

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: INVESTIGATING LEADERSHIP IN
CHARTER SCHOOLS: AN EXAMINATION
OF THE LEADERSHIP TRAITS OF
EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS IN SUCCESSFUL
CHARTER SCHOOLS

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Education

This study was a qualitative exploration of educational leadership within charter schools in an attempt to identify traits demonstrated by executive directors of successful charter schools. Because much research has been conducted to identify trends in educational leadership, but comparable little within the unique context of charter schools, and because the charter school movement is growing, it is imperative that Boards, CMOs, and advocates of charter schooling understand more clearly what constitutes successful leadership within this sphere.

Two research questions were created for this study, and qualitative methods were used to collect and analyze data. Data were collected through personal interviews with four charter school executive directors, document review, field observations, and follow-up interviews. The conceptual framework used to interpret

the collected data was based on Leithwood and Duke's six dimensions of educational leadership: instructional, transformational, moral, participative, managerial, and contingent leadership. Data were gathered and analyzed against these six leadership dimensions. A thick description of the experiences and perspectives of the four participants was created.

The data provided insight into successful charter school leadership. Some of the findings supported extant research about leadership in other educational contexts, while some indicated some unique characteristics of leadership within a charter school. Participants indicated that the largest demands in their jobs were the quantity of needs as well as the necessary practice of affecting change through systems rather than directly with students. Participants further identified a sense of personal accountability, a change management process, as well as working within all six dimensions of leadership as essential to their successes. These findings and conclusions are reported in Chapters 4 and 5.

This study was an exploration of traits and behaviors exhibited by executive directors of successful charter schools. The findings indicate a gap between current understandings of educational leadership in general and that within a charter school. It is expected that this research will help to create a clearer understanding of charter school leadership and provide insight for stakeholders to move forward in locating and training future charter school leaders.

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OF THE LEADERSHIP TRAITS OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS IN
SUCCESSFUL CHARTER SCHOOLS

By

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Dedication

To the two most important women in my life:

To my mother, Linda Nehamkin Bloomfield, who put me on the path of academic rigor and instilled in me a belief in its transformative power.

To my wife, Jill Colella Bloomfield, whose love, support, and constant faith in me made this dream into a reality. I could not love you more.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Overview

Charter schools succeed because of their leaders. This theme is evident in the literature on charter schools and school leadership (Bush, 2011b; Lane, 1998; Lezotte, 1992; Odhiambo & Hii, 2012; Protheroe, Shellard, & Turner, 2003; “Proven,” 2010). Research has consistently shown that successful charter schools are helmed by effective leaders who promote a culture of success, inspire and empower teacher-leaders, use data to drive instructional reform, manage finances effectively, and rally communities to unite around a common goal. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) argued that the executive director¹ is vital to fulfilling the goals of a charter school as an educational agency. Bottoms and O’Neil (2001) characterized the executive director as the official who assumes ultimate responsibility for the success of a school. Fullan and Miles (1992) argued that because charter schools are an ever-changing and unpredictable environment, executive directors are charged with making the adjustments necessary to guide schools to success. Regardless of the challenge, successful leaders are a vital key to success in charter schools.

In basic terms, leaders are those who are able to induce “a group to pursue objectives held by the leader” (Gardner, 1990, p. 1). They are those in power. Weber used the term *macht*, meaning “the probability that one actor will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance” (as cited in Gerth & Mills, 1946, p. 180).

¹ Leaders at charter schools go by many titles: executive director, CEO, head of school, principal, and more. For this study, the researcher will use the term executive director to refer to the highest ranking administrator in a charter school.

Burns (1978) framed early theories of leadership as two mutually exclusive types of leaders: they were either transactional or transformational. Transactional leaders were characterized as those who manipulate subordinates through reward and punishment to achieve their own desired ends. Transformational leaders, by contrast, act out of “deeply held personal value systems” (p. 86) and motivate followers to achieve their desired ends through charisma (Humphreys & Einstein, 2003). In the 40 years since Burns published his seminal work, leadership theory has shifted from focusing predominantly on leaders and their actions to a consideration of the nature of the interaction between leaders and their followers. Our understanding of leadership has evolved to view it as a dynamic force comprising nuanced and complex modes of interaction. “Transactional” and “transformational” are no longer seen as mutually exclusive models but rather as ends of a spectrum within which leaders and followers interact (Fiol, Harris, & House, 1999; Grinnell, 2003; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993).

Successful leaders do more than simply exercise organizational power and are characterized by more than the ability to attain their objectives: leaders inspire others to believe in and share their goals. Leaders are successful both in crises and normal situations; they create visions of success and excellence and motivate others to strive for them (Hunt, Boal, & Dodge, 1999). Leaders operate within both transactional and transformational models. Successful school leaders challenge the educational status quo, take risks, foster collaboration, demonstrate model behavior, inspire a shared vision, and encourage passion in their constituents. Successful leadership practices such as these lead to successful schools (Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

Leadership within Charter Schools

In this study the researcher investigated leadership within the charter school movement. A charter school is a public school: its primary sources of funding are taxes from the local, state, and federal government. Charter schools are subject to the same laws and regulations as traditional public schools by their respective state education departments, including state testing, special education laws, and federal funding restrictions. What makes charter schools distinct, however, is that they are freed (in differing degrees depending on state and local laws) from the oversight of a central district office. Charter schools often develop their own educational philosophies, programs, and curricula. The core rationale that distinguishes charter schools from traditional public schools was summarized by Ted Kolderie:

It is to offer change-oriented educators or others the opportunity to go either to the local school board or to some other public body for a contract under which they would set up an autonomous (and therefore performance-based) public school which students could choose to attend without charge. The intent is not simply to produce a few new and hopefully better schools. It is to create dynamics that will cause the main-line system to change so as to improve education for all students. (as cited in Budde, 1996, p. 73)

Like traditional public schools, the primary goal of a charter school is to increase student performance, but students in charter schools are subject to different educational strategies than students in traditional schools to achieve that end.

That is not to say that the skill sets required to lead in both charter and traditional public schools are mutually exclusive. Indeed common themes emerge for leaders in both settings such as the importance of creating buy-in through distributive leadership models ((Hargreaves & Fink, 2003) or the idea that different situations

require leaders to demonstrate competence in different areas of leadership (Leithwood & Janzi, 2000). In this study, however, the researcher investigated the ways that leaders must practice their crafts differently in charter schools in order to become successful.

Because of the differences between charter schools and traditional public schools, leaders of a charter school require some different qualities in order to be successful. Researchers have often described charter school executive directors in ways uncommon for leaders in traditional educational settings. Bierlein and Mullholand (1994) argued that executive directors must be courageous in order to open charter schools, while Vergari (2007) claimed that charter schools require executive directors and school constituencies to translate their shared beliefs into policy. Still other scholars have emphasized how, because charter schools are models of educational reform, they are themselves loci of change. Charter school executive directors must, therefore, be comfortable working within and managing constantly shifting environments, in contrast to “local educators [in traditional settings who] experience most school reforms as fads” (Fullan & Miles, 1992, p. 747). These elements of “courage,” “shared beliefs,” and “change,” while not unobserved in leaders of traditional schools, are essential for charter school executive directors, making the qualities of successful leadership in this environment different from those in traditional educational settings.

Another aspect that distinguishes charter schools is the lack of support systems for executive directors as they set out to accomplish their complex jobs. Executive directors must draw upon diverse knowledge domains, often

simultaneously. They must be competent in operational logistics, curriculum and assessment, governance and management, community and public relations, and regulatory issues (Lane, 1998), or as Garn and Cobb (2001) frame it, bureaucratic, performance, and consumer accountability. Without the advantage of a central administrative office, executive directors serve as instructional leaders, development officers, financial managers, operational coordinators, public relations coordinators, and human resources managers (Gross & Pochop, 2007). Some researchers have questioned whether or not executive directors can function as true educational leaders because of the non-instructional demands on their time (Campbell et al., 2008). In addition, executive directors oftentimes lack supportive resources such as a developed school infrastructure and a network of peers. Boards of directors of most charter schools are comprised of community members who are inexperienced as board members and educational administrators (High Bar, 2012, para. 2), and can offer little support for the executive director's varied duties. The complex and multidimensional demands of the executive director's job and the lack of internal and external support place unique demands upon these school leaders.

In this study the researcher focused on the leadership qualities of executive directors of successful charter school. Because of the complexity of the job's responsibilities, the qualities of an executive director defy simple analysis. Nonetheless, there is a need to identify the factors contributing to the greater success of some individuals. Success, for the purposes of this study, is defined based upon performance in three basic categories: student proficiency, student growth, and fiscal competency. With regard to student proficiency, successful charter schools led by

leaders were those that scored higher than the state average in standard state math and reading assessments. For student growth these leaders' schools also demonstrated above-average rates of student achievement growth (based on student-specific scores year over year) on at least one of these state tests. Finally, these successful schools demonstrated sound fiscal management, with no material deficiencies in external financial audits for at least three of the four years prior to study participation. In order to be considered a leader of a successful school for this study, an executive director's school must have demonstrated these three clearly-measurable criteria: high student achievement, high student growth, and consistent financial solvency. Beyond those criteria, leaders also had to have served in leadership capacity for a number of years. The selection criteria for this study will be explained in greater detail in Chapter 3.

Statement of the Problem

We know that a successful leader is integral to a successful school (Lane, 1998; Protheroe et al., 2003), a fact with particular relevance in the extremely complex environment of a charter school. Charter schools are formed, as Kolderie noted, around a single goal: increasing student performance (as cited in Budde, 1996). They have unique educational philosophies and missions, and executive directors are crucial in fostering and daily implementing that goal for students, faculty, staff, and community members. Thus, an executive director must be competent in various and distinct domains of knowledge to guide a charter school to success (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Although there are thousands of charter schools around the country led

by equally numerous executive directors, few studies have examined the leadership qualities that leaders of successful charter schools themselves identify as integral to their success, nor patterns in these qualities. Until there is a clearer understanding of the qualities essential for leading a charter school successfully, the charter school movement will struggle to advance a coherent idea of its leadership needs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand executive directors' perceptions of the leadership qualities that have enabled them to perform their jobs successfully. The nature of leadership in a charter school is different than that in a traditional public school setting (Campbell et. al, 2008; Fullan & Miles, 1992). While we struggle to understand what makes schools and students more successful, our understanding of the impact of leadership has on success in a charter school must differ from that in a traditional public school. This study used qualitative research methods in order to explore participants' perceptions and determine which leadership qualities were identified. These traits included practices, attitudes, specific policies enacted and created, as well as language used by these leaders. The researcher employed Leithwood and Duke's (1999) framework of leadership (instructional, transformational, moral, participative, managerial, and contingent), which was derived from several branches of leadership theory, in order to filter data and to frame findings. Leithwood and Duke's framework is discussed in greater depth in the Conceptual Framework section of this chapter. The findings yielded a rich description of successful charter school leadership which, itself, allowed for a greater

understanding of which factors may leads towards greater success in this unique educational environment.

Research Questions

The researcher proposed to answer the following two research questions which provided structure for both collecting and analyzing the data:

1. What do executive directors of charter schools perceive to be the instructional and administrative demands of their jobs?
2. What personal and professional qualities do executive directors of charter schools believe have enabled them to be successful in their positions?

The first question aimed to determine executive directors' perceptions of the responsibilities of their jobs. The second question enabled the researcher to develop an emic description of the qualities identified by executive directors as most important for successfully leading a charter school.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study drew upon scholarship in the field of leadership theory. While many researchers have investigated elements of leadership, it is important to define the parameters for any discussion about leadership because, according to Yuhl (1994), "the definition of leadership is arbitrary and very subjective. Some definitions are more useful than others, but there is no one definition" (p. 3). The consequent problem is, then, that researchers "cannot talk

about leadership with anyone until [they] agree on what [they] are talking about” (as cited in Leithwood & Duke, 1999, p. 45). In order to discuss successful charter school leadership, therefore, the researcher chose to employ a framework established by Leithwood and Duke. Leithwood is one of the most prolific writers on school leadership, with numerous scholarly articles and several books on the topic. The framework established by Leithwood and Duke (1999) has taken into account much of the theory and debate surrounding the concept of educational leadership from the previous 30 years.

Leithwood and Duke (1999) developed their conceptual framework of school leadership based upon a thorough review of the existing literature, encompassing over 700 articles and many foundational texts. They identified six broad dimensions of leadership which emerged from this literature review: instructional, transformational, moral, participative, managerial, and contingent leadership.

Instructional leadership concerns the behavior of instructors as it directly affects the growth of students. Instructional leadership refers also to traditional (didactic) and non-traditional (progressive) modes of instruction and assessment. Although Leithwood and Duke (1999) noted that teachers and administrators affect students both directly and indirectly, they focused on the direct influence teachers and administrators through instruction based on their expert content knowledge.

Transformational leadership, described more fully in Chapter 2, refers to the idea of transcendence by both leader and follower toward a higher purpose (Burns, 1978). Leithwood and Duke (1999) explained that “power is attributed by organizational members to whomever is able to inspire their commitments to

collective aspirations, and the desire for personal and collective mastery over the capacities needed to accomplish such aspirations” (p. 49). Transformational leadership is demonstrated when a leader and followers work to achieve goals shared in common.

Moral leadership refers to decision-making based on a set of values and takes into account principles that “take the form of ethical codes, injunctions, or commandments [...] their common feature is that they are unverifiable by the techniques of science and cannot be justified by merely logical argument” (Hodgkinson, 1991, p. 99).

Leithwood and Duke (1999) described participative leadership, similar to the theory of distributive leadership, as a “decision-making process of the group” (p. 52). They explained that the four most common models of site-based management (SBM) center on administrators, professionals, community members, or a combination of all three. The essential trait shared by each of these SBM models is shared or participative decision-making among multiple parties in order to foster a deep sense of engagement within a school community.

Managerial leadership emphasizes the functions, behaviors, and tasks of leaders. Focus is placed on policy implementation rather than influencing or changing policy.

Finally, contingent leadership describes the general pattern that successful leaders need to respond to “unique organizational circumstances” (p. 54) in different manners. This category addresses the unpredictability of the school environment and

the need for leaders to master and appropriately employ a variety of strategies and tactics in often unexpected situations.

Leithwood and Duke (1999) did not present a hierarchy of these six leadership approaches. Instead, they argued that facility with all of these dimensions continue to be a theme in the literature of leadership. Leithwood and Duke (1999) present their framework of leadership as a system of complex and simultaneously interacting domains of expertise and experience. They write: “given this conception of leadership, such simple forms of leadership are probably in the minority” (p. 67). Instead, they describe leadership as a “system” (p. 67). In the present study, the researcher employed these six dimensions to identify and analyze the shared behaviors, policies, and attitudes of executive directors of successful charter school.

Research Design

This study was a multi-site case study, comprising four charter school executive directors. Research for this study began with an extensive literature review of current scholarship on leadership theory and, as relevant, on charter schools. After identifying four participants for this study, individual interviews were conducted with the study participants using an interview protocol developed by the researcher (see Appendix D). Additional data was collected through school visits and on-site observations of the executive directors. The researcher also conducted a detailed analysis of relevant documents produced by executive directors (handbooks, manuals, meeting minutes, strategy documents) and, through comparison analysis with the interview data, determined the most relevant leadership qualities identified through

the research process. This qualitative, case-study based approach allowed for a more in-depth analysis and description of these leadership qualities than can be gained through quantitative measures. The study methodology is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

Definitions

- Authorizer: a charitable organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 which provides ongoing oversight of a charter school consistent with contracted expectations that assure that the charter school is complying with both the provisions of applicable law and rules, and with the academic goals set forth in the charter school's contract with the Authorizer.
- Charter school: a charter school is a publicly funded, legally independent school whose purpose is to be outcome-based, innovative, and a model for change (Vergari, 2007). Because they are outcome-based, charter schools must periodically renew their charters (the term depends on the state), and renewal is based on achievement of student performance objectives. Charter schools are created to pursue the ideas of franchising and competition (Reichott Junge, 2012). Charter schools can also establish their own policies for staff work rules and salaries. These regulations vary from state to state (North Central Regional Education Laboratory, 1993).
- Charter Management Organization (CMO): a professional organization hired by a charter school's board of directors to act as the administrator and/or business manager for a charter school.

- Executive Director: the highest ranking professional administrator in a charter school.
- Leadership traits: behaviors and strategies exhibited by an individual on the activities of an organization or group in an attempt to set and/or achieve its goals.
- Public school: elementary and/or secondary school supported and administered by state and local officials and funded largely by revenue from the local, state, and federal government.

Assumptions

The researcher assumes that there is a strong, causal connection between leadership and program success in a charter school. This assumption is based upon the literature on school leadership introduced earlier in this chapter. The researcher hypothesizes that all activities within a charter school that contribute to student success and failure are influenced directly or indirectly by the school's executive director. Finally, the researcher assumes that leadership in a charter school differs from leadership in a traditional public school setting. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) argued that charter schools make more unique demands on their leaders than other educational settings. One of the features that most distinguishes a charter school from a traditional public school is the comprehensive demands placed on its leader (Vanourek, 2005), including the areas of start-up logistics, curriculum and assessment, governance and management, community and public relations, and

regulatory issues (Lane, 1998). By studying the leadership qualities of executive directors of successful charter schools from their own perspective (Slater, 2011), this study understands more fully how a leader can influence achievement within and the larger success of a charter school.

Limitations of the Study

Marshall and Rossman (2006) observed that all research projects have limitations, no matter how well-designed. Limitations are potential weaknesses or problems with the study identified by the researcher (Creswell, 2009). The researcher acknowledges the following limitations of the present study:

1. The accuracy of this study and the validity of its conclusions, based upon analysis of the data, depended on the clarity and honesty of the study participants.
2. The findings of this study were limited to one Midwestern metropolitan area.
3. The findings of this study were limited to the conditions in the charter schools where this study was conducted.
4. The findings of this study were limited to the experiences of the charter school executive directors who participated in the study.
5. As explained in the section on criteria selection methods in Chapter 3, only approximately 2.6% of charter school leaders in the selected state participated in the study.

6. The method of sampling used (purposeful sampling) limited the study sample to executive directors with tenures of three or more years overseen by a single authorizer in a Midwestern state.
7. The findings of this study are limited by the definition of success developed by the researcher and imposed in the criterion-selection process.
8. The study was offered only to executive directors serving a combination of grades, either grades K-12, K-5, 6-12, or K-8. This is not a representative sampling of all charter school executive directors, and the data may contain inherent bias.

Significance of the Study

This study makes a significant contribution to our understanding of charter school leadership by identifying and describing the qualities necessary for executive directors to lead charter schools successfully. The researcher seeks with this study to address a gap in the existing literature regarding the successful leadership of charter schools. Because charter schools are a young concept (the first was established in 1992), no consensus yet exists within the charter school community regarding the qualities required of a successful leader. Over the past two decades many charter schools have been closed for academic or fiscal underperformance, while others have endured and flourished. This study seeks to elucidate how a leader influences the likelihood of the latter outcome.

Future executive directors may benefit from this study, whose findings may enable them to develop a better understanding of the responsibilities of leading a

charter school and to hone the skills needed to be more effective leaders within this setting. Charter school boards of directors may also benefit from this discussion of the qualities needed for successful charter school leadership when conducting executive director searches, either internally or externally, and evaluating school leaders. Finally, charter schools themselves, authorizers, CMOs, colleges of education, or other interested organizations may utilize the findings to build a base of understanding to launch their own initiatives regarding training programs for aspiring charter school executive directors. As indicated above, scholars agree that the leader is the individual most vital in managing the manifold demands and dynamic environments of charter schools (Fullan & Miles, 1992). The findings of this study will benefit the executive directors as well as those who hire, train, and oversee them in order to ensure success in the unique and challenging endeavor of educating students in charter schools.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. The first chapter presents an introduction to the study, its significance, and the statement of the problem. Definitions of important terms and a summary of research methods with limitations are also included in this chapter. The second chapter is devoted to a discussion of the major themes in the literature on leadership relevant to this study. The third chapter explains the methodology used to conduct this study. The fourth chapter presents the findings along with the results of the data analysis. The fifth chapter includes the conclusions and recommendations for further study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Overview

Charter school executive directors share less in common with educational leaders in other environments (Campbell & Grubb, 2008). The ways in which educational leaders of traditional public schools achieve success do not always apply to leaders in charter schools. The purpose of this study was to identify the leadership traits that charter school executive directors identify as integral to their success. In order to determine these findings the researcher collected qualitative data directly from four executive directors of successful charter schools. The data was analyzed through a conceptual framework developed by Leithwood and Duke (1999), which categorizes educational leadership practices into six different dimensions:

1. instructional leadership,
2. transformational leadership,
3. moral leadership,
4. participative leadership,
5. managerial leadership, and
6. contingent leadership.

