THE HIGH SCHOOL ASSOCIATE PRINCIPAL: CASE STUDIES OF AN EMERGING ROLE IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND ADMINISTRATION

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Researchers in the field of educational administration have given little attention to the role of the associate principal. The research reported in this dissertation sought to fill that void through a close examination of the roles of the associate principals on two campuses in two different school districts. In addition to illustrating the role of the associate principal, the research examines how experience as an associate principal influences the careers of educational administrators.

Data were collected primarily by means of semi-structured interviews with principals and district administrators as well as the associate principals themselves to provide multiple perspectives. Data were summarized in detailed interview logs, coded to discover the themes that were characteristic of each case, then analyzed to identify the patterns within and across the cases. The interviews were also analyzed as narratives reflecting on how experience as an associate principal can shape an educational administrator's career. The interview data were supplemented with documents relating to the associate principals, their campuses, and their districts.

The results suggest that the associate principal position is a crucial step on the career ladder to a secondary principalship. Assistant principals with knowledge and skills in curriculum, instruction, and assessment are more likely to be selected as associates, and associates are more likely to be selected for principalships. The results also indicate that instructional leadership for associate principals in Texas focuses primarily on improving students' performance on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge
and Skills and on increasing participation in and performance on other standardized
tests, in particular Advanced Placement, SAT (formerly the Scholastic Aptitude Test),
ACT (formerly American College Testing), and the PSAT/NMSQT (Preliminary
SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test).
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CHAPTER 1

THE ASSOCIATE PRINCIPALSHIP: AN EMERGING ROLE

The last two decades of state and federal educational reform and accountability legislation in the United States have placed enormous pressures on district and campus administrators to improve student achievement and overall school performance. High school principals, in particular, have been assigned responsibility for complicated, difficult school improvement initiatives requiring extensive knowledge of and skills in instructional leadership and administration. One organizational response to these pressures in large high schools has been the creation and development of the associate principalship and other positions embodying similar roles, such as assistant or vice principals for curriculum and instruction, or deans of instruction. This study focuses on the emerging role of the associate principal.

This chapter provides background on role theory and the development of building-level school leadership and administrative roles that accompanied the growth of high schools in the United States during the 20th century. After addressing the research problem and the purposes of the study, it concludes by listing the research questions that guided the collection of data.

Background

As principals of large secondary schools in many urban and suburban districts now operate much like private sector chief executive officers, building-level administrators who support principals have become more specialized. In Texas, most larger, comprehensive public high schools have associate principals employed as specialized assistants to principals. Unlike assistant principals, whose roles are typically
defined by responsibilities for student discipline and attendance, school operations, school order and safety, and teacher appraisal, the work of associates focuses on matters of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, including staff development, master scheduling, standardized testing, and alignment among curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

In November 2009, a survey of school district and campus Internet Web sites for school districts in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex found that 44 out of 52 (85%) of public high schools designated 4A or 5A (student enrollments from 1000 to 3000 or more) by the University Interscholastic League (UIL) of Texas include associate principals within their administrative teams. The development of this leadership and administrative role seems to have occurred without notice from educational policy makers, researchers, and graduate schools. Given the necessity for effective campus-level educational leadership in a time of intensive federal, state, and local government oversight and accountability, it is surprising that the associate principalship has been largely overlooked by those who teach, study, and make policy concerning educational administration.

While the role of the principal has been studied extensively for decades, and in recent years there has been increased recognition of the importance of the assistant principalship in building-level educational leadership and administration, the associate principal’s role remains virtually invisible. Graduate programs in educational leadership and administration, through which almost all school administrators must pass, overwhelmingly focus on the principalship and the superintendency at the expense of both the associate and assistant principalships. Similarly, educational policy debates
surrounding leadership and administration at the district or building levels usually focus on the roles of superintendents, principals, teachers, and, to a limited extent, assistant principals. Considering the fact that successful experience as an associate or assistant principal is a prerequisite for both secondary principalships and district-level administrative positions in most public school systems, the lack of attention to the role of the associate principal in the field of educational administration is an omission which this study intends to address.

Role Theory

The concept of role is central to this study of the emergence of the associate principalship in the leadership and administration of larger Texas high schools. It informs the collection of data as well as its analysis and interpretation. The role concept, as articulated in fields such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, organizational/management studies, and educational administration, can be very useful in explaining the nature of modern bureaucratic organizations such as schools and school districts. For the purposes of this study, schools and school districts, as bureaucratically structured organizations, are essentially systems of roles: "The network of standardized role behaviors constitutes the formal structure of an organization. A formalized role system is one in which the rules defining the expected interdependent behavior of incumbents of system positions are explicitly formulated and sanctions are employed to enforce the rules" (Katz & Kahn, 1978, p. 45).

In the analysis and interpretation of organizational life, the concept of office is closely related to the role concept:
[A] particular point in organizational space . . . defined in terms of a structure of interrelated offices and the pattern of activities associated with them, [o]ffice is essentially a relational concept, defining each position in terms of its relationship with others and to the system as a whole. Associated with each office is a set of activities or expected behaviors. These activities constitute the role to be performed, at least approximately, by any person who occupies that office. (Katz & Kahn, 1978, p. 188)

In this study the term position will be used to mean the same as the term office is defined above.

Clouse (1989) examines role theory in educational administration as it connects to issues of conflict resolution, social systems theory, and interpersonal relations (p. 33). He looks closely at three research studies employing role theory to investigate school superintendents and school board members (Gross, Mason, & McEachern, 1958), elementary principals (Gross & Herriott, 1964), and high school principals (Hatley & Pennington, 1975). In his conclusion, Clouse notes that each of these studies spawned additional research applying role theory to issues in educational administration with varying degrees of success. He writes that his exploration of:

the aspects of the role of the educational administrator revealed a number of points of strain and potential conflict between the administrator and his social system. These points promise to be important for an understanding of many of the problems encountered in large-scale educational institutions. . . . The research in role analysis reveals that the educational administrator is a man in
the middle--frequently caught between the conflicting demands of teachers, pupils, parents, . . . and those of higher authority in the organization. (p. 77)

In a discussion of role theory in sociology, Turner (2006) explores role conflict in more detail, usefully distinguishing between *intrarole* and *interrole* conflict. He clarifies how the complexity and hierarchical nature of organizations can create intrarole conflict because the primary or focal role of a position:

- involves interactions with multiple alter roles, each of which incorporates a somewhat different understanding of the focal role, reflecting their respective interests and values. . . . [R]oles often incorporate multiple functions; while limited time and resources often preclude equal attention to all functions, the effective performance of one function may undermine the performance of another function, requiring ideally a delicate balance in executing the role. (p. 244)

*Interrole* conflict, on the other hand, occurs when a position requires an individual to perform contradictory kinds of actions (p. 246). Hanson (2003) provides an informative example: "a school district superintendent on a given Thursday evening may look at his calendar and realize that as a member if the mayor's bowling team he should be bowling, as a tenor in the church choir he should be at practice, as a father he should attend his son's Boy Scout award ceremony, and as a superintendent he should give a speech at a party for a retiring teacher" (pp. 261-262). Both intrarole and interrole conflict can contribute to what Turner refers to as *role strain*, which individuals experience as anxiety, tension, and frustration (p. 249). *Role overload*, "a common condition when people play more different roles than they have time, energy, or resources for" (p. 249), can also create role strain, but "[i]nterrole and intrarole conflict
go beyond role overload in demanding behavior in one role that violates the values in another role" (p. 249).

Another useful concept in the context of this study is *role change*, which occurs when there is "a change in cultural values attached to the role or its functions, altered demand for role services, changing social support, increased or decreased availability of needed resources, demographic changes in the number or personal characteristics of potential role recruits, or technological changes" (Turner, 2006, p. 251). According to Turner, whether organizational roles change is contingent on the following factors:

1. Whether there appears to be a realistically achievable role pattern whose benefit-cost ratio is more favorable than the old pattern
2. The extent of structural autonomy of the role setting, the extent of freedom from close observation, or the weakening of normative controls over role performance
3. The extent to which role incumbents are unified in their desire for role change and mobilized to promote change
4. The extent to which there is mobilized "client" demand for the services this role provides or would provide under a new pattern
5. The cultural credibility of the new role pattern
6. Success in gaining institutional support for the new pattern, including in many cases legal and judicial action (p. 252)

The influence of these factors on campus-level educational administration during the 20th century and into the 21st is explored in the following four sections.
The Development of Campus Leadership and Administrative Roles in American Secondary Schools, 1900-Present

*High Schools and the Principalship, 1900-1945*

Before addressing the research problem and purposes of this study, an overview of the history of high schooling and of campus administration in the United States during the 20th century and into the 21st will help to outline how building-level leadership and administrative roles and positions (including the principalship as well as the assistant and associate principalships) have changed and developed over time. This first section traces the emergence of the principal's role, while following sections examine the development of the roles of assistant and associate principal.

Glanz (2004) notes that principals had little influence prior to 1900, essentially acting as head teachers and having limited authority to affect the nature of schooling. Serving at the whim of the superintendent, principals were relegated to completing routine attendance and other administrative reports, in addition to teaching classes (p. 3).

The first two decades of the 20th century, however, were a period of profound changes in American education. As the nation industrialized and urbanized, public education was transformed from a decentralized system of small, rural elementary and grammar schools, exemplified by the iconic “one-room schoolhouse,” to centralized, bureaucratic, large-scale urban and suburban districts serving thousands of students. Campbell, Fleming, Newell, and Bennion (1987) observe that: “[s]welling school populations, great expansions in educational services and in the curriculum at all levels, a boom in school construction, an increasingly diverse educational clientele, and the
supervision of an enormously enlarged teaching body were all factors posing new and onerous problems for school managers in the first years of the new century” (p. 28). By the 1920s, more and more principals were being relieved of teaching duties in order to focus on administrative and supervisory roles (Glanz, 2004. p. 3).

Enrollment growth was especially significant at the secondary level. Students in public and private secondary schools, numbering about 300,000 in 1890, increased to nearly 5 million by 1930, a figure representing almost half the nation’s eligible teenage population. According to Rury (2005), on average, a new secondary school was established nearly every day between 1890 and 1930: “If the 19th century was the age of the common (or primary) schools, the opening decades of the 20th were the era of the high school” (pp. 161-162).

This unprecedented growth in public education, particularly in secondary schooling, led many business and community leaders to conclude that the roles of superintendent and principal were “too important to be left to teacher-managers. Leadership and control, it was then believed, must be centralized and placed in the hands of those who had the specific training, skills, and vision to advance societal purposes. . . . The reformers of this era sought educational salvation through centralized, rational control” (Campbell et al., 1987, p. 8).

In response to this perceived need for a professionalized cadre of school leaders with knowledge and training in management roles, educational administration as a field of academic study emerged and developed rapidly. Early scholars and practitioners in this field received significant institutional support from the Teachers College at Columbia University in New York, which came to dominate this new academic specialty.
Brooks and Miles (2006) note that “[f]rom 1904-1934, over half of all dissertations completed on topics related to educational administration were conducted at the Teachers College” (p. 3).

During this time, educational administration programs preparing school leaders for management roles, at Teachers College and elsewhere, sought guidance from the principles of scientific management as articulated by Frederick Taylor, whose notions about organizational and industrial efficiency through standardization were very influential in American business and industry in the opening decades of the 20th century. According to Campbell et al. (1987),

The emergence of large, complex, and highly differentiated industrial operations, Taylor believed, had not been accompanied by the development of new management structures necessary for efficient operations. Traditional forms of control, authority, and communication, as well as existing methods to measure productivity, had proven ineffective in dealing with modern industrial problems, he maintained, and, as a result, American industry was marked by disorganization, strife, and inefficiency. (p. 23)

Borrowing from scientific management and assuming that schools should be operated according to the same principles as business and industry, Teachers College graduates, in particular Elwood Cubberly, the author of a series of popular and influential educational administration textbooks, redefined the role of the school principal:

Business values and rhetoric gained acceptance within school systems, and as leaders of the schools, principals became business managers responsible for
devising standardized methods of pupil accounting and introducing sound business administration practices in budgeting, planning, maintenance, and finance. (Brooks & Miles, 2006, p. 3)

As articulated and institutionalized by leading educational reformers from the first decades of the 20th century into the present, the effects of Taylor’s principles of scientific management on school administrative and leadership roles have been considerable. Scientific management’s presence can still be seen in the practices of district and school central offices and in the roles of district and school administrators throughout the United States. The bureaucratic, corporate model of administration that emerged in the scientific management era remains a powerful force shaping school systems and leadership roles. Statistical techniques, measurement scales, and cost-accounting procedures introduced for the sake of efficiency during that time are still used. Business management experts still command respect in educational circles and shape understandings of educational leadership. School leaders, mindful of public- and private-sector demands for school accountability and performance, continue to search for effective ways to perform their roles as managers (Campbell et al., 1987, p. 41).

