as a second grader,
1149 but he struggled. You know, he would have a scream he would do in the classroom that
1150 sounded like a pterodactyl. And our experienced teacher tried, and she'd get to the point
1151 where she's like, oh, my God, I can't do that. And I would tell her, I said, yes, you can.
1152 You do it all the time. There are some years you'll get these students. You can do it. And
1153 he improved. But getting to the question about the morals is the mother wanted to bring
1154 her children back. The mother took the children out of the school. The mom wanted to
1155 bring them back. Me personally, I was like, no, I want the older sister. The boy can go.
1156 Most parents will keep their children together. Now, our principal is of African descent,
1157 so many times going back to being fair, things happen with the folks from Africa that we
1158 really observe that we feel this child is receiving privileges versus other children of other
1159 races and family heritage.

1160 So the mother came in and I saw his report card where literally this child failed
1161 everything -- didn't get even a D in one subject. This child failed everything and that's
1162 why he had to repeat. You know, and I told the principal, I said, no. I said, no, behavior
1163 wise, academic wise. I said, my vote is no. So she decides to let the boy back in, and I
1164 told the boy in front of the mother, I said, my decision is no and you know why my
1165 decision is no; your behavior and then take a look at this. I point and I said, she's the one
1166 that is saying yes. I said, make sure you understand that because I'm hard. I'm firm. Now,
1167 is that the best thing to tell the boy? I don't know, but I want to make sure he understands.

1168 That was at the end of August. Yesterday he was sitting on the side of the wall in
1169 gym not being able to play because of a behavior concern. He had a field trip earlier this
1170 year where the teacher said, no way in the world. The mother has to come from now on.
1171 So he's very slick with his issues. We had a situation last year where he actually hit
1172 another student, who was actually -- the other student was actually in the seventh grader
1173 and has an IEP. And I don't know if he knew that there was an issue with him, but he just
1174 punched him. Of course, the father came in very upset. We don't do this fighting stuff.
1175 And I understand that when the door closes the mother breaks down crying, blah, blah,
1176 blah. But once again, think about everybody else in the classroom.

1177 If I was to give a good guess of the racial make-up of the school without having
1178 the stats in front of me, I would definitely put African or African American first, we have
1179 to be approximately 80% and I would say the Hispanic population; I'll maybe give 15
1180 percent, and then I would say maybe one percent Caucasian, four percent multiracial. We
1181 don't make a distinction between African and African American when we do our census.
1182 But the principal makes some distinctions mainly with the Africans. This is why many of
1183 the teachers really feel that she does not "have their backs" at many times.

1184 The favoritism is for the Africans; African Africans. The majority of whom, in
1185 our school, are Nigerians and Ethiopians. I have black children -- when I hear the word
1186 black, I think African American so you think just American. But we're talking about, you
1187 know, African culture outside of the United States of America.

1188 We had one of our parents who has two children in the building. If a teacher says
1189 something or states something, all of a sudden she's in the principal's office and the
1190 principal changes it. And it's just not fair. One again, there's so many cases like that with
1191 the same culture of people and that's why they turn around and they go, okay, I'll just let
1192 the parent have what the parent is going to get. You know, and then this parent actually
1193 feels like she's entitled and we don't get along that well. She tried that crap with me, but
1194 I'm like, no, that's not going to work.

1195 Once again, it's fairness with all. You do the rules with all. I don't care about,
1196 gender, sexual orientation, the color of your skin; fairness with all, but because the
1197 principle on several situations has not followed to say things that I will follow, that's why
1198 word gets around and people just know if you're African -- like, he's African, most likely
1199 you're going to get away with something, most likely whatever you want is going to be
1200 given to you.

1201 The favoritism could almost be weekly or every two weeks. It depends on what
1202 the situation is. For example, the young lady, the youngest child who was in the first
1203 grade, nobody had any problems. Very, very bright. But the brother who was in fourth
1204 grade at the beginning of this year was just skipped to the fifth grade this year, and many
1205 of us wondered, okay, well, did the principal go through the protocol with the
1206 archdiocese. According to her, she said that she did go through the protocol. There's
1207 nothing wrong with being a parent that is concerned and wants to know what's happening
1208 and what's taking place -- but these are parents who were just constantly nagging. No
1209 answer was ever the right answer unless their child received the highest grades and
1210 received the best conduct report. It's like, huh? Wait a minute. You know, we'll take care
1211 of your child. We have a full meeting set. This is a parent that will want to just walk up to
1212 you and demand a meeting on the spot. You can't do that. We have a class.

1213 Another prime example is a situation that happened with me around October. I
1214 was a sub in the class. This was after the child was promoted to the fifth grade. Now, this
1215 child is not mature enough, and not just my opinion, but other people's opinions. It's a
1216 behavior concern that he has. And he is extremely, extremely bright. So I'm subbing the
1217 class. It was a religion class, great conversation and discussion was going well and then
1218 all of a sudden I look over and he is very distractive to his group members. So I tell him
1219 to stop and he continues. I give him another warning. Long story short, his classmate gets
1220 up and says, E. made me stab myself in the hand. You know, he's not listening. He's
1221 playing. So I wrote up the detention. I did an incident report stating exactly what
1222 happened. I called the parent. Of course, the mother is so defensive and I can just hear her
1223 over the telephone and she's trying to convince me to change my decision of assigning
1224 the detention. Detentions are served early in the morning on Wednesday. That was the
1225 decision of the incident report. So then she comes up and she wants to meet with me. And
1226 then I tell her -- because I know her attitude -- if you want to meet, we'll meet with the
1227 principal. Now, I gladly did that because I don't trust her. I want all three of us. I want
1228 another person as part of this meeting. So long story short, she starts going into her point.
1229 She basically said how could you write that if you did not see it. And she's really just not
1230 very bright with what she's saying because in the referral, the report said that the student,
1231 her son, made another student stab himself with a pencil. So I said, fine, I'll change it. So
1232 I changed it. It said, Student B told me that Student A... I was like, that's more
1233 incriminating than the first one I did. You could take that to court. I said, oh, no, problem.

1234 I'll change it to exactly what was said. I did not see it. I'll change it to what he said. But
1235 he still has to serve the detention. No that's not fair blah blah blah. No, try to say that the
1236 stabbing of others and stabbing himself shouldn't warrant detention. I said, now, look at
1237 the detention form; disrespectful and disturbing in class. It's checked off. That's why the
1238 boy is to serve the detention.

1239 So she tried with me and it did not work. I kept my ground and the principal was
1240 supportive. Like I told her, here's another one with your same parents again. I just
1241 explained. I made the meeting with the parent short. I had aftercare that day. It was a
1242 Friday. It was probably seven minutes. Because when she requested a meeting, I told her
1243 no. I said, don't come in and request it on the spot. I have things that I have to schedule. I
1244 said, we'll get it set up. And so she couldn't make that meeting. So I had aftercare duty. I
1245 was there the entire time. I told her I'm a get to the point person, let's get to the point. I
1246 said, "I have things to do. I'm not just sitting here and talking in circles." Once again, I
1247 tried to be professional, but I'm very blunt and I tell the truth.

1248 So everything was upheld but that's her mission. She and her husband know their
1249 son and know that he has a behavior problem. It's no big secret, but instead of trying to
1250 work with the school or accept the fact, they spend most of their time trying to dig him
1251 out of the situation, coming up to the school or meeting the principal to talk. I said, wait a
1252 minute, it doesn't work like that. I will admit that every time I see them, I don't get the
1253 best vibe. I think about our teachers. They're just like, okay, here they go again. They
1254 must run the school. They must do this and that, and that's not a good feeling to have.
1255 And that student right now is failing a class with a 40 -year veteran teacher and she tried
1256 to do that with the teacher.

1257 Sometimes I think the parent thinks I don't like her but like I said earlier, you
1258 don't have to like somebody but we're all in here for the same goal. But she's also a parent
1259 that will come upstairs and she's not allowed upstairs at the top floor where we have our
1260 grades four through eight. And the teacher said that she'll kind of stand at the door and
1261 listen in. We have a strict policy that no parents are allowed upstairs. So approximately
1262 three weeks ago, I'm doing the math lab in a classroom and she just comes in the
1263 classroom to bring her son's drum set for our music program. So I addressed her. I said,
1264 "You cannot be up here. Leave it downstairs." Obviously he child has an issue right now
1265 and can't carry it on his own; whatever is happening with his back. So I told her that
1266 maybe a month ago. So all of a sudden two weeks ago I see her again, and now I'm just
1267 like this. I told her again, I said, I told you before that you can't bring it up, leave it in the
1268 office, I have no problems bringing it up. That's when she says, well, the other vice
1269 principal said that I could do it. Now all of a sudden I go, oh, my God. Once again, pass
1270 the buck. Some things happen and she just forgets the rules of the school and says, go on
1271 and do. You know, this is the person that's not gone for the training or the background
1272 check. Now, of course, they're in the hallway. So I explained to her again, that was a
1273 mistake. I said, "You cannot be upstairs. There's no other parents there. You cannot be up
1274 there." It's like this parent thinks that she has this free range and it's not right. It's not fair.
1275 Teachers see –

1276 This whole situation becomes a dilemma or problematic because of the
1277 relationships that are involved; with the kid, with mom, with the principal, with the
1278 assistant principal, with the teachers, practically everybody. It is very, very true. I think
1279 about it just overall, but the relationship is simply with the parent, this person, that

1280 person, that person. It is very true, and it's like it's more challenging managing the parent
1281 than the child. The child understands his place. However, I will say that the child also
1282 must feel that if I do something bad; mom and dad will most likely try to get me out of it.
1283 It's very rare, but if something happens behavior-wise or if mom is not happy then she
1284 immediately tries to come and just change something immediately without being
1285 educated on what our policies are. Even though we provide a handbook at the beginning
1286 of the year she or the husband may not know specifically about all the –

1287 One of the main questions I'm asking myself is, how did it get this far. I mean, to
1288 be honest, the principal allowed this to happen. You know, it's one thing to have a parent
1289 that's very involved. The principal has the final say in everything so she's in control. I
1290 always give my opinion on some things and there are times that I go over the principal to
1291 go to the pastor and there are times that he will stick with her decision and there are times
1292 that he will stick with my decision. And I don't necessarily like doing that, but I don't
1293 think about me. I think about the school in general.

1294 And I also admire them. Like I said, they have more years of experience than I do,
1295 but what upsets me is when our teachers feel that they are not supported, specifically by
1296 the principal. And there are just too many situations like that that took place last year.
1297 One teacher said she was home crying and just so upset because of this same mother.
1298 And there's another mother as well who is just e-mailing, just harassing by e-mail. It's too
1299 much. And the principal is not backing the teacher up on it. The principal is not telling
1300 the parent that this is unacceptable, this must stop. That's what she's not doing. There are
1301 meetings where the powers that be are being encouraged to say you need to find another
1302 school, even though the principal is making that call. Once again, that dilemma is like,
1303 wow, they're not supported. The great job they're doing and they're not supported. There
1304 are parameters that you have to have. That's why I said it's literally harassment. But it is
1305 harassment. That's why you have to work together and have everyone be on board.
1306 Nobody explains and breaks everything down. But then I just don't -- our teachers work
1307 too hard. You know, just so, so, so hard. And for them to just feel that their main leader
1308 does not have their back, it's just disheartening. I don't feel good about it and that's one of
1309 the reasons why I'm not the biggest cheerleader for our principal. They're facts. I observe
1310 it and this stuff is happening. And, once again, she may feel that she is really making the
1311 best call that is going to benefit all and think that the best call is to keep that parent happy
1312 so she won't go complaining. You know, it's one of those things. That just really is
1313 upsetting. You know, just being in the school leadership, you see that this is taking place
1314 and it's taken place in the past and will take place in the future.

1315 I know stress kills. Things are always in the back of my head, so I try not to get
1316 too upset. Anyone who knows me, I'm not the blow-up type. If I'm really upset, I'm quiet.
1317 I'm very quiet, so you're not going to expect to see me go crazy like raising my voice.
1318 That's not my nature. However, mentally for my health, I try to stay as calm as I possibly
1319 can. So I would immediately notify the pastor and that does help to get it off my chest. I
1320 don't know whether he will have a conversation with the principal to hopefully try to
1321 help these teacher. But physically, with that stress I'm not losing weight. Unfortunately, I
1322 must change that but it's just more, just the whole -- just a mental thing. This is just not
1323 right. But it's also offering that learning experience for me because I'll be able to observe
1324 positive things. I'll be able to observe negative things. The teachers know I will go for it.
1325 I will fight for them. I will continue to do it because I'm there. So it's like you still have to

1326 respect the principal. Once again, I'm thinking about that child in the classroom. If the
1327 teacher is happy, he or she is going to continue to do a great job. That's all there is to it.
1328 And, of course, if the teacher is just wrong, then guess what? He or she could be
1329 reprimanded verbally or by paper. You know, that happens. So it's not that I feel like the
1330 principal is never right or the teacher is always right.

1331 Remember the stories where I thought that the kid shouldn't be admitted and the
1332 principal said yes and then a year later it's like, yeah, he's great. So we're just rolling the
1333 dice. I mean, you just never know. But in my opinion, there are just some things that are
1334 still pretty basic. You know, the answer is a simple yes or the answer is a simple no with
1335 some of these things. And we're a private school. We're not a public school. It takes a
1336 signature for a child to be pulled from the building just like that. So we do expect that the
1337 parents understand that. However, they're paying this money to be here so they have...