The goal of this qualitative case study was to understand the relationship between the collected data, these leadership traits, and successful leadership of a charter school.

This review of research examines and synthesizes existing literature related to leadership theory, educational leadership, charter schools, and charter school leadership. The researcher emphasizes overviews of the increasing complexity of the

charter school model since its inception more than twenty years ago to the present day along, as well as on the evolving ideas of leadership theory. The final section discusses the relationship of the literature to the present study.

Leadership Theory

Charter school executive directors are a recent development in the long history of educational leaders. How we understand leadership in general, and within the educational sphere more specifically, has developed along with the charter school movement. While interest in the leadership styles of historical figures such as Julius Caesar, Alexander the Great, and Abraham Lincoln has existed for centuries (Adams, 2000), leadership theory has only become an independent field of study in the past 30 years. Conger (1999) noted that as human beings, “we appear to share a deep curiosity about exemplary forms of leadership and their influence on followers and organizational adaptation” (p. 124). Leadership theory has evolved over several decades into two basic branches: homo-centered and socio-centered theories. Homo-centered theories focus on the qualities and skills of the leaders themselves and argue that leaders are distinct from ordinary people (Fiol et al., 1999); by contrast, socio-centered theories focus on the interactive dynamic between leaders and followers (Pack, 2008).

Any study of the history of leadership theory must begin with Burns’ (1978) seminal text, *Leadership*. Burns’ perspective on leadership is homo-centered, focusing on the traits and actions of the leaders themselves. He identified “power” and “motivation” as the two elements used by a leader to elicit performance from his

followers (p. 12) and “to shape public and private opinion” (p. 33). Burns posited that individuals achieved these ends in different ways as two types of leaders: transactional and transformational. Transactional leaders focus primarily on the individual exchanges between leaders and followers: they ensure that both parties benefit from the interaction (Humphreys, 2003). The benefit received by followers is called a “contingent reward” (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999, p. 184). Traditionally, the contingent reward was a salary or other form of compensation (Burns, 1978; Humphreys, 2003), but in the 1980s and 1990s these rewards came to include stock options, vacation days, and even smaller tokens of recognition such as gift certificates and preferential employee parking (Nixon & Helms, 2010; Versace, Williams, Martin, & Coltrane, 2008). Transactional leaders create contingent reward systems to motivate followers to achieve certain objectives, but both are interdependent: the leader cannot achieve the set goals without the followers and the followers cannot be successful without the evaluation and approval of the leader (Burns, 1978, p. 45). From the perspective of transactional leaders, the leader possesses the power to create systems and rules, and the follower’s satisfaction derives from adherence to the system and obtaining the promised rewards. The transactional leader creates the reality of work and success for the follower (Rooney, 2010).

Transactional leadership has been shown to produce a positive correlation between follower attitude and high performance (Humphreys, 2003). The application of rewards tied to worker achievement establishes a clear system of accountability and clarity around follower expectations. In addition, transactional leadership is seen as being “fundamental” to the stability of any organization (Leithwood & Janzi, 2000,

p.114). Transactional practices that sustain an organization's operations, sometimes called "managerial" leadership, are necessary in maintaining a work environment with sustainable work conditions and a rational system of rules. Transactional leadership practices are central to achieving this.

Burns also argued that leadership consisted of more than transactions between leaders and followers and elaborated the concept of ideological, or transformational, leadership. He argued that although power is central to the values of a leader, it may also be important to the values of the follower (p. 19). Transformational leaders understand the systems they create and govern as representative of certain normative values. They further believe that followers guard their own personally-held values and that leaders seek to represent those values. Transformational leadership occurs when leaders "embody the values of the group," (p. 248) and defines for some researchers the difference between "leadership and managing" (Conger, 1999, p. 3).

In the transformational style of leadership, leaders act out of "deeply held personal value systems" (Humphreys, 2003, p. 86) and share this value system with their followers (Conger, 1999). Sergiovanni (1990) described this dynamic as when "leaders and followers are united in pursuit of higher-level goals common to both" (p. 24). Transformational leaders can either authentically embody the values of the collective group (called "projective leadership"), or followers may simply believe that they do (called "attributive leadership") (Popper and Zakkai, 1994, p. 4). This attribution is possible only because transformational leaders exert affective influence on their followers (Deluga, 2001) through a complex system of social interactions (Tichy & Devanna, 1986), rather than simply offer contingent rewards.

Transformational leaders focus not on contingent rewards but on managing the emotional and moral ideologies which they share with their followers (Seashore Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011; Popper & Zakkai, 1994). They seek out creativity in their followers (Jung, Chow, & Wu, 2003). Mary Parker Follett (1993) described the difference between transactional and transformational leadership as “‘power-over’ [in contrast] to ‘power-with.’” (as cited in Humphreys, 2003, p. 88). While Leithwood and Janzi (2000) argued that transactional leadership is fundamental to the stability of an organization, Baliga and Hunt (1988) argued that transformational leadership is more important during the birth, growth, and/or revitalization stages of an organization, suggesting that the life cycle of an organization determines the leadership style that is more effective. They argued that in addition to during infancy and mature stages of an organization, transformational leader behaviors “are needed to revitalize organizational processes” (Smith, Montagno, & Kuzmenko, 2004), as transformational practices necessarily involve more stakeholders and their values in discussions and in the decision-making process.

Transformational leaders are commonly discussed in relation to their ability to influence others through inspiration, emotion, and charisma. Weber used the term “charismatic leadership” to describe that a leader’s authority stemmed from followers’ faith in the leader, not from tradition, rules, or hierarchy (as cited in Burns, 1978, p. 243; Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Charismatic leadership is often seen in emergent situations where a leader becomes a “social force that leads people out of crisis” (House, 1999, p. 563). More recently, however, researchers have argued that charismatic leadership applies beyond crisis management and can be used to

determine the success of an entire organization (Fiol et al., 1999; House, 1999; Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996). Charisma is also often invoked in discussing a leader's ability to create, communicate, and lead toward an organization's shared vision (Hunt et al., 1999). Rather than dwell on the banalities of current challenges, charismatic, transformational leaders focus attention on a solution or a common goal, in turn creating a personal commitment on the part of each follower to achieve the shared vision expressed by the leader (Mumford & Dorn, 2001; Shamir et al., 1993). Although the relationship between leader and follower is not expressed as mutually beneficial (as in transactional), transformational leaders do gain self-confidence from the exchange with followers (Sosik & Dworakivsky, 1998). Charismatic leaders are sometimes described as "heroic" (Burns, 1978, p. 246) because of their ability to embody peoples' values through their vision and to deliver them from crisis situations (Hargreaves & Fink, 2004; Tyack & Hansot, 1982).

Burns' notion of transactional and transformational leaders is the foundation upon which later scholars developed their theories of leadership. As more researchers began to investigate leadership theory, Burns' work was reinterpreted and new paradigms were introduced. Bass (1985) built upon Burns' foundation and argued that leaders can be simultaneously transactional and transformational (Bass, 1985; Conger, 1999). Bass also delved deeper into the notion of a transformational leader, arguing that such a leader would treat each follower as an individual and provide coaching, mentoring, and growth opportunities (Bass, 1985). He noted that transformational leaders can be present at different levels of an organization simultaneously rather than only at the top of a hierarchy (Bass, Avolio, & Goodheim,

1987). Hunt and Conger (1999) argued for a more nuanced definition of the differences between charismatic and transformational leadership, and others have explored the nature of a “shared vision” and the influence of social change on leadership practices (Strange & Mumford, 2002). Popper and Zakkai (1994) argued that a leader is best identified not by personality, but by the exhibited leadership traits, which might entail attributes from transactional, transformational, and also introduced the psychological sphere.

Unlike homo-centered leadership theories that focus primarily upon the leader, socio-centered theories posit that the interaction between leaders and followers is the most important element in leadership. This view of leadership is commonly termed Leader-Member Exchange Theory (LMX). LMX theory explores the “dyadic relationship between leaders and followers” (Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson, 2008, p. 163) and claims that leaders form different types of relationships with different followers, depending on what is required to motivate an individual in a particular context (Gerstner, 1997; Grinnell, 2003). LMX is a system of components and their relationships:

- a. “involving both members of a dyad;
 - b. “involving interdependent patterns of behavior and sharing mutual outcome instrumentalities; and
 - c. “producing conceptions of environments, cause maps, and values.”
- (Scandura, Graen, & Novak, 1986, p. 580)

The interplay between these three forces in LMX determines the nature of the relationship between leader and follower in a specific context: a situation may call for

a more aggressive posture from the leader, a more supplicative role, or another dynamic altogether. LMX posits that the specific interaction between people (leaders and followers) determines successful leadership (Price, 2012).

The socio-centered perspective on leadership theory has yielded a model popular in educational settings: distributive leadership (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003). Distributive leadership is a democratic process by which leadership decisions and responsibilities are shared among a larger group of stakeholders (Savery, Soutar, & Dyson, 1992). According to MacBeath, “when we focus on leadership itself as opposed to what the ‘big leader’ is doing, we begin to see things differently and begin to understand the distribution in a new way” (2009, p. 42). In this process, communities of decision makers “recognize and accept both the obligation and the right to participate in the educational decisions which most affect their lives” (Fusarelli, 1999, p. 98; DuFour & Marzano, 2009). Some have argued that the shared responsibility of leadership allows for decisions that more accurately reflect the values of the group (Cerit, 2009; Hallinger & Heck, 2010). Further, leaders can more accurately match their abilities of followers with required tasks because there are more skills to share within the group (Mathews, 2006; Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, & Gundlach, 2003; Wohlstetter & Odden, 1992). In addition, distributive leaders must also be willing to move away from traditional forms of hierarchy-based power for decision-making (Sheard & Avis, 2010). In education settings, distributive leadership is a means of developing social bonds among leaders and followers (administration and teachers) as well as other community stakeholders to advance the

collective goal of improving student performance. (Bush, 2011a; Gold, 2004; Sergiovanni, 2004.)

Our understanding of leadership over the past 40 years has continued to expand to include both homo- and socio-centered ideas of leadership, power, influence, and social exchange. We now view leadership as personal, situational, charismatic, and psychological. It is within this complex field of inquiry that the researcher developed an understanding of organizational leadership within a successful charter school.

The Charter School Movement

Charter schools are one of the latest developments in a long history of educational reform movements in the United States. Educational reform itself has been the *modus operandi* for America's public education system for over 50 years. The most recent iteration of school reform, the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (2001), insists on greater accountability for all schools. Its stated goal is for all students to reach full literacy and numeracy by 2014 as measured by annual assessments (NCLB, 2001). To meet this goal, school districts around the country have been identifying ways to restructure instruction and assessment, including the introduction of charter schools (Elmore & Burney, 1999). However, charter schools are only one of the latest in a long succession of efforts aimed at reforming public education in America.

America is currently 57 years into a cycle of educational reform movements ranging from national-level alerts and legislative actions to state- and local-level

reform efforts (Mitchell, 2011). The modern educational reform movement began as early as 1967 when the Equality of Educational Opportunity Study (EEOS), also known as the Coleman Report, demonstrated through exhaustive quantitative analysis of data that school resources did not make a significant impact on student achievement between non-white and white students (Jencks, 1993). The publication of EEOS led to over a decade and a half of school reform movements that tried to address this academic achievement gap (Fantini, 1977; Odden & Odden, 1984; Van Til, Brownson, & Hamm, 1975).

Then in 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education published *A Nation at Risk (ANAR)* which addressed the contemporary state of the American education system. This famous study, set in motion by Secretary of Education Terrel Bell, opened with its now infamous and dramatic assertions:

Our Nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world. This report is concerned with only one of the many causes and dimensions of the problem, but it is the one that undergirds American prosperity, security, and civility. We report to the American people that while we can take justifiable pride in what our schools and colleges have historically accomplished and contributed to the United States and the well-being of its people, the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people. What was unimaginable a generation ago has begun to occur--others are matching and surpassing our educational

attainments... If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war. (United States, 1983)

One by-product of *ANAR* was state mandating academic content standards and assessments aligned with these standards. This focus on standards led the way for the 2001 NCLB legislation, which is itself a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) (Proulx, 2011).

One incarnation of the modern educational reform movement is the charter school. The concept of chartering schools in the United States dates back to 1974 when a paper titled “Education by Charter: Key to a New Model of a School District” was presented at a national meeting of the General Systems Research Society (Garn & Cobb, 2001). The concepts presented in the paper were adopted by Ray Budde who is credited with giving birth to the charter school concept. Budde wrote a draft of an outline for a book tentatively titled *Education by Charter: Key to a New Model of School District* (Reichgott Junge, 2012; Budde, 1998). Budde (1998) emphasized several core ideas in describing the advantages of chartering education, including allowing teachers to focus on educating students by relieving them of the bureaucracies present in public schools as well as putting a much greater emphasis on site-based decision-making (pp. 72-73). Originally his idea found no immediate, positive reception. When he revisited it in a decade later in 1988 in the book *Education by Charter: Restructuring School Districts*, the book received attention in the *New York Times*. The charter school movement as we know it today found its first attentive audience. Legislators and citizens in Minnesota worked to draft the

first charter school law in 1991, and the first charter school in the U.S. opened in Saint Paul, Minnesota in 1992 (Reichgott Junge, 2012). The charter school movement soon expanded to other states, and by 1997 there were approximately 500 charter schools in the United States (Griffin & Wohlstetter, 2001). Currently over 1.9 million students attend more than 5,700 charter schools in the United States (Center for Education Reform, 2012).

Along with the expansion of the charter school movement and the opening of so many schools, we have also seen many charter schools close. Estimates of overall charter school closures range between 12.5% (Roy, 2009) and 15% (Cavanaugh, 2011). That so many charter schools have closed can be attributed to the fact that many educational reformers, although themselves change-oriented, simply misunderstand the process of effecting enduring change (Starr, 2011; Fullan & Mils, 1992). Researchers have continually emphasized that charter schools are centers of change (Bierlin & Mullholand, 1994; Fullan & Mils, 1992). They are seen as pivotal sites of reform for the entire public education system, which allow parents to choose different models and permit educators to focus more on education (student achievement) than is possible in the traditional system of public education (Hoerr, 2009). Change, it has been argued, is rife with uncertainty, creates only pockets of success at a time, is resource-hungry, is systemic, and to be enacted correctly needs “the power to manage it” (Fullan & Mils, 1992, p. 751). Bierlein and Mullholand (1994) asserted that change requires “true site-based management” and a “new relationship” between all stakeholders of the charter school community (p. 38;

Gordon & Seashore Louis, 2009). As models of school reform, charter schools embody change as a theme to their births, existence, and closures.

Research on the effectiveness of charter schools at educating students more effectively than traditional schools indicates mixed results (Zimmer, et al., 2012; Buddin & Zimmer, 2012). Some have argued that few, if any, charter schools students outperform their local school district peers (Davis & Raymond, 2012; Preston, Goldring, Berends, & Cannata, 2012; Bettinger, 2005). Even some students in charter schools are skeptical of the potency of the charter school model (Kim, Kim, & Karimi, 2012). On the other hand, some researchers argue that both quantitative (Adbulkadiroglu et al., 2009; Hoxby & Murarka, 2007) and qualitative (Schneider & Buckley, 2003) data show charter school students to be more successful than those in traditional public schools. Given the mixed reviews charter schools receive, it is difficult to determine what constitutes success and how any school might move towards it effectively. In response to this plurality of concerns, this study focused on one essential element of a school's success: leadership. Research has shown that school leadership is an integral element in student success (Odhiambo & Hii, 2012; Bush, 2011b; Lane, 1998; Lezotte, 1992). Given the change-oriented nature of charter schools, examining leadership traits in these environments provides researchers and educators insight into new and innovative strategies which are more likely to lead to success.

The Executive Director

Quality leadership is of critical importance to school success (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). In fact, researchers have encountered no documented instances of a troubled school or school district being successfully turned around without strong, purposeful leadership (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Executive directors are the individuals primarily responsible for ensuring the successful achievement of charter schools' goals. Either as loci of educational reform or as schools focused on improving student performance through the application of a particular model or theory, charter schools exist to improve student achievement. The preponderance of evidence in the field indicates, however, that the success of that enterprise relies on the leader of a school (Hallinger & Heck, 1995; Lane, 1998; Lezotte, 1992; Protheroe et al. 2003; "Proven," 2010). Leithwood and Riehl (2003) have argued that the executive director is vital to fulfilling the goals of the charter school as an educational agency. Fullan and Miles (1992) have asserted that the executive director is charged with making the adjustments necessary to steer the school to success. Leithwood et al. (2004) have claimed that school leadership accounts for 25% of the total schooling effect on learning, second only to classroom instruction, and others have seen the two as inextricably linked (Johnson, 2008). Waters and Marzano's (2006) analysis of effective superintendent practice uncovered a direct relationship between particular, effective leadership practices and increases in student achievement. No matter what the challenge, successful leaders are a vital key to achieving success in charter schools.

Throughout America's history, the role of the educational leader has evolved along with society and its needs (Hessel and Holloway, 2002). First serving as teachers and then part-time administrators, principals emerged because of the necessity for administrative oversight when schools and communities expanded (Ensign, 1923). The administrative responsibilities of these early principals began with such managerial tasks as overseeing building heat, locking the building, and eventually grew to include the scheduling of classes and the disciplining of students (Sharp & Walter, 2003). Kimbrough and Burkett argued that "according to most accounts, the formal designation of principal in Cincinnati arose about the middle of the nineteenth century (as cited in Sharp & Walter (2003)). Yet the position of school principal as we know it is primarily a twentieth-century development and was concomitant with the great growth of pupil enrollments after 1900" (Sharp & Walter, 2003, p. 3). Later, principals became responsible for overseeing the instruction and professional development of faculty and staff, as well as public relations for the school (Pierce, 1934; Wren, 1994).

The notion of the school leader as operational manager endured throughout most of the 20th century. But with the renewed interest in educational reform that emerged in the 1970s, DuFour and Eaker asserted that school leaders began to be seen as powerful forces for creating and changing schools and educational systems (as cited in McLeod, 2008). After the publication of *ANAR* in 1983, educational leaders were seen as the vanguard of change in effecting an increase in student achievement (Morrison, 2005). Since the 1990s, educational reform has focused more on accountability through performance on standards-based measures. NCLB

puts the onus for student achievement directly onto the heads of school leadership (*K-12 Principals Guide To No Child Left Behind*, 2003). Today, student achievement has become the primary goal for educational leaders (Bryd, Drews, & Johnson, 2006; Purkey & Smith, 1982).

Student achievement is also the fundamental goal for charter school executive directors. Ted Kolderie explained that student achievement is the core idea which defines charter schools:

It is to offer change-oriented educators or others the opportunity to go either to the local school board or to some other public body for a contract under which they would set up an autonomous (and therefore performance-based) public school which students could choose to attend without charge. The intent is not simply to produce a few new and hopefully better schools. It is to create dynamics that will cause the main-line system to change so as to improve education for all students. (as cited in Budde, 1998, p. 72)

Kolderie delineated the one, common goal throughout the charter school movement: they all aim at the singular goal of improving student performance, despite the many different programs, methods, and educational philosophies that govern charter schools.

In order to achieve this goal of increasing student achievement, charter school executive directors must perform multiple leadership roles: those of principal and superintendent. First, executive directors serve as principal of the school, meaning they function as chief academic officers and educational leaders to students, faculty, staff, and parents. Second, they work as superintendents to the school as a district

and oversee facility, fiscal, and operational affairs for their schools. In this regard they work as chief executive officers, chief financial officers, and chief operational officers. On top of these demanding jobs, executive directors often perform these functions simultaneously, and without a great deal of support. (Hawk & Martin, 2010; Campbell & Grubb, 2008). Without the support of a central office and given the complex nature of a charter school, executive directors need a wider variety of skills to navigate successfully the challenges of operating a school (Lovely, 2004). With charter schools opening at the rate of 400 per year across the country, charter schools need not only leaders, but leaders who are uniquely capable of handling the multiple skills demanded in this atypical educational environment (Kwan, 2010; Kwan & Walker, 2009).

The role of charter school executive director is characterized by both similarities to and differences from educational leaders in other environments. Just as in traditional public schools, there are insufficient numbers of charter school leaders (E. W. R., 2008): experts predict there will be a shortage of administrators to fill the openings for executive directors expected over the next ten years. Also, like other school leaders, executive directors need “the strongest possible work ethic, superb people skills, [and] excellent communication skills (verbal and written)” (Stein, 2012, p. 55).