The Assistant Principalship

Secondary education continued to expand rapidly in size and scope during the 1920s and 1930s. In 1920, 22% of Americans 25 and older had less than 5 years of elementary school, while only 16.4% had completed high school or any higher education. By 1940, only 13.7% had less than 5 years of elementary school, and 24.5% had completed high school or some higher education, a 49% increase, this despite the severe constraints on public school funding that resulted from the Great Depression
Correspondingly, the number of principals doubled between 1920 and 1930 (Glanz, 2004, p. 4). In the midst of this period of rapid growth, Glanz (2004) notes that:

Due to increasing administrative duties, . . . the principalship gradually shifted away from direct inspections, classroom supervision, and instructional development, and assumed a more managerial position. Consequently, other supervisory positions were established to meet the demands of a growing and increasingly more complex school system. (p. 4)

The supervisory positions that emerged were known as special and general supervisors. According to Glanz (2004), “special supervisors,” usually female, were “relieved of some teaching responsibilities to help assist less experienced teachers in subject matter mastery. Larger schools . . . had a number of special supervisors in each of the major subject areas” (p. 4). “General supervisors,” on the other hand, most often men, emerged to supervise math and science and to “assist” the principal in the more administrative, logistical operations of the school. The general supervisor, subsequently called assistant principal, would prepare attendance reports, collect data for evaluation purposes, and coordinate special school programs, among other administrative duties. (p. 4)

Glanz (2004) notes that, by the early 1930s, the roles of special supervisors had largely been taken over by general supervisors, a development he attributes to gender discrimination. He suggests that, because most special supervisors were female, they “were not perceived in the same light as were general supervisors, principals, assistant superintendents, and superintendents, who were, of course, mostly male. Gender bias
and the sexual division of labor in schools go far toward explaining the disappearance of the special supervisor as such” (2004, p. 5). Glanz comes to the conclusion that by the 1940s, as the “general supervisor” position and job title gave way to the “assistant principal” position and title, the roles that still largely define the assistant principalship today had emerged, characterized by “routine administrative tasks, custodial duties, and discipline. APs have not usually been charged with instructional responsibilities, in large measure due to the historical antecedents that led to the development of the position in schools” (2004, p. 7).

Driven by a baby boom and the pervasive belief that a high school education was necessary for any kind of success in the American economy, the growth of student enrollment in secondary schools during the second half of the 20th century was remarkable, and this upward trend has shaped and reshaped the roles of principals and their assistants during this time period. By 1980, the percentage of Americans 25 and older who had less than 5 years of elementary school had dropped to 3.4%, a decrease of over 400% from 1940, while the percentage of Americans 25 and older completing high school or some higher education was 68.6%, an increase of 280% (Digest of Educational Statistics, 2005). While the number of schools decreased from about 200,000 in 1940 to about 70,000 in 1980, schools in general (and high schools in particular) nonetheless grew substantially in size, from an average daily attendance of about 100 students in 1940 to about 450 students in 1980, a 450% increase (Berry, 2004, p. 57). The demand for high school principals and assistant principals and the expansion of their administrative and leadership roles mirrored the growth in enrollment and increase in school size during the period from 1940 to 1980.
Post-war Expansion of Federal Education Policy and Influence

Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of American education in the second half of the 20th century has been the substantial increase in federal aid to (and corresponding influence on and control over) state and local school systems. According to a report published by the States’ Impact on Federal Education Policy Project (SIFEPP) in 2006, “even if public education is chiefly a matter of state and local responsibility, the federal role in American schools has grown exponentially in the period since the mid-20th century, and state-federal interactions in the realm of education policy have become increasingly complex as a result” (p. 5). Beginning with the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act (the GI Bill) of 1944 (which, incidentally, provided much more aid to veterans seeking assistance with secondary education [5.6 million] than with higher education [2.2 million] [SIFEPP Chronology, 2006, p. 1]), federal legislation and federal court decisions in the second half of the 20th century stimulated a host of state and local level educational programs and initiatives, most of which have placed new demands on both district and building-level school administrators. This section discusses the major federal initiatives, and the following section will describe the impact of these initiatives on building-level school administrative and leadership roles and positions, including the emergence of the associate principal.

The expansion of federal education policy and its influence on states and local districts was especially rapid during the 1950s and 1960s. In the 1950s, the Brown v. Board of Education United States Supreme Court decision in 1954 required states to eventually develop and implement strategies to address segregation in schools, while the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958, the federal response to the Soviet
Union’s launch of the *Sputnik* satellite in October 1957, provided unprecedented funding for science, math, foreign language, and guidance programs in schools (SIFEPP Chronology, 2006, p. 2).

The effects of the *Brown* decision and the NDEA on federal funding of education were eclipsed by those of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, a centerpiece of Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society agenda. This groundbreaking federal legislation focused on the improvement of educational opportunity for disadvantaged children. ESEA Titles I through V “funneled previously unimaginable sums of aid into schools, and each was expected to produce results in terms of academic performance. . . . In order to secure as much ESEA money as possible, school districts throughout the country implemented major organizational changes” (SIFEPP Report, 2006, p. 18).

Compounding the effects of millions of baby boomers reaching their teens, requiring more and more high schools of a larger and larger size, the organizational changes in American high schools resulting from the implementation of the five ESEA titles created substantial new roles for high school administrators during the 1960s.

In response to the increasing federal role in education during the Johnson administration, Presidents Nixon and Ford during the 1970s tried to pull back from federal control and sought to return the responsibility for education to states and local districts. A series of Supreme Court decisions in the early 1970s intended to alleviate the negative effects of racial segregation in schools ran counter to Nixon’s and Ford’s educational policies, however, as these decisions required states and local districts to devote substantial resources to racial desegregation efforts (SIFEPP Report, 2006, pp. 25-29). District and building-level school administrators, still working on the
implementation of educational programs designed to increase educational opportunity for disadvantaged children that were initiated during the Johnson Great Society years, also struggled to keep up with the demands of federal court decisions addressing racial desegregation during the 1970s.

Intended to build on ESEA provisions for disabled students, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (P.L. 94-142) substantially increased federal aid to special education, providing up to $4 billion over five years to cover “excess” expenses associated with special education so that federal funding would cover 40% of the cost of educating the average special needs student (SIFEPP Report, 2006, p. 37). Although he signed P.L. 94-142 into law, President Ford asserted (prophetically, it turns out, because federal funding for educating the average special needs student has never come close to 40% of the cost, leveling off at about 15% in recent years) that the law promised more than the federal government could deliver and would become an “unfunded mandate” with legal obligations that outstripped its financial contributions:

Even the strongest supporters of this measure know as well as I that they are falsely raising the expectations of the groups affected by claiming authorization levels which are excessive and unrealistic. . . . It establishes complex requirements under which tax dollars would be used to support administrative paperwork and not educational programs. . . . Unfortunately these requirements will remain in effect even though the Congress appropriates far less than the amounts contemplated . . . (Quoted in SIFEPP Report, 2006, p. 37)
It goes without saying that the federal mandate to provide special education has expanded and complicated the roles of building-level school administrators in the years since.

In recognition of the increased federal role in education, the Carter administration in 1979 shepherded legislation through Congress to establish a cabinet-level Department of Education (SIFEPP Chronology, 2006, p. 4). The federal government turned in a different direction, however, during the Reagan administration beginning in 1980. Following the lead of Nixon-era education policy, Reagan worked to shift the responsibility for education back to the states. But despite his attempts to cut back on federal aid to and regulation of public education, a national movement to reform American education emerged during the 1980s, shaped by the publication in 1983 of *A Nation at Risk*, an influential report authorized by the U.S. Department of Education and coordinated by federal commissioner Terrel Bell. This report led to still another uptick in federal influence on and control over educational policy. It called for systemic reform and recommended higher academic standards for both students and teachers, significantly more time in school for students to engage in learning, and a nationwide system of state and local standardized tests. According to the SIFEPP Report,

This call for a nationwide system of tests marked a new era in federal educational policy, an era in which equal educational opportunities would be measured not so much in terms of financial aid, special programs, or even racial desegregation, but, rather, in terms of standardized tests. This emphasis on standardized tests derived, in part, from a sense that the United States was losing its edge in vigorous economic competition with other industrialized
Stressing “achievement” and “accountability” as prerequisites for government aid, the Reagan administration made schools’ continuing eligibility for aid contingent on rising test scores. If schools did not produce higher scores, they would lose federal aid. (2006, p. 49)

As educational systems at the state and local levels took up the challenge posed by the *A Nation at Risk* report, much of the work required to implement its recommendations in schools fell to principals and their assistants, who were obligated to assume challenging new roles aligning curriculum and instruction with standardized tests.

In 1989, a bipartisan National Education Summit of all 50 state governors was convened by President George H. W. Bush. Following this Summit, the National Governors’ Association and the Bush administration adopted a set of National Education Goals intended to promote state-led education reform movements nationwide (SIFEPP Chronology, 2006, p. 5). Some of the strongest support for the new national goals came from the governor of a small Southern state, Bill Clinton of Arkansas, who made educational reform a major issue during his successful 1992 presidential campaign.

Building on the groundwork laid by the 1989 Bush Education Summit, Clinton signed the Goals 2000: Educate America Act into law on March 31, 1994. Goals 2000 established major national educational goals and provided federal support to assist state and local governments in the standards and assessments necessary to meet those goals (SIFEPP Chronology, 2006, p. 6). As the federal, state, and local governments developed and implemented educational initiatives intended to meet Goals 2000, district and building-level school administrators faced even more pressure
to improve academic achievement and overall school performance in their administrative and instructional leadership roles. At the same time, more and more decisions about teaching, learning, and other fundamental elements of schooling were taken from local school administrators by the increasingly powerful federal and state education agencies that were tasked with assisting schools and local districts in achieving the goals.

Although Goals 2000 created new challenges and roles for school administrators during the 1990s, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) went still further to expand the roles of principals and their assistants. Beginning as a reauthorization of ESEA, the final version of NCLB passed by Congress and signed into law by George W. Bush included important new provisions that increased federal control over state and local educational policy. Passed with strong bipartisan support, the legislation required the following:

- All students to be “proficient” in reading, mathematics, and science by 2014, with Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) measures to determine school success
- Annual standardized tests (developed state by state) in grades 3-8 in reading and mathematics
- Reports from all schools by disaggregated (according to income, race, gender, English language ability, and special education status) groups of students
- Sanctions on schools not meeting AYP requirements
- School plans to close achievement gaps among students (SIFEPP Chronology, 2006, p. 7)
Each of the NCLB provisions has created new roles for building-level administrators, particularly in urban communities that are less affluent and more racially and ethnically diverse; the challenges facing high school principals and assistants in these communities have become exceedingly complex and difficult.

The Associate Principalship

In the 1970s, district administrators and principals of larger high schools began to restructure the roles of assistant principals in response to education reform and accountability initiatives such as the ESEA legislation in 1965 and the Supreme Court desegregation decisions in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Evidence of this can be found in an October, 1973, special issue of the *NASSP Bulletin*, which contains several articles describing new, restructured assistant principal roles that look remarkably like associate principalships in Texas today. In “A Principal Looks at the Assistant Principal,” Roxee W. Joly, principal at John Bowne High School, a large (3500 students in grades 9-12 in 1973), diverse, urban/suburban school (Flushing, Queens, New York City), describes a “triumvirate” with an “assistant principal—pupil personnel services” and an “assistant principal—staff organization and building management” (p. 17). The role of the assistant principal for pupil personnel services is detailed as follows:

- Organizes and supervises a team of deans, attendance coordinators, and guidance counselors so that each student receives a maximum of personal attention . . .
- Trains and develops potential new counselors and continues the training on the job. . . .
Develops with the principal and the department chairmen all possible new electives to make for a flexible set of offerings meeting the needs of all students, students from our National Merit Scholarship winners to our non-readers who come to us with a 3.3 reading grade level . . .

Organizes and supervises the college office, which is the unit by which college guidance reaches each student. . . .