1338 This year we lost two students for behavior this year; on average, it's maybe one a
1339 year. It varies. Sometimes it's none. We haven't had to put out a student that's been with
1340 us for several years in about four years now. Then there is also maybe two or three
1341 students that we deny admission to each year because of behavior. This is my fourth year
1342 doing it. Maybe two, maybe three, and they are literally behavior. You know, we did
1343 have one young lady who came three years ago when I first started in the position that the
1344 teachers felt that she had a learning disability. Because what the parents would do, some
1345 would not tell us all of it. They don't say. But then after the first period, I remember a
1346 teacher came to me and said, "W., there is something going on here." Then after I address
1347 the parent, then she faxes over this child's IEP, which clearly states -- you know, this
1348 child was applying for fourth grade. This child had a first grade level, blah, blah, blah,
1349 blah. The whole point is that we do not have a staff for students for IEPs that have so
1350 many accommodations that have to be met. We don't. You know, we tell the parent all
1351 the time, we care about the education of the child wherever he or she is. You know, we're
1352 a wonderful school and that's why so many people want to come, but we do not have the
1353 services. We can't offer that. That was one of the students that I was speaking of that just
1354 immediately that red flag just went up no behavior problems but just really need a
1355 different setting.

1356 I was thinking about another mother that's very demanding, like, that Nigerian
1357 mother, and the children have been in our school since Pre-K. So that's a real
1358 competition. The Nigerian child is at a much, much, much higher academic level than the
1359 other child in the building. So whatever Child A does, the mother feels that Child B
1360 should do. Both mothers talk to each other. They feel like their children are so superior.
1361 They have this special bond and they just constantly go back and forth. Long story short,
1362 since Child A was promoted to the fifth grade this year, Child B was also put in the fifth
1363 grade. Once again, the teachers were just like, okay, here we go again. You know, and
1364 Child B is not where Child A is, and the principal says, this is it. No more. She says, I am
1365 not doing this again. But, once again, is that fair? You know, you bent over backwards
1366 for these two parents who are in here constantly since Pre-K. And then what if you have
1367 another student that is genuinely gifted and they can skip. Now, are you going to shut that
1368 student down?

1369 You're not going to welcome that conversation with the parents to go through the
1370 testing with the archdiocese? It's one of those things which to me clearly shows that she's
1371 just so frustrated with them. She continues to cater to them and in some aspects this

1372 opportunity has been ruined for future students according to her. That's just not fair.
1373 That's one of my concerns. It's also the same parents who bug, bug, bug, and bug. This
1374 parent is also an educator but our students go to the top area high schools every year, so
1375 we know that our school works. They come out. They get scholarships. They're rocking
1376 and rolling. When they apply to some of these top schools but they don't happen to go to
1377 the schools. It may be a second choice for them or it's a financial concern for some, but
1378 they're in there. They get in there. So we know that our school is very, very successful.

1379 You know, the parents are just okay -- they're expecting more. Could we do
1380 differentiated instruction? We do change our curriculum up to constantly look for what's
1381 going to be the best fit for our students. We do that all the time. But, once again, these are
1382 two parents. There are, you know, 200 other students in the building. These two parents,
1383 they made this reputation and it's just not fair. Now, I was told, I don't know how true it
1384 is, that the principal did tell Parent B that if you're not happy, you need to go. I wasn't in
1385 there. It's kind of hard to believe. I can believe it if the principal got frustrated with this.
1386 So I can see her saying that, but it's sad that it had to get to this point. You know, and
1387 that's why I don't forget to bring somebody else in to talk. I mentioned everybody
1388 understands this is my position, that's your position. Now, let's talk, let's work this thing
1389 out. We want to work with you, but there are so many things you're asking for. It's just
1390 crazy. You know, some of the things that you're demanding that we're already doing. Oh,
1391 you're upset because a teacher did not get back to you eight hours after you e-mail them
1392 and that teacher has a family, too. It's just some of those things where some of the
1393 parents think that if they say jump, our response, of course, should be how high no matter
1394 who it is. That's why our teachers are a little frustrated.

1395 There are all kinds of different situations. For example; the enrollment piece;
1396 we're not a school that's begging for children. You know, we've met our budget. We have
1397 increased year after year. But we were just told recently... we have 200 students this year
1398 and last year we had 207 students but we also had 33, 34 , students that registered but did
1399 not come. When you go to former students who end up leaving the school - students who
1400 registered but don't come back- when we speak to the parents, some were honest and
1401 weren't honest with us about their reasons for leaving. So in our meeting last week -- the
1402 administrators do it on a weekly basis with the school board --they're just like, you know,
1403 financially we can't lose any more students. That just rubs me the wrong way because if
1404 there's a child with horrible behavior--I don't think we have any but if that was the case.
1405 It's not a good feeling on that. We just can't lose. And that's why I tell the teachers -- I did
1406 a big presentation my first time this year going over enrollment, going over the stats, to
1407 get them to understand that we don't have a problem with new students.

1408 It's actually a retention problem that we're having and that we were capable of
1409 keeping the higher percentage of our own students, we'll be successful. If someone is
1410 happy with our product and service, they're not going to change it. So we have a big
1411 process to find out what's going on. But if it's financial, they're going to find a way. They
1412 will find a way. And that's why it's just disheartening. I tell the teachers that we have to
1413 work on this. That's the same thing. And I'm bringing this up because if we had numbers
1414 where we wanted, it would be very easy to tell them they need to go. I mean, I'd be
1415 happy for them to go. They've been here since Pre-K, so we know that they're happy. It's
1416 just that -- once again, it's that funding, it's that enrollment that has a very strong impact
1417 for all the schools. Teachers have to be paid. Utilities have to be paid. I'm just not happy

1418 with the fact that enrollment can ever be a determining factor that you have to keep that
1419 body. So that definitely rubbed me the wrong way.

1420 It pushes me even more after doing it all these years to increase the enrollment.
1421 You know, we have to work harder because I'm thinking about the stakeholder's
1422 reputation of the school. We don't have any "holy terrors" running around the building
1423 that are acting up right now. You know, literally if these two parents want to continue
1424 what they're doing then you get that letter written to them as a warning. Then you need to
1425 go and just take their children out because they're doing more damage to the school than I
1426 think some people actually realize. And the parent -- teachers should not have to see a
1427 parent coming and go, oh, no, or parents to calm this child, oh, no. I mean, it's just not
1428 right. It's just not right and I just feel like the teachers just aren't, you know, being
1429 supported.

1430 **Participant 3**

1431 School leadership ethics makes me think of doing what's right. In a very
1432 simplistic way I think that's it. You know I have regulations and I have policies that I'm
1433 trying to deal with. I have kids and I'm trying to do what's right for kids. That's the first
1434 thing that comes to my mind. I ask "What did I do that was right for kids?" Or maybe it
1435 wasn't necessarily the best for that child, but it was the best for my staff. That's the
1436 balancing that comes into play.

1437 Hopefully I'm not dealing with something super ethical in the sense of life and
1438 death; though when I deal with CPS calls I might hesitate or I might think about "Should
1439 I call or should I not call?" Ethics comes into it there. It's the application of policy and
1440 regulation in a responsible way; for the best of kids.

1441 A guiding principle or ethic of school leadership is that you need to be doing
1442 what's right for kids or what's best for kids. I think, with that as our goal or our guiding
1443 principle, everything else depends on it. And then judgment comes in. I have examples
1444 that I've thought of where I try to decide what's best for the kid - an individual child -
1445 and what's best for my school and my school staff working on the theory that the school
1446 staff is working with 800 kids. So, did I maybe not do what's absolutely the best thing
1447 for this one particular child but I know that it's for the greater good of the whole school?
1448 If I'm not hurting this kid but I'm not necessarily giving him an optimum situation is that
1449 okay? Those are kind of the balances I think of.

1450 This is the Reader's Digest version of my journey to the principalship. I grew up
1451 a military brat. I went to college on an ROTC scholarship. I was an officer in the Marine
1452 Corps and served active duty for over twelve years years. I flew helicopters in
1453 California, Hawaii, and in the Orient. I then became a reservist. I flew for the Federal
1454 Government chasing drug smugglers around Central America. I finished my reserve
1455 career and ended up leaving the fed for a myriad of reasons and moved to the mid-
1456 Atlantic where I got into education. I went through the troops to teachers program, retired
1457 from the Marine Corps and started teaching in Middle School. I got a Master's in
1458 Education and taught in middle school for five years. While I was there I knew I wanted
1459 to do something on the administrative side. I got my administrative ticket, became an
1460 assistant principal in an elementary school for three years and I've been a principal now
1461 for two different elementary schools. This is my tenth year as a principal. It's also like
1462 my 18th / 19th year in education.

1463 As a principal you have many hats. You want to make the trains run on time;
1464 that's stuff I do in my office with schedule, and coordination, working with the
1465 custodians, with the cafeteria people and with the office staff. That's one side.

1466 The relationship with all those people -- custodians, cafeteria workers, etc --
1467 shows the classic concept of "it takes a village." It takes a whole school to train a kid.
1468 And the principal's role is to not only to have great relationships with my staff and my
1469 teachers but I also want to have good positive working relationships with all the people
1470 who are working for me and then on top of all that, most important, is great relationships
1471 with all my kids. I greet them every morning when they show up in the building and
1472 repeat over and over; good morning, good morning, good morning. I have
1473 kindergarteners throwing their arms around my legs as I say good morning right outside
1474 the cafeteria as they come in for breakfast. Often I'll be outside on the bus ramp but at
1475 other times I'm at the entrance to the cafeteria where I have them coming in from two
1476 sides of the building. That's where I can see the most. So I see them there, coming in for
1477 breakfast. And that's the start of the day. About a third of our school will eat breakfast,
1478 about 2-300 kids. I see them all there. Next, they're going to hear me on the PA system.
1479 They see me in their classrooms quite a bit and whenever we do any kind of a significant
1480 activity. We do flagpole assemblies. We do one in the beginning of the year at 9/11 and
1481 we just did a big Veterans Day thing. And they see me at those events. And of course I'm
1482 doing observations and the kids see me there.

1483 It's tough to be visible because I'm trying to keep other pieces together. I have
1484 other balls in the air at the same time; whether they're special education requirements,
1485 dealing with central office, etc. So I really have to blast myself out of my office and
1486 really schedule myself out so that I know I'm going to be out and be in the classrooms
1487 where the kids will see me

1488 Relationships go all the way up and down the chain. I just moved to the division
1489 I'm in a year and a half ago so it's a completely new district for me. And I have to build
1490 relationships with all those people on the other end of the phone when I call central office
1491 because those are critical. Take Human Resources for example; the most important thing
1492 I think I do is hire teachers and I need to get the best that I can get and I need to build a
1493 positive relationship with HR to do that. I want them to want to help me and me to
1494 support them. The same thing applies to the budget people that I deal with. I have a
1495 direct boss; an associate superintendent and he and I are on a great first name
1496 relationship. We spoke for forty-five minutes this afternoon as he was following up on
1497 some issues. So the relationship piece going up is equally important as the one going
1498 down.

1499 If I had to pick one relationship that I really cherish.... I love it when we have
1500 back to school night and the parents are coming in. The parents will be walking in the
1501 door and I'll be standing there and I'll have some kid come flying across to grab me and
1502 give me a big hug and I can see an interesting response from the parents because initially
1503 they think "What is my child doing? Who is this stranger?" and then they realize who I
1504 am and then I think they actually really like that "Oh my kids got that kind of a
1505 relationship with his principal." We have that. I have the relationship with the kids, the
1506 relationship with the central office, and the relationship of course with my teachers and
1507 staff.

1508 Almost every morning I used to go into my kitchen and meet my cafeteria ladies
1509 and have a chat with them and generally I have positive things to say. That's a tough,
1510 you know, to feed 800 kids lunch in an hour and a half so I want to go in and let them
1511 know that we appreciate what they do. The same thing applies to the bus drivers. I
1512 always say that to the cafeteria people "You're feeding the future" and to my bus drivers
1513 I say "You're delivering the future." So I try to have good relationships with everybody
1514 we work with because we want to do what's best for kids and if we keep that in mind....

1515 The things I have to watch is when I get frustrated, when someone does
1516 something that I don't expect or that I don't understand or that disagrees with me. I have
1517 to...I try to..I need to stay Mr. Positive all the time. The principal needs to stay positive,
1518 especially in the building with the kids and the staff. I just had someone say to me just on
1519 Friday of last week. "You know I never see you not smiling." But then we were having a
1520 pretty rough day with some stuff and apparently I wasn't smiling. So that kind of stuff is
1521 important. I think it's important because I want the staff to have the confidence that the
1522 school is being run by someone who knows what they're doing and is comfortable with
1523 what they're doing and have confidence that we're going to do the right thing. And I'm
1524 never afraid to ask for input. You know, I'm always asking for input. I can always tell
1525 you I know exactly how I want it done but I'll always ask "What do you think? How do
1526 you want to do it?" Because I think it's really important that they have confidence in
1527 what we're doing.

1528 There's smiling but there are other things too. You are never going to catch me in
1529 that school without being in a coat and tie for the most part. I'm very conscience of the
1530 clothes I'm wearing and the tie and the stuff that I wear. I want to look professional not
1531 only for the kids but also the parents; everybody. When people see me in that building,
1532 it's pretty obvious that I'm the only guy dressed the way I am. I'm conscious of that.
1533 Heck, I'm conscious of the length of my hair and I'm sure conscious to make sure that I
1534 shave every day. I have not grown a beard or a goatee or anything and part of the reason
1535 is I've always felt that if I was a kid that I would find that potentially scary or negative. I
1536 never wear sunglasses with the kids because that's hiding my eyes and that makes me
1537 look potentially scary or not open so I never wear sunglasses with the kids. I've never
1538 had a beard with the kids. It's just a little quirk of elementary school.