There are differences, however, between charter school leaders and those in other settings. Charter schools tend to demand leaders who will effect high-impact changes, in turning around failing school or students with histories of underperformance (Robinson & Buntrock, 2011, p. 22). Executive directors must be

able to operate in multiple leadership styles and move between them fluidly depending on the context. While familiar with how transformational leadership leads to sustainable improvement (Boerema, 2011), these leaders are often expected to swoop into a school suffering from a deterioration of organizational and instructional leadership and to enact policies to stem failure and begin improvement. They work to build partnerships through distributive leadership models but also recognize that collaborative leadership is not appropriate while the “ship is sinking” (Stein, 2012, p. 52), and therefore must be competent transactional leaders.

Campbell, Gross, and Lake (2008) conducted an extensive study on charter school leaders. They determined that despite some attempts by municipal and business leaders to run charter schools (Finn & Manno, 1998; Robelen, 2008), 87% of charter school leaders come from the field of education. Of these, 30% had led schools for fewer than two years prior to their appointment as executive director; 12% were under the age of 35, and only 19% had ten or more years’ experience in education in any capacity. These data demonstrate that charter school executive directors are younger than their peers in traditional education settings and are also less experienced in education and educational leadership. These facts may be why many charter schools seek external leadership training (Lane, 1998) or turn to CMOs to help them to gain sustainable administrative and governance competence (Hendrie, 2005).

Campbell et al. (2008) further argued that executive directors are deeply committed leaders who tend to be motivated by the mission of the specific school for which they work. There is a strong link between the personal beliefs of the director

and the mission and purpose of the charter school (Khan, 2012), which drives the school's success. In fact, 86% of executive directors surveyed indicated that they were drawn to their present position because of the school's mission. Other studies identified that executive directors are "dedicated, passionate, and [believe in] independent stewardship": "the ones who make it are very entrepreneurial; they're risk-takers by nature, and they put everything on the line" (Bowman, 2000, p. 1; Starr, 2012; Bierlein & Mullholand, 1994). This idea of leadership combined with courage is repeated in numerous articles describing charter school executive directors (Bierlein & Mullholand, 1994; Hess, 2009; Ryan & Rottman, 2009). The profile presented shows that a typical executive director is relatively young and comparably inexperienced, lacks a supportive network, is fiercely independent, and also is mission driven (Aguilar, Goldwasser, & Tank-Crestetto, 2011; Rooney, 2009). Although the relative youth of charter school executive directors is advantageous because most report an average work week of 70 hours (Campbell et al., 2008), these leaders have less experience prior to directing their schools which might otherwise inform how they might manage the complex skills set required of them.

Conceptual Framework

The framework for this study comes from a chapter published by Leithwood and Duke (1999). Acknowledging Yulk's (1994) assertion that there is "no correct definition" of leadership, but that there are multiple, "arbitrary," and "subjective" definitions (p. 45), Leithwood and Duke set out to build upon literature exploring educational leadership as well as "historical and theoretical" sources in order to

“understand leadership” (1999, p. 45). In order to accomplish this goal, the authors reviewed 716 articles from four scholarly journals as well as many scholarly books. From this comprehensive review, Leithwood and Duke identified six dimensions of educational leadership: instructional leadership, transformational leadership, moral leadership, participative leadership, managerial leadership, and contingent leadership (1999, p. 48).

Instructional leadership focuses on peoples’ “behaviors...as they engage in activities directly affecting the growth of students (Leithwood & Duke, 1999, p. 47). Actions which fall into this category are either “narrow,” (Shepperd, as cited in Leithwood and Duke, 1999) referring to specific actions within a classroom or a specific policy, or “broad,” referring the ways that school culture affects and informs teacher behavior. Instructional leadership tends to focus more on the actions and authority of particular people (e.g., principal, dean), and thus is more of a homo-centered perspective on leadership. Writers reviewed in the study oscillated between who served important roles as instructional leaders, from teachers to lead teachers to principals. Instructional leadership tends to describe actions or attitudes which have a direct effect on the specific outcome of student achievement. This leadership dimension is applicable to the present study because executive directors identified beliefs and actions which they use to affect student performance measures as well as set a climate for faculty and staff within their schools.

Transformational leadership emerges primarily from the literature referenced above and indicates how the actions or behaviors of leaders affect “the commitments and capacities of organizational members” (Leithwood & Duke, 1999, p. 48).

Common language in this literature refers to charisma, vision, culture, and the concept of empowering others (Nidus & Sadler, 2011). Those responsible for transformational actions do not necessarily occupy leadership positions in a formal, structural hierarchy, but rather, through their words and behavior, encourage others to act based on their belief in a shared, organizational goal. Leithwood and Duke (1999) gave a short review of the history of transformational leadership beginning with Burns and discussed, in particular, the importance given to charisma in some theories of transformational leadership. Leithwood himself was responsible for the most robust description of transformational leadership through his earlier identification of seven dimensions of transformational leadership: building school vision, establishing school goals, providing intellectual stimulation, offering individualized support, modeling best practices and important organizational values, demonstrating high performance expectations, creating a positive school culture, and developing structures to foster participation in school decisions (Leithwood, 1994). Leithwood and Duke (1999) argued that transformational leadership emphasizes “the leader-follower relationship” (p. 49), and is thus a socio-centered perspective on leadership. This leadership dimension is applicable to the present study in executive directors’ descriptions of the dynamic interactions with other stakeholders in their communities.

Moral leadership focuses on the “values and ethics of the leader” (Leithwood & Duke, 1999, p. 50) and explores the congruence of the leader’s values and those of the organization and its stakeholders. As such, it is a homo-centered perspective on leadership, identifying one person (at a time) within an organization and exploring the synchronicity or conflict between the values of the leader and those of the

organization. The most significant proponent of this perspective is Hodgkinson (1991) who outlined in great detail the highly analytical system by which moral leaders identify the values behind a policy or decision, rate them on a hierarchy of values, and purposefully elect implementation based upon higher placement in the ordered system of values. An educational leader subordinates “all lower values” to higher-order values through historical analysis, logic persuasion, and personal preference (Hodgkinson, 1991, pp. 150-153). Hodgkinson (1991) argued furthermore that educational bureaucracy is “a good thing. It is rational, benevolent, efficient, reflective, and fair. It connects means with ends according to the best principles of logic, science, and jurisprudence” (p. 57).

In contrast to Hodgkinson, Leithwood and Duke (1999) argued how moral leadership has a socio-centered dimension that “focuses on the nature of the relationships among those within the organization...” (p. 51). Moral leadership, therefore, references not only values but how those values are communicated and implemented, beginning with the value and extending to the practice or policy that embodies it. Leithwood and Duke (1999) also discussed the potentially complicated relationship between ideal of democracy and moral leadership, which allows leaders to ignore or devalue the voice of the people as the “least common denominator” within a school community (Slater, as cited in Leithwood & Duke, 1999, p. 98). This leadership dimension is applicable to the present study as executive directors described how their values align and conflict with the mission of the school and its stakeholders, and how they approach acting in those situations.

Participative leadership, similar to distributive leadership, has at its core the notion of shared responsibility. It highlights “the decision-making process of the group” (Leithwood & Duke, 1999, p. 51). Although schools that employ this leadership model may maintain authoritative hierarchies, individuals at any level of leadership may be called upon to contribute expertise and influence the group’s decision-making process in any given aspect of school life. Although participative leadership is determined in part by the knowledge of a single individual, this dimension understands leadership predominantly as socio-centered given its concern with the dynamics of how “legitimate stakeholders [together]...implement decisions” (Leithwood & Duke, 1999, p. 51). Schools shaped by participative leadership aim to enhance organizational effectiveness, foster democratic principles, and support site-based management (Leithwood & Duke, 1999, pp. 51-52). Some scholars have argued that because of these goals, all school leaders will need to move toward models of participative leadership in order for their schools to thrive (Hallinger, 1992; Murphy & Hallinger, 1992). Leithwood and Duke (1999) also argued that participative leadership, which has been typically incorporated into site-based management efforts, is “a centerpiece in a majority of the past decade’s school restructuring initiatives” (p. 52). They further described three major models of participative leadership in site-based management: administrative-controlled, teacher-controlled, and community-controlled. In the explanations of each of these models, Leithwood and Duke (1999) demonstrated how the continued use of expert knowledge is leveraged by all stakeholders to increase organizational effectiveness, to create accountability, and to improve school performance. This leadership dimension

is applicable to the present study as executive directors' described the process of decision-making and implementation in their schools.

Managerial leadership refers generally to organizational oversight within a school; it relates to “the functions, tasks, or behaviors of the leader” and presumes that the work of others in the organization required that the hierarchical leader be competent at enacting those functions and tasks (Leithwood & Duke, 1999, p. 53). Behaviors identified within the scope of this perspective are often repetitive tasks which many consider mundane, but research demonstrates that these tasks are vital to a school's longevity and adaptability through policy, personnel, and leadership (Davies, 1987; Harvey, 1986). This leadership dimension clarifies the distinction made throughout the literature on leadership between management and leadership, where management refers to tasks required to maintain organizational functionality, while leadership refers to loftier ideals such as creating a vision and motivating followers (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Leavitt, 1978). Leithwood and Duke (1999) argued, however, that just as our understanding of transactional and transformational leadership has evolved from polarity to complementarity, so too, some have argued, have management and leadership (Reitzug & Reeves, 1992). This leadership dimension emphasizes the homo-centered skills and qualities of a leader, but includes socio-centered notions in describing the implementation of policies that concern all employees (Caldwell, 1992). This leadership dimension is applicable to the present study as it informed executive directors' descriptions of their varied responsibilities.

Finally, contingent leadership focuses on “how leaders respond to issues within their unique organizational circumstances or problems that they face”

(Leithwood & Duke, 1999, p. 54). Although seemingly vague or ill-defined, the authors intended this dimension to be an acknowledgement that schools have attributes that distinguish them from one another, and that what is required for a leader's success in one context may differ from another. A problem requiring managerial leadership in one circumstance might call for participative leadership in another; one organization might be best served by a more transactional approach during a restructuring (Leithwood & Janzi, 2000) and more transformational one when fostering ongoing growth (Baglia & Hunt, 1988). Within this leadership dimension Leithwood and Duke (1999) identified some consistent leadership practices but found that while other perspectives that emphasize "leadership style" are more easily categorized, many "problem-solving" behaviors within contingent leadership resist such generalized description, leading to "a virtually unlimited universe of leadership practices" (p. 54; Duke & Salmonowicz, 2010). Factors affecting this variety range from personal experience (Allison, as cited in Leithwood & Duke, 1999) to personal conviction (Hodgkinson, 1991). Expert problem-solvers leverage their values and try to learn something personally from the challenge, while others simply try to solve the problem at hand (Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995, pp. 310-314). Because of the multiplicity of behaviors and skills encompassed within this leadership dimension, Leithwood and Duke (1999) focused more on the homo-centered idea of the traits and skills of individual leaders. This leadership dimension is applicable to the present study as executive directors' described the challenges unique to their schools.

In addition to Leithwood's scholarship on educational leadership, which has been widely influential in the field of education, there are numerous other theories that one might consider for a conceptual framework for educational leadership. For example, Tupes and Christal (1961) advanced a model of leadership which was predicated on classification of the five strands of human personality: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience (as cited in Judge & Bono, 2000). This view of leadership was rooted firmly in individual human psychology, but Judge and Bono made strong correlations between these five personality dimensions and extant theories on leadership. Compared with Leithwood and Duke (1999), Strange and Mumford (2002) emphasized to a far greater degree personal charisma and situational (contingent) leadership. Hodgkinson (1991) and Sergiovanni (1992) focused on the values and (moral) convictions of the leader, whereas Portin et al. (2004) noted the importance of distributive (or participative) leadership. Waters and Marzano (2006) studied the influence of school district leadership on student performance and defined a wholly different set of ideas as the framework for understanding educational leadership:

- collaborative goal-setting,
- establishing non-negotiable goals for student achievement and classroom instruction,
- aligning board support for the district's nonnegotiable goals,
- continuous monitoring of the district's progress in attaining its non-negotiable goals,

- effectively utilizing resources to support the accomplishment of district goals, and
- providing defined autonomy to principals to lead their building's efforts to attain district goals within clearly defined operational boundaries.

Any of these conceptual frameworks might be considered as alternatives to the framework elaborated by Leithwood and Duke (1999). However, the researcher selected this conceptual framework for the present study because Leithwood and Duke's taxonomy offers the widely-encompassing framework for leadership, referencing elements of all other models. Also, this framework specifically examines educational leadership and delimits consideration of other systemic factors that might affect school success.

Leithwood and Duke (1999) presented their six dimensions on leadership— instructional leadership, transformational leadership, moral leadership, participative leadership, managerial leadership, and contingent leadership—not as mutually exclusive, but instead as overlapping dimensions of the phenomenon of leadership. Leithwood and Duke (1999) reviewed an extensive body of literature on leadership in a variety of domains to frame these six dimensions through inductive categorization, integrating both homo- and socio-centered ideas of leadership theory within their framework. These six perspectives provide a framework through which one might analyze data about leadership practices in other domains, including the present study which will utilize them to categorize and analyze the self-reported leadership traits of executive directors of successful charter schools.

The Relationship of the Literature Review to This Study

The sources presented in this chapter demonstrate our evolving understanding of the concept of leadership and contextualize it to leadership within the charter school environment. While much of the research has begun to privilege a more transformational approach to leadership, some examples of success within charter schools seem to indicate the need for other strategies and tactics. As our understanding of leadership theory has evolved concurrently with the emergence and evolution of charter schools, the qualities of executive directors of successful charter schools have been noticed but not thoroughly investigated. This study is prompted by the need to understand more clearly successful charter school leadership.

Executive directors need to function as superintendents, principals, financial and operations managers, and marketing specialists, and need to do so simultaneously and without much support (Campbell and Grubb, 2008). Executive directors need a wider variety of skills to navigate successfully the challenges of operating a charter school than do educational leaders in traditional settings. Because of the different missions, foci, and governing philosophies of charter schools, as well as the relative youth of executive directors in the field of education, we need to understand more clearly the leadership traits that enable successful oversight of a charter school.

Within this context, the following research questions were used to explore the traits and habits of executive directors of successful charter schools:

1. What do executive directors of charter schools perceive to be the instructional and administrative demands of their jobs?

2. What personal and professional qualities do executive directors of charter schools believe have enabled them to be successful in their positions?

After the data was collected as described in Chapter 3, Leithwood and Duke's (1999) conceptual framework provided the structure to analyze data and determine relevant findings.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Within the charter school community, the responsibilities and skills of executive directors support the ongoing academic, financial, and programmatic success of their schools (Campbell & Grubb, 2008). Although more recent research has investigated the processes involved in the establishment of charter schools, much less is known about the practices and individual leadership traits that sustain successful charter schools (Bierlein & Mullholand, 1994). At present, there is little agreement on the leadership traits that characterize executive directors of continuously successful charter schools, and much is mere conjecture. Researchers agree, however, that competency in a set of leadership skills required in a charter school is integral to the school's success (Garn & Cobb, 2001; Gross & Pochop, 2007; Lane, 1998). The purpose of this study, therefore, was to identify key traits of successful charter school executive directors.

This chapter outlines the procedures used to research the phenomenon of successful charter school leadership. This chapter also details the methods, research questions, study population, sample selection process, ethical considerations, as well as methods of data collection and analysis.

Overview of Research Methods

This study employed a qualitative research approach with a multiple case study design. According to Merriam (1998), qualitative research is most appropriate when the goal is to explore, explain, or describe a phenomenon. Qualitative methods

are employed to understand human experience in context-specific settings; by contrast, quantitative research is used to test hypothetical-deductive generalizations (Patton, 1990). In a qualitative study, the researcher seeks answers to questions that emphasize how social experience is created and given meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Merriam, 1998). Merriam (1998) further described qualitative research as based in the “view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds” (p. 6). Qualitative methods then, are appropriate to the study of a social phenomenon (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2003).

Merriam (1998) further outlined the characteristics of qualitative research:

- (1) conducted by a researcher as a primary instrument for data collection and analysis,
- (2) involves fieldwork,
- (3) employs an inductive research strategy, and
- (4) yields a richly descriptive finding.

The present study of charter school leaders was appropriately examined through qualitative methods as it incorporated these characteristics. First, leadership, as has been discussed in Chapter 2, is a dynamic between leader and follower, and is, therefore, inherently a social dynamic. A qualitative method, in which the researcher is integral to data collection, was suited to examine such interactions between individuals. Second, because charter school executive directors engage in their duties in the field rather than in a laboratory, a qualitative research method employing fieldwork was appropriate for the study of a real-world dynamic. Finally, this study was interpretive because it was based upon inductive interpretations of the data

indicating leadership experiences from the perspective of executive directors of successful charter schools. This study of charter school leaders lent itself to qualitative research methods because of the inherently subjective nature of understanding social relationships through self-reflection to gain a “depth of understanding” (Patton, 1990, p. 1) of successful charter school leadership.

According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research methods are grounded in a social constructivist theory of knowledge. In social constructivist theory, knowledge is formed as a result of individual experience and perspectives. Knowledge itself is “forged in discussions and interactions with other persons” (p. 8). As such, both qualitative research and social constructivist theory place value on the importance of lived experience (Rudestam & Newton, 2007). In the present study the researcher explored and explained the phenomenon of leadership, itself a social construction, through first-person accounts of executive directors’ individual perceptions of their own successful leadership in established charter schools. To this end, this study explored the question of successful leadership practice through the perceptions and experiences of charters school executive directors, data that is best captured, analyzed, and explained through qualitative research methods.

Case Study Approach

A multiple case study design was used for this study. Patton (1990) wrote that the art of evaluation includes creating a research design that is appropriately suited for a specific situation and decision-making context. A qualitative researcher typically utilizes one of five primary design approaches (Creswell, 2009): a narrative

or a phenomenological design for studies of individuals; an ethnographic design for studies examining the culture-sharing behavior of individuals or groups; a grounded theory or case study approach for studies of processes, activities, or events.

A case study approach is most appropriate when the researcher's goal is to understand a single unit or bounded system or to understand more fully "concepts, models, and theories" (Merriam, 1998, p. 19). Smith (1978) described case study research as being set within a bounded system, requiring the researcher to delineate clearly elements which exist either inside or outside the study's scope and differentiate between what is contained within and lies beyond its parameters. The process of bounding the research study requires the researcher to define the study's unit of analysis. Case study design is appropriate to the present study given its parameters and goals in which the researcher will examine the leadership behaviors and practices (models) of four charter school executive directors (bounded system).

The researcher employed a multiple (or collective) case study to conduct this study, with each executive director to serve as a single case. A multiple case study is one that is extended to several cases sharing common characteristics (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2003). The logic that underlies the use of multiple case studies is similar to that of multiple case experiments. In multiple case study design, each case is selected intentionally so that it either predicts or contributes similar results (termed literal replication) or produces contrasting results, but for predictable reasons (termed theoretical replication). With both, the goal is replication (Yin, 1994), or the ability to infer future conclusions from the findings of the case. Because the evidence collected is more substantial and therefore compelling, multiple case studies are often

regarded as more robust than single case study design (Yin, 1994). For this reason, the present study utilized a multiple case study design, entailing data collection from four executive directors of successful charter schools which yielded more reliable findings.

For this study, the four charter school executive directors were considered successful based on clear, measurable criteria and subsequent nomination by peers and leaders of the charter school community. Their schools were demonstrably more successful by these various criteria when compared with other charter schools in their state. As research has shown, a school's success is determined in large part by the efficacy of a school's leadership (Deal & Peterson, 2009; Portin et. al., 2003). By obtaining self-reported data from the respective charter school leaders on their specific leadership traits, the researcher intended to illuminate the qualities and practices that helped to contribute to each respective school executive director's success.

Research Questions

This multiple case study has two research questions:

1. What do executive directors of charter schools perceive to be the instructional and administrative demands of their jobs?
2. What personal and professional qualities do executive directors of charter schools believe have enabled them to be successful in their positions?