Sets up the procedures for report cards and permanent records, entry of marks, transcripts, etc., including many faculty conferences and committees to improve these processes, and continued revision thereof (Joly, 1973, pp. 18-19).

Many associate principals today would recognize something very like their own role in this job description.

While Joly’s assistant principal for staff organization and building management is a kind of associate principal for school operations, responsible for business administration, master scheduling, and building security (1973, pp. 23-24), her job description for department chairmen suggests that they had the most direct responsibility for instructional leadership. Entitled “assistant principals for supervision” and receiving the same level of pay as her other two A. P.’s, these administrators:

- Read and evaluate new materials
- Create and revise curricula and assessments
- Schedule their department’s classes
- Interview teaching applicants and make recommendations for employment
- Mentor new teachers
- Supervise substitute and student teachers
• Order texts and supplies
• Are the first level of referral for students with discipline and attendance issues
• Teach two classes, rotating courses each term in order to serve as demonstration master teachers
• Organize course leaders who prepare daily, weekly, and semester lesson plans (joly, 1973, pp. 26-27)

Another article in this issue of the NASSP Bulletin, “Accepting the Challenges of Curriculum Development,” presents the case for an “instructional assistant principal” who, much as today’s associate principals, directs the school curriculum, coordinates faculty and staff professional development, and builds the master schedule (Burgess, 1973, pp. 48-51).

A third article, “The VPI is a VIP” by Harold E. Turner, connects the emergence of high schools with enrollments of 3,000 to 4,000 students and public pressure for standardized test-based school accountability, on the one hand, and the need for a “vice principal, instruction (VPI),” on the other:

The principal must find some satisfactory means of dealing with this new mandate on his time and energy. . . . A most realistic solution is to establish a position expressly designed to deal full-time with the problems involved in curriculum and instruction. This can more effectively meet the needs of classroom teachers and come closer to solving the problems of accountability at that point on the instructional ladder most directly involved in teaching and learning. (1973, pp. 55-56)

Turner includes an inventory of the vice principal for instruction’s roles:
1. Coordinating the instructional program
2. Assisting in its evaluation
3. Encouraging and assisting with innovations
4. Developing curriculum design
5. Arranging for and assisting in curriculum writing
6. Providing for and maintaining appropriate inservice experiences
7. Seeking out, assessing, and recommending new methods, materials, and technologies
8. Assessing teaching and providing feedback to teachers of their effectiveness

(1973, pp. 56-57)

The last article in the October, 1973 NASSP Bulletin that documents the emergence of specialized assistant principals, “A Unified Approach to Administration” by Donald L. Rankin, argues for redefining assistant principals as “co-administrators” and changing the job title to “associate principal” because, according to the author, “the term ‘assistant principal’ does not adequately reflect the role that the individuals holding the position attempt to fulfill” (1973, p. 73). Rankin prefers the term “associate principal” because the “word ‘associate’ implies co-equal, rather than sub-ordinate. It . . . implies that a shift has been taking place from staid line and staff patterns of organization to more lateral communication patterns based on function” (1973, p. 73).

Another special issue of the NASSP Bulletin devoted to the assistant principalship, published 18 years later in 1991, indicates that, pushed by state and federal educational reforms in response to the A Nation at Risk report in 1983 and events such as the National Education Summit in 1989, conceptions in place since the
1940s of the assistant principal’s role were continuing to evolve. Citing a 1988 NASSP study of high school leaders and their schools, an article in this issue by Pellicer and Stevenson suggests that, as “schools attempt to respond to a more diverse student population and meet the learning needs of more students, assistant principals may well assume an increasingly important role in the functioning principalship” (1991, pp. 60-61). They compare the results of a 1965 NASSP study of the assistant principalship with those of the 1988 NASSP study, and find that, as a full or shared responsibility for assistant principals, teacher evaluation moved from 23rd place in the 1965 survey to 3rd in the 1988 survey. Also, while instructional methods, staff inservice, and teacher incentives/motivation did not appear on the 1965 survey, these all were ranked in the top 25 responsibilities in 1988 (1991, p. 61).

To account for the changing roles of assistant principals and to make remaining in the assistant principalship more attractive, Pellicer & Stevenson recommend a career ladder for school administrators. Echoing Rankin’s reasoning in 1973, they maintain that designating school administrators with high-level responsibilities under the principal as, for example, the associate principal for instruction or the associate principal for operations, will better describe their more important and substantial leadership and administrative roles than the generic term “assistant principal” (1991, p. 63).

Statement of the Problem and Purpose of the Study

This study addresses the lack of attention in the field of educational administration to the emerging role of the associate principal. As noted previously in the Background section of this chapter, unlike the principalship and to some extent the assistant principalship, the associate principalship remains virtually invisible in
educational administration, despite the key roles that associates play in leading large schools during a time of intensive local, state, and federal government oversight and accountability. Graduate programs focus on the principalship and the superintendency and generally give short shrift to both the associate and assistant principalships. Similarly, educational policy debates surrounding leadership and administration at the district or building levels usually focus on the roles of superintendents, principals, and teachers, rarely considering the assistant principal's role, let alone the associate's. The problem of this study, then, is to determine what the roles and responsibilities of associate principals are and how the position is perceived by educational administrators and school districts in relation to administrative career paths.

The purpose of this study is to document how the role of associate principal is defined by two campuses in two different school districts and to detail the duties and responsibilities of associate principals in those settings. Describing the roles of associate principals is meant to contribute to the field of educational administration by providing a depiction of this emerging but often overlooked position. In addition, it is intended to help policy makers at district and state levels determine how to best organize campus-level leadership and administration to improve student academic performance and to achieve other educational goals.

Research Questions

Grouped according to three topics or areas of emphasis, the following questions guided this research:

1. Personal and professional perspectives on the role of the associate principal:
• How did the associates prepare educationally and professionally for their principalships?
• What are the career paths they have followed?
• How does the associate’s role fit into their career paths? What are their career goals? Do they regard the associate principalship as useful and appropriate preparation for the principalship? For other professional and leadership opportunities in educational administration?

2. Role expectations for the associate principal:
• What are the primary roles and responsibilities of associate principals? How do the roles and responsibilities of associates compare and contrast with those of principals? With assistant principals?
• Are specific roles and responsibilities negotiable among principals, associates, and assistants?
• How do associates define instructional leadership? How do they practice it? Are their administrative and management roles and responsibilities in conflict with their leadership of teaching and learning in their schools?

3. Knowledge, skills, and abilities:
• What kinds of experience, academic background, and professional development do principals and district-level administrators look for in selecting associate principals?
• How do candidates acquire the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to qualify for consideration and selection as an associate principal?
Definition of Terms

The following key terms are defined as they relate to this study:

- **ACT**—Much like the SAT, the ACT is a standardized test assessing high school students' general educational achievement and their ability to complete college-level work. Originally an abbreviation of *American College Testing*, it was first administered in November 1959 as a competitor to the College Board's Scholastic Aptitude Test, now the SAT Reasoning Test. The ACT test has historically consisted of four tests: English, math, reading, and science. In February 2005, an optional writing test was added to the ACT, mirroring changes to the SAT that took place later the same year. The English, math, reading, and science test scores range from 1 to 36; these scores are averaged to produce a single composite score that also ranges from 1 to 36. The writing score does not affect the composite score (http://www.act.org/aap/).

- **Advanced Placement (AP)**—A program operated by the College Board in which high school students can pursue advanced courses that are generally eligible for college credit. Participating colleges grant credit and/or advanced placement to students who obtain high scores on AP examinations. The schools that participated in this study included AP programs (http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/about.html).

- **AEIS**—The Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) is a comprehensive educational information reporting system in Texas. AEIS reports include the following data for campuses and districts:
- Results of Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) by grade, by subject, and by all grades tested
- Participation in the TAKS tests
- Exit-level TAKS cumulative passing rates
- Progress of prior year TAKS failers
- Results of the Student Success Initiative (requirements at grades five and eight that determine whether a student may advance to the next grade level)
- English Language Learners Progress Measure
- Attendance rates
- Annual dropout rates (grades 7-8, grades 7-12, and grades 9-12)
- Completion rates (4-year longitudinal)
- College readiness indicators (http://www.tea.state.tx.us/)

**ARD--the Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee meeting by which an individualized education plan (IEP) is developed for a student in a special education program. IEPs describe the services that a student will receive from special education. Participants in ARD committees include:**
- Parents (or designated representative)
- Administration (principal or designee)
- Teacher (from special education)
- Teacher (from general education)
- Student (when appropriate)
- Special education assessment team member
- Other professionals with knowledge of the disabling conditions that qualify students for special education services
  (http://ritten.tea.state.tx.us/special.ed/ardguide/)

- AYP--Under the accountability provisions in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, all public school campuses, school districts, and the state of Texas are evaluated for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Districts, campuses, and the state are required to meet AYP criteria on three measures: Reading/Language Arts, Mathematics, and either Graduation Rate (for high schools and districts) or Attendance Rate (for elementary and middle/junior high schools). If a campus, district, or state that is receiving federal Title I funds fails to meet AYP for two consecutive years, that campus, district, or state is subject to certain requirements such as offering supplemental education services, offering school choice, and/or taking corrective actions (http://www.tea.state.tx.us/).

- College Board--The College Board is a not-for-profit membership association whose mission is to connect students to college success and opportunity. The College Board is composed of more than 5,700 schools, colleges, universities and other educational organizations, and in 2009 it served seven million students and their parents, 23,000 high schools, and 3,800 colleges through programs and services in college readiness, college admission, guidance, assessment, financial aid, enrollment, and teaching and learning. Its best-known programs are the SAT, the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT), and the Advanced Placement Program (http://www.collegeboard.com/about/index.html).
• DAEP (Disciplinary Alternative Education Program)--An educational and self-discipline alternative instructional program, adopted by local policy and regulated by TEA, for students in elementary through high school grades who are removed from their regular classes for mandatory or discretionary disciplinary reasons (http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter103/ch103cc.html).

• Gold Performance Acknowledgments--The Gold Performance Acknowledgment (GPA) system acknowledges districts and campuses for high performance on indicators other than those used to determine accountability ratings. The 15 indicators, in the Texas Education Code or determined by the Commissioner of Education, include attendance rate; SAT, ACT, AP, and International Baccalaureate test results; dual enrollment courses completed; the percentage of students earning commended scores on the TAKS subject area tests; and the percentage of students graduating with Recommended High School Program or Distinguished Achievement Program diplomas (http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/account/2009/manual/ch05.pdf).

• Professional learning community (PLC)--An organizational arrangement in which teachers and administrators in a school continuously seek and share learning and then act on what they learn. The goal of their actions is to enhance their effectiveness as professionals so that students benefit. PLCs are often used as a means to organize staff development and to initiate school change and improvement (http://www.sedl.org/change/issues/issues61.html).

• PSAT/NMSQT--The Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) is a standardized test cosponsored by the College Board and
National Merit Scholarship Corporation (NMSC) that provides practice for the SAT. Taking the test also qualifies students to enter NMSC scholarship programs, which will award more than $48 million to 9,700 students in 2012 (http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/about.html).

- SAT--A standardized test for college admissions in the United States. The SAT is owned, published, and developed by the College Board. It was formerly developed, published, and scored by the Educational Testing Service, which still administers the exam. The test is intended to assess students' readiness for college. First introduced in 1901, its name and scoring have changed several times. The current SAT Reasoning Test, introduced in 2005, takes three hours and forty-five minutes and includes an essay writing component. Combining test results from three 800-point sections (math, critical reading, and writing), possible scores range from 600 to 2400 (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SAT).

- TEA accountability ratings--Using data gathered by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), every campus and district in the Texas public education system is rated according to performance each year. In most cases the system assigns one of four rating labels —ranging from lowest to highest—Academically Unacceptable, Academically Acceptable, Recognized, and Exemplary. To determine the rating label, the system evaluates assessment results on the state standardized assessment instruments as well as longitudinal completion rates and annual dropout rates. Campuses and districts earn ratings by having performance that meets absolute standards or by demonstrating sufficient improvement toward the standard. In addition to evaluating performance for all students, the performance
of individual groups of students the (major ethnic groups and the group of students designated as economically disadvantaged) is disaggregated and held to the rating criteria. All of the evaluated groups must meet the criteria for a given rating category in order to earn that label (http://www.tea.state.tx.us/).