1539 We joke about my office. I have my office set up so that when I'm at my desk I
1540 can see out my door and down the hall. I'll put it that way. And I'm always facing the
1541 door so I catch people's eyes all the time. There's a phrase "leadership by walking
1542 around." Often my leadership is "leadership by walking by" because I get to know
1543 people's footsteps, and I can recognize people from the back and I'll call at them as
1544 they're walking by. Remember especially in elementary-land the only real break that
1545 teachers have is that 45 minute encore break or specials break or maybe at lunchtime. So
1546 I'm not going to see people very often. I might see people or catch them at the beginning
1547 of the day, at the end of the day or when they walk through the office. I always have my
1548 door open. If it is closed people know something is probably going on. I had windows
1549 put in all of our doors so people could see in. I think it's really important to be
1550 approachable and because I know that teachers have a short amount of time and limited
1551 access, unless I'm really dealing with something serious where I really don't want it
1552 interrupted, I'll often take a quick question from someone who is walking by just because
1553 I know it's going to be the only opportunity they're going to have to do it.

1554 Our school day officially starts at 9:00. The staff has to be there basically at 8:30.
1555 Our staff meetings are at 8:00. I usually am in there by 7:15, no later than 7:30. And then
1556 our day is over with a 4 o'clock dismissal and the kids are pretty much gone. I am
1557 normally not out of there until six-ish. That's just a normal day and I very often come up
1558 on the weekend to do a few hours of work alone for some administrative stuff. This
1559 morning I debriefed a teacher on an observation. We met at 7:30 and we talked for 45
1560 minutes. Like I said, we have meetings at 8:00. It's a long day. I'll grab one of my AP's
1561 for lunch. I have two APs now which is great and we'll often try to eat together for at
1562 least 15 minutes before something blows up and we have to go. So it's a pretty full day.

1563 We'll often joke that it'll be 2:30 and you'll suddenly go "Oh, I forgot to eat
1564 lunch today." And it's a good day. I mean you're busy, that's what it is - you're busy.
1565 You're being called all the time. Recently we had a series of kid issues; special ed. -
1566 primarily emotionally disturbed kids having really bad times and we were being called
1567 and we were just moving from one to the other- in and out. Dealing with him and
1568 bringing him back and helping him, calming him down. But I will tell you I never feel --
1569 even on a busy day like that-- it doesn't beat you down. What will beat me down is if
1570 I'm dealing with difficult or unreasonably demanding parents.

1571 Days are fast. I can genuinely say I look forward to going to work every day, I
1572 really do. Every once in a while there may be some meeting I'm not looking forward to
1573 but for the most part I look forward to going to work every day because I know we're
1574 doing something right for kids. I find the day goes by amazingly fast. Even observations
1575 seem to go quickly. Reading instruction is critical. Everything is about reading. So I'm in
1576 a first grade room for an hour and forty-five minutes, scripting what is going on and
1577 walking around and talking to kids and looking at what they're doing. And even that
1578 hour and forty-five minutes goes more quickly than you would think. It is not a painful
1579 experience. The more I learn about the importance of reading and the many aspects of
1580 reading helps me to dissect what's going on in the room so I can be a good instructional
1581 leader and I can help the teacher to do a good job.

1582 I'll sit down and watch her class and I script it so that I literally write that the
1583 teacher said "Boys and girls, let's do this" or "look at the objective." As I'm observing if
1584 there is something I notice I put a little note in my script to say let's discuss this. I've
1585 done enough of these so that when I am done with the whole thing I can figure out what
1586 I'm concerned about.

1587 For instance, we'll do reading instruction and we'll have guided reading models
1588 where the teacher is taking a small group of students with them and then she'll have 4 or
1589 5 other "stations" within the room where the kids are off doing something on their own.
1590 My big thing about students being off doing something on their own is I want some form
1591 of accountability to make sure they're doing it, especially with the little guys. Some
1592 teacher will say, "Well I have them working on their sentences over there and they're
1593 doing this and they're doing individual silent reading over there and here they're doing
1594 buddy reading" and I put my seven year old hat on and say "You know, if I wasn't a
1595 terribly good reader I could sit there and look at the pictures for 15 minutes or me and my
1596 buddy can fake it over here. So I want to make sure this is quality instruction so what
1597 accountability do we have? If they're writing something do they know that somebody is
1598 going to look at it right away? Sometimes they don't and they need to look at it. With
1599 the books; are you watching what they're reading? Very often if I give kids choice on

1600 their own, they'll read a book that is too high for them. This can be for any number of
1601 reasons; either they're embarrassed and they don't want to read a book that is at their
1602 reading level or they just want to read something that looks cool -I'm going to get that
1603 Harry Potter book - and now they can't read it. I'll sit down with them and I'll ask the
1604 kid to read to me and he'll be reading aloud and every third or fifth word he is getting
1605 wrong. That's not doing him any good. So that's the kind of stuff I try to improve with
1606 the instruction. We have to watch this.

1607 There is never enough time. If I ever get a calm moment in my office I almost feel
1608 like I'm slacking, I must be doing something wrong. And that's when you try to go out
1609 and get into classrooms.

1610 I do actually think about my day quite a bit. I have a good half hour / forty-five
1611 minute drive. So I think then. I think in the morning if I'm in early. A great quote that
1612 was shared with me is "If you don't have time to read, you don't have time to lead." One
1613 of the lessons I learned early on as a principal is don't get bogged down. Don't honcho a
1614 particular committee because you really don't have time to take charge of an affair and
1615 deal with it correctly because you are always getting yanked every which way from
1616 Sunday. I delegate and I monitor very closely because it is important to stop and think:
1617 what are we doing and how are we going to do it? I have a school that is struggling
1618 academically. I have about 40% of the students qualify for free and reduced lunch.
1619 About a quarter of my students are English Language Learners (ELL) and we've done
1620 some pretty big trainings on trying to change how we teach so we can reach these kids
1621 and improve our reading scores. So I do consciously work on that. I do consciously
1622 think about how we're doing stuff. I think consciously about how I'm going to present
1623 stuff to the staff.

1624 For instance I have 4th and 5th grade loop. Which means they teach 4th grade and
1625 then 5th grade then they go back and teach 4th grade then they do 5th so they have the
1626 same group of students for two years. They also compartmentalize. That means that if I
1627 have two teachers, one will do math and science and the other will do reading and social
1628 studies. And then they'll flip flop during the day whereas a classic elementary teacher
1629 teaches all subjects. They compartmentalize at my school. Well, we haven't been
1630 convinced instructionally when you look at SOL scores that this has necessarily been
1631 giving me the benefit it should. There are multiple reasons why things aren't going as
1632 well. I have some teachers who are still teaching like it's 1995 and everybody's great and
1633 nobody has any challenges and they'll complain about the parents not supporting with
1634 homework. I have teachers who have not caught on to differentiating or recognizing that
1635 even though this kid is two years behind you've got to go down to meet him where he is.
1636 So there are a myriad of reasons. But if I want to make a change next year I sometimes
1637 start with steps now. I just did this; I said in a leadership meeting two weeks ago that I
1638 just want you to know that we're looking at compartmentalization and looping. I want to
1639 make sure we're doing what's right, what's best for kids. Well I affectionately call that
1640 lobbing a grenade into the staff lounge because I have a number of staff that have only
1641 taught math and science for like five or ten years. And they say that it's all about
1642 relationships or this and that. And I respond "Yeah, but the scores aren't backing it up.
1643 We should be doing better than we are." So my big message was to make sure
1644 everything is on the table and that there are no sacred cows. Everything is about what's
1645 right for kids.

1646 Lobbing the grenade was not at all difficult. It was a very conscious decision.
1647 Again, if there is something I want to change or play with or adjust I'll float it as an idea.
1648 If you're the grade level lead I might just say "Hey look I'm just thinking about maybe
1649 changing this," just to talk about it. There is no time line on this but let's let people think
1650 about it and let's let that be part of the discussion. They're trying to come up with reasons
1651 why I should do this or why I should do that. That's fine. It was a very conscious
1652 decision to float the idea and I'm not going to make any big decision for 6-9 months and
1653 chances are I probably won't do anything but the added benefit of lobbing that
1654 grenade..and this is a little manipulative but that's okay.. is so suddenly they are going to
1655 be worried about their job and if they want to keep doing what they are doing they better
1656 be doing a good job and prove to me that they can be the best math teacher for these 4th
1657 graders and the best language arts teacher for these 4th graders. So in some ways it was
1658 kind of a little cattle prod to say don't get super comfortable here, we have kids that need
1659 to learn. So if being someone who only teaches math isn't going to make a difference in
1660 math scores than why are you only teaching math? And it was more than that too. I'm
1661 pretty conscious of those kinds of things when I do them; well, I'm going to throw this
1662 grenade and maybe it'll shake them up. But big picture-wise I still want them to be part
1663 of the process.

1664 There are a couple things that come to mind - both kid-based and staff based-
1665 regarding times when it was more of a struggle to decide what to do because the situation
1666 presented itself as a dilemma or a challenge. I'm very big on supporting the staff. I want
1667 them to know that I genuinely care about them and I really do. And the staff will come to
1668 me and say "My husband needs to have this operation and I need to drive him to the
1669 hospital and I want to drive him back and I want to stay home with him and it's going to
1670 be three days and it's going to be over the holiday." My brain is going, "Who the heck
1671 am I going to get to teach that class? Who's going to be the substitute?" Now I could
1672 have taken a hard line and said "No, you can't take leave over a vacation. You need to
1673 talk with your husband and try to find a different schedule day because it's not what's
1674 right for kids." That's one of those kinds of examples. I have people who are taking
1675 tomorrow. It's Friday and a holiday week. I was just talking to my secretary and I see
1676 about four or five people that are out and I know each one of these people approached me
1677 over the last couple months and said look I've got a wedding I have to go to, I want to go
1678 do this, I want to go do that, can I do it? And I always, for the most part, say yes you can
1679 go even though part of me is dying inside because I'd really rather have them in the
1680 school. Very rarely will I stop someone. One reason is that I try to set up a tone where
1681 they understand its importance and they don't come to me unless it's really something of
1682 significance. That's one kind of example of pro and con.

1683 The reason this comes to mind is that I get a print out every day before the next
1684 day of who all the subs are and I saw her on the list again and I knew she'd been out
1685 today and then I remembered that's what it was. So this is the balance; in my heart of
1686 hearts I know for those two days when she's out, the instruction is not nearly as good as
1687 when she's there. It just isn't and that stinks. But at the same time, I need an
1688 environment where the staff feels supported and I want them to come to me with
1689 whatever issues they have. So there is that balance.

1690 So in this case, I'm pretty sure she came to me in my office. And they generally
1691 ask "Look I need to take this Thursday and Friday off" and they usually will couch it

1692 with “I know it’s Thursday and Friday and I know you say you don’t want us to take
 1693 Fridays off however, um, my husband is having cataract surgery,” - it’s either cataract or
 1694 back, I know that seems like an extreme but I can’t remember which one it is – “and I
 1695 really need to be there for him and help him.”

1696 It might have been a month ago that she made the request. Here’s what happens.
 1697 The classic; people will hit me, someone might have even come to me in September and
 1698 said “Look, on this Friday, even though I know it’s a Friday I need to go out of town for a
 1699 wedding” to which I respond “ Oh, yeah okay.” Or one in particular I remember is
 1700 someone who needed to take their kid to college. You know in August you’re going to
 1701 take your kid to college. Well the trouble is you get individually hit by these and with
 1702 my “support the staff” hat I’m caught individually and I agree to them all, thinking it’s
 1703 great and then a day like today rolls around and I open up the list and I’m looking at it
 1704 and I had ten staff members out and I’m like “what the heck is going on here.” Then I go
 1705 back and recall; oh yeah, I remember this one had surgery, this one is going to the
 1706 wedding, this one is going here... They’ve all come to me individually and asked. I do
 1707 know some people who would really fight letting people go but I really try not to fight
 1708 those battles because I know it’s important and I’ve built a culture around relationships
 1709 where they wouldn’t ask if it weren’t important so I tend to go for it.

1710 But I have said no. I had someone who wanted to take a test. She wanted to take
 1711 a whole afternoon off because she wanted to go take some test and I started going “Er,
 1712 um, er...”and I started looking at it askance meaning it’s optional. She actually backed
 1713 down and said, “No, no I don’t want to do that. I don’t need to do it that badly. I’ll do it at
 1714 another time.” So, I am mindful of what I’m being asked. Like if it’s a surgery, I can’t
 1715 turn that down. If you’re going to your kid’s college, I can’t turn that down. My mom is
 1716 sick. I can’t turn that down. My kid is sick. I can’t turn that down. I want to take a test.
 1717 Ummm. Can you maybe do it some other time? Are there any other options?

1718 So even though this is a dilemma where I want to support the teacher but I also
 1719 want the person to be at school, it is usually resolved by giving the teacher what they
 1720 want. But there are all sorts of reasons. Let’s say you turn somebody down. If they really
 1721 have to go or really want to go they’ll call in sick and then that’s worse because then you
 1722 have less notice. Often, if they come to me and say “I need to take Friday. It’s really
 1723 important for this,” what I’ll say is “Ok, put it in now and make sure we get a good sub in
 1724 that room.” So then they know I’m watching that aspect of it. I like to remind them. The
 1725 line I like to use at the school is; “It matters who’s here.” We’re not the checkout clerk at
 1726 Wal-Mart. It matters. You may be just a TA, a teacher’s assistant, but it matters. Those
 1727 kids know you, they look up to you, they want you, they need you and someone comes in
 1728 to sub, they don’t know anything. So it’s not just your day or my day, what really
 1729 matters of course are the kids’ days.