Selection of Participants

According to Merriam (1998), one difficulty of case study research is the selection of the particular cases to be studied. Creswell (2009) stated that the researcher should “identify the purposefully selected sites or individuals...that will best help the researcher [to] understand the problem and the research question” (p. 178). Because the goal is to select those cases that provide the best opportunity to learn from the collected data, researchers employing qualitative methods frequently elect to use purposeful (Creswell, 2009) or purposive (Chein, 1981, as cited in Merriam, 1998) sampling. Participants for this study were identified and chosen by two methods of purposeful selection: criterion-based sampling and network sampling. The use of “criterion-based selection” (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, as cited in Merriam, 1998) allowed the researcher to select a small number of schools from the charter school population of a Midwestern state in order to identify charter school executive directors whose participation was most likely to yield results that address the research questions. This smaller population was then subjected to network sampling.

Criteria

First, only charter schools that share the same authorizer were considered for this study. An authorizer (sometimes called a sponsor) is an organization or body external to the charter school which is responsible for ensuring that the charter school meets all legal and financial requirements, and follows all appropriate state statutes. The selected authorizer for the present study is well-regarded in the charter school

community and was one of the first two authorizers approved by the state following the enactment of more stringent laws outlining the responsibilities of authorizers. Furthermore, because this authorizer has developed a specific profile of curricula and performance expectations for the schools it chooses to authorize, all of its schools share some similarities. All of this authorizer's schools are also geographically proximal within the given state. This criterion narrowed the sample population from 151 charter schools in the state to 13.

The second criterion further narrowed the sample to include only those schools that demonstrated success, both academically and financially, as determined by the following measures. First, the schools must have demonstrated Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) at least three of the four previous years (2009-2012). Adequate Yearly Progress is a measure of benchmark achievements (academic, attendance, etc.) introduced through NCLB used to define the success of a school or school system. Second, charter schools led by these executive directors had to have produced student achievement growth percentages higher than the state averages on either the state-mandated math or reading tests for three of the previous four years. Finally, charter schools led by these executive directors have to have demonstrated sound fiscal practices by earning no material findings on their legally-required external financial audits for at least three out of the four previous years. These criteria narrowed the sample pool from twelve to seven charter schools.

The final criterion required that prospective executive directors had three or more years of experience in school leadership, whether at their current or a previous school. Current research has shown that the needs of new leaders differ from those of

experienced leaders (Gross & Pochop, 2007; Lovely, 2004; Pack, 2008), and some researchers in leadership theory have posited different domains of knowledge for “novice” and “experienced” leaders (Allison & Allison, 1993). The skills and resources required to support newer leaders would, therefore, not be indicative of those required by more experienced leaders. Consequently, the present study examined only more experienced leaders. With the application of this criterion, seven potential charter school leaders remained in the sample pool. Table 1 displays the sample invited to participate in the study.

Table 1: Study Sample through Criterion-Based Selection

	Authorizer schools	Non-authorizer schools	Total
Schools	13	138	151

	Criteria-based selected schools	Non-selected schools	Total
Schools	7	6*	13

*includes researcher’s own school, disqualified on ethical grounds

	Leaders with 3+ years of experience	Leaders without 3+ years of experience	Total
Leaders	7	0	7

Sampling

Once these criteria had been applied, the remaining seven schools and their corresponding leaders became the new population subjected to purposeful, network

sampling. In qualitative case studies, the most common form of sampling is network sampling. According to Merriam (1998), a researcher utilizing network sampling asks participants to refer other potential participants who they feel would best fit the criteria for the study. Network sampling is an appropriate choice for a study in which the researcher requires information-rich subjects and where the identification of the best study subjects cannot be determined simply through an analysis of quantitative data (Merriam, 1998). In the present study, characteristics that distinguish charter school executive directors as successful were not determined solely based on the quantitative criteria above, but on subjective criteria such as perceptions of effectiveness, colleague respect, and ability to advance the mission and goals of a particular charter school. Through a survey tool given to stakeholders in the charter school community, network sampling afforded the researcher the opportunity to discover which leaders from the narrowed population were considered appropriate cases for research. The stakeholders included the executive director of the authorizer, the head of a nationally recognized organization that offers one of the few leadership training programs for charter school leaders, as well as leaders of the thirteen charter schools overseen by this same authorizer. The people in this group (totaling 15) were emailed a brief message in which the researcher described the project and sampling criteria and process (Appendix A). The email contained a link to a secure (password-protected) webpage, on which each of the seven potential participants were listed along with a box next to each with numbers 1-7 listed. The 15 members were asked to rank each of the seven potential participants according to which they perceive to be the most successful leaders of their charter schools, higher numbers denoting more

successful leaders. The expertise of these stakeholders, experienced both with charter school leadership and familiar with the pool of potential study participants, determined the researcher’s ultimate selection of the final sample of four charter executive directors. The secure webpage remained live for a designated period of time, and when the deadline specified in the note came, the researcher tabulated scores for each potential participant and selected the four highest point-earners as prospective participants for this study.

According to Creswell (2009), the criteria for case selection should lead the researcher toward those examples that provide the greatest insight to the research. Based upon this study’s rigorous selection methodology, the criterion-based method yielded a sample of just seven (4.6%) of all charters in the chosen state. Network sampling reduced this number to four (2.6%). The researcher believed that this logical methodology identified a group of charter schools, and ultimately charter school executive directors, whose leadership traits warranted in-depth study.

Table 2: Study Sample through Network-Based Selection

	Leaders under consideration	Leaders with highest marks through network sampling	Total
Leaders	7	4	4

Each of the four executive director subjects were subsequently contacted by the researcher and extended a formal invitation to participate in the study (Appendix B).

All four agreed to participate and their formal, written consent was secured (Appendix C).

Data Collection

A case study employs a specific way of collecting, organizing, and analyzing data (Merriam, 1998). Qualitative data is typically gathered through fieldwork, which entails the researcher engaging study participants in conversation about their perceptions and experiences. The findings, insights, and propositions that emerge were the result of methodical analysis of that fieldwork-obtained data.

In case study design, data collection involves four primary sources of evidence: interviews, documentation, archival records, and direct observations (Yin, 1994). The primary responsibility of the case study researcher during the data collection phase is gathering multiple sources of evidence, create a case study database, and maintain a logical chain of evidence in order to increase the reliability of the conclusions (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994).

Open-ended, semi-structured interviews were the primary source of data collection for this research study. The researcher conducted interviews at each of the four charter school sites with each of the four executive directors. (See Appendix D for the interview protocol.) The researcher conducted a pilot interview in order to refine the interview questions prior to meeting with the selected participants. The purpose of the interviews was to solicit rich descriptions from the each executive director concerning leadership of his or her charter school. Through the interviews, the researcher endeavored to obtain information regarding the school's challenges and

the traits and actions each leader had demonstrated to overcome those challenges successfully. Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes, was audio recorded and subsequently transcribed for the purposes of analysis by an outside transcriber. The transcriptions were ultimately verified by the researcher for accuracy. Additionally, each participant was provided with interview questions in advance in order to generate more reflective responses. A transcript of each interview was then provided to each participant for verification and to allow an opportunity for error correction. Shorter, follow-up interviews with participants were conducted and later transcribed, after preliminary analysis of the interview and document data.

In order to improve the reliability of the findings from this case study, the researcher adopted a case study protocol in order to guide the investigation. This protocol included field visit procedures, interview questions and format, data recording, data analysis, and the production of the case study report (Yin, 1994). According to Patton (1990) the goal of the case study is to capture a rich account conveys the varied experiences and nuances of the case situation. In this instance the case was a study of the leadership traits of each of the four executive directors. This protocol helped to guarantee the veracity of the data and subsequently, support the ultimate goal of the study.

Data Analysis

The direct involvement of the researcher is a key challenge of qualitative research (Creswell, 2009). As the instrument of data collection, the qualitative study researcher was aware of the challenge to communicate with participants clearly and

without bias during the data collection process. The issue of researcher bias is addressed later in this chapter under Ethical Considerations. In order to increase the validity of the data analysis, the researcher used a process that recorded participants' perspectives and identified when particular ideas were repeated based on theme. This process served to clarify the accuracy of the data collected by the researcher (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 1994). The researcher collected data from participants and through multiple data types (interviews, observations, official documentation, and written communication) instead of relying solely on interviews with the four charter school executive directors. Further, after preliminary analysis and identification of traits and themes, preliminary findings were vetted by an outside scholar for accuracy.

The researcher's goal for this study was to identify common traits of executive directors of successful charter school through analysis of collected data filtered through the identified conceptual framework. Merriam (1998) describes the multi-step data analysis process: category aggregation, in which the researcher codes data into broad categories; pattern-identification, in which the researcher locates similarities and differences among cases and categories; generalization, in which the researcher develops explanations about what is to be learned from the cases and categories; and finally case description, in which the researcher compiles a detailed view of the aspects of each case. The researcher collected, analyzed, and coded data and then sorted it into categories.

For this study, interviews served as the primary source of data. Each participant interview was transcribed and analyzed for comments related to specific

leadership practices. Each specific comment was highlighted and coded by a school and participant source for reference purposes via Microsoft Excel. Data analysis focused on examining thematic similarities in leadership practice among the study's four subjects.

The case descriptions focused on the study's units of analysis: the four charter school leaders. Each case description contains a short biographical sketch of each leader, along with brief descriptions of the leader's dominant characteristics of leadership and of the leader's perceptions regarding challenges at the school, and how these challenges have been overcome. In a multiple case study, a typical analytical approach is first to provide a detailed description of each case (termed a within-case analysis) followed by a thematic analysis between the cases (termed a cross-case analysis) (Creswell, 2009). For the present study, the goal was to identify leadership traits which have permitted a select group of charter school executive directors to achieve success in their schools. The within-case analysis combined with the cross-case analysis allowed for the identification of such themes, alongside a rich description of each trait.

Ethical Considerations

This study complied with all Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines put forth by University of Maryland at College Park (UMCP). Several precautions were taken to ensure the confidentiality of each study participant. A standard protocol of informed consent was followed in order to protect the privacy of each subject (see

Appendix C). This process entailed obtaining permission from the IRB prior to data collection, including a rigorous training process.

In addition, study participants received a formal, written invitation to participate in the study (see Appendix B). This invitation included a brief description of the study, its goals, and methods of data collection, analysis, and storage. Prior to each interview, study participants were asked to sign voluntary consent forms indicating willingness to participate in the study (see Appendix C). Each participant also was permitted to withdraw from the study at any time. Interview recordings and transcripts were securely stored by the researcher. The researcher protected the identities of the subjects and other interview participants through the use of pseudonyms; the names of specific schools, if mentioned, were also replaced with pseudonyms. Specific information related to the location of the schools and of the authorizer were withheld to prevent identification.

One challenge with any qualitative research study is reliability of the data interpretation (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 2003), which can be easily affected by the researcher's bias. In the current study, the researcher serves as executive director of a charter school, so his personal understanding of the demands of the role presented a challenge to objectivity. In order to control for this bias the researcher utilized an external scribe for participant interviews and an outside scholar to vet initial findings.

Chapter 4: Case Descriptions and Analysis

Overview

The purpose of this study was to understand executive directors' perceptions of the leadership qualities that enabled them to perform their jobs successfully and to improve student learning. This study used qualitative research methods in order to explore participants' perceptions and to determine which leadership qualities were identified. These traits included practices, attitudes, specific policies enacted and created, and language used by these leaders.

The researcher employed Leithwood and Duke's (1999) framework of leadership (instructional, transformational, moral, participative, managerial, and contingent) in order to filter data and to frame findings. The conceptual framework was derived from a comprehensive review of literature and based in several branches of leadership theory. The researcher's findings allowed for a greater understanding of which factors may lead toward greater leadership success in the unique educational environment of charter schools.

According to Patton (1990), the first task in qualitative research analysis is description. An effective qualitative research study requires the presentation of descriptive data. Solid descriptive data allows the researcher to provide the reader with a thorough understanding of the meaning of the experience under study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). In this study, that experience describes the leadership habits and traits used by executive directors of successful charter schools.

A typical approach in a multiple case study is to provide a detailed description of each case, (case description) followed by a thematic analysis across the cases, (cross-case analysis) (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 1994). Presenting thick descriptions of the case descriptions first allows the reader to gain an appreciation for the smaller, contextual differences among the study's subjects. In qualitative studies, thick description leads to thick interpretation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Often the small, contextual differences that appear in the case descriptions foreshadow more significant thematic findings which later emerge in the study's cross-case analysis (Yin, 1994).

This chapter first features the case descriptions of each executive director and charter school. The researcher then presents the cross-case analysis based upon the theoretical propositions contained in Leithwood and Duke's educational leadership framework.

Case Descriptions

Each case description contains a brief biographical and professional description of the individual executive director as well as a brief account of their charter schools, including history, general mission, assessment data, and demographic description of the school and its surrounding community. Pseudonyms have been assigned to participants and charter schools in order to assure the privacy of each executive director participating in the study. Charter schools will be named after English castles and their executive directors after English monarchs: William is

executive director at Windsor Charter School, Victoria at Buckingham Charter School, Henry at Leeds Charter School, and Elizabeth at Blenheim Charter School.

Case One: William and Windsor Charter School

William is a fifty-two year old male who describes his ethnicity as “Latino-Hispanic.” He is the founding executive director of Windsor Charter School, currently in its ninth year of operation. His educational background includes Divinity, Accounting, and Computer Science. For sixteen years in between graduating from college and starting work at Windsor, William worked at two different private sector software companies and one nationally known private sector accounting firm. He has worked as an accountant, manager of a customer service center, and manager of a sales department. Windsor Charter School is his first and only job in the field of education, but he did identify that in his previous, private sector employment he was responsible for training new employees, and that “was running an educational environment.”

William described the most formative educational experiences he had as a student as part of his studies in the discipline of Divinity. He identified that most of his professors were from “the British system,” and that “they didn’t particularly like the United States’ system of education.” Instead, he described their model of education as “reading a lot of things that you didn’t necessarily agree with, but processing.” This view on education directly correlates with Windsor, the charter school which William currently leads.

Windsor opened in the early 2000s. William described Windsor as “based on a classical model of education. A classical model focuses on providing students with

the life-long educational tools to learn and think for themselves.” The classical model of education upon which Windsor is based takes its modern roots from an essay published in 1947 by British Journalist and novelist Dorothy Sayers named “The Lost Tools of Learning.” A classical model of education divides learning into three phases: grammar, logic, and rhetoric, each with distinct pedagogical and curricular goals. Windsor has adopted this approach and has divided its K-12 population into three schools: the School of Grammar (grades K-4), the School of Logic (grades 5-8), and the School of Rhetoric (grades 9-12). The classical model calls for students to be taught appropriate skills at each level to be able, eventually, to express and discuss a subject which comports with the students’ affinity for contradiction and argumentation. Drawing inspiration from William’s formative educational experience where he was taught and encouraged to read ideas with which he did not necessarily agree, William has structured Windsor to teach students to be able to achieve exactly the same goal: they study complex ideas and learn to agree or disagree with them.

William identified himself as “one of the last founders to come into play” in the formation of Windsor. What drew these founders together was that they were “discouraged by some of the current educational programs in place, traditional environments.” This dissatisfaction resonated professionally with William who, in his various roles within private sector business for nearly twenty years, “had sales people and consultants that were communicating with CFOs, CEOs, VPs...they couldn’t write, they couldn’t spell, they couldn’t construct sentences, or persuasive arguments.” On a personal level, William also had a daughter who “could socially

migrate through the educational system without being challenged...[in] first grade she couldn't read, but that was because she could navigate the system." In contrast, William discussed how he had taught his son cribbage before entering into Kindergarten:

When he gets to first grade it's "one plus one," "one plus two" and he basically was bored out of his mind, so I saw two different spectrums. I said, well, "why is the educational system one such that you can't do the basic fundamentals and do it for somebody who would be willing to do it, and then at the same time have somebody who is ready to excel great but you just want to keep them down?"

From these professional and personal experiences, William joined the effort to found Windsor: "I think the idea was to establish an institution that would raise the bar from an academic perspective."

In 2012 Windsor enrolled over 1,000 students in grades K-12, making it the largest charter school in this Midwestern state. Its proficiency scores on mandatory state testing have consistently surpassed state averages in reading, math, and science. Scores for the past four academic years for Windsor are included in Table 3.

	Windsor	State
Math		
2011-12	78%	62%
2010-11	71%	56%
2009-10	84%	66%
2008-09	79%	62%
Reading		
2011-12	96%	76%
2010-11	92%	74%
2009-10	90%	72%

2008-09	88%	72%
Science		
2011-12	72%	51%
2010-11	70%	48%
2009-10	71%	49%
2008-09	69%	46%

The geographical community in which Windsor resides is relatively affluent, and this demographic is reflected in the demographic make-up of Windsor. All ethnicity data is self-reported by families.

	Windsor	State
American Indian	0.2%	2.2%
Asian	5.2%	6.7%
Hispanic	3.2%	7.1%
Black	1.4%	10.2%
White	90.1%	73.8%

In addition, each public school in the state is required by law to report accurately English Second Language (ESL) students, special education students, and students who qualify as free or reduced population students.

	Windsor	State
ESL	0.8%	7.7%
Special Education	9.7%	14.9%
Free-Reduced Population	10.6%	37.2%

Windsor’s enrollment has continuously grown since it opened in the early 2000s, it has secured bond monies and built its own 90,000+ square foot facility, and has a waitlist of applicants of over 600 annually.

Case Two: Victoria and Buckingham Charter School

Victoria is a sixty-two year old white female. She is the executive director of Buckingham Charter School which has been open for almost ten years of operation, although this is only her second year leading Buckingham. Victoria is, however, in her fortieth year as an educator, all of which has been in the public K-12 sector. Her highest degree is an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership where she studied the position female administrators held in the public school system in this Midwestern state. Victoria has held leadership positions in several schools throughout her career including “long-entry principal, superintendent, executive director, assistant principal, principal, and staff director teacher,” as well as having worked in both middle- and high-school settings. Before educational leadership, she was a public school teacher for thirteen years. She has also worked within urban, suburban, and rural school systems. Her position as executive director of Buckingham is her first position in a charter school. In fact, Victoria came out of retirement to pursue and take the position at Buckingham Charter School.

Victoria was drawn to work at Buckingham for two primary reasons: she enjoys working in educational leadership and she wanted to work with elementary school children. She said, “I like what I do, this [leadership] is my saddle. This is it...I realized my years of experience, my age...I don’t need to go back and quote-unquote prove that I can be a school director.” As she was looking into leadership opportunities, she came across the advertisement for executive director of Buckingham and,

[I] did a little research, a little homework about it and thought “you know I can do this, I think I would enjoy elementary kids.” Years ago I don’t think I would’ve. So...I’ve been fortunate to have K through 21 for my age of students. There isn’t a level I haven’t done.

In the case of Victoria, however, the student population, more than the mission of the school, enticed her to apply for this position.

Victoria has been working in education in this Midwestern state long enough to see the introduction of its charter schools many years prior, and she was not always supportive of them in principle. “I was one of those young, smart administrators who...said ‘Okay Governor, all this [school] choice, this is not good. You are going to be taking students away from us with the open enrollment.’” She indicated that she was “concerned” with charter schools when she heard ideas which she found troubling, particularly from parents who said, “‘we’ll make it our school, we’ll do it our way.’ I did hear parents say that.”

Buckingham Charter School itself is a K-5 school in a suburban setting and in 2012 serves over 400 students. It partners with another charter school which offers grades 6-8, and together these schools focus on providing a rigorous, content-rich educational program that nurtures “academic potential” and “personal character.” The guiding principle behind Buckingham’s program is a strong curriculum, and in order to achieve that goal Buckingham has, from its inception, used the Core Knowledge curriculum. Core Knowledge is a commercially available curriculum which purports to sequence skills both horizontally and vertically. The Core Knowledge curriculum was also attractive to Victoria because of “how little bits of

knowledge are taught and are taught well so that there is minimal re-teaching. As a skills teacher, that is what drew me here.” Further, Victoria looked at Buckingham’s whole program, including,

Visual arts, music, physical education, Latin I thought...this is a well-rounded...this is not just hit and miss where we’ll try art but if I am not very good as a third grade teacher we won’t do a lot of art. But we have art and we have music. So that is what drew me to it.

The track record of success the school published along with the stability of the curriculum further “resonated with me [her].” The academic achievement, demographic, and education needs data for Buckingham Charter School are below in Tables 6-8.