- **TEA**--The Texas Education Agency (TEA) comprises the Texas Commissioner of Education and agency staff. The TEA and the State Board of Education (SBOE) guide and monitor activities and programs related to public education in Texas. The SBOE consists of 15 elected members representing different regions of the state. One member is appointed chair by the governor (http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=3793).

- **Title I**--Part of NCLB, this federal program provides financial assistance to districts and schools with high numbers or high percentages of poor children to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards. Federal funds are allocated through formulas that are based primarily on census poverty estimates and the cost of education in each state. The districts and schools that participated in this study received Title I funding (http://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/index.html).

- **UIL (University Interscholastic League)**--supervises extracurricular academic, athletic, and music contests in Texas and provides guidance to public school teachers who sponsor and coach these activities. Established in 1909, the UIL is the largest interscholastic organization of its kind in the United States. It operates as part of the University of Texas, under the auspices of the Vice President for Diversity and Community Engagement (http://www.uiltexas.org/about).
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

As noted in the “Background” section of the first chapter, the associate principalship has been almost entirely overlooked by educational researchers, commentators, and policymakers. Literature related to the assistant principalship, on the other hand, while not extensive, is substantial enough to provide some useful background for this study. Because the associate principalship can be viewed as a specialized building-level leadership and administrative position that emerged from the assistant principalship, this chapter reviews and summarizes research literature concerning assistant principals. Particular emphasis is given to two issues: the ways the assistant’s roles have changed in recent decades in response to federal, state, and local school reform and improvement initiatives, and how those changes led to the emergence of the associate principalship.

The Assistant Principalship

While the American secondary school assistant principalship in more or less its current form has been around since the 1940s, there were no comprehensive studies of the assistant’s role and position with much rigor or depth until the 1970 Austin and Brown Report of the Assistant Principalship. This report is the third volume of a larger study of the secondary school principalship (the first two volumes studied the senior and junior high principalships) sponsored and funded by the NASSP. The authors design “three related but essentially independent research projects, each with its own group of participants, research instruments, and methodology” (Foreword).
The first research project is a qualitative shadow study, based on structured observations and interviews with students, teachers, and other staff members, of assistant principals at work in 18 public secondary schools located throughout the United States. Of the three main findings, the first is that the tasks, roles, and responsibilities of assistant principals have “no fixed relationship to either the size or the formal structure of the school. Rather, the variations in the position as [the authors] . . . observed it were the results of the personalities, philosophies, and interests of the administrators involved and of the changing needs of a particular school” (Austin & Brown, 1970, pp. 17-18).

The second important finding is that the “one duty characteristic of the assistant principalship in practically all schools is responsibility for discipline and attendance” (p. 18). While attendance and discipline were managed differently among the schools involved in the study, both observations and interviews confirmed that spend more time dealing with attendance and discipline than with any other responsibility.

The third finding, revealed primarily through interviews with students, teachers, and staff, is that, rather than principals, assistant principals are the real operational leaders in their schools, responsible for the key tasks of maintaining order and resolving conflicts among students, teachers, and parents: “Throughout all of these interviews one could hear or easily infer the conclusion that the assistant principal was, so far as the interviewee was concerned, pretty much the person who really kept things going” (p. 23).

The other two research projects in the Austin and Brown Report (1970) are a normative study and a career study based on a national questionnaire/survey.
completed by over 1200 assistant principals. In summarizing the results of the normative study, the authors conclude that “the findings corroborate the common observation that an assistant principal in an American secondary school has his hands in practically everything that goes on in the school” (p. 46). They inventory the primary areas of responsibility for the assistant principals in the study according to the following categories:

- **School management**: day-to-day practical tasks related to running the school and providing for the physical necessities of the educational program.
- **Staff personnel**: duties that relate directly to teachers, to their professional and personal welfare, and to their professional improvement and status.
- **Community relations**: activities that involve adults in the community in their various relations to the school.
- **Student activities**: duties that relate directly to the non-classroom activities of students.
- **Curriculum and instruction**: activities relating directly to the course of study and instruction offered by the school, the improvement of instruction, revision of curricula, and improvement of services designed to facilitate instruction.
- **Pupil personnel items**: duties associated with students’ problems and concerns, with their welfare in school and within the community, and with their control and guidance within the school.

The findings of this normative study indicate that there are substantial variations among schools regarding the tasks, roles, and responsibilities assigned to assistant
principals, as well as the level of discretion permitted to carry out those tasks, roles, and responsibilities:

Assistant principals are seldom assigned “full” responsibility for the execution of duties in the task areas used in this research. . . . either they have slight responsibility for their work, or they share with the principal the responsibility of planning, organizing, and coordinating the work. . . . it may be that many assistant principals might be more accurately described as “assistants to the principal.” If this is indeed the case, it appears essential to ask if this conception of the assistant principalship is really appropriate to the administrative needs of the contemporary American high school. (p. 46)

Mirroring the shadow study’s finding, the authors determined that these variations have no fixed relationship to either the size or the formal structure of the school: “Variations from school to school in assigning responsibility to the assistant principal are striking. . . . The same spread is observable in the matter of importance and level of discretionary behavior (p. 46).

The third component of the Austin and Brown study is an examination of the career patterns and occupational mobility of assistant principals, based on a national survey sample of 419 former assistant principals serving in urban (108 respondents), suburban (176 respondents), and rural (135 respondents) schools (p. 51). Survey respondents were asked to provide information concerning their:

- Socio-economic background
- Formal preparation
- Previous employment
Factors influencing occupational choices
Influence of other individuals on career decisions
Occupational values at several career stages
Job satisfactions (p. 49)

Concerning socio-economic background and formal academic preparation, the survey found that, while 95% of the respondents held graduate degrees, “six out of 10 . . . reported that their parents had not finished high school, and fewer than one in 10 reported that their parents held college degrees”:

In less than 15 percent of the cases could the parents be classified by occupation as professionals, business executives, or owners of large businesses. About a third of assistant principals came from homes where the head of household was a skilled or semi-skilled worker, a tenant farmer, or the owner of a small farm.

(pp. 53-54)

In regard to upward mobility as determined by previous employment, the study revealed that it was much easier for assistants to move into principalships in school districts in which they are already employed, with only 15% of respondents making such changes between districts. This relatively low level of inter-district movement consists primarily of rural administrators moving into urban (6%) or suburban (5%) districts (pp. 59-60).

Comparing the conditions that influenced the respondents to become teachers to those that influenced them to become assistant principals, the study found that, while the “service orientation” (opportunities to be helpful to others or to work with people rather than things, for example) remained strong, “such practical matters as salaries
and status tend to carry more weight in making the decision to continue on into administration than in deciding to enter the teaching profession in the first place” (p. 64).

Not surprisingly, administrators (principals and, to a slightly lesser extent, superintendents) in the school districts in which they were working had by far the most influence on the respondents’ decisions to pursue and to get a position as an assistant principal (p. 64)

The study determined that the occupational values of the survey respondents at the points when they made critical career decisions, including seeking an assistant principalship, were primarily shaped by three factors: family considerations such as number of children and proximity to relatives, school environment (student discipline and parental views on education, for example), and job security issues such as seniority and retirement benefits. The authors conclude that these factors contribute to the low level of movement between school districts, noted previously in this summary, among those entering the assistant principalship or stepping up to the principalship (pp. 66-67).

The research findings concerning job satisfaction were particularly revealing. According to the authors, “[w]hat is noteworthy (and depressing) . . . is the rather low level of satisfaction that these men and women realized in their tenure as assistant principals compared with the satisfaction gained during those years spent in other assignments” (p. 72). The data speak to the challenging demands and stresses faced by assistant principals in the late 1960s. In addition to the challenges of numerous new federal legislative and judicial mandates for schools and local districts, social, cultural, and political conflicts stemming from historical events including the civil rights
movement and the Vietnam War spilled over into American education, especially high schools.

The job satisfaction findings also lead the authors to express concern for the future of the assistant principalship:

[I]t is unmistakably clear that, if this position is to attract and hold individuals of talent and energy, the nature of the position must be redefined in such manner that this position in the administrative structure has its own meaning and value and does not exist primarily because someone else has more than he can do and needs assistance (p. 73)

The career study data, along with the results of the shadow and normative studies, lead the authors to six general findings, two of which anticipate problems that researchers and writers who have studied the assistant principalship since this study was published in 1970 have returned to again and again. The first of these findings is that

*there seems to be ample reason to question the commonly held belief that the assistant principalship is a necessary step in the preparation of those who will serve as effective school principal* (italics in the original). . . . Preparation for long-range planning, for program leadership, and for educational statesmanship of the order required of superior school principals is no doubt more effectively provided through other experiences . . . (p. 77)

The second finding is that “*the satisfactions to be found in the assistant principalship are few and unimpressive to most who occupy this office*” (italics in the original):
Only one fourth of the men and half of the women reported that they intended to make this a career position; the larger fraction of women may be accounted for by the feeling expressed by several that this probably the highest rung they can reach on the administrative ladder . . . For men, this is much more commonly a position to be endured until a principalship or other promotional escape appears; but for many, a final resignation either to remain in the position or to return to classroom teaching is the sad conclusion to an ambitious program of professional growth. (p. 78)

Much of the research on the assistant principalship since the Austin and Brown study has been published in the *NASSP Bulletin*, a monthly journal that, until it ceased publication in 2006, served as a clearinghouse for some of the best current research and writing on building-level school administration. Beginning with the October, 1973, issue, the *NASSP Bulletin* published several special editions featuring articles relating to the assistant and associate positions.

A second issue of *NASSP Bulletin* devoted to the assistant principalship was published October, 1987. What is perhaps most notable about this special issue is how little the assistant principalship discussed in its various articles differs from that described by Austin and Brown in 1970. Corroborating the results of the Austin and Brown study, the lead article cites a recent study which concluded that the major responsibility of most assistant principals is still discipline and that “[m]ost assistant principals would like additional responsibility in such areas as curriculum improvement, advising parents’ groups, public relations, and the school budget” (Gorton, 1987, p. 1). In a similar vein, Panyako and Rorie (1987) conclude that “it is possible for the ordinary
assistant principal to go for weeks, or even months, buried deep in custodial, clerical, discipline, and social duties, to the total exclusion of meaningful interaction with teachers and students in the classroom setting” (p. 8). Confirming one of the key findings of the Austin and Brown study, in his study of eight high school assistant principals in the city of Medicine Hat, Alberta, Graham Kelly (1987) writes that,

[wh]ile all eight looked upon the assistant principalship as a preparation for the principalship, they observed that assistant principals spend most of their time at tasks they will not look after as principals, and very little time at tasks they must perform when they become principals. As a result, the efficacy of the assistant principalship as a training ground for the principalship is highly questionable.
(p. 18)

A third NASSP Bulletin special issue published in March, 1991, returns to the notion of an associate principalship first introduced in the 1973 issue. In the first article, Calabrese, Tucker-Ladd and Hartzell (1991) argue that, despite the pervasive image of assistant principals as disciplinarians, “secondary schools have moved into a new era where leadership is shared and the assistant principal assumes a multi-dimensional role” (p. 52). After detailing the various dimensions of the assistant principal’s role, the authors conclude that “[a]t times it is the most demanding position in the school system,” and, while “[t]here are tasks that the assistant principal does that seem trivial and unrelated to education, . . . there is no trivial task; there is no mundane action; there is nothing that the assistant principal does that is unrelated to the school’s educational mission” (Calabrese, Tucker-Ladd & Hartzell, 1991, p. 56).
In the second article in this special issue, Pellicer and Stevenson (1991) discuss ways to improve the assistant principalship to make it more attractive, recommending the creation of associate principal positions for individuals with superior educational leadership skills and abilities. The last two articles examine effective mentoring strategies for principals to promote assistants’ professional development (Calabrese & Tucker-Ladd, 1991) and ways for principals and district administrators to successfully induct experienced assistant principals into school leadership teams (Hartzell, 1991).

The most comprehensive study of the assistant principalship since Austin and Brown published their work in 1970 is Catherine Marshall’s *The Assistant Principal: Leadership Choices and Challenges* (1992). In this study, Marshall argues for a new understanding of the assistant principalship, emphasizing the crucial work of assistants in maintaining order and resolving conflicts among students, teachers, and parents, and suggesting innovative ways to improve the assistant’s role. According to Marshall, by focusing on the assistant, local, state, and federal educational leaders and policymakers can uncover problems and identify new solutions for reconceptualizing school leadership.