1730 At other times; it’s more directly about the kids. This is a true story. I had a real
 1731 quandary with this. This bugged me. We had a student at our school that had been there
 1732 for at least four years – I’ve only been there a year and a half – she was there four years,
 1733 maybe five. She is a real discipline problem but not a particularly bad student. We
 1734 actually were evaluating her because she had some special needs. We’ll call her Mary.
 1735 Mary is a fifth grader and frankly Mary is a real pain. Mary goes into her class - and this
 1736 is one of those looping classes so Mary has been in the class for two years - and pushes
 1737 this teacher’s buttons. And that teacher then calls for an administrator to come and get

1738 Mary and take her away. So I come down and get Mary and ask “Mary what are you
1739 doing?” and she replies “Well, I didn’t want to do it.” Anyway, part of it is that there is a
1740 teacher problem there but part of it is also Mary is a load and a problem.

1741 Mary’s mother then comes into us and says “We’ve moved. We’ve moved out of
1742 zone and I’m interested in getting a transfer to stay here.” Now I have two teachers who
1743 would love nothing more than for Mary to be gone. I personally wouldn’t mind Mary
1744 being gone. But I know for that peer interaction.... I can’t even say that I know. There
1745 are pros and cons. I’ve been a principal for ten years and I can count on one hand the
1746 number of transfer requests I’ve turned down. Well, I turned this one down.

1747 Now what I expected to have happen is that mom would complain to the head
1748 shed, headquarters, and that they would say “What do you think” and I would say “OK,
1749 we’ll take her.” But I turned her down for a couple reasons. I was, once again, very
1750 conscious about this. One, I knew if I turned her down that those two teachers who she’s
1751 been driving crazy for the last 18 months would think “Oh, our principal cares about us,
1752 he’s watching out for us.” There is no doubt about it that Mary had an impact on the class
1753 climate. You know one kid can make a room toxic and can really change the whole
1754 timber of a room; the whole way things work. If we could remove her it would be a good
1755 thing for that class. I’m sorry but that is just a reality. So I did it because I knew those
1756 teachers would think. “OK he’s watching out for us.”

1757 I did it for another reason. We have had a bunch of kids who have been really
1758 taxing the staff and the kids with multiple calls and she was one of them so it wouldn’t be
1759 a bad thing for us. Those were really the two big things. It was kind of, let’s give it a
1760 shot.

1761 Now did I think it was a bad thing for her to go? I actually think it could be or
1762 might be a good thing for her to go. She gets support in our school from a special
1763 counseling service that qualifies for Medicaid kids. And I knew the other school she was
1764 going to go to had those same services right in house which is good. So I knew she’d get
1765 that support. I also did think that she probably; a new set of faces, a new group of kids,
1766 would not necessarily be a bad thing.

1767 I was primarily making the decision but I talked about it with my AP a little bit. I
1768 find that if the decision is mine, and truly mine, and they want me...Not one person said
1769 to me “I think you ought to approve it. We ought to let her stay.” Nobody said that. This
1770 was not a big discussion around the school by any means. I didn’t even really talk to the
1771 teachers about it. I knew what they wanted and so I said to my AP “I’m thinking of
1772 turning this down.” Now I didn’t talk to her about the teachers liking it. I said “If we turn
1773 this down that might really be a nice. It would be a good thing for us.” This is an
1774 example of the greater good for the whole school as opposed to this one child.

1775 When I think about ethical dilemmas this was the first thing that came to my mind
1776 because it probably still bugs me. I don’t think it was a bad thing. I don’t think I hurt the
1777 kid. And I was actually surprised that the mother didn’t even try to change my mind.
1778 One of the problems with transfers is that you have to drive the kid. She’d have to drive
1779 the kid to school every day to us and by staying with her neighborhood school she could
1780 just take the bus. I was really surprised that she didn’t challenge it. When I told the
1781 secretary and I signed the letter I’m pretty sure I said to let her know she could appeal.
1782 The secretary said “if you have a problem with this you can take it up the hill,” but she
1783 didn’t.

1784 That was a few weeks ago. The whole situation took about a month to resolve.
 1785 And now it's resolved and she can't really say anything more. Potentially she could but
 1786 it's highly unlikely. She came to us about 1 October and told us they were moving. I got
 1787 the paperwork for the transfer maybe the 10th; somewhere about a week into October.
 1788 The kid's last day was going to be the 4th of November, I think. I turned it down. Now I
 1789 was able to turn it down because we've been closed to transfers due to high numbers.
 1790 However, I can easily discount that and just do what I want. It's site based. It's my
 1791 school and they're my kids. However, I could use that as the excuse in the memo. I just
 1792 said we're closed to transfers. So the mother was told somewhere around the middle of
 1793 October; maybe the 20th. I fully expected them to come and at least want to have a
 1794 conversation with me. And quite frankly, had they come to talk to me, I probably would
 1795 have said yes. But they didn't; they didn't fight it. And then Bingo, the 4th rolls around
 1796 and she went to her new school.

1797 Time slowed down a little bit between the time she made the request and the time
 1798 that she left because I kept expecting a request to reconsider. And I really quite frankly
 1799 wasn't concerned about it because I was fully prepared to say okay stay. I was fully
 1800 prepared to do that. I knew the benefits of her being gone. I'm sorry, it would have been
 1801 real to the school and it would have been real to those classrooms and real to those
 1802 teachers and real to the administration because we were sucking a lot of time with her.

1803 Administratively, I have two APs and one of them is unfortunately having
 1804 medical issues. The other one is primarily a brand newbie but she's really good. All three
 1805 of us would have been involved. We pretty much tag team whoever is available. So the
 1806 decision affected those three and the counselor, though that would not have been a
 1807 negative for her since this was kind of like a client. She gets so many in the school that
 1808 this was one of hers. Then the two teachers she works with. I don't think the girl was
 1809 ever an issue for Encore teachers like PE or anybody else.

1810 She was in the classroom and received light support and we were actually
 1811 evaluating her because we thought her behavior was getting worse; all behavior and
 1812 emotional. But actually, she was not identified for special education, yet. But we had
 1813 signed off to evaluate her. We'd started the process prior to her request. So here's the
 1814 problem, one of the other costs of this is that because we signed her off, we need to
 1815 evaluate her, even though they moved her to a new school. We needed to do the
 1816 evaluation on her. I think they pushed it up and got the evaluation done; everyone did
 1817 their piece, the site evaluator, the social worker, did theirs both before she left. So there
 1818 were other people involved. She was going to be special ed. I don't think it was going to
 1819 be a heavy load. She'll be an inclusion kind of kid, not self contained.

1820 Well, there were a couple of incidents with her behavior. Not only is she a
 1821 challenging kid but she had probably two of my weakest teachers as far as being able to
 1822 deal with her kinds of behavior. I would get calls that she's just not doing anything.
 1823 Well, I don't need to come down just because she's not doing anything. Let her sit there
 1824 and do nothing. Teach your class and then come back and work with her. Don't let her
 1825 drive you crazy because she's not doing anything. But this girl would just push this
 1826 teacher's buttons by just kind of kicking back and putting her feet on the desk and saying
 1827 I'm just not doing anything and snap, that just set them off whereas some of my other
 1828 staff would just say "Go back to that table over there and I'll come back and talk to you

1829 later. “ So, had she been in a different room with stronger teachers I might not have even
1830 have thought about it. But I knew it was going to solve the problem for me.

1831 Her behavior included kicking back in the chair and things like that. She was not a
1832 violent kid and she didn’t really have problems with other students per se.

1833 But she was pushing the teachers’ buttons. It was just one more thing on top of
1834 everything. I do have a number of ED kids that are pushing kids and throwing things and
1835 that kind of stuff. So if I could just take her out of the mix so I could deal with the others
1836 that would be good for me. It would just reduce the workload and it wasn’t like I was
1837 sending her ...

1838 We’re a very heavy special ed school. I have five programs. I have three self
1839 contained autism rooms. That’s K/1, 2/3, 4/5. That’s kids that spend most their time ...I
1840 have everything from almost non-verbal kids who are probably close to ID to high
1841 functioning autistic kids who go in there. I have an ED room and I have a pre-school
1842 room. I have 2 year olds, 3and4 year olds. And for all of those are just a lot of
1843 requirements administratively.

1844 So there’s just a lot on us and if I can take somebody out I...errr...got rid of ‘em.
1845 Again, I was always mentally prepared for them to come back but it didn’t happen. So it
1846 worked out. And I will be interested to see how she’s doing but I really haven’t spoken
1847 to the other school. The transfer is all paper work so you literally just take the file and
1848 you don’t make copies of it or anything you just put it in the courier and send it over. So
1849 she’s just at a school that’s probably ten minutes away.

1850 That’s the one. When I think about ethical dilemmas that was the first time I was
1851 really balancing what’s absolutely the best for this child... You could debate this or I
1852 could try but it might be a stretch. You could make the argument that going to a new
1853 place with new people and a chance to have a new start maybe would reset her and
1854 maybe make her try to work a little better at it and then be more successful and work on
1855 her schooling. You could maybe make that argument. I’m not sure I’d believe it but I
1856 could make that argument. I don’t think I was hurting her particularly. I do know that I
1857 think I was helping our school which I think was helping many other kids at the same
1858 time.

1859 She just put in the original request. She talked to the secretary who just brought it
1860 back to me but she didn’t talk to me. And I’m going to be honest, I was grateful that I
1861 didn’t have to face her. She just brought it in. Actually, to go back to time, I had it on my
1862 desk for like five days. I knew when I got it. I thought, “Oh boy, I’d love to turn this
1863 down.” Then I thought about it and I did some calculations and then I did turn it down
1864 and I fully expected her to come back. I expected her to come back. And then I thought I
1865 would get the good of supporting the staff. Most of the people - 75% - I turn down
1866 usually complain or come back and request reconsideration and quite frankly if she came
1867 in and said “Look, I understand but she’s been here for so long and she’s got these
1868 relationships and her friends are here and she really doesn’t want to go and couldn’t she
1869” If she had done that I probably would have said “Yeah, she can stay.”

1870 The only real reason she stated on the form was one that I almost always approve
1871 which is that she’s a fifth grader. I think she was probably with our school since
1872 kindergarten. I think she might have just written that on there as a reason. So that was my
1873 ethical dilemma.

1874 I'd like to follow up and see how she's doing. I will say now not one person in the
 1875 school ever came to me to say you should have approved that. Most people were happy
 1876 about it. The word spread like wildfire that so-and-so might be leaving. I might have
 1877 said that I was thinking about it. You know I told you the way I float ideas. I might have
 1878 said that because normally this paperwork comes in and you make a call right away for
 1879 everyone's sake; the family's sake and everyone else. But I sat on it for a little while. I
 1880 know the word spread like wildfire. The two teachers directly involved came and said
 1881 "Hey I heard that so-and-so is leaving" and I said "Yeah, maybe...maybe." But nobody
 1882 really said one way or the other. Nobody said "I'm really glad you didn't approve it."
 1883 Also some might not have known that there was even a transfer request. They just knew
 1884 she'd gone.

1885 I don't think it made an impact on any other community members. The staff
 1886 certainly would be aware that she was gone. I not sure how but I'm sure word spread
 1887 around that I turned it down. I don't think other parents would be involved unless the
 1888 family was to tell somebody. And even if they did I had a pretty good relationship with
 1889 the parents. And again, they didn't even ask. Many people, if they have one that they
 1890 know is iffy, will come in and request a meeting or a conference so we can talk about it.
 1891 I've turned other requests down from people who fought me on it but they just didn't
 1892 have a leg to stand on and there were other issues. This one was pretty clean.

1893 This just came to mind and all of these happened just this year. We have a
 1894 family; I'm going to call them the Smiths. And the mother of the Smiths lost custody of
 1895 her kids, four kids like five years ago. The kids have all been living with her mother.
 1896 And the kids were doing okay in school, not great but okay. One of them was having
 1897 some challenges. Well mom had been incarcerated and came out this summer and we
 1898 saw the difference in the kids. And then mom got custody back from the courts and one
 1899 of the children in particular was having a real hard time. We were evaluating him for
 1900 ED. We fully expected him to go through because he was becoming a real problem. He
 1901 was a real problem. We were having to clear classrooms and bring him out; kicking and
 1902 hitting and we suspended him a number of days. And mom was getting frustrated with us
 1903 but we're not a medical facility. We didn't say this to her. We're a school and we're
 1904 trying to teach. Anyway, she came in one day and said "I want all my kids stuff. We're
 1905 moving." And we went...Yay. No, what we actually said was can you fill out this
 1906 transfer paper work; not transfer like the other but transfer paperwork. She said "No I
 1907 don't have time. I'm taking the kids and we're gone." "Well are you going to another
 1908 school in this county." "Yeah, we're going to another school and we'll be okay." So
 1909 boom, they're gone...this is a Thursday or Friday.