	Buckingham	State
Math		
2011-12	88%	62%
2010-11	79%	56%
2009-10	87%	66%
2008-09	78%	62%
Reading		
2011-12	91%	76%
2010-11	90%	74%
2009-10	86%	72%
2008-09	81%	72%
Science		
2011-12	79%	51%
2010-11	61%	48%
2009-10	64%	49%
2008-09	50%	46%

	Buckingham	State
American Indian	0.7%	2.2%

Asian	4.5%	6.7%
Hispanic	2.8%	7.1%
Black	11.5%	10.2%
White	80.5%	73.8%

Table 8. 2012 Educational Needs Data for Buckingham		
	Buckingham	State
ESL	0.7%	7.7%
Special Education	9.9%	14.9%
Free-Reduced Population	21.9%	37.2%

Case Three: Henry and Leeds Charter School

Henry is a forty year old white male. He is the executive director of Leeds Charter School which is in its almost tenth year of operation, although this is Henry's first year leading this school. Henry highest academic degrees are an M.A. and a Specialist's Degree in Educational Leadership. He worked for six years as a public school science teacher prior to moving into leadership, and is now in his ninth year in educational administration. Of those nine years, eight have been at charter schools, and his roles have included curriculum specialist, assistant principal, and executive director. Before working in education, Henry was also in the United States Army for over a decade.

Leeds Charter School first opened serving students in grades 6-12 and was granted a charter expansion. In 2012 Leeds services almost 800 students in grades K-12. Leeds' program is college preparatory, and, like Windsor, Leeds also employs a classical, liberal arts curriculum as a central component to its program. Henry claims that Leeds boasts an educational experience for students and families which rivals selective private schools. Leeds' initial focus was to present a strong curriculum, and,

like Buckingham, the school also adopted from its onset the Core Knowledge curriculum. When applying for the position at Leeds Charter School, Henry said “that mission...screams to me a ‘world class’ school...what brought me to [Leeds] was the potential of having a world class school.” When asked to elaborate on what makes a school world class, Henry said,

I want to have the highest ACT scores in the region, in the state, and in the nation, and as a public school we have the potential to be able to do that. I want our students to be qualified to go to any college they choose to go to.

Henry continued to say that much of the work of Leeds Charter School explores “how to prepare for college,” including in non-academic ways such as “training the parents on how to prepare their child [financially] for college.”

Henry also said that there were particular aspects of Leeds’ program which resonated with him personally. He mentioned that Leeds worked “to teach the knowledge of the mind and also...discipline,” and that Leeds’ program provided a “structured environment.” Despite the school’s history of success in academic proficiency, Henry said that as he came into this job of executive director, he began focusing on “academics: I want to get beyond looking at the [state] proficiency.”

Henry’s leadership of Leeds Charter School does not reference his personal academic experience. He said that his educational upbringing was “nothing like [Leeds] in terms of rigor or strength.” He said that he hoped “to make a school better than what he had.” The academic achievement, demographic, and educational needs data for Leeds Charter School are below in tables 9-11.

Table 9. Academic Proficiency on State Testing for Leeds		
	Leeds	State

Math		
2011-12	83%	62%
2010-11	72%	56%
2009-10	65%	66%
2008-09	73%	62%
Reading		
2011-12	90%	76%
2010-11	87%	74%
2009-10	84%	72%
2008-09	89%	72%
Science		
2011-12	69%	51%
2010-11	61%	48%
2009-10	71%	49%
2008-09	64%	46%

Table 10. 2012 Demographic Data for Leeds		
	Leeds	State
American Indian	0.4%	2.2%
Asian	11.1%	6.7%
Hispanic	1.7%	7.1%
Black	3.9%	10.2%
White	82.9%	73.8%

Table 11. 2012 Educational Needs Data for Leeds		
	Leeds	State
ESL	0.0%	7.7%
Special Education	6.5%	14.9%
Free-Reduced Population	13.1%	37.2%

Case Four: Elizabeth and Blenheim Charter School

Elizabeth is a forty-one year old white female. She is the first executive director of Blenheim Charter School which was founded in the latter half of the 2000s. Elizabeth has two bachelor's degrees, an M.A., and a Specialist's Degree in

Educational Leadership. Her academic background is varied, and includes Special Education, Business, and Kinesiology. She has five current teaching licenses in physical education, elementary education, social studies, pre-primary education, and special education. She also worked four years as a fifth grade teacher in a parochial school before moving into educational leadership. Her first leadership position was as the executive director of Blenheim Charter School. Elizabeth cites her versatile background as the primary reason she was originally hired at Blenheim. She was first hired as a teacher and taught three different classes her first year while the school had no executive director. “By spring I was the interim director and that summer after a panel interview and the town meeting, I was the [executive] director.”

Blenheim Charter School is located in a rural setting. It first opened serving students in grades K-3, but now services over 300 students in grades K-8. According to Elizabeth, Blenheim claims to be an environment which focuses on rich character development and modern, effective learning techniques in order to create “self-confident students.” To achieve this end, Blenheim creates and then utilizes personal learning plans for each of its students. Elizabeth indicated that some of the aspects which drew her to work at Blenheim were that it was an “academic charter school that features Core Knowledge curriculum and character development.” Elizabeth had no prior experience with the Core Knowledge curriculum before coming to work at Blenheim. Despite the aspects of Blenheim that attracted Elizabeth to come to work there, the primary reason for her to come to Blenheim was “opportunity.”

What drew me here was opportunity. When I was hired, I didn’t know better but there actually wasn’t a school, there was actually a slab and they said

there'd be a charter school here...I actually thought that it would be less work to be a Phy Ed teacher. Who would not love to wear sweat pants to work every single day? How hard could that be? That only lasted for nine days.

Before her interview experience at Blenheim Charter School, Elizabeth "didn't know what a charter school was; I had no idea of what I was getting myself into. It really looked exciting." More than seeking out a new opportunity, however, Elizabeth said what motivated her to find a new job was to escape from her previous job:

We didn't have to follow any standards [at my previous school]. We just had good, really bright students that outperformed the neighborhood...you know, traditional district schools. So everybody thought it was okay but, our leadership wasn't very good. I felt that the teachers were always unhappy...a lot of discontent. I never went to the staff lounge to eat lunch because it just...it was a place of negativity. And the whole school was just negativity... there was just no innovation. It just felt like it was a dead end and that just doesn't fit my personality, but I didn't know this [Blenheim] was an innovation and thinking outside of the box. It was just an opportunity that maybe I could do something other than be a teacher for the rest of my life.

Despite the historical, academic successes of Blenheim, Elizabeth was the only participant interviewed for this study who did not move to the school because of the promise of a better type of education, but rather, "I didn't move for the school at all. It was more I saw opportunity."

Similarly, Elizabeth said that she runs Blenheim Charter School to create "the opposite effect" from her experience as a student herself. Elizabeth is the product of

parochial and public school education and said that her experiences as a student led her to believe that “I never wanted to be a teacher.” Those experiences carried through her time at a graduate “teaching school.” But, said Elizabeth, she “matured in her 30s,” and her dislike for the educational experience she had “makes me more passionate now...As I reflect on the teachers and leaders I’ve experienced, I think there’s a better way. From the reverse, I found things I would like to do better.”

Blenheim Charter School has a higher percentage of free and reduced students than the other charter schools in this study. The academic achievement, demographic, and educational needs data for Blenheim are below in tables 12-14.

Table 12. Academic Proficiency on State Testing for Blenheim		
	Blenheim	State
Math		
2011-12	71%	62%
2010-11	60%	56%
2009-10	79%	66%
2008-09	83%	62%
Reading		
2011-12	79%	76%
2010-11	76%	74%
2009-10	86%	72%
2008-09	77%	72%
Science		
2011-12	44%	51%
2010-11	61%	48%
2009-10	64%	49%
2008-09	23%	46%

Table 13. 2012 Demographic Data for Blenheim		
	Blenheim	State
American Indian	0.0%	2.2%
Asian	2.3%	6.7%
Hispanic	4.6%	7.1%
Black	2.6%	10.2%

White	90.5%	73.8%
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Table 14. 2012 Educational Needs Data for Blenheim		
	Blenheim	State
ESL	1.0%	7.7%
Special Education	12.4%	14.9%
Free-Reduced Population	21.6%	37.2%

Research Questions and Study Responses

Within a case study, after the researcher presents a with-in case analysis, he typically proceeds to the cross-case analysis (Creswell, 2009) in which the research speaks to how the thematic findings of the study answer the research questions. A cross-case analysis is referred to as the theoretical propositions approach to data analysis as the analysis is done within a defined framework rooted in previously-established scholarship (Yin, 2004). In the case of the present study, the researcher analyzed the collected data against the framework provided by Leithwood and Duke’s (1999) six dimensions of educational leadership in order to answer the following two research questions:

Research question #1: What do executive directors of charter schools perceive to be the instructional and administrative demands of their jobs?

Research Question #2: What personal and professional qualities do executive directors of charter schools believe have enabled them to be successful in their positions?

Audio-recorded interviews with each of the four executive director participants were conducted on their charter school campuses and then transcribed.

Additionally, follow-up interviews were conducted with each of the four participants via telephone and then transcribed as well. Copies of each transcribed interview were emailed to participants in order to verify accuracy and to allow each participant an opportunity to make any final revisions or corrections to the transcripts prior to analyses. These written transcripts proved to be the primary source of research data for this study. They were supplemented by field notes taken by the researcher observing each participant once in a meeting or event acting as leader, and through analysis of fourteen relevant documents submitted by the four executive directors.

From the interview transcripts and analysis of other data, a color coding process was used to code according to the conceptual framework used in this study: Leithwood and Duke’s (1999) six dimensions of leadership. From this, further analysis led to certain highlighted themes discussed, referenced, or prioritized by participants during the course of each interview in response to the research questions. Those emergent themes are presented below and then discussed in detail.

Research Questions	Themes
What do Executive Directors of charter schools perceive to be the instructional and administrative demands of their jobs?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quantity of demands 2. Affecting change systemically
What personal and professional qualities do Executive Directors of charter schools believe have enabled them to be successful in their positions?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Accountability 2. Change management 3. Leadership in multiple dimensions

Executive director demands: Quantity of demands

In investigating what do executive directors of charter schools perceive to be the instructional and administrative demands of their jobs, the first issue which kept

surfacing was the quantity of demands on the executive director from all areas of school leadership. Victoria said this very clearly straight away: “it’s a dual job. The sign should read executive director, school principal.” The executive director portion of the job was most commonly described by participants in connection to various managerial responsibilities. Victoria said, “I’m the HR, the finance, the go-to for transportation, food service, parent advocacy, student advocacy, professional development, teacher observation,” while Elizabeth gave a listing of the managerial tasks she oversaw as: “parent issues, student issues, state and federal mandates, facilities, business operator, safe schools, lunch program, bussing.” Henry said, “What I have noticed is that there is a lot more management a lot more paperwork that I find cumbersome that I am having to deal with,” while William summarized his responsibility as executive director as him being the one creating “operational excellence and customer intimacy.”

This idea of the quantity of demands on executive directors culminated in participants expressing that they had much more to do than time to do it. Elizabeth described the workload as “never-ending,” and said as follow up, “now I know why traditional school districts have such a hierarchy.” She continued to say that “every problem that I have which is very small, you extrapolate it out and it is much larger, and it is unmanageable. So I need help.” Victoria expressed the same feeling of being overwhelmed as, “I just do a lot of juggling,” and, “I want to scream. I want to scream.” Victoria also said that “there is just more responsibility” in being executive director of Buckingham Charter School than in any of her educational leadership jobs in the past forty years (Gross & Pochop, 2007; Garn and Cobb, 2001). William, who

used Rogers Technology Adoption Curve as a taxonomy to describe the growth of his school over ten years, expressed the same issue as:

[When the] organization grows or starts, it really attracts innovators or early adopters those people that are willing to take risk...so from the administrative perspective I think it differs as you get along this curve here (referring to the present day), this is more about just trying to get across what they call the chasm, your entry in the mainstream market where you are a viable solution.

At this point, William continued, his work became more about creating “more policies because the volume is bigger”:

So 200 students, 1100 students, somehow I have to create pockets of intimacy, lower school, middle school, upper school, parent group, operational excellence. More policies because the volume is bigger. “I want to request a teacher”; “you can’t.” “What is the bullying policy here?” “No bullying allowed.” “Do you have it in writing?” “No, you write it down.” Now you have the bullying policy. It’s this if you want to make a bullying complaint, you fill out a form, if you falsely accuse somebody you are sent to criminal prosecution. So this is the piece here (pointing to the upper end of the curve), so from the administrative perspective I think it differs as you get along this curve here (pointing to the lower end of the curve), this is more about just trying to get across what they call the chasm: your entry in the mainstream market where you are a viable solution. The bigger you are, the more policies you need to get things done.

The common idea which emerged from these data was that executive directors perceived that they had more work to do than time to do it.

Executive director demands: Affecting change systematically

The second issue which the researcher identified through analysis was the shift from working with people to working with systems. Three of the four participants in the study were teachers in public and/or private schools prior to assuming their current leadership roles, and the final participant had extensive background in training new employees in the private sector. The participants described the difficulty of understanding the difference between direct service (which teachers provide to students) and affecting students indirectly (which administrators provide to students through faculty and staff). The shift from people to systems management manifested itself as a move from thinking only of students to thinking about affecting “standards, the curriculum, instruction, evaluation systems” (Henry). Instead of working within the system, executive directors said that, “I am looked to for guidance, coaching, and professional development” (Victoria). This change challenged each of the four participants, even those who have been in leadership for many years. The constant tension between working directly with students and working with the people who work with the students tasks remained in the front of their minds:

I have to remember when I meet with people—teachers, administrators, parents—that my job really should be as an instructor that they are trying to figure out why a situation is happening: why their student is being suspended,

why it is wrong for them to call somebody something on Facebook, why that doesn't work, and why there is discipline at 6th grade, and why when you get to 10th grade it's not law enforcement. So I try to make sure there is always instruction. (William)

William summarized his understanding of this difference as "I would view myself as more of a teacher, always a teacher, it's just my audience is a little bit different," even though he sees his current duties mainly as "adult daycare." William also connected the first issue (quantity of demands) to the second when he said, "the people I have in place won't do it exactly the way I would, but I have to give them the leeway to do it. If I don't, they're going to make me do that."

The difference between working with people and working with systems is a struggle which Henry said, "I have to keep on the forefront," so that if he wished to fulfill his goal to "affect instruction, that affects ten years from now" he had to

Delegate a lot of that [management] more...I am trying to develop systems where it minimizes the amount of times on that management piece so I can focus on leadership and, be the real instructional leader so I can help the principals be the instructional leaders to their teachers.

Elizabeth discussed the difference when she examined her faculty and realized "I figured out my teachers don't know how to plan...I'll sit down with them [and ask] 'what are you going to do with the data, how are you going to get them [students] to grow?'" Blenheim creates personal learning plans for each student, and Elizabeth expressed that rather than creating the plans for each student herself, she now had to coach teachers on how to do that. Victoria said, "systematic change leads to

operational change that leads to working with people: it always ends up affecting people.” Each of the executive directors discussed the challenge of working to create and manage systems to support students rather than working with the students directly.

Executive director success: Accountability

The first idea which emerged from the data to describe how executive directors overcame these challenges and led their schools to success was that executive directors are the people who are most responsible for the success and failures at their charter schools. The staff sizes at the four charter schools in this study ranged from 51 to 123, but despite those numbers, the executive directors expressed an extraordinary amount of ownership over all aspects of the school. Victoria stated, “I’m the HR, the finance, the go-to for transportation, food service, parent advocacy, student advocacy, professional development, teacher observation... there is no district office to do things.” The comment referred to more than just the multiple domains of responsibility, but to a sense of ownership over Buckingham Charter School: “There is just more responsibility. And there are more demands than I think people are aware, because if I don’t address it no one will; if I don’t keep on top of the budget... yes the accountant will, but at the end of the day the question comes here to me.” Despite the fact that all four charter schools use external business management services to oversee the cash management of those organizations and each have onsite liaisons to those firms, according to Victoria ultimate responsibility for the charter school fell to the executive director.

Elizabeth expressed a similar idea: “it’s all my fault or it’s all my glory. I have to be more involved and invested.” In the context of ramping up to the job of executive director, she said:

When you work with all this and there is no one above me and really no one below me all things fall onto my lap. I think that is the way that I’ve learned. And if I didn’t have them on my lap I wouldn’t actually know what to do with them or that they even existed.

The daily and regular activities of running these charter schools fell to the executive directors, even with those underneath them to spearhead certain efforts. William said that, “I might not be personally responsible [for the mistake] but I’m personally responsible for the messaging from the institution; I have to clean it up.”

The responsibilities which the executive directors described were many, and spanned across traditional categories of administrative and instructional. In addition to the managerial tasks named by Victoria above, William explained setting normative priorities for Windsor (“operational excellence and customer intimacy”) while Victoria continued to explain the dual roles of the executive director as both principal (instructional leader) and executive director (operational leader). Victoria said that in her capacity as executive director, as opposed to principal or superintendent before,

What’s different [from my previous work is that] I’m responsible for the whole operational aspect in addition to the instructional leadership piece. [Before this] I didn’t have to be responsible for every single line item. For example, I’ve worked before at Title I schools, but I’ve never been the person

to talk to [contact person at the Midwestern state department of education] and who has had to fill out the Title grant application.

Henry lamented that the amount of managerial leadership under his role surprised him and that he had to attend to it all in order for it to get done:

I have noticed is that there is a lot more management a lot more paperwork that I have find cumbersome that I am having to deal so that's, I am trying, I am trying to develop systems where it minimizes the amount of times on that management piece so I can focus on leadership and, be the real instructional leader so I can help the principals be the instructional leaders.

Elizabeth added to the litany of tasks under her control: “parent issues, student issues, state and federal mandates, facilities, business operator, safe schools, lunch program, bussing” and ultimately “academics.”

One repeated idea is that the executive directors all lamented that the need for them to attend to managerial tasks distracted them from functioning primarily as instructional leaders (Campbell et al., 2008). Victoria said, “oh absolutely. It’s [the many facets of educational leadership] all here.” From “staffing culture” and “academics” (Elizabeth) to making sure the school is truly “mission driven,” (William), the executive directors felt accountable for the various elements within their charter schools being successful. In terms of faculty and staff, William said “I am looked to for guidance, coaching, [and] professional development.” Henry said that his staff looks to him to oversee, “standards and the curriculum, instruction, evaluation systems,” as well as “I coach the principals, who coach the coaches.” In terms of responsibilities to the students, William said, “so I would view myself as

more of a teacher, always a teacher.” Henry described his goal to “affect instruction that affects ten years from now.” In terms of parents, Elizabeth said that she spent a lot of time trying to get “parents just to... zip it,” echoing a comment from William who said of his job, “my work right now is adult daycare.” These charter school leaders expressed clearly that their demanding jobs moved across domains (managerial, instructional) and stakeholder groups, but that the responsibility to get things done rested on them.

In order to tackle the extreme demands of these jobs and still maintain the position of being accountable to the school, executive directors discussed using a combination of collaboration, delegation, and prioritization. In describing how he managed the largest charter school in this Midwestern state, William described the transition of leadership needs throughout the growth of Windsor. In the earlier part of Windsor’s existence, when people needed concerns addressed such as questions about bullying, they had to “write it down” themselves. Now that Windsor has existed for approximately a decade and is more established and much larger, the focus has shifted for William from doing things himself to collaborating with others and delegating them to do it. As William tried to move Windsor to what he terms “operational excellence,” he recognized that he needed to empower others. In order to reach the goal of excellence, William had to adjust his leadership style to “empowering, encouraging in the sense that I trust people. I have very high expectations, I expect people to just to do their work. I am not a micromanager, I am very hands off.” William has shifted from himself being the action-center of the school to “if you have a problem if you have a question, ask me, if you don’t, I trust

that you do it, you can make mistakes, we all make mistakes, just make sure they aren't critical mistakes and that sort of thing so it is more mission driven." By adopting this new style of leadership and empowering his direct reports to oversee their programs (with accountability), William was able to focus more on his priorities, which involve defending the mission of this school. "Academics, character, leadership, classical.' [If someone asks if we teach] auto mechanics, the question is, 'how does it fit with "Academics, character, leadership, classical.'" But these are good things? Correct. But not all good things fit into our mission." The shift to having more people responsible for smaller tasks leaves the various executive directors more responsible for big picture ("mission") issues, but their accountability to even the small issues did not fade away.

Victoria described the same dynamic as "I do a lot of juggling"; Elizabeth described it as "multi-tasking, prioritizing and making delegations." But, she continued, "delegating doesn't lessen responsibility; it heightens it because you want make sure it's done right." Even when assigning responsibility of a task to someone under her, the accountability for the project being done correctly remained the responsibility of the executive director.