A second edition of the text, revised with the assistance of Richard M. Hooley, “incorporates the new realities of administrator shortage, new licensure and training practices, accountability pressures, and other such stressors” (Marshall & Hooley, 2006, p. ix). In this new edition, the authors discuss at length how recent educational reforms and the expansion of federal policy and influence, culminating with the passage of NCLB, have left principals and assistant principals accountable for raising student performance in schools with no increases in resources or time and with less flexibility.
Hampered by restricted autonomy and flexibility, assistants are nonetheless expected to understand, communicate, and implement a rapidly expanding body of federal and state education policy devised by legislators with conflicting, often politically-driven agendas, usually with little involvement of teachers and building-level school administrators.

In making a convincing case for the centrality of the assistant principalship in the leadership and administration of high schools, Marshall and Hooley cite four reasons for its critical importance:

1. The assistant principalship is a frequent entry-level position for administrative careers in education
2. Assistant principals usually handle the most difficult disciplinary problems, in the process coping with the effects of poverty, discrimination, and dysfunctional families on students
3. Assistant principals must frequently play the key role of mediator, addressing the sometimes contentious and difficult conflicts that emerge among teachers, students, and the community
4. In their daily work, assistant principals “encounter the fundamental dilemmas of school systems”: “Their day is a microcosm representing the array of issues that arise when children bring society inside the schools’ walls” (2006, p. 3)

Marshall followed the 1992 edition of *The Assistant Principal: Leadership Choices and Challenges* with *The Unsung Role of the Career Assistant Principal* in 1993. Based on interviews, observations, and document analysis, this brief but informative descriptive study expands on the previous work in an attempt to counter stereotypical conceptions of the assistant principalship as “hatchet man, activity
coordinator, handyman, or firefighter‖ (Marshall & Hooley, 2006, p. 50). The author argues persuasively that her research requires qualitative methods because “[d]iving into the real school setting is the only way to understand the interplay among career APs, their career environments, the daily tasks and roles, and their idiosyncratic approaches to meaning–making” (Marshall, 1993, pp. 4-5). Summarizing her findings, she writes:

The most driving reward of career APs is the knowledge that they help young people grow and develop. Often, they stay in their positions in order to maintain balanced and stable personal lives. They find ways to use their discretion and flexibility to instill meaning in their work lives. At the same time, they sort out the rules and realities of school life. All educators can gain insights from examining the career and life choices as well as the philosophies and work interactions of these career APs. (1993, p. 2)

Two other, more recent book-length discussions of the assistant principalship also deserve review. While overlooking the emergence and development of the associate principalship entirely, the authors of both texts argue that, for effective schooling in an age of accountability, assistant principals must be substantially more involved in building-level instructional leadership. The first text, The Assistant Principal: Essentials for School Leadership (Weller & Weller, 2002), is both reference guide and handbook or textbook. The authors suggest in their first two chapters that the assistant principalship should be understood as a leadership rather than management position, and then review the knowledge and skills necessary to be successful in leadership areas relating to school politics, public and community relations, communication skills,
and instructional improvement. The other text, *The Assistant Principal’s Handbook: Strategies for Success* (Glanz, 2004), cited earlier in this study for its review of the historical development of the assistant principalship during the 1920s and 1930s, covers much the same ground. Like Weller and Weller, Glanz makes no mention of the associate position, even as he contends in his “Preface” that “[t]here must be instructional leaders, other than the principal. Our first task, then, is to redefine the AP’s role with an emphasis on more significant involvement instructional and curricular improvement. This, of course, entails relieving the AP of, for example, lunch duty and serving as chief disciplinarian” (2004, pp. xiii-xiv). What Glanz is describing here is something very like the associate principalship as it currently exists in many large high schools in Texas.

A search of Digital Dissertations via ProQuest using the title search terms “associate” or “assistant” or “vice” and “principal” for the years 2005 through 2008 produced a list of 42 dissertations studying assistant principals but none for associates. A review of the abstracts for these dissertations indicates several areas of focus:

- The description of assistant principals’ duties, roles, and responsibilities, including those relating to the area of instructional leadership (17 studies)
- Mentoring programs for assistant principals (9 studies)
- The assistant principalship as preparation for the principalship (8 studies)
- Job satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction (6 studies)

The preceding review of research literature leaves little doubt that assistant principals play a central role in most facets of the day-to-day leadership and operation of a large school, including instructional leadership. Descriptively, this research details
the ways the assistant principalship has changed and expanded substantially in response to the federal, state, and local school reform and improvement initiatives of recent decades. It also helps to explain how new roles and responsibilities have developed for assistants in recent decades. More specifically, the research literature establishes that, with strict accountability measures for student learning in place at local, state, and federal levels of government, there is a clear need for instructional leaders other than the principal in large schools. The associate principalship appears to be an organizational response to attempt to fill this leadership gap.
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter begins with a discussion of the reasons that qualitative research methods are more appropriate for this study and then reviews the case study and qualitative methods that guided the research. After considering sample selection criteria and the value of investigating multiple cases of the associate principalship, some of the key features of the two Texas high schools that served as sites for the case studies will be described. Next the techniques through which data were collected, semi-structured interviews and document analysis, will be reviewed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how the data were analyzed and interpreted.

Qualitative or Quantitative Methods?

The review of recent dissertations noted previously found that researchers preferred survey- and questionnaire-based research rather than qualitative field or case studies. Of the 42 dissertations, only 10 used qualitative methods. Marshall and Hooley (2006) argue that this preference for quantitative, survey/questionnaire research is misplaced because field and case studies of assistant principals provide a more revealing, meaningful, and useful picture of their roles. They maintain that qualitative field and case studies are the “more fruitful way of understanding the role of the assistant principal” because “surveys of tasks and assessment of job satisfaction do not adequately capture the essence of the assistant principalship. . . . Frequently, these ways of understanding lead to dead ends—to seeing the assistant principal as hatchet man, activity coordinator, handyman, and firefighter” (pp. 49-50). Following Marshall
and Hooley’s argument, this study will assume that qualitative case studies also will be a more revealing and meaningful approach to investigate the associate principal's role.

In his informative and useful discussion concerning the selection of methods for conducting dissertation research in education, Kilbourn (2006) observes that “the most elementary distinction between qualitative and quantitative” research is that “qualitative inquiry focuses on the quality and texture of events rather than how often those events occur” (p. 552). He goes on to cite Erickson’s (1986) guidelines for choosing qualitative rather than quantitative research methods; according to Erickson, qualitative “methods using . . . field work are most appropriate when one needs to know more about:

1. The specific structure of occurrences rather than their general character and overall distribution
2. The meaning-perspectives of the particular actors in the particular events
3. The location of naturally occurring points of contrast that can be observed as natural experiments when we are unable logistically or ethically to meet experimental conditions of consistency of intervention and of control over other influence on the setting
4. The identification of specific causal linkages that were not identified by experimental methods, and the development of new theories about causes and other influences on the patterns that are identified in survey data or experiments (Erickson, p.121, cited in Kilbourn, pp. 552-553)

Erickson’s distinctions parallel Marshall and Hooley’s (2006) observations concerning the limitations of most current survey/questionnaire-based research studies on the assistant principalship. Given these limitations and considering that qualitative methods
are considered to be more appropriate for generating information and theory in areas of study where there has been little or no research, as is the case with the role of the associate principal, it appears that a qualitative approach is best suited for this investigation of the associate principalship.

Case Studies in Qualitative Research

In her excellent overview of case study research in education, *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education* (2001), Merriam notes that, while qualitative case studies are prevalent in educational research, “there is little consensus on what constitutes a case study or how this type of research is done” (p. 26). An additional complication is the fact that the term *case study* is used interchangeably (and often confusingly) to refer to three distinctly different things: the process of conducting a case study, the particular unit or case of the study, and the end product of the study (Merriam, 2001, p. 27). In an effort to clarify, Merriam argues “that the single most defining characteristic of case study research lies in delimiting the object of study, the case,” (p. 27), and defines case studies as “intensive descriptions and analyses of a single unit or bounded system . . . such as an individual, program, event, group, or community” (p. 19).

Gall, Borg and Gall (2003) define case study research similarly, as "the in-depth study of instances of a phenomenon in its natural context and from the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon" (p. 545). In this sense, a *phenomenon* is "the processes, events, persons, or things of interest to the researcher. Examples of phenomena are programs, curricula, roles, and events. . . . A *case* is a particular instance of the phenomenon" (p.545). Using these definitions and terminology, the
phenomenon to be investigated in this study is the role of the associate principal, and
the associate principals enacting this role at two large Texas high schools are the two
cases that are examined in depth.

In addition to defining and illustrating the role of the associate principal using the
case study approach, this study examines how experience as an associate principal
influences the careers of educational administrators. In considering the characteristics
of the different varieties of qualitative research, Merriam (2001) notes that qualitative
methods “can and often do work in conjunction with one another” (p. 20). This
investigation borrows from narrative analysis in qualitative research by examining the
career paths followed by the associate principals serving as cases for the study.
According to Coffey and Atkinson (1996), “[t]he concept of career has long been of
interest to social scientists. . . . How the [career] chronicle is told and how it is structured
can. . . . provide information about the perspectives of the individual in relation to the
wider social grouping or cultural setting to which that individual belongs” (p. 68). The
career paths or chronicles related by the associate principals, principals, and district
administrators who participated in this study are described and analyzed for what they
reveal about the structures of the campus and district leadership and administrative
teams (the social groups) of which the associate principals are members, as well as the
school and district cultures within which the associates perform their roles.

Settings for the Case Studies

Two, four-year (Grades 9 to 12) high schools were selected for detailed analysis
because they met the criterion that the principals and district administrators as well as
associate principals at each school site would consent to be interviewed. This criterion
was important for triangulation in the study, in the attempt to make its findings more credible by examining the roles of the associate principals from multiple perspectives. According to Merriam, "[t]he more cases included in a study, . . . the more compelling an interpretation is likely to be. . . . The inclusion of multiple cases is, in fact, a common strategy for enhancing the external validity or generalizability of your findings" (2001, p. 40). This study therefore included a total of three associate principalships in two high schools and school districts. Student, faculty, and staff information about the two campuses that served as cases for this study is summarized below in Table 1 (all data are from Campus Profiles for 2008-2009 as published by the TEA’s Academic Excellence Indicator System [AEIS]. The names of schools have been changed to maintain confidentiality).

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Great Plains High School</th>
<th>Smithfield High School</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Students</strong></td>
<td>3188</td>
<td>2653</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>UIL Classification</strong></td>
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<td>5A</td>
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<td><strong>TEA Accountability Rating</strong></td>
<td>Recognized</td>
<td>Recognized</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Staff</strong></td>
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<td>12.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers</strong></td>
<td>187.6</td>
<td>172.3</td>
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<td><strong>Teachers’ Years of Experience</strong></td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>8.5</td>
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<td><strong>Administrative Team</strong></td>
<td>2 Associates, 5 Assistants</td>
<td>2 Associates, 6 Assistants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students per Teacher</strong></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Great Plains High School</td>
<td>Smithfield High School</td>
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<td>--------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>African American</strong></td>
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<td><strong>White</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Asian/Pacific Islander</strong></td>
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<td>2.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Economically Disadvantaged</strong></td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
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</table>

Data Collection

Data for this study were collected primarily by means of interviews. The conventional way for researchers to choose an interviewing strategy appropriate to their problems and purposes is "by determining the amount of structure desired. . . . At one end of the continuum fall highly structured, questionnaire-driven interviews; at the other end are unstructured, open-ended, conversational formats" (Merriam, 2001, pp. 72-73). Merriam (2001) warns that, in qualitative research, highly structured interviews, which are usually conducted as oral forms of standardized, written surveys, can be misleading:

The problem with using a highly structured interview in qualitative research is that rigidly adhering to predetermined questions may not allow you to access participants' perspectives and understandings of the world. Instead, you get the investigator's preconceived notions of the world. . . . For the most part, . . . interviewing in qualitative investigations is more open-ended and less structured. Less structured formats assume that individual respondents define the world in unique ways. (p.74)
Merriam then suggests that semi-structured interviews, combining both standardized and open-ended questions, are often the best approach in qualitative case studies:

In this type of interview either all of the questions are more flexibly worded, or the interview is a mix or more and less structured questions. . . [T]he largest part of the interview is guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, and neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time. This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic. (p. 74)

Following these guidelines concerning effective questioning strategies in case study research, the interviews for this study were therefore semi-structured.