1910 And again I had a very similar feeling that I had with Mary. We've had these kids
 1911 a long time and we understand these kids; there are four of them. But one in particular is
 1912 totally destroying a classroom. And so what are we going to do? What do we do? Well
 1913 we're hoping she is going to go to another school and register but she doesn't do it. Time
 1914 passes and she doesn't do it. More time and still she doesn't do it. She then does call up a
 1915 school. Good, she's putting them in school. But then she's not doing anything and so
 1916 now we're in a quandary. We're now in a quandary where we're still the ones who have
 1917 her files so we're on the hook. We're still carrying their absences now. And it's
 1918 complicated by the holidays and those early days in November where we had voting and
 1919 teacher workdays and stuff. The kids have only been out 10 or 11 days now. Well, two

1920 or three days ago we called the attendance office and said okay guys what do we do here
 1921 because we're concerned? We don't know where she is with the kids. We're making
 1922 phone calls to mom. Wait, someone is making phone calls to mom; social worker or
 1923 guidance. We get a lot of run around and stories. And then the attendance office goes out
 1924 to try to find mom. They call up mom and make contact. There are pitfalls if you come
 1925 into a story late in the game and the attendance office is not aware of the whole custody
 1926 issue where mom lost custody and then got custody back. Mom has a well documented
 1927 mental health issues. And we've had some challenges with her. The first time the
 1928 attendance officer talks to her she gets a very nice story; the kids have been sick and
 1929 everything is fine now and I'm going to register as soon as I get a copy of some
 1930 paperwork. And then the attendance officer calls us and says "Hey I had a really nice talk
 1931 with the mother" and we're like "Oh my gosh...NO,NO, NO"

1932 You need to set firm boundaries. We want to say and probably did say "I'm sorry
 1933 but she was lying to you all the way." And we ended up calling CPS. I hesitated on this a
 1934 little bit but I called CPS; Child Protective Services, because we're worried about the
 1935 kids. I did this just today. And actually Child Protective Services says we don't deal with
 1936 educational neglect, at least in this county they don't. Surprising. They say it falls back
 1937 on the attendance people. So I then went back to the attendance people to get on them to
 1938 say "Look we have to figure this out because these kids have got to be in school."
 1939 Allegedly, the attendance people are expert in this. So this situation was different but I
 1940 had much the same feeling with this group. When mom said we're taking the kids we
 1941 were like hallelujah. You know, you're a very difficult parent. I had shouting matches in
 1942 the front office with this mom where I said m'am can we go back to my office so we can
 1943 talk and she responded "No, you're not going to take me back I'm going to sit right here
 1944 and talk to you." So the exchange takes place right in front of God and Country and I can
 1945 do it, don't get me wrong but it was...some things I'd rather do, some things I'd rather
 1946 not. But it was the same thing that I had with Mary of boy I happy they're gone. But this
 1947 one is worse in that while we're not worried about them physically right now, we are
 1948 worried about them educationally. And right now they're still not in a school. We're
 1949 doing everything we can to try to get them back in school. Not necessarily get them back
 1950 to our school because she's not going that way but at least try to get them into a school.
 1951 But again I had that same kind of feeling.

1952 I'm very conscious that what happens in K-2, and this goes back to things I've
 1953 studied; what happens in K-2..I can draw a straight line from first grade reading to
 1954 graduation. And so I know if we don't get these kids back into a good, positive
 1955 environment, with them learning, they are going to be guaranteed drop outs in ten years
 1956 and obviously we don't want that. And I do see it with those eyes. I don't look at it in
 1957 the short term. I look at it in the long term.

1958 **Participant 4**

1959 I started off in this school division. This is my 21st year. I started as an
 1960 instructional assistant. The following year I became a related service provider for a
 1961 student with a disability. I did that for six or seven years through the elementary school
 1962 years. Then I was presented with a job to go to the high school to teach World
 1963 Languages. I taught there, at one school, for seven years and during that time I got my
 1964 masters in admin. I then became an assistant principal at another school for four years,

1965 then at another school still in the same division for two years and this is the start of my
 1966 fourth year at this school as principal. So that's where I've been.

1967 Well, right now as the principal it is important to me to build a trusting
 1968 atmosphere with my administrators so that they can come to me. They know what's
 1969 going on and can tell me what's happening and I can be supportive of them so they can
 1970 grow as leaders so that they will eventually be where I am right now. I want to help them
 1971 in their growth. Relationships with my instructional leadership team- my department
 1972 chairs – are also important for really understanding that they keep me informed about the
 1973 things that are happening in the classroom day to day. They're the ones that just inform
 1974 me of everything that's happening. And then of course, with my teachers; I periodically
 1975 check on them, try to figure out where they want to go, what they're doing in their
 1976 classrooms. I try to stop by as much as I can. The next group would be students; they'll
 1977 tell you everything. I've found that as the principal it becomes harder and harder to keep
 1978 those connections with students because you're pulled in so many different meetings with
 1979 adults so I have to schedule that time with students to really be able to find that time to
 1980 know what's going on. Parents; my PTSA is huge for me. I meet with them once a
 1981 month during the day. I contact them during the week to let them know what's going on.
 1982 I try with my parents that email me with questions or things like that to I always pick up
 1983 the phone and call them back. I always try whenever I'm out in the halls or in the front
 1984 office to talk to people who are out there. My school board member who oversees me is a
 1985 hugely important relationship. I only have one person. Some people have two. They
 1986 have two different school board members for their district. I only have one person. Thank
 1987 goodness. I will check in with her on a monthly basis or if something big is about to go
 1988 down. I tell her this is what's coming up and just so you know if you start getting phone
 1989 calls, here's the background from my point of view. Or I'll just tell her some things that
 1990 are happening in the community or send her positives that have happened with some of
 1991 the kids. My AA of course, that's huge. So I think those are the main players. Also ,
 1992 relationships with my assistant superintendent and all those people above me are
 1993 important. I try to inform them of difficult situations coming down the road that I foresee
 1994 so that they're aware of it as well.

1995 I went to a meeting with all the principals and people were complaining around
 1996 the building about me being out of the building all the time. I am. If you look at my
 1997 calendar for two weeks straight I was not in the building at all. I was being pulled to
 1998 different meetings around the county for instructional services and advanced placement
 1999 evaluations. I literally was not here for two weeks and it's really my first time that I
 2000 thought whoa. This has been way too much. Now we're doing our own study to say how
 2001 much we're out of the building because the more senior you get the more you're pulled
 2002 into different meetings to be asked questions and to represent... Then at night I'm always
 2003 out. I'm out three or four nights a week; Saturdays also.

2004 Now it's basketball season. There was Friday night football. I have plays I attend.
 2005 I have band, orchestra and PTSA meetings. On the weekends I went to "It's Academic"
 2006 or I go to basketball tournaments. You have to go to every sport so you go to the track
 2007 meet. You are pulled over there to do this and that and you don't want to miss anything.
 2008 While I have my APs, I also have to be cognizant of their lives and so I'll do Senior
 2009 Nights and then every once in a while I'll say to them, "I got your night tonight. I got it,"
 2010 so that they can be with their family. I'm single so it's not as difficult. Though I do have

2011 my dog . So there are just those kinds of things that I think I need to be at and it's
2012 appreciated. I know that. It's a good time to talk to parents. I just had a parent come up
2013 to me and say thank you for coming because nobody ever goes to the girls' basketball
2014 games; like nobody. And so I make a point of making sure that I go to their games and
2015 they gave me a shirt and it's nice that they recognize that I go. It's time consuming and
2016 it's tiring because I still have to be at work the very next day, on time, and ready to go.

2017 I start at 6:30 in the morning. I like to be the first one here. I want teachers to
2018 know that I'm here when I'm here. I'm just so ingrained. I try to do morning meetings.
2019 My APs usually get here around 7:00. From 7:00-8:00 is time that people know that they
2020 can come in and stop in and talk to me. At 8:00 I go through the halls. School starts at
2021 8:10 now. I walk through the halls and get everybody organized; make sure teachers are
2022 here, check on students, do all that kind of stuff. Then my day is usually full of meetings.
2023 Meeting with this person or so and so needs to do this. I do complete evaluations; not
2024 that many. I only have four teachers that are mine to do. I do four teachers and they're
2025 my department chairs because I don't want the person that the AP works with closely to
2026 be having a conflict so I take that off them. And I also do teachers who are not
2027 performing; if I think that it's time for them to get extra support. So I do those right now.

2028 My department chairs; I don't think they're too excited that it's me doing their
2029 evaluation. The one who right now is under evaluation, I took over two years ago so he
2030 knows I'm concerned. Nobody else knows. I do it very quietly. The kids when I walk
2031 into the classroom know why I'm there. You can tell though. I stop in all the classrooms
2032 but with his particular classroom, I write and I stay the entire period so the kids know.
2033 The other ones, if it is a good teacher I'll just do a thingy and send them a quick thing; so
2034 it's not a big deal. It's funny, just this year one of my APs is going out for 12 weeks, and
2035 I asked, if they would like me to continue for them. Teachers would have a choice. They
2036 could have the person filling in do their evaluations or they could have me and I thought
2037 that some people would ask that I would do it. Well they all went running to the new
2038 person. My God please don't let E. do it and I wasn't really sure why. I'm very thorough
2039 in my comments but I didn't know why. I thought that I'd have at least a couple people
2040 that would ask me to do it but nobody did.

2041 I do that and I might be a quick meeting with parents. My APs do a great job in
2042 meeting with parents and not having to go to the next level. They are strong enough to be
2043 able to have those conversations and the parent feels satisfied. Every once in a while I
2044 will get.. I will say though that now that I'm in my fourth year it is very rare that I have to
2045 have a parent conversation. My first year, it was constant parents. And it was working
2046 together as a team that we had to work on what do we believe in, so that we all give out
2047 the same message. The parent conversations have lessened. It's more of going and doing
2048 things within the county; going to instructional services, doing those meetings. I'd have
2049 to pull out my calendar to see what all the stuff is that I go to because I really just don't
2050 know. I mean, what have I been doing? But it's mostly those kinds of meetings.

2051 As an administrative team, we've been together for four years and my first year
2052 we all came with varying backgrounds. You know I had a very new admin team. I had
2053 one assistant principal who had been an assistant principal previously but was in his
2054 second year. I had someone who was a brand new administrator and new to the county
2055 but was in her second year; starting her second year when I was starting my first year. I

2056 hired two others that November. I started that September. I hired two more in November
2057 who were brand new.

2058 So I have four APs; one was experienced, one was barely with one year under her
2059 belt and two were brand new. And then my athletic director was here the April before I
2060 was hired and my DSS (director of student services) was here the year before and then
2061 the principal went out before the summer and so they were alone from June until I got
2062 hired in September. And so it was two APs, a DSS and a DSA running everything.

2063 We're at about 21-hundred students. When I got here I was only supposed to
2064 have three APs but we went over the 2000 mark and so they said, you're hiring this one
2065 why don't you hire your fourth and so that was fortuitous.

2066 You know we started working on things and started noticing that we all had to
2067 figure out where are the things that we believe in. So we had somebody come in and
2068 work with us on building what our mission and vision was; our goals; what do we see as
2069 where we want to take this school in three years in five years where do we want to be? So
2070 we started working just on that piece. We built our own mission and vision; how do we
2071 handle discipline? You know, what's our goal of discipline? Is it to punish or is it to get
2072 these kids on the right track? When we go and evaluate teachers, what is it that we're
2073 looking for? What do we want our school to be? We have collaborative teams. How do
2074 we form them? So we started working on those. We read books together. We did those
2075 things together and we discussed at every meeting. The summer we then put our year
2076 plan together about what the next two years would look like. What were our goals and if
2077 we met our goals along the way? So I worked on them probably the first two years. My
2078 third year I brought in my instructional leadership team. They needed to be worked on.
2079 Here I am now really working on team needs and trying to get them to be on the same
2080 page and so it's probably a five year goal to get everybody where they needs to go. And
2081 I've been lucky. I haven't had turnover. The admin team; that can happen but it hasn't
2082 happened. And my instructional leadership team; I changed that my second year. It was
2083 people who had been here for eighteen years and was department chair and I changed
2084 that. That was big. So getting the right people to move the school forward; to get them
2085 going where we need to go. So it was a lot of working to get my admin team to help
2086 move that forward and we knew we had to start with the team; with the instructional
2087 team.

2088 Having everyone on the same page is... We have our disagreements; just as
2089 everybody does. I think that... I will say that the one thing they know is that when they
2090 are talking to parents, they know what I would say. For example; I have a kid who was
2091 in the main stream classes and totally disruptive of everything in the educational system.
2092 But of course, he is special ed and he has his rights. He has the right to be in that
2093 classroom. And so I sat my AP down and I said "Look, I understand that this child has his
2094 rights but you have to start thinking about thirty others." Because it was so disruptive that
2095 the class couldn't keep moving forward. I had a teacher in tears. She walked into the
2096 room one day and she looked at me and she started crying. And I said "While I know
2097 you are focused on the one you have to think about the thirty." And then I called in the
2098 person running the meeting with the parent and I said these are the expectations. It is not
2099 to say that his education is not important. He was still going to get his education but he
2100 can't keep disrupting this classroom. They went in knowing what I would say. So they
2101 know that I believe that they should have this to move forward, the kid has every right to

2102 be there but they have to look at the larger picture too. So being able to have those open
2103 conversations; if I didn't start this my first year I wouldn't be able to have those
2104 conversations now to say here we are. And we had open dialogue; I didn't just go in and
2105 say bam this is what's happening. We had a little family fight and I had to talk to that
2106 person and say what about the thirty? And she just looked at me and said you're right. I
2107 wasn't thinking about the thirty. I was thinking about the one student and all of his rights.

2108 It resolved pretty well. He's had a change to self contained which was the better
2109 thing. Parents were able to recognize because we had the behavior plan all set and in
2110 place to show with the disruptions and how many times he was being taken out of the
2111 classroom. He wasn't being in the classroom and then the special ed. teacher had to go
2112 with him and those other kids weren't being educated. So we were able to lay out to the
2113 parents this is what's occurring and so he was removed from that class to be able to get
2114 into the smaller environment and actually he's been able to stay in the classes longer so it
2115 worked out.

2116 The process was probably from September to.... It just resolved itself at the
2117 beginning on November. That's how long it took. Well, he's been in our school for a
2118 long time. It's been a long process. It's been four years. And we've know about it but it's
2119 been ratcheting up and getting worse and worse. It's something he just can't control and
2120 we know it but then there are times when we know he can control it. And the teachers
2121 are so nice and they don't want to get him in trouble and was it behavior or was it the
2122 disability and so it was hard to say which one it is.