For example, Elizabeth said that she delegated much of the curriculum design and assessment strategy to one of her direct reports because, "I have an expert, and I feel as a leader it is really hard for me to give things up. But I felt like that was one in order to do justice, I can give that up." Henry said, "I delegate a lot of that [management] more" to ensure that he can continue to be the instructional leader of Leeds Charter School. Even with this separation of duties, however, Elizabeth said,

“I have to be accountable to what has my signature” which, she continued to explain, can be anything that happens within the school building on any day. Each executive director described some way to handle the plurality of the demands on their jobs both to survive the needs while maintaining accountability for their school and its direction.

While this idea of the centrality of the executive director was clear from all four participants in their interviews, there was little mention of the notion in any of the documents examined for this study. In fact, in the school handbooks, mission and vision statements examined, the word “community” appeared repeatedly and the executive director was not set apart as a sole decision-maker or bottle-neck to processes even once. Blenheim’s family handbook began with a letter from the executive director saying that she was glad to have families as a part of “our wonderful school community,” and that she looked forward to working together “as we build our future leaders.” Later she wrote in the handbook, “together we will develop a growing, dynamic, and nurturing school community.” In fact, this handbook used the word “community” twenty-three times and the title “executive director” only seven times. Leeds Charter School created a document to guide their efforts as a college preparatory school which described five goals to prepare students to matriculate successfully into college. Despite the centrality of the college-preparatory program to the school’s mission, the executive director is not named in the document as responsible or contributing to this portion of the mission, while entities such as the curriculum, faculty, alumni, students, and families appear throughout the document. While the case can be made that executive directors are

responsible for the success of all of the schools' programs, it surprised the researcher that the executive directors identified themselves heavily in the interviews as integral to these efforts, but were rarely named in any of the relevant documents of the schools.

In contrast, many of the schools' policies studied (both state-mandated and charter school-specific) listed either the executive director or board designee (primarily the executive director) as the main point of contact for administering and overseeing the implementation of policies. Whether state-mandated policies such as Harassment and Violence, Bullying prohibition, or Student Discipline, the executive director, not the Board, was named as the responsible agent. Community members were encouraged to contact the executive director about policy matters prior to contacting the Board. This trend held true for the school-specific policies as well as Blenheim's policy on expense reimbursement and Buckingham's wellness policy. While the Board approved all policies, it was the executive director responsible for implementing them on a daily basis and dealing with issues which arose from them. The executive director's accountability to implement and maintain policies came across very clearly in policies, but significantly less so in school-produced documents such as handbooks and guiding documents.

Executive director success: Change management

The second idea which came across through the data is that the executive director needs to manage change as a process. While much of the extant literature on charter schools supports the notion that the schools themselves as well as their leaders

are more comfortable with ongoing change than in traditional public schools (Fullan & Miles, 1992), what came through the data in the present study was not only change itself, but change management as a process.

Elizabeth described her personal leadership style as “being a change agent.”

William highlighted how change is such a regular part of life at Windsor that sometimes he needs to help faculty see that if they do not change, they may not realize that they are no longer a good fit for the school’s present needs:

It’s on many occasions that teachers that get a little contentious. It has changed, ‘I don’t like this,’ they work really well here, and they don’t work well here. Sometimes when they don’t work well here we have to point them in a different direction because it is just not a good fit.

In response to the question which lessons had prepared her for success as a leader, Victoria said, “I work with people in understanding change.” She then continued:

I am a firm believer in helping people in what they all want what we all need to understand in change. “What is the change?” “What does it mean for me?” “How does it affect...how am I going to be affected by it?” “What do I need to do right now?”

She quoted using the informal “WIFM” system (What’s in it for me?) to work with people as she guided them through changes. The fact that Victoria highlighted not the change itself but her goal of working people through the change highlighted the notion of a change management system.

Henry discussed the need for continuous change management at Leeds Charter School:

Why do we need to improve? So I really want a consistent feedback loop, a consistent feedback model, a consistent improvement model and because [Leeds'] test scores when we compare to the state average looks great, alright? When we look at our finances, they are good. When we look at our enrollment, we've got a waiting list. What do we need to improve on? Look at all these measurables. So that is what I am finding, this status quo. And that is hard, and so what I needed to do was raise that bar...

Henry's mention of "feedback loop" and "feedback model" again highlight the process surrounding the change being discussed more than the change itself.

Elizabeth highlighted the need for change management in response to the hypothetical of stagnation in education: "we are still teaching and not looking at the data and it is not changing anything, so there is really no need to change anything." She said:

I think until we are done growing, change is always...and I always tell my staff here is the great thing about working here is that we have no history, so we are just kind of making it up as we go. And that we have to be... if we want to be innovators, if we want to be creators of something better and something new, we have to be willing to change. And when we hire, that is a great question to ask: 'how do you handle change?' I think change is good.

Elizabeth's response to mediocre performance in students is to create a culture of change at Blenheim and to hire faculty and staff who align with that cultural value.

William similarly described a constant mode of change and improvement management at Windsor:

Because that is too much and if this is what kids are doing, where 36% are taking remedial classes when they are freshmen in college, we don't want to be a part of that so as we get here we start to refine this so to the point where I go back to K-4 and say, 'these reading and math scores, I don't know if you can't read when you are in third grade,' reading well by third, and 'you know if we can't read well by third grade, and now we have them reading substantial pieces of information in history science and English in fourth fifth and sixth grade, they are going to fail.' So don't fail them in fifth grade, fail them in third grade, because they have to get those skills. So we are always going back and trying to redefine and make it better if that makes sense.

The continuity of these responses about executive directors being agents of change towards a goal of constant improvement and managing the change process with their stakeholders, as well as charter schools themselves being loci of change followed throughout the interview data.

Executive directors focused their changes on the areas of curriculum and faculty pedagogy. Victoria wanted to revamp Buckingham's science curriculum in order to get test scores "higher and to close the achievement gap in reading and math, for our students." Victoria, therefore, hired National Geographic whose program promised to improve "science vocabulary and knowledge." After the initial training, Victoria focused on the "interim assessments, which we create" in order to gauge where students are toward their learning goals.

I work with the curriculum director...and also our enrichment team, and especially...the assessment director to talk about how what can we do with

our teachers in the area of interim assessments and regular classroom assessments that will address the standards, [state] standards, and will also address our desire to ramp up their [science] vocabulary.

Even after this implementation, Victoria said that it remained her responsibility: “then I’m responsible for working with teachers on the re-teaching of what students did not get.” She spoke at greater length about the process of finding, implementing, and tracking the success of this change than about the curricular program itself. Henry set a goal for Leeds to “increase our [state assessment] to a percent over last year,” and Elizabeth said, “our academic goals are based, for reading are based off of STEP so getting kids to make that three step achievement.” To lead their schools towards these pedagogical goals, however, executive directors described the process as “building is a trust,” and “we’re just having pilot year the first year and at the end of the year we will come together and make our own” (Henry). Executive directors described more the process of implementing these changes than the nature of the specific changes themselves.

There was a clear difference between change and a change management process. Although these executive directors each spoke about the importance of change at their schools, it was change management which they identified as aiding their success as leaders. Change alone refers to a difference between one condition and another; change management, however, is a different entity altogether.

Change management, often thought of as a technical process, is significantly more complex. It is a business mindset, a management approach that has demonstrated its many strengths in organizations dealing with rapidly

changing environments. It allows companies and agencies of all sizes to increase the efficiency and dynamics of their project delivery, and at the same time, to improve their customer satisfaction by increased predictability of project outcomes. (Schüler, 2012, p.13)

In the studied charter schools, change management was a superstructure in place and overseen by leaders. Its goals were to arrive at more consistent and desired outcomes as well as increase the satisfaction of those involved in the process as stakeholders. Henry discussed his school's "change process" as historically challenging: "great idea, but boy the implementation as terrible." To counteract these past failures, Henry developed a change management process for everyone in Leeds. Leeds' new change management document details, in nine steps, how anyone who works at Leeds Charter School would go about instating any form of change. In different phases it calls for people to identify clear goals for the change as well as define measurement tools, reach out to key stakeholders within the school community to get their ideas on the proposed change, plan for an appropriate amount of time to implement the change, to expect setbacks along the way towards success, and to develop a process of consistent self-assessment to determine the ongoing success of the proposed changes. These steps are not specific to the change being discussed, but instead outline steps within a process to implement change more successfully.

At Windsor, William echoed the idea of using process to manage the rapid change and growth when he said that he used "a manufacturing process" to implement changes. "There's always change, constant improvement; implement it, manage it, sell it; let people know that change is not bad; it is good; we're always

trying to get better.” William continued to describe the change management process he uses at Windsor:

That didn’t work; I don’t know let’s figure it out let’s try this. OK, that worked better, OK, so for us it isn’t about having it right, we can’t put the plan to make it exactly work right, but we have to go up the steps first. It is. It is a manufacturing process, and at times it is kind of ugly because it is just ugly.

William continued to describe what he might say to a staff member whom he was guiding through the change management process:

And you know we always say the same thing: I know this isn’t working how you want it to yet, but is the kid learning? Is the kid learning more than they were two weeks ago? Alright, we are heading in the right direction, just be patient. We are going to get there, but you know you are not harming the kid; you are helping the kid, so just relax. The kid has a whole life to learn how to do long division; he doesn’t need to know it in the next three days.

William’s comments on change management raise an important element in the process: time. Successful implementation of anything new requires time. When Windsor first opened years prior, time was in short supply:

We had four months to get up and running. We can’t do the classical, you know. We can’t we just don’t have time to put the framework in. So how do you start? So we start here: Core Knowledge, abridged versions. You know make a good selection; stats, math, you know, grow now get to here.

He expressed his process of starting at one place, but coming back over time to revisit and strengthen what was in place.

Victoria discussed the process of managing change for some time during her interview, and pointed to when in her career she had been trained on it: “[I] learned that skill when I was an admin in [suburban school district] in 1996-97. I was exposed to different seminars that worked with strategic planning. Experts were brought in to teach admins how to initiate change and manage change.” When she discussed overseeing change in Buckingham Charter School, Victoria said, “[I] follow my little change model over there,” pointing to a multi-step process outlined on the dry erase board in her office. The model was less formal than Henry’s was at Leeds, but it included communicating with people, identifying goals, and analyzing data to see if the change was moving closer towards achieving the prescribed goals.

Each of the executive directors interviewed in the study discussed not only the need for change and improvement in their schools, but that managing the change process was an integral component to how they achieved success as overseers of a change management process.

Executive director success: Leadership in multiple dimensions

The third idea which came across through the data is that the executive directors relied upon leadership traits, skills, and tactics from the multiple leadership dimensions in Leithwood and Duke’s (1999) framework. In their study, Leithwood and Duke discuss how “the six approaches are most distinct with respect to their basic foci and the key assumptions on which they are premised” (1999, p. 55). According

to the authors of the framework used for this study, the six dimensions of leadership are distinct, each with their own uses. What emerged from analysis of the data collected for the current study is that executive directors identified elements in all six dimensions as essential to them being successful in their positions.

When asked to describe their leadership styles, each of the executive directors responded with a list of various adjectives. William's immediate response was:

Based on technology, laid back, empowering, encouraging in the sense that I trust people. I have very high expectations: I expect people to just to do their work. I am not a micro manager, I am very hands off. I do meet with my team every Monday, individually, you know so my meetings are Monday all day Tuesday I meet with them as a team. But it is really if you have a problem if you have a question, ask me. If you don't, I trust that you do it, you can make mistakes, we all make mistakes, just make sure they aren't critical mistakes and that sort of thing. It is more mission driven: I make decisions pretty quickly. I think I am intelligent, visionary, that sort of thing.

The list presented by William highlights certain elements such as his "hands off" approach to leadership with accountability as well as his perception that he is a visionary thinker, an element associated with moral and transformational leadership. The language he used such as "meet with my team...individually," and "I meet with them as a team," however, both reference elements in Leithwood and Duke's descriptions of participative and transformational leadership. These meetings signify that William seeks out "the commitments and capacities of organizational members" (Leithwood & Duke, 1999, p. 48) and works to validate how "legitimate stakeholders

[together]...implement decisions” (Leithwood & Duke, 1999, p. 51). When he claimed that his decisions are “mission driven,” a claim which he emphasized again and again throughout the interview, William referenced the importance of moral leadership and how leaders using tactics from this leadership dimension identify the values behind a policy or decision, rate them on a hierarchy of values, and purposefully elect implementation based upon higher placement in the ordered system of values (Hodgkinson, 1991).

Victoria’s response was more thematically linked to the skills and habits a leader shows when one wishes to interact with others:

It’s one that’s based on the foundations of understanding in this school business and all the players that are in that community. So it is one that involves collaboration, responsiveness, accountability, positive working relationships, communication: communication is key, connections are key.

Victoria’s response indicated how much she valued participative leadership. Schools shaped by participative leadership aim to enhance organizational effectiveness, foster democratic principles, and support site-based management (Nidus & Sadler, 2011; Leithwood & Duke, 1999, pp. 51-52). She also said that her habit of using participative leadership was “tricky” for leaders as “we don’t [wish to] end up micromanaging.” Instead, she continued, we “turn to shared leadership and look to others to assist us in the process.” Victoria used language such as “collaboration,” “positive working relationships,” and “connections” in describing her leadership style, all of which reference participative leadership practices. She summed up her

philosophy on leadership as “trust me and vice versa,” again showing the importance of relationship to how Victoria leaders Buckingham Charter School.

Victoria continued, however, to say that managerial skills are also essential to success as an executive director. Management refers to tasks required to maintain organizational functionality. Victoria said that “I think one of the keys is being responsive to your community. Not reactive, but responsive.” She then continued to say that “I think young administrators...are reactive because we have to prove who we are.” Victoria continued to say that during her time in a public, suburban district she learned the communication and decision-making skills which allow her to be responsive without being reactive. Her reliance on a technical skillset reflects her respect for the technical acumen which is contained within managerial leadership, which Leithwood and Duke (1999) describe as policy implementation rather than influencing or changing policy.

Henry responded in a more value-laden manner and emphasized the importance of moral leadership to his success:

I would say servant leadership: I am here, I am not here for me. And the teachers aren't here for their jobs...we are here for the students and for the families and that is what is exciting. They are the customers, we are providing a different option, now we have an option that those parents need to understand this is what we do, so we are not just going to tailor it to them, but I want to serve others.

Henry generally referenced the style of leadership known to researchers as servant leadership, where one “puts primary emphasis on the needs and desires of the

followers before the needs of the leader and emphasizes personal development and empowerment of followers” (Cerit, 2009, p. 601). This philosophy of leadership set up Henry to say “first of all, I naturally go to the servant leadership. Then I go to meeting the needs of the group.” Henry’s thought process reflects that his first tactic as a leader is to apply the values of servant leadership (moral leadership), and then move to another leadership dimension if needed. This ability to shift to another dimension reflects the elements Leithwood and Duke (1999) outline in their description of contingent leadership. Contingent leadership focuses on “how leaders respond to issues within their unique organizational circumstances or problems that they face” (Leithwood & Duke, 1999, p. 54).

Henry also spoke at length, however, of the importance of his decisions “as they engage in activities directly affecting the growth of students” (Leithwood & Duke, 1999, p. 47), which directly reflects instructional leadership. Henry emphasized at several points in his interview the struggle he faces to keep instructional leadership at the forefront of his life as an executive director.

I have noticed is that there is a lot more management a lot more paperwork that I have find cumbersome that I am having to deal, so that’s, I am trying, I am trying to develop systems where it minimizes the amount of times on that management piece so I can focus on leadership and, be the real instructional leader so I can help the principals be the instructional leaders.

Here Henry indicated that the challenge of working with systems, referenced above, will lead to him being able to focus more of his time on being “the real instructional

leader” of Leeds Charter School. His focus on being the instructional leader is what he used to determine which tactics and skills to deploy.

Finally, Elizabeth emphasized elements from managerial leadership, transformational leadership, well as the social dynamic of relational leadership indicative of participative leadership as her primary tools:

I need a book. My own personal leadership style...I think I listen and I don't react too quickly. I like to... I mean if I need to, if someone is having a seizure I'm probably going to clear the room and do what I need to do, I'm not going to think about a million different ways to handle that situation. But on bigger picture things I think I kind of sit back and like to do a bit of research, a little bit of reading. I like to be thoughtful and planful [sic]. Like anytime you do a new initiative, like being a change agent...there is a process and method to doing it. I'm not a dictatorial type person that says... 'gosh darn it' or other words; this is the way we're going to do it. I want them to think about and discover on their own, maybe it is still my idea, but I want them to cultivate on their own so they have ownership over it.

Elizabeth's statement that "I think I listen and I don't react too quickly," echoes Victoria's managerial notion of a skillset learned and applied to control the elements of a situation. Her reference to doing "a bit of research, a little bit of reading" reflects Elizabeth's personal habit of seeking advice from others in order to better her own development as a leader, an important element of transformational leadership. In addition to reading, Elizabeth said that she liked to seek the advice of her peers: "I just call [name of another executive director]...who are we getting our information

from? Other people have it...talking to other leaders finding out what they do: it is all there.” Elizabeth’s habitual calls to other leaders shows how she recognizes that executive directors, as a group, believe in a shared goal of excellence, an important element in transformational leadership, but also that she looks outside of her own community to locate valuable stakeholders.

Finally, Elizabeth emphasized the values of participative leadership when she said, “I’m not a dictatorial type person that says... ‘gosh darn it’... this is the way we’re going to do it. I want them to think about and discover on their own...I want them to cultivate on their own so they have ownership over it.” Leithwood and Duke highlight “the decision-making process of the group” (1999, p. 51) as a definition of participative leadership. Leithwood and Duke (1999) continue to demonstrate how, in participative leadership, the continued use of expert knowledge is leveraged by all stakeholders to increase organizational effectiveness, to create accountability, and to improve school performance. Elizabeth described her leadership style as “you are always bringing people together,” and that her staff and community were “really super talented, thoughtful people.” However, in referencing importance dynamics of contingent leadership, Elizabeth concluded that:

I think it would depend on what that decision is...Like, if it is over curriculum, I would say I’d give decision-making authority to [curriculum specialist] because she has more knowledge in that... and if it’s staffing and budget, I might listen and get input...or like a hiring decision, I would say the final say is mine. Otherwise, you are giving power to the wrong people...so I don’t know. Can I be both, depending on the situation?

Elizabeth made it clear that she seeks input from others, leverages the expertise they possess, and defers to others when she chooses, but retains the right to make the decision herself if the situation calls for it, by her own judgment.

Each of the six dimensions of leadership identified by Leithwood and Duke (1999), instructional leadership, transformational leadership, moral leadership, participative leadership, managerial leadership, and contingent leadership, played important roles in the success of these executive directors. More significant, perhaps, is that each of the four participants identified elements from multiple dimensions of leadership within their descriptions of their leadership styles and how they have achieved successes for their schools. The fluidity of the executive directors movement between and use of multiple dimensions will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 5 of this study.

Summary

This chapter presented the findings associated with the study. Initially, each case description was presented independently in order to give the reader a thorough understanding of the meaning of the experience under study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Executive directors' backgrounds, personal history, and the demographic and assessment data for their schools conveyed the depths of the experiences of the participants in this study. After each case was presented, the researcher identified a number of themes which emerged from the data in response to the study's two research questions. In response to the first research question, what do executive directors of charter school perceive to be the instructional and administrative

demands of their jobs, two consistent themes emerged through analysis of the data. The first theme conveyed the sense from these executive directors that they have an extraordinary quantity of demands on them, both administrative and instructional. Participants conveyed this theme through an understanding of the duality of their job (as administrative and instructional leader) as well as expressions of feeling overwhelming, tired, or being pushed to the limits of their endurance. The second theme involved the role of executive director needing to affect change systemically, rather than directly. Almost all participants discussed the need to work through a change management process, involving time, stakeholder buy-in, piloting, and control, in order to produce the long-term and sustainable changes they sought.

In response to the second research question, what personal and professional qualities do Executive Directors of charter schools believe have enabled them to be successful in their positions, three major themes emerged through analysis of the data. The first theme was that of the accountability of the executive director. Despite the range of the sizes of the schools led by the participants, ranging from under 400 to over 1000 students, or about 60 to over 100 employees, the participants repeatedly expressed a belief in their own personal accountability for every aspect of the school's programmatic and managerial operations. Although each participant led a school too large for them to run everything themselves, the participants expressed that the tactics of collaboration, delegation, and prioritization did not alleviate them of the responsibilities, but changed the nature of how they were to remain accountable for everything within their charter schools. This theme was prevalent in the interviews and school policies studied, but surprisingly absent from school-produced

documentation. The second theme involved the role of executive director needing to affect change systemically rather than directly. Almost all participants discussed the difference between providing direct service, such as a teacher would to a student, and working to create long-term change which was sustainable for their charter schools by creating and affecting processes. Participants further emphasized the translation they experienced from working as teachers to working as educators of a larger stakeholder group, including parents, teachers, and the larger community. The final theme captured that executive directors regularly rely on elements from all six dimensions of leadership identified in Leithwood and Duke's (1999) conceptual framework. Each of the participants discussed the need to be fluent in elements from instructional, transformational, moral, participative, managerial, and contingent leadership. In addition, each participant emphasized the importance of his or her ability to move fluidly between these dimensions, depending on the situation. A number of recommendations for practice and further research were drawn from these findings and are presented in Chapter 5. The following chapter also presents conclusions reached as a result of this study.