For purposes of triangulation, the assistant superintendent or district-level administrator who works most closely with the principal and the associate in the areas of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and student or administrative services in each of the high schools was interviewed, in addition to the associate principal and the principal. Each interview was recorded digitally so that data could be more easily analyzed and interpreted using computer software. The interview guides for the three different levels of administrators are outlined below.

A. Interview guide for associate principals:

- Describe your personal background.
  - Describe your educational preparation.
  - Describe your professional experience.
  - What motivated you to become an associate principal?
- What are your career goals?
o Do you think that the associate principalship is a useful and appropriate preparation for the principalship?

o For other career opportunities in education or educational administration?

- Do you think that the assistant principalship is a useful and appropriate preparation for the associate principalship?
  
o For the principalship?
  
o For other career opportunities in education or educational administration?

- What supervisory, administrative, and/or managerial tasks, roles, and responsibilities do you perform?
  
o Which tasks or roles take up most of your time and effort? Please provide examples.
  
o Which tasks or roles do you find most rewarding? Please provide examples.
  
o Which tasks or roles do you find least rewarding? Please provide examples.

- What are your tasks, roles, and responsibilities for instructional leadership in your school? Please provide examples.

- Compare and contrast your tasks, roles, and responsibilities with those of your principal.

- Compare and contrast your tasks, roles, and responsibilities with those of the assistant principals in your school.

- Are specific roles, tasks, and responsibilities negotiable among your administrative team? Please provide examples.

B. Interview guide for principals:

- Describe your personal background.
o Describe your educational preparation.

o Describe your professional experience.

o What motivated you to become an associate principal?

• What background, qualities, and characteristics should a person possess to be a successful and effective associate principal?
  
  o Academic preparation?

  o Professional experience?

  o Personal characteristics?

• Do you think that the associate principalship is a useful and appropriate preparation for the principalship? For other career opportunities in education or educational administration?

• Do you think that the assistant principalship is a useful and appropriate preparation for the associate principalship?
  
  o For the principalship?

  o For other career opportunities in education or educational administration?

• What are your tasks, roles, and responsibilities for instructional leadership in your school? Please provide examples.

• In what ways does your associate principal practice instructional leadership? Please provide examples.

• Compare and contrast your tasks, roles, and responsibilities with those of your associate principal.

• Compare and contrast the tasks, roles, and responsibilities of your associate principal with those of the assistant principals in your school.
• Are specific roles, tasks, and responsibilities negotiable among your administrative team? Please provide examples.

C. Interview guide for district-level administrators:

• Describe your educational preparation.
• Describe your professional experience.
• What are your primary roles, duties, and responsibilities in your current position?
• What experience and skills does an administrator need to be a successful and effective associate principal?
  o Academic preparation?
  o Professional experience?
  o Training/professional development?
  o Personal characteristics?
• What are the main roles, duties, and/or responsibilities of high school associate principals in your district?
• In what ways do you interact and/or collaborate with high school associate principals in your district?
• Do you think the associate principalship is a useful and appropriate preparation for the principalship? For other career opportunities in education or educational administration?
• Do you think the assistant principalship is a useful and appropriate preparation for the associate principalship?
  o For the principalship?
  o For other career opportunities in education or educational administration?
• Compare principals' roles, duties, and/or responsibilities with those of associate principals in the high schools in your district. Are there differences among/between the campuses?

• Compare the roles, duties, and/or responsibilities of associate principals with those of assistant principals in the high schools in your district. Are there differences among/between the campuses?

Interviews were supplemented by the collection of documents about associate principals, including job descriptions and the documents and records they produce and use at work (district and campus improvement plans, staff development plans and program descriptions, master schedules, and policy/procedure handbooks, for example). To provide a broader context for the information obtained through interviews, documents providing background information about the school sites and districts also were collected.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

According to Miles and Huberman, reviewing qualitative data "to dissect them meaningfully, while keeping the relations between the parts intact, is the stuff of analysis. This part of analysis involves how you differentiate and combine the data you have retrieved and the reflections you make about this information" (Qualitative Data Analysis, 1994, p. 56). In Chapter 4 of this study, the data collected are differentiated and combined to identify the themes and patterns that help to describe and explain the associate principalship. In the context of the analysis and interpretation of case study data, Gall, Borg, and Gall define these terms as follows:
- **theme**: an inference that a feature of a case is salient and characteristic of the case (p. 772).

- **pattern**: an inference that particular phenomena within a case or across cases are systematically related to each other (p. 765).

The interviews are also analyzed as narratives, that is, as stories told by people in specific times and places, at particular points in their careers as educational administrators. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) argue that the analysis of qualitative data should not obscure the fact that:

> Our interview informants may tell us long and complicated accounts and reminiscences. When we chop them up into separate coded segments, we are in danger of losing the sense that they are accounts. We lose sight, if we are not careful, of the fact that they are often couched in terms of stories—as narratives—or that they have other formal properties in terms of their discourse structure. Segmenting and coding may be an important . . . part of the research process, but it is not the whole story (p. 52).

**Ethical Considerations**

For the most part, the research for this study presented minimal risks to the building and district-level administrators who participated. The ethical safeguards (informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, and assessment of risks and benefits) required for approval of research involving human subjects by the University of North Texas Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) ensured that the participants suffered no harm. In fact, it is very possible that the research benefited the participants as well as their schools and districts, as the associate
principals and other administrators reflected on their practice in ways that may have refined and enhanced their leadership skills and administrative expertise.
CHAPTER 4

CASE STUDIES OF THREE ASSOCIATE PRINCIPALSHIPS

By documenting the work of associate principals, this study intends to help policy makers at state and district levels determine how to organize campus-level leadership and administration to promote student academic achievement and to achieve other educational goals. This chapter will describe the roles of three associate principals at two high schools with enrollments of over 2500 students located in a major metropolitan area in Texas, as those roles were detailed in interviews with district administrators, principals, and the associates themselves. The purpose of this chapter is to represent how the role of associate principal is defined by campuses and school districts, and to detail what kinds of work associate principals practice and engage in with students, teachers, parents, administrators, and other members of the school community. By describing and representing the associate principalship, it is meant to contribute to the understanding of building-level educational administration by providing some definition to this emerging but often overlooked role.

Following a brief description of each school site and district, perspectives on the associate principal's role as articulated by the associate, the principal, and the assistant superintendent or district-level administrator who works most closely with the principal and the associate are summarized.

Great Plains High School

Great Plains High School (GPHS), a UIL class 5A high school with 3188 students in Grades 9 to 12 during the 2008-2009 school year (all statistical data in the school and district descriptions in this chapter are from the TEA’s Campus Profiles for 2008-2009,
unless otherwise noted), is situated on a sprawling, relatively new, well-maintained campus with ample, modern athletic facilities on the outermost ring of suburbs of a major metropolitan area in Texas. It serves a community with rural, suburban, and exurban features as well as a mix of high, low, and middle income families; for detailed demographic information describing this campus, please see Table 1. The school’s administrative team consists of one principal, two associate principals (one for administration, one for curriculum and instruction), and five assistant principals.

In addition to earning the “Recognized” accountability rating from TEA for 2008-2009, the school received four Gold Performance Acknowledgments:

- College-Ready Graduates (Class of 2008)
- Recommended High School Program (Class of 2008)
- Commended on Social Studies
- Comparable Improvement: Reading/ELA

The average SAT score for the class of 2008 was 1014 (state average: 987), the average ACT score was 21.2 (state average: 20.5), and the school offers 22 Advanced Placement courses for students seeking advanced college credit.

Plains Independent School District (PISD), to which GPHS belongs, has nearly identical student demographics: economically disadvantaged 21.2%, White 72.9%, Hispanic 17.1%, African American 6.4%, Native American 0.8%, and Asian/Pacific Islander 2.8%. With a total student enrollment of 12,935, it is one of the fastest growing districts in Texas, gaining more than 1,200 new students annually in recent years; this rapid growth necessitated the construction of a second high school, which opened in the fall of 2009. PISD has a total staff of 1284 employees and an annual operating budget
of nearly $85 million (these figures, for the 2007-2008 school year, represent the most recent data available from TEA AEIS reports). As is the case with most school districts in Texas and elsewhere in the United States, it is also one of the largest employers in the communities it serves. PISD covers 234 square miles, serves 14 communities in parts of three counties, and, depending on the effects of the current economic recession, is expected to continue its rapid enrollment growth. Like GPHS, the district received the “Recognized” accountability rating from TEA for 2008-2009. It currently includes two high schools, three middle schools, 14 elementary schools, a special programs center, and a community-based youth residential program. In August 2010, the district will open its fourth middle school as well as an accelerated high school.

Bill Johnston, Associate Principal for Curriculum and Instruction

Prior to entering campus administration, Bill Johnston spent 17 years in five different school districts as a teacher (biology) and coach (football, basketball, track, cross country, and soccer) and served as a high school science department chair during one of his teaching assignments. He has a bachelor’s degree in geology and a master’s degree in educational administration. His interview was conducted in the summer of 2009 in his office at one of PISD's three middle schools, where he began his career in administration as a middle school assistant principal, having been selected in the spring of 2009 to serve as principal there, following two years as an assistant principal and one year as the associate principal for curriculum and instruction at GPHS.
Perspectives on the Associate Principal's Role

The Associate's Perspectives on His Role

Our conversation began by exploring this study's first research question: what are Johnston's personal and professional perspectives on his role as an associate principal, and how does his experience in that role fit into his career path as a campus administrator? That Johnston only spent one year as an associate principal suggests that, in relation to his career in educational administration, the position was for the most part a step on his career ladder rather than a professional goal in itself. He acknowledged that he eventually would like to be a high school principal: "At some point, I think probably, just to take on that next challenge. I need to run this [middle school] system, but there's always another challenge out there."

Johnston passed up an opportunity to become a middle school principal in PISD four years ago because he believed taking it without any high school administrative experience it would limit his career opportunities in administration. He feared he would be "pigeonholed" in his career if all his administrative experience was at the middle school. Instead he accepted a position as assistant principal at GPHS where he worked for two years before his promotion to associate principal: "Four years ago I could have become a middle school principal, but I decided that, if I became a middle school principal without any high school administrative experience, I was going to pigeonhole myself, so that's why I left and went up to the high school for a couple of years."

However, Johnston did not see his experiences as a high school assistant principal as part of his preparation for a career move to either a middle school or high school principalship. He warned that the high school assistant principalship, with its
focus on administrative duties such as textbook distribution and student services such as discipline and attendance, can also result in career "pigeonholing," even more so than a middle-level assistant principalship:

The most important thing that I ever did was become a middle school assistant principal because it was just myself and the principal, and I was allowed to do a lot of things. The problem with big high schools, as an assistant principal, is you're pigeonholed. In some schools, they don't even rotate duties. . . . You'll have textbooks until they hire someone else because textbooks go to the low man; . . . you're just praying they'll hire someone else, otherwise that's all you'll know. I was so much further than the guys that started the same year I did because I was allowed to go further. I felt that was huge for me.

He noted elsewhere in the interview that the assistant principals at GPHS "were eaten up with discipline and attendance" and therefore had little opportunity to assume other leadership and administrative roles, in particular those associated with curriculum and instruction.

Unlike his experience as a high school assistant, Johnston viewed his experience as a high school associate principal as being valuable professionally. By supplementing his knowledge and skills in building administration with experience in curriculum, instruction, and assessment, he increased his ability to raise student achievement as well as his career opportunities. According to Johnston:

The job that prepared me the most to help students the most, not just to run a building or a middle school--I was ready to run a middle school years ago--but to actually know what I need to do to take those kids to where they need to be, was
the year as an associate at the high school, because I know what the kids need to know and where they need to be academically when they get to the high school.

*The Principal's Perspectives on the Associate's Role*

The GPHS principal confirmed his assessment of the significance of experience in curriculum and instruction experience. The career of Jane London, the GPHS principal for whom Bill Johnston served as an associate for one year, followed a different trajectory. Beginning her career as a math teacher in a large suburban high school before moving into educational administration, she has 24 years of experience in education. She has served in a variety of leadership positions, mostly at the campus level, mostly in the same large school district, and mostly with a distinct emphasis on curriculum and instruction, in the following order: K-12 math and science coordinator; high school dean of instruction; high school assistant principal; Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP) principal; 9th grade center principal; high school principal; and early college high school advisor at a university. She has a bachelor's degree in Spanish, a master's degree in educational administration, and is currently working toward a doctorate in educational administration. She was interviewed in her office in 2009, during the fall semester of her second year at GPHS.