2123 People sometimes responded; That's the way he is and people would just move
2124 on. I'm like that's not acceptable. So there are times that we have our disagreements but
2125 it's that open communication but I think it is also that we've just been working together
2126 so long. I had one disagreement that I think they were surprised at what I said. I had a
2127 boy who was in class and he went up to a science classroom after his class and he said
2128 about a teacher "Gosh I can't stand her. Don't you think we should all just go down
2129 there? Does anybody want to go down with me and I'll kill her?" And so that teacher said
2130 she wanted him removed even though she said that she wasn't threatened by him; but she
2131 wanted him removed still. She had talked to him and she said I'm not threatened but I
2132 want him removed after thinking about it. And my AP removed him without ever having
2133 a talk with the parent. Without having a talk with all of them together and I said I
2134 disagree. What is he learning from it and what is this teacher learning from it? And the
2135 parent, luckily after it was done was like "Oh yeah he should be moved." So it didn't
2136 come down but I believed that he can't be moved until you have a student / parent /
2137 teacher conversation to say how can we make it better. How can we make sure that you
2138 feel safe going in or what did you do wrong? And they were surprised and they said
2139 "You always say safety first." I always think of safety first. But nobody felt threatened
2140 so why are we doing this? But the decision had already been done so I wasn't too
2141 pleased with that one.

2142 It might have been rewarding him. I'm sure being removed from the class was a
2143 bonus for him. And I'm like..what did he learn? He can just do what he wants and move
2144 on with his day. And just because you say that doesn't mean everybody automatically
2145 stops. And the teacher wasn't threatened. Come on. So we had a disagreement about
2146 that. I was surprised by the reaction about it from my AP. He said "What does it matter?
2147 I did it. It's done." And I thought oh, we will stop right there. You're wrong. Those

2148 kinds of things still do happen. But you know, we move on and we learn a little bit more
2149 because my job is to prepare them. To have them think about the other side. Now
2150 everybody's on the same page. I think we are. I would say that we have a very
2151 cooperative working environment.

2152 Safety is huge for me. That's the number one thing. When I first got here all the
2153 doors were open. And I decided we're locking this down. We were probably the second
2154 school in the county to get the locks and all that on our doors. I got a new SRO. It was
2155 huge for me to get him at my school. I worked with him at one of my prior school
2156 assignments and I knew he would make great relationships with kids. And since he's
2157 been here - I would say my first year we probably had 17 expulsions. This year I've had
2158 zero. Only two suspensions and that's it for this year.

2159 Other things that we're on the same page about include the curriculum teams and
2160 where we want to go forward with that. You know, making sure that there are meetings
2161 and they're meeting and going through... What we want to get to is the ... and this is the
2162 hardest part, it is not just meeting, it's working with the teams, being able to analyze the
2163 data that they see about the kids and to know the strengths and weakness and not just say
2164 I already know he's going to fail. I can't take that. I want them to know their kids and I
2165 want them to know that if Tim did not understand this part of the lesson then I have to
2166 find a way to get him to get back to it as evidenced by this. So we are in agreement that
2167 we go to the meeting to make sure that they are going through these dialogues and are
2168 talking with one another. It's harder to move some teams forward and as a result I got an
2169 instructional coach to help my APs go through that cycle with the teachers and take some
2170 of the pressure off them because they can't be at everything. I got somebody to come in
2171 and help them go through the process and that's something that we truly believe in.
2172 That's what is going to make every kid successful. And that's our ultimate goal; that
2173 every kid will walk out of here with a great education and will have been challenged
2174 along the way. So I think we all agree on that. We also agree on the mental well being of
2175 our students and our staff; that we don't want them to be over pressured or to have things
2176 be too demanding on them. We want them to know where their level is and maybe go
2177 above that a little bit but not necessarily to go and take six APs. So when we talk to the
2178 kids we try to talk to them about what is healthy and how to go home and still be a nice
2179 kid. So those are our top three that we work on the most.

2180 In addition to the work here in the building, I do a lot of it work at home too
2181 because I don't have time to finish it here. And I need to be home so I do a lot of my
2182 writing... I have a lot of evaluations that I need to do. I don't do that during the school
2183 day. I do that at home. I do a lot of my phone calls driving home because I don't have
2184 time or somebody is always popping in if I'm sitting in my office. I don't usually get a
2185 moment's peace. I was looking forward to today and then everybody said they were
2186 coming in and I thought please don't come in. I really don't want to see you. But they're
2187 here. I'm just so bummed. Why are you guys coming today? So I'm looking forward to
2188 hopefully tomorrow that nobody comes in to school. I would say that if I'm not in here in
2189 my office then I'm probably in a counselors office or I'm in a teacher's room or I'm
2190 sitting and talking with someone in here. I am rarely ever alone. I never get a moment's
2191 break. It's weird.

2192 Physically, being a school leader is tiring. Sometimes you forget how tiring it is.
2193 The other day, on Friday, we had a two hour early release and I left at my normal time

2194 and I got home and I was supposed to go to a basketball game at night. And I was
2195 exhausted. It all just hit me. And I got home and I laid down next to my dog and all of a
2196 sudden it was an hour later and I thought, I've got to go to a basketball game. It just never
2197 leaves you. It just, you know, you're ... I'll wake up at two in the morning and I'm like I
2198 have to do this and do that. It just doesn't stop. I think my dad always put it best. He
2199 was in a high stakes job with the Federal Government and he was very high up but he
2200 said he was always able to leave it at work. Then he became a teacher upon his
2201 retirement and he said "It never goes away." It's with you 24/7. You always think about
2202 that kid or how I could help that person. It's always thinking about what more can you
2203 do for somebody else. Often if a conflict is happening or is starting to brew, I'm thinking
2204 about it and I'll wake up in the middle of the night. I'll take an Advil PM some nights
2205 because I just can't think. I just have to let something go because I have to get sleep.
2206 Spring is the worst because you have all the honor things you go to and the end of the
2207 year celebrations and then our spring sports do well so they keep going to the finals and
2208 you're like oh, great, they're winning. So that's when it gets to be really difficult. That's
2209 the hardest. It's hard.

2210 I'm a great talker on these things. There should be an ethic for school leadership
2211 and... The thing is I guess.... We as a group were talking about this the other day. Some
2212 of my colleagues are also principals and they You're an AP. You learn from doing.
2213 Because, you know, your classes are all theoretical. It's just like being a teacher. You
2214 learn all the theories about how you are supposed to do things and then a kid comes in
2215 and swears or kicks somebody and you don't know what to do at that time. I didn't learn
2216 that in my Educational Foundations class so what am I supposed to do? It's the same
2217 thing with school leadership. I remember when I started as an AP I put a student up for
2218 expulsion and then I had to write this packet. And I didn't know. I was like I have to do
2219 what? I didn't know I had to do any of that stuff and I had to write it a certain way with a
2220 certain format and my mentor said that you need to do this, this and this. If I didn't have
2221 my mentor I would never have learned it. And I thought; why is it her responsibility to
2222 teach me all that stuff. But she taught me all of it. As a principal, I'm here by myself. I
2223 have to make all the decisions. I rely on calling somebody on the phone and hoping that
2224 they're not too busy and that they can sit there and answer my questions. There's just
2225 this... What do you do if? And there is no continuous professional development along the
2226 way. For example; if you went to another company there are all these leadership building
2227 companies out there. Well who is building us while we are doing the job. They give us
2228 the keys to the building and say "Here you go and now here's a million dollar budget"
2229 and I've never had to deal with finances before and they try their best but it's a lot of
2230 relying on others to tell me what to do from their own experience. There is not a person
2231 out there who works on what are my strengths and weaknesses' to say this is what you
2232 need to work on. There is nobody there to tell me that kind of thing and I think that I
2233 would love to have somebody come in and tell me what my weaknesses are. I know what
2234 my weaknesses are. I think because people tell me enough but there are things that I
2235 mess up a lot. Those are the things that I need help in. I need help in certain things and I
2236 have to rely on my colleagues who are just as busy to assist me with that.

2237 This relates to school leadership ethics because I get frustrated with myself or I
2238 don't know where to go. And am I making the right decision? It's that questioning of
2239 myself. From my past experiences am I making the right decision? Is that the right thing

2240 to do? I hope so. What guides my decision is what's best for students. And that's the
2241 only thing that I can say at the end of the day. So I called one of my colleagues once and
2242 I was just having a horrible, horrible week. She and I would talk on the way home. And
2243 so I said "How do you do it? How do you make it through all this." And she said "You
2244 know I struggled for many years but at the end of the day as I make my drive home I
2245 think about my day and I ask myself did I do the very best that I can today? If I can say
2246 that then I have a clean conscience about what I have done." My mom and I had a
2247 discussion once and she said "You need to take that advice because this is killing you,"
2248 because I was taking it so personally. And she's like, I would like my daughter back.
2249 There are a lot of decisions that you make that are just so difficult and I get to call
2250 somebody on a phone and try to make sure I'm making the right decision. It's hard. So
2251 are you making the right decision? I don't know. At the end of the day I hope I am. I'm
2252 impacting students lives, impacting teachers lives, families,....

2253 I've also learned.... Another principal taught me nothing in education is an
2254 emergency so take the time to make the decision. I used to be really quick to the draw
2255 because I just wanted it to be this is it. This is done. And I remember earlier this year
2256 where I made a decision and I thought why am I brushing this so quickly. I have all the
2257 time in the world to make this decision to make sure it's the right one for this student. But
2258 I have their best interest in mind and I'm following the rules. So I was able to call
2259 people. This is my situation. This is what I plan to do. And then I call another person.
2260 This is my situation. Am I hitting all of the rules? So I hit different offices of people I
2261 need to talk to. And I try to get all the facts first. And then make sure that I... that's the
2262 best that I can do.

2263 I can talk about specific experiences I've had. There are two that I'm not going to
2264 talk about that have affected me greatly. I'm just not going to talk about two. One
2265 situation that I can tell you about happened in my first year here. I had a theater director
2266 who did whatever she wanted; highly acclaimed. Our band is probably the top in the
2267 country. We're up for this stuff. Our theater is acclaimed. There is a lot of visibility in
2268 those programs. I'm more of a sports person. I get the whole rah-rah. But she doesn't
2269 follow the rules. But I didn't know to what extent she didn't follow the rules. What you
2270 don't know, you don't know. I am supposed to be the contract signer. I sign all contracts.
2271 No one else can sign a contract. I found out that she was signing her own contracts. I'm
2272 like, you can't do that. So I brought her in and I talked to her about it. She had gone
2273 ahead and she had already announced to her class that they were going to be doing... We
2274 also have a high school theater critic and journalism program around here. It's a big
2275 thing. So we're going to be doing a play. I didn't think anything of it. Whatever.

2276 And I started getting calls from conservative members of the community. Well,
2277 the play was rather risqué to say the very least. It was about teenage suicide, revolting
2278 against the parents, and it had a group masturbation on stage. I've never said that word
2279 out loud and found myself saying it to my mother one day and telling her about the play
2280 and I blush from head to toe. And so this is my first year and my assistant principal is
2281 here with me and we are getting non-stop emails all weekend long because she had made
2282 an announcement on Friday. And people are like; How dare you do this? How can you?
2283 And I'm just like "Oh my God, what did I do?" It was my first year. I came in and I
2284 talked to my AP and I said what in the world are we doing and she said "I don't know
2285 anything about this play." So we both read the play and we're like oh my gosh. So then

2286 we talk to the teacher and I'm like; you can't do this. This is too risqué. She replied, "It's
 2287 already been announced. What are you going to say?" And the kids were all excited
 2288 because this is of course what theater kids want to do. Then the rights advocates all start
 2289 coming in. They express that this is what theater is all about and how dare you limit their
 2290 free speech.

2291 All this kind of stuff and I'm just like; I don't know what to do. I call over to my
 2292 assistant superintendent and say I need some help and he says well, it's a fine pickle.
 2293 Because no matter what, even though I didn't make any decision and it was done for me
 2294 it's all my fault. One way, I'm doomed. I'm damned if I do and I'm damned if I don't. I
 2295 learned a lot. I called the play company that we buy the rights from and he said you have
 2296 the rights for next twenty days and if you don't sign the contract within twenty days
 2297 there's another company that is probably going to pick it up. I think it was twenty days. It
 2298 was short. And so I said "If I don't sign it somebody else is going to pick it up and we
 2299 can't have rights to it?" and he said "Yes." And I said "Good." So I kept that quiet. You
 2300 are not allowed to do the play within 35 miles of another play. And so one of the theater
 2301 companies around here, I can't remember which one it was, picked it up. It was not
 2302 another high school but a community or other theater that picked it up. So I was like;
 2303 another company's picked it up and now it doesn't matter and then I didn't have to make
 2304 a decision either way.

2305 That was just luck. But during that time, it defined me as being pitted against the
 2306 theater community. The following year we didn't have such a bad year but she knew that
 2307 I had to sign the contracts but then it was me being pitted against the boosters because of
 2308 the way the finances were being handled. I'll say that last year was horrendous. That she
 2309 wanted to... what did she want to do? Oh, I finally got a parent to complain about her. I
 2310 finally got somebody to send me all the things she was doing because she wouldn't come
 2311 to school on time, she did all these unethical things. The kids were here until two in the
 2312 morning but they would lie for her. And the parents would lie. Every single time it was
 2313 dismissed as it's just because you don't like us and I tried to communicate that no, it's not
 2314 following the rules. It's not good for kids to be out until two o'clock in the morning when
 2315 they have school the next day. It's not correct. So we put a limit. They can't be here after
 2316 ten o'clock. I got some flax for that. You don't like the theater. No, it's just... You
 2317 know, that's what defined what it was.