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Overview

This chapter consists of seven parts: introduction, summary of the study, findings of the study, conclusions, recommendations, suggestions for further research, and a personal reflection of this study by the researcher. The introduction frames the issues that led to this study. The summary includes the purpose of the study, problem statement, research questions, and methodology. The findings section includes the observations made from analysis of the data. Based on the findings, the conclusions section includes the researcher's ideas about the leadership traits of executive directors of successful charter schools. Based on the conclusions, the researcher included recommendations for practice as well as suggestions for further research. Finally, the researcher has offered a brief reflection on the importance of this study.

Much of the literature on educational leadership demonstrates that successful schools have successful leaders at their helms (Bush, 2011b; Lane, 1998; Lezotte, 1992; Odhiambo & Hii, 2012; Protheroe, Shellard, & Turner, 2003; "Proven," 2010). Some researchers have argued that the leader of a school is the second most important influence on the success of the school, more than any other force save classroom teachers (Leithwood et al., 2004). Within the realm of educational research, however, even though research has begun to explore the differences between charter schools and traditional public schools, comparable little has been researched about how executive directors lead charter schools to their successes and how that might differ

from a leader in a traditional public school. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) argued that the executive director is vital to fulfilling the goals of a charter school as an educational agency, and other researchers (Bottoms & O'Neil, 2002, Fullan & Miles, 1992) point to the idea that because charter schools can operate so differently than traditional public schools, so too might their leaders operate differently.

Leadership theory has evolved in the past thirty years beyond the paradigmatic homo-centric dimensions of transactional and transformational leaders which Burns (1978) first introduced. It now includes ideas such as leadership behaviors positioned on a spectrum between ends (Bass, 1985) as well as socio-centric views of leadership, including Leader-Member Exchange theory (Liden, Wayne, Zhao, & Henderson, 2008) and distributive leadership (Hargreaves & Fink, 2003). While the former emphasize the behaviors of a leader as well as how his or her personality is the formative factors in describing a leader's leadership style, the latter emphasize more the dynamic created between leader and follower, as well as complicate the static ideas of leader and follower by distributing authority in new, non-hierarchical ways (Sheard & Avis, 2010).

Charter school executive directors draw from their unique contexts (the charter school world as well as the missions of their individual schools) and utilize a broad skillset from the realm of leadership theory in order to move their schools to success. This study explored how executive directors lead their successful schools in order to determine more accurately the traits of charter school leaders.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of the study was to understand executive directors' perceptions of the leadership qualities that have enabled them to perform their jobs successfully and to improve student learning. Research suggested that while we struggle to understand what makes schools and students more successful, our understanding of the impact of leadership had on success in a charter school must differ from that in a traditional public school (Vergari, 2007; Bierlein and Mullholand, 1994). This study used qualitative research methods in order to explore participants' perceptions and determine which leadership qualities were identified. These traits included practices, attitudes, and language used by these leaders. The researcher employed Leithwood and Duke's (1999) framework of leadership (instructional, transformational, moral, participative, managerial, and contingent), which was derived from several branches of leadership theory, in order to filter data and to frame the findings.

The problem which was the impetus for this study was that few studies have examined the leadership qualities that charter school leaders themselves identified as integral to their success, nor patterns in these qualities. Researchers have shown that a successful leader is integral to a successful school (Lane, 1998; Protheroe et al., 2003), a fact with particular relevance in the extremely complex environment of a charter school. Charter schools are formed, as Kolderie noted, around a single goal: increasing student performance (as cited in Budde, 1996). They have unique educational philosophies and missions, and executive directors are crucial in fostering and implementing daily that goal for students, faculty, staff, and community

members. Thus, an executive director must be competent in various and distinct domains of knowledge to guide a charter school to success (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Until there is a clearer understanding of the qualities essential for leading a charter school successfully, the charter school movement will struggle to advance a coherent idea of its leadership needs.

The researcher used the following two research questions to guide this study, which provided structure for both collecting and analyzing the data:

1. What do executive directors of charter schools perceive to be the instructional and administrative demands of their jobs?
2. What personal and professional qualities do executive directors of charter schools believe have enabled them to be successful in their positions?

The first question aimed to determine executive directors' perceptions of the responsibilities of their jobs. The second question enabled the researcher to develop a description of the qualities identified by executive directors as most important for successfully leading their charter schools.

The researcher used a qualitative research approach with a multiple case study design. According to Patton (1990), qualitative research methods should be employed to understand human experience in context-specific settings. Because this study sought to understand traits that charter school leaders themselves identify as integral to their success, the research selected a methodology which allowed him to work with the leaders directly and solicit their opinions, attitudes, and ideas regarding successful charter school leadership. The researcher employed a multiple case study

to conduct this research, with each executive director serving as a single case. The logic that underlies the use of multiple case studies was that in multiple case study design, each case is selected intentionally so that it either predicts or contributes similar results or produces contrasting results but for predictable reasons. For this study, the four charter school executive directors were considered successful based on clear, measurable criteria and subsequent nomination by peers and leaders of the charter school community.

Findings of the Study

The following thematic findings emerged from the data in response to the two research questions used to guide this study.

Finding #1: The quantity of demands on the executive director from all areas of school leadership is much greater than expected.

Finding #2: The shift from working directly with people to working indirectly by influencing systems was a challenge for these executive directors both as they transitioned into leadership roles and on an ongoing basis.

Finding #3: Executive directors perceive themselves to be the people who are most responsible for the successes and failures at their charter schools. This sense of responsibility extended into every aspect of school life, including academics, management, and communications.

Finding #4: Executive directors need to manage change. This finding was demonstrated by participants discussing not the changes implemented in their

schools, but instead the process they used to oversee the implementation of changes.

Finding #5: Executive directors relied regularly upon leadership traits, skills, and tactics from the multiple leadership dimensions in Leithwood and Duke's (1999) framework.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the research has developed three maxims which support successful charter school leadership. These maxims are derived from the thematic analysis presented in Chapter 4, and the findings listed above. They include further analysis of how the participants from the study discussed traits necessary to lead their charter schools successfully.

Charter School Leadership Maxim #1: The Executive Director is Responsible for the School

Despite the size and complexities of the various charter schools which were the focus of the current study, executive directors indicted clearly that they are responsible for the successes and failures of every programmatic element of their schools. This notion was expressed most succinctly by Elizabeth when she said, "it's all my fault or it's all my glory." Even though Victoria said that due to the demands of her job, she must "turn to shared leadership...and look to others to assist us [executive directors] in the process," she also said that as executive director, in comparison to his previous jobs, "I didn't have to be responsible for every single line

item.” William echoed the idea of relying on others, but never giving up responsibility when he said, “you have to build your team to determine how you will accomplish your goals,” but that, “I might not be personally responsible [for the mistake] but I’m personally responsible for the messaging from the institution; I have to clean it up.”

The researcher has previously summarized how the participants in the current study expressed an overabundance of responsibilities in their daily lives and from any and all domains of school life. Problems stemming from academic concerns, operational programs, financial or compliance issues or even legal or human resources problems could become the essential work of each executive director on any day. Despite the executive directors relying on collaboration, delegation, and prioritization, and the repeated expression of shared responsibility through participative leadership, executive directors expressed that they remain responsible for everything within their schools. As Victoria put it: “delegating doesn’t lessen responsibility; it heightens it because you want make sure it’s done right.”

Charter School Leadership Maxim #2: The Executive Director Oversees Change Management

Even though extant literature on charter schools and their leaders emphasize the daily role that change plays in this unique educational environment (Fullan & Miles, 1992), what the participant executive directors repeatedly described was how they oversaw change management processes. Most of the participants identified desires to affect change in education as a primary reason for their choice to assume

leadership of their schools. The fact that executive directors relied not on being agents of change, but instead on a clear and consistent change management process, demonstrates the difference between being an inspirational leader and also being a successful operational leader.

Henry discussed the need for a change management process at Leeds Charter School: “why do we need to improve? So I really want a consistent feedback loop, a consistent feedback model, a consistent improvement model.” He said that he personally found it hard to lead his staff continuously against the “status quo.” Elizabeth said, “if we want to be innovators, if we want to be creators of something better and something new, we have to be willing to change,” but identified that part of her process of achieving that goal was to emphasize change in the hiring process for new staff and teachers. William said, “we are always going back and trying to redefine and make it better if that makes sense,” demonstrating the ongoing process of change and continuous improvement at Windsor Charter School, which William called a “manufacturing process and improvement plan.” Both Henry and Victoria presented documentation of specific change management processes which they used with their staffs to implement any changes, and William and Elizabeth discussed their processes informally. All executive directors discussed the components inherent in a change management process such as communicating with people, identifying goals, and analyzing data to see if the change was moving closer towards achieving the prescribed goals. Remarkably, it was the process of implementing change which constituted more of the discussions from the participants than the programmatic or academic changes themselves.

Charter School Leadership Maxim #3: Executive Directors Depend Most on Contingent Leadership

Within Leithwood and Duke's (1999) framework, participants discussed using tactics from each of the six dimensions of leadership. What was surprising, however, was not the versatility of skills required of executive directors of successful charter schools, but how they utilized the principles of contingent leadership as a guide for the five other dimensions of leadership. Leithwood and Duke (1999) describe contingent leadership as, "how leaders respond to the unique organizational circumstances or problems that they face" (p. 54). The data from the present study suggests that contingent leadership is used more by successful charter school leaders than the other five in order to analyze every situation and to select from a "virtually unlimited universe of leadership practices" (Leithwood and Duke, 1999, p. 54; Duke & Salmonowicz, 2010).

Elizabeth described her leadership goal as, "all the decisions I make are based on the students, what is best for them." She continued to describe her leadership style as: "my leadership style... I don't know if I have one, it depends on the situation." Elizabeth's use of the word "depends" and her reference to situation-dependent leadership became a theme which connected all of the participants' responses, and which directly referenced Leithwood and Duke's (1999) notion of contingent leadership.

Henry, who described himself as a servant leader, continued to describe how different situations require him to use different leadership approaches:

I like to tailor my leadership style based on the needs of the group. So that when we talked about leadership style, first of all, I naturally go to the servant leadership, then I go to meeting the needs of the group. So sometimes you need to be autocratic. Sometimes we just have to move forward and jump on the train, move on and off, and sometimes we can take time to really collaborate, it just depends on the decisions of the team...

Henry's description of contingent leadership (again demonstrated by the word "depends") highlighted several different criteria he used to determine a course of action as a leader: meeting needs, priorities, clarity of his vision, as well as the experience of the group. In any situation, he analyzed these (and other) factors and determines which model of leadership to employ to best meet the group's needs.

When asked if her leadership style more favored distributive leadership (decisions made at different places in the hierarchy) or committee-based discussion (where people are encouraged to give input but the final decision is made by one person in authority), Elizabeth said:

I think it would depend on what that decision is. I'd say a little bit of both. Like, if it is over curriculum, I would say I'd give it to [curriculum specialist] because she has more knowledge in that...and if it's staffing and budget, I might listen and get input...or like a hiring decision, I would say the final say is mine. Otherwise, you are giving power to the wrong people...so I don't know. Can I be both, depending on the situation?

When asked to be more specific, Elizabeth indicated that her leadership style would be contingent, and that once the criteria affecting the situation were determined, she would decide which style of leadership to exhibit. Her use of the word “depend” highlights the crucial role that contingent leadership played in her choices of leadership behaviors and tactics.

Victoria expressed the same notion when she described the varying skills she needs to be successful at her job. While she described it as “situational leadership,” Victoria described the various components of her job as arrows which she can select as she needs them:

I just do a lot of juggling and...I am great-I often wonder how people who have not had solid principal leadership...do this job. Because I was blessed in [suburban school district] to learn so much, and if wasn't... if it was site-based we did it and did it well. If it was central office we always had those communications-so they taught me that was the key...and so if you don't have that experience I, I don't know how you I don't know how difficult, how much more difficult that job is... And so my quiver [is] full.

William made a similar claim about understanding the context to determine what type of leader he needed to be:

...it really depends on the [Rogers Technology Adoption] curve, where am I? So for instance we hired a, OK; when you go from here (before chasm) to here (after chasm), you have to cross the chasm, and...for us it really was the building. So Calculus, AP History, whatever it is, but bottom line, kids want mascots, gyms, proms, National Honor Society, a lunch program, they want

really what is a whole product, so for us getting across the chasm was really building that building... so the challenges here (before chasm) are far different than the challenges here (after chasm), so it depends on the curve.

Like Elizabeth, William's repeated use of the word "depends" signaled that what was needed in one context is not the same as in another. In fact, William used the phrase "it depends on where we are on the curve" multiple times in the first interview, and in the follow-up interview he elaborated further:

You have to vary it [leadership method] sometimes. Sometimes I need to be a kind person; I have to know who I am and how I function in a situation. Other times I'll beat the crap out of you. How should I act here? Am I supposed to be lenient, kind, protect the mission?

William said that he must adjust which leadership skills he employs depending on the situation or people or time within the school's organizational life.

In concert with the qualitative data garnered from participants, it appears that executive directors of successful charter schools see contingent leadership not only as another skill set or dimension, but as the lens through which they view their many tasks in a given situation and choose which elements of leadership from the other five dimensions to apply.

Recommendations

This study made a significant contribution to our understanding of charter school leadership by identifying and describing the qualities necessary for executive directors to lead charter schools successfully. The researcher sought with this study

to address a gap in the existing literature regarding the leadership of successful charter schools. Because charter schools are a young concept in education, no consensus yet exists within the charter school community regarding the qualities required of a successful leader. Over the past two decades many charter schools have been closed for academic or fiscal underperformance, while others have endured and flourished. This study sought to elucidate how a leader influences the likelihood of these two possible outcomes. The following recommendations are offered as a result of the conclusions.

Recommendation #1

Charter schools, CMOs, and potential executive directors should utilize interview models and evaluation systems which emphasize the elements of accountability and contingent leadership. Because executive directors assume personal accountability for all aspects of the school's operations, even with delegation and partnering, modes of leadership practiced in other educational environments (such as distributive leadership) may not be as effective in a charter school as in a traditional public school setting. In contrast, a mere transactional leadership style, while it may work in times of extreme growth or situational crisis, is not sustainable once the school grows to a certain size, complexity, and desire for operational sustainability. Demonstrated failures by executive directors in previous situations should be analyzed against these criteria and charter schools can use perceived deficiencies to build a training regimen for executive directors in whom they wish to invest (Campbell et al., 2008).

Recommendation #2

Executive directors should receive training in change management processes, whether formal programs (i.e., Six Sigma, ISO 9001), or informally with the fundamental aspects of change management. Data from the participants demonstrated that their transitions from being direct services providers (as teachers are) to managing a staff who serves students and a community was a learning curve. Rather than make changes, executive directors needed to oversee broader, more deliberate processes which gathered data, set goals, sought stakeholder consensus, and tracked progress. Such training is commonplace in many private sector industries, especially in manufacturing, but less so in education. Only one of the four participants in the current study had been introduced formally to change management training, and only peripherally in a strategic planning process. Change management processes are various, but formal exposure to them would aid executive directors in overseeing change within their charter schools.

Recommendation #3

Institutions of higher education should develop training programs around the elements of accountability and contingent leadership. Very few training programs exist for charter school leaders, and the researcher located none specifically designed for charter school leadership from institutions of higher education. As many educational leaders require certification, it would be beneficial for educational

leadership programs to begin to consider the differing environment within the charter school community as it prepares future leaders.

Recommendation #4

Charter schools should develop partnerships with public and private 501(c)3 groups to share best practices. Between change management, continuous improvement, and executive professional development, many organizations outside of the public education sector have well-developed program to support these shared needs. Charter schools would benefit from partnering with these organizations and sharing best practices.

Recommendation #5

Training programs for charter school executive directors should begin to develop resources and supports around the elements of accountability and contingent leadership. Such programs could intermix traditional study (research, reading) with mentorships. Colleges, authorizers, and even charter schools themselves would benefit from developing formal training programs tailored to this specific segment of the educational leadership population.

Suggestions for Further Research

This study provided rich, detailed descriptions of traits and behaviors of executive directors of successful charter schools. Though the data provided some details and answers regarding practices of the executive directors, it raised other

questions for further research. Questions for further study are recommended as follows:

1. It is recommended that this study be replicated with executive directors of charter schools in a different state or territory. Because state laws and Authorizer oversight regulations vary from state to state, a second study might yield different findings.
2. It is recommended that a study be conducted in a larger public school district which purports to utilize site-based management. The study would give another perspective on how a central office influences decisions at the school level and determine if, as some research suggests, charter schools function differently than even true site-based traditional public schools.
3. It is recommended that a similar study be conducted with leaders of independent schools. Because most independent schools do not have a central office, function as total organizations, and are more mission-driven (just like charter schools), a study of leadership in independent schools would help to ascertain if there are any dynamics which are related to schools size, mission-driven operations, or public regulations.
4. It is recommended that a quantitative study be conducted with executive directors of more of the 5,000+ charter schools around the country in order to gauge if the present findings are verified by those leaders.

Personal Reflection on this Study

The researcher's personal interest in this topic stems from his work as a leader in a charter school. This study provided the opportunity to explore notions of leadership and educational leadership, and focus them within the unique context of a charter school. As the charter school movement reaches its twentieth year and works to define its place in the field of public education, more prominent attention will have

to be paid to how leaders are discovered, hired, and trained to support the charter school movement. Charter school boards will need to take a more informed position in the identification and preparation of future administrative candidates. With increased expectations on student performance and accountability, future executive directors will need a blend of proven theoretical and pedagogical training, along with practical experiences which do not currently exist as they are somewhat unique to charter schools. As educational leaders, we will need to understand with greater nuance that although there are elements common in the many iterations of successful leadership, the differences are what occupy us more often and which can define our failure or success.

Appendices

Appendix A: Survey/Selection Letter

Hello,

Most of you know me as the Executive Director of [School name]. What some of you know is that I am also trying to complete my dissertation to earn my Ph.D. in Educational Leadership. My study is titled: Investigating Leadership in Charter Schools: An Examination of the Leadership Traits of Executive Directors in Successful Charter Schools. This study will allow for a greater understanding of the phenomenon of successful charter leadership by identifying common challenges and subsequently, traits which successful leaders utilize to deal with them. I will interview four charter leaders for this study. In addition, I will conduct a limited on-site observation and a review of relevant official documents.

I need your help, first, to determine the four candidates for me to approach. Using a defined methodology, I have limited potential leaders participants based on [state test] scores of schools for the past four years, student growth scores, financial reporting of the school, and years experience of the school leaders. In order for me to move from seven to four, I require the opinions of charter school leaders and experts (you).

Below is a link to an online survey. The survey has only one question: it asks you to rank each of these seven charter school leaders based on your perception of their success as a leader. I offer no guidance or criteria, as that is the point of the study. This survey is completely anonymous. I understand it is unusual to ask you to rank your colleagues, but I need to point out:

1. That your responses will be completely anonymous and will be destroyed within two weeks
2. That my study requires a smaller sampling of participants
3. That I understand that we are all exceptional and successful. But a focused study such as mine requires elimination based on certain criteria. Another day, another study, we might rank people differently
4. Your participation in this survey is completely optional

I will leave this survey open through 7pm Central time next Wednesday, December 19. You can rank yourself in the list as well as others.

If you have any questions, please email me. If you are willing to help me, thank you very much. If you are not, I appreciate your consideration.

Regards,
Brian Bloomfield

[HYPERLINK INSERTED]

Appendix B: Recruitment Letter

Date

Street

City, State Zip Code

Dear Participant:

I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Education Policy and Leadership at the University of Maryland. I am writing to request your participation in my dissertation study. The focus of my research is to examine how successful charter school executive directors identify and deal with challenges in their schools. The purpose will be to identify common traits of successful executive directors.