As we discussed her personal and professional perspectives on the role of the associate principal and how experience in that role fits into the career paths of campus administrators, London noted that her own career in educational administration included experience at another large suburban high school in a position that was essentially an associate principalship, although with a different job title: "The dean of
instruction position . . . was exactly the same; they did not deal with any discipline except when there was an emergency, and they basically dealt with curriculum and instruction. There was a different pay schedule as well, . . . higher than the assistant principals."

She confirmed Johnston’s perspective that experience as a high school associate principal (or, in her case, dean of instruction) is valuable preparation for anyone interested in becoming a principal: "Typically, people that . . . have aspirations to be a building principal, it certainly prepares them." Using Johnston as an example, she explains how his experience as an associate at GPHS enhanced his career opportunities:

What he did here as an associate, all his duties and responsibilities, very much prepared him for a principalship. . . . Everybody commented on his leadership last year, how he grew professionally so that he was very well prepared for the interview [for the middle school principal position], as opposed to an assistant, who's just not dealing with some of the things he dealt with on a day-by-day basis.

She maintained that, for assistant principals seeking to move up the career ladder in campus leadership, acquiring experience working on curriculum and instruction is crucial. To be considered for an associate principalship, an assistant principal must find ways to contribute to the campus curriculum, instruction, and assessment programs; in her words, "[w]hat are they doing above and beyond? What are they doing to set themselves apart? What knowledge do they have about C and I?"
These comments supported Johnston’s concern that assistant principals who get stuck doing textbooks or get "eaten up with discipline and attendance" can be pigeonholed in their careers and have few opportunities for professional advancement. For London, gaining experience in curriculum and instruction is clearly the best way for campus administrators to advance in their careers.

London took this perspective a step further, arguing that teachers with specialized knowledge and skills in curriculum and instruction actually may be better prepared for the associate principalship than assistant principals, whose focus on administrative and student services limits their opportunities to gain curriculum and instruction experience. PISD seems to share her perspective, as the district has instituted a Campus Instructional Teacher (CIT) position to help develop teacher expertise in best instructional practices for faculty interested in a leadership role. Rather than teaching students, these individuals coach their peers to teach more effectively. London described the CIT as "someone who also has aspirations for some kind of leadership position in the building. They're very well versed on good instructional strategies, best practices, technology in the classroom, how to use instructional technologies most effectively," adding that she believed "they can go from CIT straight up to an associate. You don't have to learn how to do discipline to be an associate."

London referred to her own professional experience to validate her point of view: "I went from being a [district-level] math and science coordinator up to dean of instruction. . . . You don't need to have [assistant principal] experience to be an associate, but that's typically the way it goes."
The District Administrator’s Perspectives on the Associate’s Role

As PISD assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, one of Michael Davis’s many responsibilities is to supervise the instructional program at GPHS. In this position he collaborates frequently with Jane London, is well informed concerning the roles her associate principals perform, and participates in the process for selecting associates to hire. He has a bachelor’s degree, a master’s degree, 30 hours of additional graduate work in education beyond the master’s, and he is currently pursuing a doctorate in education. His interview took place in early 2010 in his office at the PISD administration building, about half-way through his third year in his role as PISD’s assistant superintendent for C and I. After teaching for 10 years and serving one year as an educational service center consultant in a different state, Davis moved into campus administration; he then served as an elementary assistant principal, an elementary principal, and a middle school principal before he moved to Texas to take another middle school principalship in a nearby suburban district. Prior to taking his current position, he served as district executive director for curriculum and staff development in the same district. Davis’s roles as educational consultant, principal, and especially district executive director have provided the experience in instructional leadership that both Bill Johnston and (to an even greater degree) Jane London saw as necessary to career advancement in educational administration. However, in relation to the associate principal’s role and how experience in that role fits into the career paths of educational administrators, Davis’s career trajectory displays a substantial contrast to theirs: he moved directly from a middle school principalship to a district-level executive director.
position, skipping high school administration entirely. This calls into question Bill Johnston's fear that he would be pigeonholed in his administrative career unless he gained experience in high school administration.

However, Davis supported Johnston's belief that high school assistant principals who get "pigeonholed" in textbooks, discipline, and attendance can find their opportunities for professional advancement to be limited. He shared both Johnston's and London's view that experience in curriculum and instruction is essential for assistant principals looking to move up to a principalship. As he put it, "What I don't like is pigeonholing somebody and not giving them the training to prepare them for the principalship if that's what they want to do." To prevent this kind of "pigeonholing" and to provide assistant principals with a range of experiences that will prepare them to become associates or principals, Davis has worked with his district leadership team to create several campus-level professional development activities focusing on instructional leadership. Beginning last year, the assistants met monthly with the elementary and secondary executive directors, the two PISD administrators who report to and assist Davis in delivering C and I services to campus administrators, for PLCs that incorporated book studies and opportunities for networking. In addition,

[The executive directors] asked the assistant principals to get together across levels and visit each other's campuses to do . . . focused walkthroughs to look at instruction and to look at displays of standards-based student work, and to hear their conversation when they got back was extremely powerful. . . . It forced them . . . to talk about instruction and teaching strategies, whether they were high school assistants or elementary.
Going forward, the district plans to supplement these activities with an instructional coaching training program for the assistants: "We're going to bring some folks in and do . . . training on ensuring they have coaching language to do follow-up discussions with teachers and follow-up discussions with each other on how to . . . help those individuals improve their craft."

Role Expectations for Associate Principals

The second research question that was posed to the GPHS and PISD administrators concerns role expectations for associate principals: what exactly are their primary roles and responsibilities? Are those roles and responsibilities negotiable? How do associates define and practice instructional leadership?

*The C and I Associate's Role Expectations*

During his year as associate principal for curriculum and instruction, Johnston said that his roles and responsibilities centered on administration of the school's instructional program. In his words, "Academic responsibility for all the kids fell to me, whether it was working with the at-risk students, or the gifted and talented students, or the high achievers."

More specifically, one of Johnston's key roles in leading the campus academic program focused on analyzing the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) data in order to align math and science curriculum and instruction with the TAKS test. He said that the campus leadership team was:

very offended by being "Academically Acceptable," so we felt that the biggest thing we could do to take our kids further was we had to become "Recognized,".
and the one way to become “Recognized” was to intervene with TAKS. What can we do to help as many kids as possible? We just tore the data apart.

By collaborating with the principal to lead the campus TAKS intervention effort, he performed an instrumental role in improving student performance on TAKS tests to raise the school's TEA accountability rating from "Academically Acceptable" to "Recognized."

TAKS interventions generally took the form of "pull-out" classes (classes organized during students' elective courses in subjects not specifically required for graduation, outside of the core, TAKS-tested content areas) for students whose TAKS scores, particularly in math and science, needed to improve in order for the campus to reach "Recognized" status. The pull-out classes were taught during a period (out of eight in the daily class schedule) that was originally planned for teachers to collaborate in building professional learning communities (PLCs):

We took the PLCs and . . . [that] met once a week in the morning, and we used that period for TAKS interventions. . . . Our math teachers would have a group of kids we’d pull out of an elective once a week, twice a week; some of the math teachers actually had four days of pull-outs. Science teachers usually did two days of pull-outs, but some . . . actually picked up full semester classes of kids in the spring semester.

In this way students were removed from the elective courses for which they had originally signed up to receive remedial instruction in math and science for the purpose of passing the TAKS test.
In addition to organizing and implementing the pull-outs, Johnston was responsible for developing the TAKS-aligned curriculum that was used to address the learning gaps among the targeted groups of students in those classes:

I spent countless hours with our math coach and science coach, . . . [who helped] me form these pull-out groups and [assisted] the coordinators in writing the curricula we used for them. During the year last year, we wrote curriculum for entire classes, for pull-outs, for different grade-level TAKS interventions; it was tremendous; . . . It took a lot of time, but it paid off [in moving the campus from "Academically Acceptable" to "Recognized"].

A second important leadership and administrative task that Johnston performed was also focused on standardized testing, in this instance for higher performing students who have no problem passing TAKS. The superintendent directed the campus leadership team to improve student enrollment in Advanced Placement (AP) courses as well as participation in and performance on AP tests; these measures are taken into account for TEA Gold Performance Acknowledgments as well as for national campus quality ratings such as those published by Newsweek magazine. Johnston was expected to lead this effort on the GPHS campus. While the school offers 22 different AP courses, a relatively small number of AP students actually were sitting for the AP tests. The problem, he discovered, was that the students were gaming the school's grading system by taking AP courses, for which they could receive a weighted six points on a four point scale, and then failing to sit for the exams: "We had a large AP program, but we had a small testing participation. The kids are pure grade hounds; . . . they got a weighted grade, and that's all the kids were interested in."
A third, less urgent but still important responsibility for Johnston was to collaborate with the GPHS counseling staff to assist students in earning scholarships and in the college admissions process. Negative feedback from parents concerning this guidance and counseling service required a response from the school:

Our parents have said for years that we don't do enough with preparing their kids for scholarships and for the college application process. We feel we have; we just don't know what the parents want from us at times. There's certain aspects we can't do for them. They're so used to us doing these things for them that they get frustrated when they have to do a part of it, but we can't write their scholarship applications for them.

One last academic issue that Johnston was expected to manage and that took a considerable amount of his time and effort was resolving conflicts concerning grades between students (and their parents) and teachers: "You deal a lot with grading issues and interpretations of grading policies by teachers and students and parents. You know, what does the late policy really say? What do our grading guidelines actually mean? All that came to me."

*The Principal's Role Expectations for the C and I Associate*

From her point of view as the GPHS principal, Jane London perceived the role expectations for a C and I associate principal on campuses like hers to be very demanding, with complex and difficult responsibilities that are integral to the school's educational mission. Regardless of prior leadership and administrative experience, London saw a "huge learning curve" for anyone moving into a C and I associate principalship for the first time. She has hired two C and I associate principals, including
Johnston, during her tenure at GPHS, and both were promoted from assistant principal positions:

The two that I have hired didn't have any experience supervising C and I, so it was a lot of training the first year. . . . It's a huge learning curve. . . . They've done discipline, they've done walkthroughs, they've done PDAS [teacher appraisal], . . . but it's mostly the assistant principal kinds of things. . . . Certainly they're not involved with the testing, the master schedule, advanced academics. . . . You just find someone who you think can pick it up and go with it, if you're not hiring somebody who has done this [the C and I associate principalship] in another district.

The learning curve is especially steep if the first-year associate principal is new to the campus and/or the school district. London noted that, when she selected Bill Johnston to be her new C and I associate, the transition "wasn't as difficult" for him "because he had been in the district so he was familiar with a lot of what we did and how we did it. . . . he did have a learning curve, but not as severe as someone who's new to the building and new to the district and new to the position."

*Role Expectations for the Associate for Administration*

The GPHS leadership team also included an associate principal for administration. The role expectations are different for this version of the associate principalship (and other position titles embodying similar roles, such as associates for operations, facilities, and student services or activities), which is most often found in very large high schools with enrollments of 2500 to 3000 or more students. While not as commonplace as the C and I associate, this administrative role has emerged on these
very large campuses as their leadership teams struggle to manage, in addition to their instructional program, a wide array of logistical and scheduling issues relating to co-curricular, extracurricular, and community activities. At GPHS, according to London, the administration associate was responsible for coordinating facilities use and the school calendar, supervising the teacher mentoring program, and serving as the UIL and extracurricular activities administrator.

The District Administrator's Role Expectations for the Associates

Assistant Superintendent Michael Davis's discussion of the associate principals' role expectations and responsibilities indicated that he shared London's view that their leadership roles at the campus level are vitally important. For an organization as large and complex as GPHS, according to Davis, "the reality is the job is too big for the principal to be able to do it all. [Principals can't] meet the expectations that we have for them at the same time they're dealing with . . . , for lack of a better term, minutiae, knowing full well that it's not minutiae, the micro side of the job as opposed to the macro side of it." He cited student discipline and testing issues as examples of the "micro" side of campus leadership and administration:

What I've tried to work on with our folks: If it's something dealing with discipline where we get a parent phone call up here, I'd really prefer that goes directly to an associate principal. I think we're wasting the principal's time to call them to turn it over to an associate principal. . . . Likewise [with] some of the smaller . . . again, I don't mean to degrade the issues at all, but the minutiae of testing and things like that.
Davis viewed the two associate principals at GPHS as necessary to give the principal time to address "the macro side" of campus administration: her role as the chief executive officer of a campus with total operating budget of $17,125,945, responsible for the supervision of a staff of over 230 employees in addition to the leadership and management of a comprehensive educational program for 3188 students:

We have two associates at Great Plains High School; one for C and I related kinds of things, and one more for administrative kinds of things. Those folks are highly capable, and, if we're going to expect the principals to do everything we need them to do, then the principals need to use all resources they have available, . . . and those are the strongest two resources they've got. . . . Somebody's got to do the stuff. That doesn't sound very scientific, but somebody's got to get the stuff done!