2318 So at the end of the ...and of course they end up winning the high school critic
 2319 program award for best play and all that stuff but it was just an astronomical amount of
 2320 money that they spent. It was horrible the things that happened. She decided she was
 2321 going to quit because she knew her time was up with me because I was going to write her
 2322 up. I was just going to go and evaluate her for everything and hold her to every rule. And
 2323 so she quit. And she puts on this big production. She did it at the awards ceremony
 2324 where she gives out the best actor and all this stuff. She made it all about her which I
 2325 was hoping people would start seeing through that she made it about her. So she makes
 2326 this big long speech about how she's done this and she's done this and administration
 2327 won't let me do that and administration won't let me do this. So she's like you're going
 2328 to get a big backlash...you're going to get so much crap because parents are going to be
 2329 upset that I'm leaving. I didn't get one thing.

2330 And nothing happened. I mean, I've had to clean up her mess. It's costing me
 2331 thousands of dollars to clean up the mess but I do it because our kids want to put on a

2332 great production. And then I had to find a teacher that was appropriate. I had to find
2333 somebody that could come in behind her. They're going to hate no matter what that
2334 person does so I split the position in two. I got a brand new guy to take the level ones
2335 and a retired guy to take the higher kids so that this guy could be the nice guy and start
2336 building a program to where it's going and this guy could say, these are the rules. So he
2337 could teach us what are the appropriate rules. It worked out but its catching me up for
2338 three years. And it was building relationships with parents who thought I was this
2339 horrible mean person. That's what the teacher would go tell them. The principal won't
2340 let us do this. And then I'd start meeting with them and they're like you're not so bad.
2341 Nope, I didn't think I was. And they started seeing that I had the best interest of the kids
2342 in mind. I think the kids probably still don't like me much because she's gone.

2343 There are probably about twenty of her students still in the school. And next year
2344 they'll all be... the seniors are the ones that cared; current seniors. She left last school
2345 year. The juniors, they kind of started seeing through her because they just started
2346 seeing. They weren't the favorites and they weren't the ones leading up to it. You don't
2347 become a favorite until you could get her a reward. And the program probably is
2348 becoming a little weaker; the skill set. So, she probably saw that on the wall too. But we
2349 put on a great production just a little while ago and they did it fabulously. It was rather
2350 risqué but I had the faith in the teacher to do it appropriately and I didn't have one
2351 complaint. So we're rebuilding the program. But those were some really tough times.
2352 That was really hard.

2353 I worked with this teacher for three years. And three years that she would say
2354 something to my face, lie to me. I would always say that I was a day late and a dollar
2355 short on her. She was always one step ahead because I didn't know enough about
2356 productions. So I learned a ton and my AP and I worked through everything but she
2357 would always do one thing we just weren't prepared for and we're like how did
2358 we...because we just didn't think like that and she always thought of something. For
2359 three years this was a contentious thing. She usually came to me as the nicer person and
2360 then went down to the AP and they met weekly and stuff like that. In the end it's better
2361 for kids but she's still involved in their lives because she does these You-tube things with
2362 them but she's down in Texas now so that is far enough away. But she'll be a lasting
2363 impact probably for the next two years. The parent community; it was building the parent
2364 relationships along the way to ensure that they knew that this is what was really
2365 happening. Getting the right people on board.

2366 For this stuff I usually met with people in my office and I never met with anybody
2367 alone. I always made sure I had somebody there. It was a lot of us learning together but
2368 I had to show them this is the proper stuff that we have to do. Working with the booster
2369 president and saying this is what's happened. And I was honest. This is safety first and
2370 this is what we need to make sure that safety is first and these are all the safety things that
2371 could have been going wrong. And then the cost of fixing everything that was destroyed.
2372 I mean, she destroyed it. It probably cost me about \$200,000 to fix everything that she
2373 has destroyed; like our sound system. She tore it apart to try to make it state of the art. It
2374 hasn't been replaced in I don't know how many years; probably thirty years. You take
2375 this equipment and destroyed it. So we had to try to put it back together. Well we
2376 couldn't. When we got it all back. They also went on a road trip and they took all of our
2377 equipment without asking me; took lights, took mics, took everything and trying to

2378 rebuild it is.... I've had to have sound engineers... It was my entire summer this year
 2379 was just trying to ... It's all I did was work on trying to restore the theater. I had kids
 2380 come in and volunteer to help clean it up. I had engineers coming in the place just trying
 2381 to get it ready for the start of school. We couldn't use it for the first three weeks because
 2382 it had no sound system. We had a makeshift sound system and I had to figure out what
 2383 kind of sound system we were going to get. Curtains, which are \$40,000 are destroyed.
 2384 She just rolled them and put them under the stage and mice ate them. The riggings she
 2385 had held up by ... she had moved it so often that it was held up by towels. So all of this
 2386 stuff had to be fixed first so we could safely put on a production. And I can't put the cost
 2387 and I don't have the money so we'll figure it out slowly. We made a profit. We finally
 2388 made a profit this year. And we immediately put it toward the deficit.

2389 When we first met with the students it was really difficult because I had to go
 2390 down there and have a conversation with them about what was inappropriate about the
 2391 play. And they were just like we just want to do this play. It's cutting edge. It's this. It's
 2392 that. And I had to try to talk to them about but this is a school, you know, there's a fine
 2393 line between being creative and following school rules because we want to invite the
 2394 community in; to come in and see this and we want them to see you and put on what you
 2395 do great but we have to do it within the realm of school rules. And they didn't want to
 2396 hear it. So I was the wicked witch of the West for a while. And it was building those
 2397 relationships up with those students. I think... It's hard to build up those relationships
 2398 because I didn't get to see them every day and she got to say whatever she wanted to
 2399 about me. So there were times that I think that I felt positive with them but she
 2400 would...there was always something that came in and destroyed it along the way ...
 2401 something always happened. So now the teachers will say to me, we're doing this and it
 2402 would be great if you come down here and show the kids that you are supportive of them.
 2403 So I have those teachers now. My choir teacher, who works with a lot of the kids, knew I
 2404 was going to miss their Halloween show and so she goes; we're going to do a dress
 2405 rehearsal here and why don't you come down and sit with us and we'll do it afterschool
 2406 and then you can give them feedback . Perfect. So it's having those teachers really
 2407 understand ... so having the choir teacher and the band teacher... they always talk to the
 2408 parents about how I support ...because I'm able to work with them and I've been very
 2409 supportive of them and so then they're able to say why am I hearing this from these two
 2410 teachers who are well respected but this one over here is saying this and this. People are
 2411 smart enough to piece it together. So it's also just getting that message to other teachers
 2412 and working with the other teachers to say here I am... that's been helpful through the
 2413 year. So, the ethical dilemma in this case was should the play go on or should it not?
 2414 That was ..creativity or this ..

2415 I'm trying to think... I think that part of it is that when you come in people are
 2416 optimistic and you have all these teachers come down and they're like "oh you know our
 2417 last principal this and our last principal that. It was so horrible" and this kind of stuff and
 2418 so the first year is a honeymoon. Second year, you're building your relationships and
 2419 you're starting to see what you want to see and you start to see a little bit of the ugly. And
 2420 the third year the ugly just comes out.

2421 So this year has been difficult because I would say there are teachers who don't
 2422 want me to have operating curriculum teams. They don't want to have that weekly
 2423 meeting. They don't want... They've been teaching for twenty-plus years and it's

2424 worked great for them. "I don't know why you're making me change this." Because
2425 they didn't think I was really going to make them do it. We all say we're going to do it
2426 but are you really going to make me? Yeah, I really am. So.. That's what's been very
2427 difficult this year. There are relationships with teachers that have been difficult;
2428 particularly with the math team. It's always the math team. And it's different from
2429 being... You know when you're with a teacher you always have that camaraderie. As an
2430 AP if you led that team you still had that closeness with that team but when you're the
2431 principal it is difficult because you have all of these teams and you don't get to go in and
2432 be a part of any of those big meetings or conversations; the day to day stuff. So there's
2433 some teachers who have been here for a long time; very well respected in the community;
2434 community members, went to high school here; did all that stuff. They want to run it the
2435 way they want to run it. They want to keep it the way they've been having it. I would
2436 like it to be better. I would like them to work as a collaborative team and not just tell
2437 everybody this is what you do. This is what I've done, here's a packet, go for it. I want
2438 better. And so I've been complained about that I'm making them do this and it's put a
2439 strain on what was a positive relationship that I've always had, or that I thought I had
2440 until about a month ago. That they have been very nice to my face but found out that
2441 they're not that nice anymore because they don't want it to change. That's my
2442 perspective. And so it's hard to know that there are people out there that really can't
2443 stand you. And I think that they like you personally but they don't want to have that
2444 change.

2445 As a school administrator you bring change and it's hard for people. Our
2446 population is changing. Our success rate is not that high. We have to change. You know
2447 these kids come and they can pass any SOL at the beginning of the year but what are we
2448 doing to make them be challenged? Somebody says that a C is okay. It's not okay. What
2449 are you doing to challenge them? That's my question and they don't like it.

2450 In terms of changes, I'm following what the school division wants me to do. And
2451 that's just what's bothersome to me. Is that this one particular teacher went above me to
2452 my boss and my boss talked to that teacher before ever alerting me and then asked me to
2453 make a consideration. And I said what consideration? There is none. And now he
2454 himself is in a pickle because he knows I'm right. There is no consideration. This is what
2455 we in this division believe. That this is how we operate in our system and this is how we
2456 believe our schools should run for the success of every student so I said tell me what I
2457 should change and now he's in a pickle. But now there is a push against this teacher and
2458 she's trying to find enemies for me and trying to find out who's in her camp and who's in
2459 my camp and it's not pleasant and I don't want it to be part of that but it kept me up the
2460 first couple nights and now I'm just like screw it. If that is her professionalism then that
2461 is her professionalism. We had a positive relationship so why aren't you coming down
2462 and talking to me. Because she's afraid to. So I have to have that strength in me to know
2463 that it's okay...it's okay that people don't like you. And that's sometimes hard. So that's
2464 what's been a struggle lately.

2465 The particular teacher is not the team leader but she's been here for twenty plus
2466 years; parent in the community; used to be an administrator in the building, went back to
2467 teaching; and now she's trying to get people to go against me. My relationship with the
2468 math team leader is great. She is not a conflict person. She doesn't like it and I don't want
2469 to put her in a conflict. So I've avoided it. I make it a non-issue. I just told the

2470 department chair about it just so she knows. So the chair is like “I’ve been hearing a lot
2471 of conversation but she won’t talk to me about it. She knows what side I’m on.”

2472 But the thing is, she’s having a fight, but she’s having a fight that only she knows
2473 about. There is nothing that I should do so I just let it go. If she wants she can come and
2474 talk to me and be professional... I have to weigh if I have to go and talk to her eventually.
2475 I don’t know if I will or not.

2476 I really don’t have a conflicted decision to make except should I even approach it?
2477 But you see my point is, she never talked to me about any of her concerns. She just went
2478 right ahead up to the... all the way to the top to write something about me to say that I
2479 was doing this and even my assistant superintendent said well that’s what she’s supposed
2480 to be doing. And so she doesn’t have a win in it so I don’t know what her point is. I just
2481 don’t know what it is. But it might resolve itself because she said she’s leaving at the end
2482 of the year. But my assistant superintendent said she’s probably going to bring parents
2483 and have them come down on me because we’re going to lose her as a teacher. Possibly.
2484 They also said that about the theater teacher. So I’m kind of like do I have to get my
2485 allies? What do I have to do? Do I have to talk to people or do I just go directly to talk to
2486 her? That’s what my dilemma is. I haven’t decided yet. This one is on-going. But right
2487 now I’m kind of annoyed with her so..It bothers me because I like her as a person but I
2488 don’t like what she does as a teacher.

2489 It’s hard. It’s hard when you first start building your relationships as an
2490 administrator. Where is that line? I’ve learned not to have friends in the building. They
2491 can’t be your friends and I learned that the hard way. It’s a lonely... one of my principals
2492 said it’s a very lonely job. It’s a very lonely job. I get along well with my APs and I
2493 would probably be their friends outside of school but they know that I’m not going to go
2494 out and have drinks with them or you know.... We’ll go out to lunch or something
2495 together and things like that but I’m not their friend. I don’t call them up and say oh my
2496 gosh guess what? They’re friends. You know, they get to go do things together but I
2497 don’t. Like there’s a happy hour the other night and everybody asked are you going and I
2498 said no. I’m not going. You know I’ll probably go next time and have one drink and then
2499 leave but it’s that... It’s hard. And to know that you just come to work, work and you go
2500 home but you think about work all the time. That’s about it. It’s not an exciting story it’s
2501 just those are the things... the relationships that can just weigh on you a lot. You want to
2502 have positive ones but you’re still the ..

2503 It does take a toll physically. On me..I will probably lose weight. I jog but during
2504 the winter I don’t because it’s cold so I go for walks. If I don’t do that then I would go
2505 absolutely crazy. So physically, I get migraines. I have a lock jaw right now so I’m going
2506 to get one of those mouth guards. So yes it takes a physical toll. I become very quiet. I’m
2507 single. I don’t have anybody to go home and talk to about everything. So I talk to my
2508 mom a lot but my mom doesn’t understand what I do so it is kind of hard to tell her. I
2509 usually rely on my principal friends. And that’s who I really talk to who get it; who get
2510 education. It’s hard to find those people. So I usually have the phone.. if I leave here by
2511 four; four-o- five I’m on the phone with a friend and one person in particular and she
2512 knows all the different people that I’m talking about so that I can sometimes get
2513 reassured about what I’m doing or just complain. But I can’t complain here. I don’t have
2514 somebody that I can go to. Probably my DSA and my DSS those are the two people that
2515 I confide in the most to tell them what’s up and coming.