This study will allow for a greater understanding of the phenomenon of successful charter leadership by identifying common challenges and subsequently, traits which successful leaders utilize to deal with them. I will interview several charter leaders for this study. In addition, I will conduct a limited on-site observation and a review of relevant official documents.

I am requesting you be a part of this study because you have demonstrated success as a charter school leader. Your participation is completely voluntary, and any responses shared with me will be kept confidential. All study data will be maintained in secure files and will be accessible only to me and members of my dissertation committee. Reports and other communications related to the study will not identify respondents by name, nor will they identify any schools. All participants will be invited to review and provide comments on a copy of their interview remarks prior to their inclusion in the study. All participants will be offered the final study and its findings for their consideration.

I hope that you will be able to assist me in this important research project. If you have any questions regarding the study, please feel free to contact me by phone at 651.225.1360 (home) or at 651.253.7430 (mobile), or e-mail me at bbloomfi@umd.edu. My doctoral work is through the University of Maryland at College Park and will comply with the University IRB. My research advisor is Dr. Carol Parham.

Attached you will find an Informed Consent Form. If you agree to participate, please fill it out and return it to me in the enclosed self-addressed and stamped envelope.

Sincerely,

Brian D. Bloomfield

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

Project Title	Investigating Leadership in Charter Schools: An Examination of the Leadership Traits of Executive Directors in Successful Charter Schools.
Purpose of the Study	<i>This research is being conducted by Carol Parham and Brian Bloomfield at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you have been identified as a successful leader of a charter school. The purpose of this research project is to identify traits of successful charter school leaders.</i>
Procedures	<i>The procedures involve the researchers reviewing certain relevant school documents (handbooks, manuals, policies), conducting two on-site interviews with you (60-minutes and then 30-minutes), and observing you at either a staff meeting or a community event. Your participation should last no longer than 6 total weeks, and will be scheduled to cause minimal interference with your daily routine. All interviews will be audio recorded and later transcribed for accuracy. Participants must consent to be audio recorded in the interviews in order to participate in the study. All questions and research will focus on leadership traits you have demonstrated in the normal course of performing your job. Questions include: How would you describe your personal leadership style, and As your school’s leader, describe two significant challenges you have overcome and how that process took place. Observation of the staff- or community meeting will be pre-arranged with you, and observation notes will be taken by the researcher. This meeting or event need last no longer than 30-minutes.</i>
Potential Risks and Discomforts	<i>There are no known risks associated with participating in this research project.</i>
Potential Benefits	<i>There are no direct benefits to you, but some possible benefits include may be findings for you, your supervising Boards of Directors, and others interested in school leadership by identifying personality and behavior traits leaders need to demonstrate in order to lead your schools to greater successes. These findings could potentially form the basis for professional development, conference presentations, and leadership evaluations.</i>
Confidentiality	<i>Any potential loss of confidentiality will be minimized by storing all notes and computer files in a secure location. Notes will be locked in an office and the computer files will be password protected. The data will be retained for 12 months and then permanently destroyed.</i> <i>In the final study, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. A code will be placed on the survey and other data so your name and identifying data will not be recognizable. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.</i>
Medical Treatment	<i>The University of Maryland does not provide any medical, hospitalization</i>

	<p>or other insurance for participants in this research study, nor will the University of Maryland provide any medical treatment or compensation for any injury sustained as a result of participation in this research study, except as required by law.</p>	
Right to Withdraw and Questions	<p>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.</p> <p>If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the investigator:</p> <p>Carol Parham 2215 Benjamin Building University of Maryland, College Park College Park, MD 20742 301.405.3580 cparham@umd.edu</p> <p>Brian Bloomfield 1603 Jefferson Avenue Saint Paul, MN 55105 651.225.1360 bbloomfi@umd.edu</p>	
Participant Rights	<p>If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">University of Maryland College Park Institutional Review Board Office 1204 Marie Mount Hall College Park, Maryland, 20742 E-mail: irb@umd.edu Telephone: 301-405-0678</p> <p><i>This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.</i></p>	
Statement of Consent	<p>Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree to participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form.</p> <p><i>If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.</i></p>	
Signature and Date	NAME OF SUBJECT	
	[Please Print]	
	SIGNATURE OF SUBJECT	

	DATE	
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Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Project Title: *Investigating Leadership in Charter Schools: An Examination of the Leadership Traits of Executive Directors in Successful Charter Schools*

Time of interview: _____

Date of interview: _____

Location: _____

Interviewer: Brian Bloomfield

Interviewee: _____

Interview Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. With your permission I would like to record this interview in order to reflect accurately your thoughts and observations. You may request that the recorder be turned off at any time.

The success of your charter of the past four years has been impressive. Your community should be proud of this accomplishment. While most of the credit certainly should go to the students and their hard work, some of that credit and praise should go to your staff, administration, and board.

Today we are going to talk about the work of the executive director, the highest ranking administrator in the school. In our discussion, I am going to ask you a few questions that will require you to describe, in your own words and based upon your own observations, your work and activities. In particular, I will ask you to describe your work activities and habits. I am looking for value-based opinions and judgments (i.e., “I do this well and that not so well”), but also, I will be asking for you to describe or give examples of the your work habits, activities and practices (“I send an email every Friday, or meet with the teachers every Tuesday morning”).

Are we ready? Let’s begin.

Executive Director Interview:

- 1) Can you briefly describe your background, career path, and how you became the leader of this charter school?
 - a. Your educational background:
 - b. Highest degree earned:
 - c. Years working in education:
 - d. Experience teaching:
 - e. Experience in charter schools:
 - f. Your race:
 - g. Your age:
 - h. Your gender:

- 2) Please describe of the mission and program of this charter school, and speak about what drew you to work here?

- 3) What have you learned about the administrative demands of your job here?

- 4) What have you learned about the instructional demands of your job here?

- 5) How would you describe your personal leadership style?
 - a. How would you describe your strengths and challenges as a charter school leader?
 - b. Which factors and experiences have strongly shaped your leadership style?

- 6) Describe the most important challenges facing your school and discuss ways that you have sought to meet them?
 - a. Administrative, financial structural, instructional
 - b. State funding, Fundraising, Grants, Federal subsidies, Fund balance
 - c. Facility
 - d. Other

- 7) What are the student achievement challenges facing your charter, and what have you done to address them?
 - a. General
 - b. Math
 - c. Reading
 - d. Science
 - e. Writing
 - f. Other

- 8) Under your leadership, what has your school done to document, track, and improve student growth?
 - a. General
 - b. Math
 - c. Reading
 - d. Science
 - e. Writing
 - f. Other

- 9) Describe how lessons you have learned have helped you to overcome the challenges you mentioned.

- 10) What resources have you used to help you to overcome these challenges?
 - a. Leadership networks
 - b. Colleagues/leadership team
 - c. parents
 - d. others

- 11) What do you do specifically that helps you to grow and to develop as a leader?
 - a. Conferences
 - b. Professional organizations
 - c. Independent work
 - d. Networking
 - e. Authorizer

- 12) As your school's leader, describe two accomplishments of which you are the proudest?

- 13) As your school's leader, describe two significant challenges you have overcome and how that process took place.

Appendix E: Application and Admissions Procedures

One question which researchers ask about charter schools is do they have higher student achievement because of how they recruit or attract higher ability students (Huff, Orfield, & Falk, 2012; Davis & Raymond, 2012). Because charter school laws vary in the many states which have charter schools, so too do the laws and procedures which govern how students are enrolled in a charter school. All charter schools in the Midwestern state being studied are subject to State mandated procedures on enrollment. Schools do have some flexibility regarding setting dates for open enrollment periods, but the application data collected and nature of enrolment are set by law. Below is a brief summary of the enrollment process.

Any child of a citizen of the Midwestern state is permitted to apply to a charter school and attend it. There is no tuition charge; in fact, charging tuition is illegal per state statute. Charter school boards may advertise for their school and determine the dates of their Open Enrollment period. They may also determine and publish the number of openings per grade at the school.

Families must submit an application (below), for which there is no fee. Charter schools are prohibited from gathering demographic information on the family or any academic records as a part of the application process. Charter schools are permitted to accept applications by mail, in person, or electronically, at their discretion. All four schools in the current study accept both paper and electronic application.

Once the Open Enrollment period ends, applications are sorted by grade level and by admission preference. The state allows for preferential admission based only

on two criteria: first, siblings of currently enrolled students have first preference. Second, children of staff of the charter school may, at the discretion of the board of directors of that school, be granted preferential status after siblings and before the general population. All other applications are considered based in a determined order.

Once all applications are received within the designated enrollment period, they are sorted by legal preference status. If there are more openings than applicants to a grade, all families are offered seats. If there are more applicants than openings in any grade, a lottery is held. There are separate lotteries for each grade and each preference status (sibling, staff-child, general). The lottery must be witnessed. Some schools conduct public lotteries while others do not. Seats are then offered in order by preference and lottery number. If an offer is declined, then the next person in numerical order is given an offer of admission. Schools are permitted to set response deadlines to offers. Aptitude and scholastic testing are not legally permitted before a student accepts a spot, but can be given afterwards for diagnostic data collection.



OFFICE ONLY
 Date Received: _____
 Time Received: _____
 Staff Member Receiving: _____

2013–2014 [Redacted] STUDENT APPLICATION

ON-TIME APPLICATION DEADLINE for 2013–2014: February 22, 2013, 4:00 PM

I. STUDENT INFORMATION [Please fill out a separate form for each child applying to grades K–12]

Last Name _____ First Name _____ M.I. _____

Home Address _____ Home Phone _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____ Home Email _____

Grade Applying for in 2013–2014 _____

Due to sibling enrollment preference required by [Redacted] Stat. § 124.D10 Subd. 9, [Redacted] asks that you identify siblings who are concurrently applying for admission at [Redacted].

Sibling(s) also applying to [Redacted]

Name: _____ Grade Applying for in 2013–2014 _____
 Name: _____ Grade Applying for in 2013–2014 _____
 Name: _____ Grade Applying for in 2013–2014 _____

NOTICE: Applicant understands that providing inaccurate information in connection with the application to [Redacted] disqualifies the applicant from enrolling in [Redacted].

II. PARENT/GUARDIAN INFORMATION

Mother/Guardian _____ Day Phone _____

Home Address [If different than above] _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____ Email _____

Father/Guardian _____ Day Phone _____

Home Address [If different than above] _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____ Email _____

NOTICE: All families will be asked to sign a [Redacted]/Home partnership agreement which details goals, expectations, and responsibilities for the student, school, and parent/guardian(s) upon final enrollment. A copy of the School-Family Partnership Agreement is available [Redacted].

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

*For early Kindergarten admission applications (DOB after 09-01-08) and for students requesting grade-skipping, additional documents must be submitted with the application. Please view the Enrollment section of the [Redacted] website for a list of requirements.





Enrollment Procedures

The Enrollment Deadline for 2013–2014 is Friday, February 22, 2013 at 4:00 PM*
*Applications are considered timely when marked as received by
[redacted] by the enrollment deadline.

ENROLLMENT PROCEDURES FOR PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

- **New Applicants:** Any current [redacted] residents interested in having their children attend [redacted] will need to apply to the school each year by submitting a [redacted] *Student Application* form by the school's approved deadline (February 22, 2013 at 4:00 p.m. for the 2013–14 school year). Timely applicants will be entered into a lottery process and assigned a corresponding number on the Non-Sibling Waiting List for the grade to which they are applying.
- **New Twin/Multiple Applicants:** Any current [redacted] residents interested in having their twins or multiples attend [redacted] will need to apply to the school each year by submitting a separate [redacted] *Student Application* for each child by the school's approved deadline. All timely application forms for twins and multiples will go through the lottery process as separate applicants and each child will receive a separate waiting list number for the grade to which they are applying. If the twin/multiple applicants are non-[redacted] siblings and one of the twins or multiples is offered and accepts an open spot in a class, on the day that student attends the school, the other twin or multiples move from the Non-Sibling Waiting List to the bottom of the Staff and Sibling Preference Waiting List. **Please note:** *Twins and multiples are considered separate applicants; twins and multiples may not switch lottery numbers and are not considered as interchangeable for taking open spots.*
- **Returning Applicants:** Anyone who previously applied to [redacted] who either went through the school's lottery process or were added to the waiting list after the lottery was conducted will need to submit a new [redacted] *Student Application* for the 2013–14 school year. If the form meets the deadline for timely applications, the applicant will go through a new lottery and will be assigned a new number on the Non-Sibling Waiting List for the grade to which they are applying.

ENROLLMENT PROCEDURES FOR SIBLINGS OF CURRENT [redacted] STUDENTS AND CHILDREN OF CURRENT [redacted] STAFF MEMBERS

- **New [redacted]-sibling and [redacted]-staff-member Children Applicants:** Any current [redacted] parent or [redacted]-resident [redacted] staff member interested in having their non-[redacted]-student child attend [redacted] will need to apply to the school each year by submitting a [redacted] *Sibling/Staff-Child Student Application* by the school's approved deadline. All timely application forms will go through a lottery with new and returning [redacted]-student sibling/[redacted]-staff member children applicants that determines their new number on the Staff and Sibling Preference Waiting List for the grade to which they are applying. **Please note:** *Twins and multiples are considered separate applicants. A separate application form must be submitted for each child.*
- **Returning [redacted]-sibling and [redacted]-staff-member Children Applicants:** Anyone who previously applied to [redacted] who either went through the school's lottery process or were added to the waiting list after the lottery was conducted will need to submit a new [redacted] *Sibling/Staff-Child Student Application* for the 2013–14 school year. If the form meets the deadline for timely applications, the applicant will go through a new lottery and will be assigned a new number on the Staff and Sibling Preference Waiting List for the grade to which they are applying.

11/2012



Enrollment Procedures

ENROLLMENT PROCEDURES FOR LATE APPLICANTS

- **All students who apply after the February 22, 2013, 4:00 p.m. application deadline**—general new-student applicants and [REDACTED]-sibling/staff member-children applicants—will not go through the school’s lottery process. Late applicants are placed at the back of their respective lotteried waiting list in the order in which applications are received.
- If a child on the general Non-Sibling Waiting List who applies after the application deadline moves through the waiting list and is offered and accepts an open spot, when the child attends [REDACTED] his/her sibling(s) will change status to official [REDACTED] sibling(s) and will move to the back of the Staff and Sibling Preference Waiting List.

NOTICE FOR CURRENT [REDACTED] STUDENTS

- We assume all current [REDACTED] y students intend to return to [REDACTED] for the 2013–2014 school year. All [REDACTED] students remain enrolled at the school until the family submits a written request to disenroll the student and/or [REDACTED] receives a formal request for student records and transcripts from the student’s transferring school.

[REDACTED] does not have carry-over waiting lists. Each spring a new lottery is held for all timely applicants. This lottery determines placement on each grade’s waiting list for the school year that will begin in the fall of that calendar year. Annual reapplication is required for all applicants on our waiting lists wishing to apply to [REDACTED]. This ensures our waiting lists are up to date.

Completed [REDACTED] Student Application forms may be delivered to the school electronically, by mail, by fax, or by hand to one of the school offices. Please note that we will confirm receipt of the form by email (or by phone if an email address is not provided), so please follow up with the school if you do not receive confirmation within one week of submission. If you have enrollment questions, please contact [REDACTED].





Lottery Procedure

In early March of each year, following the close of the on-time enrollment season in late February, ██████ holds an electronic lottery to place timely applicants on randomized waiting lists for the following school year by grade. Offers for enrollment for available spots in classrooms are made to applicants in mid- to late-March based on the resulting grade-level waiting list order, first to siblings of currently enrolled ██████ students, then to children of ██████ staff, and finally to general applicants.

On-time Enrollment Season

██████ enrollment season typically runs from early November through late February. The on-time enrollment season for the 2013–14 school year will run from Thursday, November 1, 2012 through Friday, February 22, 2013 at 4.00pm. Applications received between November 1, 2012 and February 22, 2013 at 4.00pm will be included in the electronic grade-level lotteries that will take place in early March 2013. These lotteries will produce grade-level waiting lists. Applications received after the deadline will be placed at the bottom of the appropriate grade-level waiting list.

Grade-level Lotteries

Application to ██████ is considered confidential and therefore lotteries are not open to the public. There is, however, at least one witness present as the electronic lotteries are conducted. The lottery process and the randomized waiting list results are videotaped. The taped process is posted to a secure location on ██████ internal server.

Lottery Procedure

██████ will hold up to three lotteries per grade, K–12, based on timely applications* received:

1. ██████ sibling-applicant lottery;
2. ██████ staff-child lottery;
3. General applicant lottery.

Lotteries will only be held for a given grade if there are more applicants than open slots.

██████ 2013–14 lotteries will be conducted using an electronic randomizing formula in Microsoft Excel in each of the grade-level databases containing on-time 2013–14 applications. The electronically randomized lists will become the waiting list for each grade, with the randomized list of siblings for a given grade being placed in the first places on the waiting lists, the randomized list of staff-children being placed immediately following the sibling applicants, and the randomized list of general applicants being placed immediately following the staff-children applicants.

A charter school shall give enrollment preference to a sibling of an enrolled pupil and to a foster child of that pupil's parents and may give preference for enrolling children of the school's staff before accepting other pupils by lot. — Charter Schools, ██████ Stat. ██████ (2012)



Lottery Procedure

Waiting Lists and Offers of Enrollment

Waiting list applicants are moved to an enrollment offer list based on the number of available places in any given grade, starting with the applicant in the first place on the waiting list. Offers of enrollment will be made first to ■■■ sibling applicants, if any and according to available places in classrooms; second to staff-children applicants, if any and according to available places in classrooms if all sibling applicants on the waiting list have been exhausted; and third to general applicants, if any and according to available places in classrooms if all sibling and staff-children applicants on the waiting list have been exhausted.

Once all lotteries have taken place, all waiting lists have been generated, and enrollment offer databases have been populated for each grade based on places available in classrooms, lottery letters will be generated. Letters will be mailed to all applicant families in mid- to late-March indicating the applicant's place on the grade-level waiting list for the grade to which they have applied, or indicating that they have been offered a place in a classroom at ■■■ for the following school year. These lottery letters are generated from the randomized waiting lists using Microsoft Office Suite Mail Merge. The time period a family has to accept or decline an offer of enrollment is based on when the offer of enrollment is made; please see the attached list for timelines. Note that a failure to respond to an offer within the set response time constitutes a declination of the offer.

■■■ waiting lists do not carry over from year to year. If a child does not receive a place at ■■■ for the school year to which they are applying and they remain interested in the school, s/he will need to submit a new application during the next on-time enrollment season to be included in the grade-level waiting list lotteries for the following school year.

Mid-Year Placement

■■■ will fill places in classrooms that become available through the start of the third "trimester" or "entry point" of the school year. ■■■ will fill spots that become available in classrooms through Monday, March 4, 2013 for the 2013-14 school year.

Application and Lottery Timeline for 2013-14

The timeline for on-time applications, lotteries, and the lottery mailing for the 2013-14 school year is as follows:

November 1, 2012—Applications for the 2013-14 school year are posted in the Enrollment Materials section of ■■■ website and in the Main Office.

February 22, 2013*—On-time application deadline for 2013-2014. Applications received after the deadline will be placed at the bottom of the appropriate grade-level waiting list.

March 2013—Grade-level lotteries for the 2013-14 school year will be held in early March. Families of applicants will receive a letter in mid- to late-March indicating their child's place on the waiting list or that their child is being offered a spot at the school.

**Applications are considered on-time/timely during the "Enrollment Season" (2012-13: November 1, 2011-February 24, 2012; 2013-14: November 1, 2012-February 22, 2013 at 4.00pm); it does not matter when in that time period the application was received.*

11/2012



Lottery Procedure

Intent to Enroll Response Time 2013-14

<u>Offers</u>	<u>Response Time Allowed</u>	<u>Date of Offer</u>	<u>Response Deadline</u>
Initial Lottery Letters	3 weeks	Friday, March 8	Friday, March 29
Round Two	3 weeks	Monday, April 1	Friday, April 19
Round Three	2 weeks	Monday, April 22	Friday, May 3
Round Four	2 weeks	Monday, May 6	Friday, May 17
Round Five	2 weeks	Monday, May 20	Friday, May 31
Early Summer	2 weeks	June and July	
Early August	1 week	August 1-15	
Mid-August	2 business days	August 15-24	
Late August	1 business day	August 27-31	
Early September	1 business day	September 1-2	
First week of school	2 business days	September 3-6	
Remaining Enrollment Period	3 business days	Sept. 9-Mar. 3, 2013	

*2013-14 Enrollment Closes
March 3, 2014*

11/2012

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