2516 So I consider them my two most important people and so usually... The hardest
2517 things I've ever had to deal with are sports related. Sports will take you down in a
2518 minute. So my DSA and I are very close. Having those people to talk to and just being
2519 able to let it go at the end of the day and as I said earlier my friend told me you have to
2520 say at the end of the day say to yourself is it okay and did you do what's best and that you
2521 possibly could think of and I think that helps me the most. And I don't talk a lot now with
2522 my mom because she just doesn't understand it but I do tell her the nice things that have
2523 happened. You know, the good things that happen but I don't tell her about the bad
2524 things.

2525 There are other situations that I want to share but I just can't. I just can't. But
2526 there are just things... People can be mean. They can be very mean not knowing the
2527 other side. And you can't tell the other side of the story. And I think that's what makes it
2528 hard. You can't say someone's business or why you made a decision because it would
2529 compromise somebody else's Their story.

2530 They are not what you might expect. Evaluation is easy for me. It's the right
2531 thing to do. I've written probably more people than I can count up. How many people
2532 need to go because that's what is best for students. I have no issue with that. Student
2533 discipline I have no issue with that. I think that when a student gets in trouble I always
2534 see the positive because now everybody knows. We now have every support for that
2535 student. So I see those two things as positive. I've never had I shouldn't say I've
2536 never had a negative on it

2537 So there are things that I can't talk about but I've never had a issue. Have I taken
2538 kids up that I really like for expulsion? Yep. But I look at them and I sit with their
2539 parents and I'm like here we are, we all know the truth so let's do what's right for you.

2540 Sports related stuff can be hard because you know I've never had anybody come
2541 in and say "That English teacher.." but they complain about the coaches and the sports
2542 and my kid and it's difficult. And it's those he said, she said when you weren't there and
2543 my kid should have this but ...It's just hard and you're making decisions and you try to
2544 make the right ones and one last year was way difficult and I think that's what pains me
2545 the most is that they'll never know the other side.

Appendix C: Practicing Forms of Phenomenological Writing

(from Van Manen, 2014, pp. 376-378)

Heuristic Draft Writing

Heuristic draft writing is challenging because it is difficult to evoke wonder in the reader through the writing of a single or a few small paragraphs. Even the researcher who is doing the writing may not yet have internalized the true enigmatic and depthful nature of the phenomenological question that he or she is pursuing. As well, the irony is that a common topic may seem very ordinary and shallow, and yet almost any topic hides a depthful question that can make us truly wonder about the meaning of human existence. Each subsequent draft must keep the questioning wonder of the first draft alive. The wondering tone of heuristic questioning lingers and echoes throughout an increasingly full-fledged phenomenological text.

Experiential Draft Writing

Experiential draft writing means being attentive to inserting lived experience material into the text. Initially it may be helpful to focus on preliminary anecdotes, examples, fragments, images, and stories that seem to be the concrete embodiments of the phenomenon being investigated. Gradually this experiential material should be expanded and edited for its relevance. The experiential examples need to be recognizable and compelling.

Thematic Draft Writing

Thematic draft writing goes hand in hand with experiential writing. Themes are succinct phrasings that are discerned in the activity of theme analysis of the concrete or experiential material. These phrasings correspond to the variant and invariant themes of the reduction. Theme statements are generally converted into narrative passages. Increasingly, the writing needs to focus on essential and possibly originary thematic insights of the reduction. Invariant and distinct eidetic aspects of meaning need to be rationally and sensitively expanded in the writing process. Eidetic phrasings that appear to get at the heart or essence of the phenomenon may function as headings, sided headings, and leading lines.

Insight Cultivating Writing

Insight cultivating draft writing is enabled by reflections on sources that draw on other scholarly phenomenological and related texts. Cultivating insights may be gleaned by reading relevant literature metaphorically, as it were. For example, it is likely that Dreyfus and Dreyfus drew on Kohlberg's stages of moral development (from rule bound to principled reasoning) to develop their phenomenology of skill development from novice (who is rule guided) to expert (who uses intuition). Marion likely drew on the interpretation of the Orpheus gaze by Blanchot, for the phenomenology of writing, to develop his own interpretation of the Orphean myth for the phenomenology of the invisible painting.

Vocative Draft Writing

Vocative draft writing consists of the tactful attentiveness to the vocative nature of language. Vocativity is part of the entire phenomenological reflective writing process. Poetic elements of the writing process may help to bring language nonintentional meanings that are difficult to capture in the more conceptual and rational discourses of the text. Phenomenologically powerful

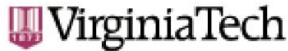
anecdotes, examples, fragments, selective material from literature, art, and mythology may be tactfully and eloquently integrated and sutured into the text. Vocative writing strives for the text to be addressive and speak to our whole embodied being.

Inceptual Draft Writing

Inceptual draft writing articulates deeper, perhaps speculative, and sometimes surprising insights about the human condition and the meaning of life. For example, Sartre's phenomenology of responsibility and freedom led him to the hermeneutic conclusion that all humans are "condemned to freedom." In his *Psychology of the Sickbed*, van den Berg raises the question of who is more ill: the person who is in bed or the so-called healthy person. It is worth quoting this paragraph from his book:

Who misses more of life, the healthy person, when he throws himself into the avalanche of ever more respect, with an ever more wonderful house, an even more expensive car and ever further reaching holiday trips, and consequently a frantic drive for money; when he throws himself into this avalanche which bears the dazzling name of "career"? Or the sick person who makes her room, her window sill, her window and her view a world full of significant and breathtaking events? Who-now in a completely different sense-is more ill? The illness of the body can be the condition for a soundness of mind which the healthy person misses easily. An existence devoid of sickness lacks the stimulus to live, just as an existence devoid of mental problems degenerates into complete insignificance. Probably there is no better guarantee for a really unhealthy life than perfect health (van den Berg, 1966, p. 73).

Appendix D: IRB Approval Letter



Office of Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board
North End Center, Suite 4120, Virginia Tech
300 Turner Street NW
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
540/231-4606 Fax 540/231-0959
email irb@vt.edu
website <http://www.irb.vt.edu>

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 22, 2016
TO: Walt Mallory, Timothy Michael Guy
FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires January 29, 2021)
PROTOCOL TITLE: A Phenomenology of School Leaders' Experiences of Moral and/or Ethical Dilemmas
IRB NUMBER: 15-472

Effective March 21, 2016, the Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair, David M Moore, approved the Amendment request for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report within 5 business days to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at:

<http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/responsibilities.htm>

(Please review responsibilities before the commencement of your research.)

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Approved As: **Expedited, under 45 CFR 46.110 category(ies) 5,6,7**
Protocol Approval Date: **October 27, 2015**
Protocol Expiration Date: **October 26, 2016**
Continuing Review Due Date*: **October 12, 2016**

*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:

Per federal regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(f), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant proposals/work statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities included in the proposal / work statement before funds are released. Note that this requirement does not apply to Exempt and Interim IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this IRB protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this IRB protocol, if required.

Invent the Future

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY
An equal opportunity, affirmative action institution

Appendix E: Informed Consent Document

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY

Title of Project: Phenomenology of School Leaders' Experiences with Moral/Ethical Dilemmas

Investigator(s): Tim Guy _____ E-mail / Phone number
Name
Walt Mallory _____ E-mail / Phone number
Name

I. Purpose of this Research Project

The purpose of this study is to explore the nature and meaning of school leaders' experiences of moral and/or ethical dilemmas. This study will contribute to the literature on ethics in the role of school leadership as experienced by practitioners. The methodology I am using to conduct this study is called hermeneutic phenomenological. "Hermeneutic" means that there is an interpretive- reflective-analytical component and "phenomenological" means there is a descriptive -concrete – life experience – phenomenon component. Van Manen (1990) wrote "phenomenological research gives us tactful thoughtfulness: situational perceptiveness, discernment, and depthful understanding. The fundamental thesis is that pedagogic thoughtfulness and tact are essential elements of pedagogic competence," (p.156). This understanding is of value to both practice and policy and therefore may be of interest to school leaders, aspiring school leaders, teachers, policy makers, preparers of school leaders and others interested in school leadership practice and policy.

Research Question: How do school leaders experience moral and/or ethical dilemmas in their role as school leaders?

The results of this study will be used to complete my dissertation.

The study will involve the participation of three to six practicing school leaders. I will be recruiting school leaders from the pool of leaders that I have come to know over the course of my career as a teacher, a student and a building based administrator. For the purpose of this study, school leaders include department or team teacher leaders, building based administrators and central office administrators.

II. Procedures

Should you agree to participate in this study, I will be calling on you to assist me in both the phenomenological (experience) and hermeneutic (analysis) phases of this study. Each phase involves a conversation that will be approximately an hour long. The two phases will take place within a four week period and will likely be even closer together. I hope to conclude all the interviews related to the study before December 31, 2015.

An experience will be the subject of the first of two conversational interviews. We can use pseudonyms in this conversation to preserve confidentiality. I will ask you to share an experience that you had in your role as a school leader of a moral/ethical dilemma. While it's okay to reflect on your leadership experiences, there is no need to prepare anything in advance for the interview. Our conversation will allow for some consideration of options and exploration of the subject before we choose a specific event.

I will record this conversation and have a transcript of the conversation produced. I will use the transcript to write up your experience in narrative form and will present the transcript and the lived experience description to you to review before continuing to the next phase. I will ask if it accurately represents the experience and if there is content you feel easily identifies you, others, or your school that should be revised or redacted.

Analysis of the meaning and significance of experiences is the subject of the second conversational interview. I will ask you to help me analyze your lived experience description and the lived experience of another participant to identify and reflect on significant themes. Consequently, one other participant in the study will assist me in the analysis of your lived experience description.

Once I have completed the analysis with all participants I will be compiling the findings in a hermeneutic text which integrates the multiple experiences and significant themes. I will share my findings with you before completing the study.

I have guides to assist me in focusing our conversations but neither is a scripted interview.

The research interviews will take place in a location mutually agreeable to you and me. I would prefer a location and time that is removed from your professional responsibilities so would propose and be open to meeting you at your home, my home, or a café. But am open to other locations you propose that will make you comfortable.

III. Risks

The risks to you as a participant are minimal. Responses may be revealing but are unlikely to cause you any harm. Nonetheless, we will use pseudonyms to ensure you are not personally identifiable in this study. You will have an opportunity to review the lived experience description to confirm it accurately represents your experience and that it does not contain any personally identifying information with which you are uncomfortable.

1. As a participant, you will be recounting personal experiences of moral dilemmas. Positively, this may contribute to new awareness and insight. However, there is also a possibility that you may experience discomfort, anxiety or doubt as you recall and discuss challenging or unpleasant experiences.

2. I will be writing narrative descriptions of the lived experiences described in the interviews. These descriptions will be included in the appendix of the study and will be read by others.

3. The lived experience descriptions will also be analyzed and reflected upon by another study participant.

4. Experience descriptions may recount situations or subtle identifying content that is familiar or recognizable to other study participants.

Strategies to reduce these risks include risks:

1. You are a mature adult in a school leadership position and therefore are habitually accustomed to dealing with confidential information about students and staff. You are reminded to stay attuned to confidentiality issues. As a mature educated adult, I expect that you have the capacity to share experiences that may be revealing without risking self-harm.

2. I will maintain a perspective of participants as cooperative collaborators and friends and avoid exploitation through openness and trust.
3. Pseudonyms will be used in interviews for people and places. Participants will have an opportunity to review their lived experience narratives and may request to redact or amend personally revealing or identifying information in the lived experience narratives.

These requests will be obliged prior to the narrative being presented to others.

IV. Benefits

1. Any potential benefits to you are derived from your own reflection on leadership practice as this self reflection may enhance self awareness and insight regarding ethics and leadership.
 2. The study will add to the literature regarding ethics and school leadership.
 3. The study will be useful in school leadership development and may influence action; individually, collectively or politically.
- No promise or guarantee of benefits has been made to encourage you to participate.

V. Extent of Anonymity and Confidentiality

The focus of this study is the experience you describe. Information about you personally will remain anonymous and confidential through the use of pseudonyms for people and places. At no time will the researchers release identifiable results of the study to anyone other than individuals working on the project without your written consent.

As a participant you will have access to the lived experience description of another participant for analysis and reflection. It is expected that you will not reveal or discuss identities or identifying details you may be able to infer to anyone other than to individuals working on the project.

The Virginia Tech (VT) Institutional Review Board (IRB) may view the study's data for auditing purposes. The IRB is responsible for the oversight of the protection of human subjects involved in research.

In the unlikely event that a situation you describe gives a researcher reason to suspect that a child is abused or neglected, or that a person poses a threat of harm to others or him/herself, the researcher is required by Virginia State law to notify the appropriate authorities in which case the investigator must break confidentiality to report to the appropriate authority.

VI. Compensation

You will not be compensated for participating in this study.

VII. Freedom to Withdraw

It is important for you to know that you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. You are free not to answer any questions that you choose or respond to what is being asked of you without penalty.

Please note that there may be circumstances under which the investigator may determine that a subject should not continue as a subject.

Should you withdraw or otherwise discontinue participation, you will be compensated for the portion of the project completed in accordance with the Compensation section of this document.

VIII. Questions or Concerns

Should you have any questions about this study, you may contact one of the research investigators whose contact information is included at the beginning of this document.

Should you have any questions or concerns about the study's conduct or your rights as a research subject, or need to report a research-related injury or event, you may contact the VT IRB Chair, Dr. David M. Moore at moored@vt.edu or (540) 231-4991.

IX. Subject's Consent

I have read the Consent Form and conditions of this project. I have had all my questions answered. I hereby acknowledge the above and give my voluntary consent:

_____ Date _____

Subject signature

Subject printed name

(Note: each subject must be provided a copy of this form. In addition, the IRB office may stamp its approval on the consent document(s) you submit and return the stamped version to you for use in consenting subjects; therefore, ensure each consent document you submit is ready to be read and signed by subjects.)