*Negotiation of Role Expectations for Associates*

After considering the role expectations for associate principals, the discussion shifted to a related research question: are role expectations for the associate principals negotiated among the administrative team at GPHS, as well as between the district and campus administrations? Reflecting on his year as the associate principal for C and I, Johnston suggested that he would have liked to negotiate for some assistance from the other members of the campus administrative team to meet his role expectations but was unable to make this happen. The result was that he received little assistance with his curriculum and instruction responsibilities from the other members of the school’s administrative team, including the associate principal for administration as well as the assistant principals. As he described it, there was a fairly strict division of labor within
the team; when asked what role the associate for administration performed in C and I, he replied:

He had a big job. The problem was, it's a lot of job to not play any role in C and I. If we're all responsible for what we are, it's all got to tie back in. That's one thing that [the principal] is going to change this year. When she hired her two associates [the associate for administration retired], they were redistributing the jobs so there would be C and I responsibilities in both jobs. Where one might be in charge of TAKS interventions, the other is going to be in charge of TAKS administration. . . . One might have AP administration, but somebody else might be involved in the PSAT, just so that they've both got irons in the fire when it comes to the C and I part.

The assistant principals, on the other hand, were, in Johnston words, "eaten up with discipline and attendance," and therefore had little opportunity to provide him with much assistance with the academic program.

The absence of negotiation about roles and responsibilities and the clear division of labor between the two associate principals, as well as between the associates and the assistant principals, appeared to be the result of the principal's leadership strategy. Asked if there was any negotiation between the two associates concerning their roles and responsibilities, London responded: "No. One is C and I, and the other one is facilities. I'm not going to ask the one who does facilities or administration to do the C and I stuff." There was also minimal negotiation of roles and responsibilities between the associates and the assistants; the one example of role negotiation that she noted was a temporary exception:
I have an assistant principal who does a lot of the work on the master schedule. . . He was an associate at one time, so he did the master schedule, then he wanted to go back to being an assistant, but he continued to do the master schedule, so the C and I associate doesn't do the master schedule. . . Now, should [the assistant principal] leave, then the person who takes his place won't do the master schedule. It's just a unique situation that he was an associate, . . . he knows how to do it. . . Things that are specifically C and I, no one else [other than the C and I associate] is going to do them. No one else is going to be the hearing officer for an appeal other than the associate for administration, so there are some things that are non-negotiable for me.

There was, however, an opportunity for the assistants to negotiate their roles and responsibilities among themselves: "The assistants, . . . we look at that at the beginning of the year. We put a big list up on the board, and who wants to do this, who wants to do that? You did that last year; do you want to continue? So there is some negotiation among the assistants for their duties and responsibilities."

Overall, London's comments concerning the negotiation of roles among her administrative team suggested that, in her experience, role specialization increases organizational effectiveness, and therefore opportunities for members of her administrative team to negotiate their roles and responsibilities should be limited. In contrast to Johnston and Davis, she was unconcerned that this specialization and relatively strict division of labor could lead to the "pigeonholing" of assistant principals in roles (those associated with textbooks, discipline, and attendance, for example) that could limit their opportunities for career advancement. From her perspective, her job
was to run the campus as efficiently and effectively as possible, regardless of how it
affected the assistants’ careers or the district's goal of building leadership capacity
internally.

While Davis and London both accepted the value of the role of the associate for
administration, London perceived the position as largely coincidental and, while
necessary, not as fundamental to the school's core academic mission as the C and I
associate. As she explained it, the administration associate's role was created for her
campus by the district not because of institutional needs but because the district was
negotiating a problematic personnel issue; discussing the dual associate arrangement,
she explained that:

There’s and associate for administration and an associate for curriculum and
instruction, but that just happened because there was a principal . . . at the 9th
Grade Center, and they closed down the 9th Grade Center, and they needed to
find a place to put him, so they made him an associate principal at the high
school, so that's how that position came about. The new high school that opened
[elsewhere in the district] only has an associate for C and I.

While she understood that the administration associate makes important contributions
to campus leadership, she considered the C and I associate to be indispensable. When
asked about the importance of the C and I associate's role in campus leadership, she
responded:

If I didn't have the title, I still would need seven people, and one person would be
doing the C and I. . . . You have to have one person who is completely devoted
to that. . . . I guess you could take the discipline and divide it by seven
administrators as opposed to five, . . . but I was a dean of instruction for six years, and I don't think that I could have done the job if I also had supervising the counselors and everything else, plus doing discipline. I think that would be very, very difficult.

Her perspective on the associate principal for administration's role contrasted with Davis's, who saw this position as providing important leadership regarding what he referred to as the "minutiae" or the "micro side" of campus operations. According to Davis, the administration associate:

- does so much big picture as far as that school is concerned; . . . he takes care of books, buses, and butts, for lack of a better description.
- That means [the principal] is not trying to figure out an extracurricular schedule; that means she's not trying to figure out who's going to be monitoring the cafeteria. It lets her get in the classrooms, it lets that other associate get in the classrooms and focus on instruction.

With the administration associate taking responsibility for the campus operations, the principal and the C and I associate were free to lead and manage the academic program:

- With what's being demanded of a high school principal at this point, something's going to require more than one person. . . . Yes, we deal with discipline; yes, we deal with all that kind of stuff, but I don't think that stuff takes two people to handle. . . . But when you start looking at changes in curriculum, when you start looking at the challenges associated with the new four by four [years of math and science required by the state for graduation], when you start looking at the
challenges associated with bringing on end of course [examinations in core content areas required by the state to replace TAKS], when you start looking at accountability challenges, when you start looking at needs as far as professional development, that person to assist the principal [is necessary].

Even two administrators may not suffice to perform all the curriculum and instruction roles and meet the leadership expectations for the academic program at GPHS; Davis said that district is negotiating the addition of a third campus administrator, drawing from the ranks of the assistant principals, to assist the principal and the C and I associate:

What we've asked the principal to look at for a structure next year instead of doing grade-level assistant principals, and we saw a model like this in another district, is to compact the discipline with three assistants so that we put a principal, an associate, and an assistant all working with curriculum and instruction issues, because if we're going to make the changes happen at the high school level, something's going to have to give. . . . We can't keep doing high school the way it's always been done; here's the magic wand, make it happen. We've got to give the administrative support.

The Associate's Definition of Instructional Leadership

After considering the negotiation of the associates' role expectations, we turned our attention to a related research question: how do associate principals define and practice instructional leadership? As described previously in this chapter, during his year as the C and I associate at GPHS, Johnston defined instructional leadership primarily in relation to standardized testing, leading campus efforts to raise TAKS
scores and improve student participation in and performance on Advanced Placement exams. He was careful to note, however, that, by focusing on discipline and attendance, assistant principals also practiced a very important form of instructional leadership, one that is crucial to raising students' academic performance:

We point-blank said we made "Recognized" this year because we made the kids go to class. . . . We had a coffee shop in the building and last year . . . the bell would ring [and administrators would say] "Go to class" [and students would respond] "Not until I get my latte." And they weren't kidding, and they weren't going anywhere because no one had made them go anywhere; you got your frappucino before you went to class. . . . I talked to a girl, she'd failed all her TAKS last year, passed them all this year; she went to class this year! She hadn't been in class for a year, she'd been in the hall having her latte!

Johnston went on to suggest that, if assistant principals do not effectively perform their administrative roles in supervising student discipline and attendance, then there will be few opportunities for other administrators, including the C and I associate, to improve instruction. He considered this definition of instructional leadership to be in contrast to the district administration's definition:

A lot of your central office people will shy away from the institutional, administrative-type things; but if you don't have those things in place, your kids will not learn because they don't have the structure to learn. . . . Structure and accountability for the kids creates learning because it creates discipline. . . . You can't run that wonderfully interactive, technologically literate classroom if the kids don't understand basic . . . rules and structure, because chaos erupts.
Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities for Associate Principals

My conversations with the GPHS and PISD administrators concerning the associate principalship concluded with a discussion of this study’s third research question: What kinds of experience, academic background, and professional development do principals and district-level administrators look for in selecting associate principals? What do candidates for a position as an associate principal need to know and be able to do to be considered seriously in the hiring process?

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities from the Associate's Perspective

Johnston pointed to his work as an athletic coach as one important part of his experience that gave him the knowledge and skills to be an effective campus administrator in general and associate principal in particular. In his view, leading the campus to analyze students’ test scores and other statistical data in order to improve standardized test scores was very like coaching a sports team in competition; it’s basically a matter carefully planned strategies and tactics, of X’s and O’s. When asked what he brought from coaching into campus leadership and administration, he responded:

The competitive nature of coaching. I attack TAKS the way I do a Friday night football game: by gosh, we’re going to win! . . . Tom Landry [legendary NFL coach for the Dallas Cowboys] would have loved to break down TAKS data; Paul Brown [legendary NFL coach famous for innovation and attention to detail] would have loved to look at all that and say, "Here’s what we’re going to do, here’s our strategy, here’s our script, we’re going to run these plays."
Johnston is quick to clarify, however, that candidates for assistant and associate principalships can also develop the necessary planning and program management skills and leadership ability by supervising competitive, performance-based, and creative activities other than athletics. He argues that band directors, choir directors, theater directors, and others in similar extra-curricular or co-curricular leadership roles:

   can be great administrators. . . . We have a guy here who’s going to be a great administrator. He's a former professional actor, and he's our lead theater teacher. He has the personality; he's tremendous. He's got his certification, but he's just not ready yet. It's funny: he says, "I've got a couple more productions in me." When he's done that last production, he's going to make somebody a great assistant principal.

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities from the Principal's Perspective

On the other hand, the GPHS principal, Jane London, made no mention of coaching experience or supervision of extra-curricular or co-curricular activities as providing the knowledge and skills necessary to be an effective associate principal. In her observations about the career path for associate principals that were noted previously in this chapter, she made it very clear that, to be seriously considered for an associate principalship, assistant principals in the pool of candidates need to develop knowledge and skills in curriculum, instruction, and assessment. When asked what experience a candidate for associate principal should have to be considered, the principal explained:

   What knowledge do they have about C and I? Whether they're doing research on their own, keeping up with the data that's out there, going on Websites, getting
very involved with the instruction, helping extra hours after school . . . What are
they doing with the testing? Are they helping with the AP program? They just
have to take the initiative on their own to want to do that.

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities from the District Administrator’s Perspective

When participating in the selection process for associate principals, PISD
assistant superintendent Michael Davis looks for candidates who are conversant with
campus and district academic programs and initiatives and have the same kinds of
leadership skills and abilities that would qualify them to be principals. According to
Davis,

What I'm looking for when I look for an associate is a potential principal. If we're
going to consider them at principal level, I want somebody that can function in
that role. . . . While that person is not operating in isolation, they've got to be able
to make decisions quickly, they've got to have a working knowledge of that
campus, they've got to have a working knowledge of this district so that they're
not constantly having to ask questions and likewise so that they're not constantly
having to go back and clean up a mistake that they made or the principal has to
go back and clean up that mistake.

Like London, he also leaves little doubt that this "working knowledge" should be about
curriculum, instruction, and assessment; referring to assistant principals who may be
seeking an associate’s position (and eventually a principalship), he says that "usually
that person that's doing the administrative kinds of things, overseeing schedules,
overseeing discipline, overseeing the cafeteria, . . . that person ends up with less of a
role in curriculum and instruction than might be good for them” in becoming an associate.

In concluding this discussion about the knowledge, skills, and abilities considered necessary to be a successful associate principal, it should be noted that none of the educational administrators interviewed cited academic qualifications such as graduate degrees or administrator certification programs as having value in preparing candidates for the associate principalship. While Michael Davis mentioned the professional development activities led by his district's elementary and secondary executive directors (PLCs with book studies and networking, focused walkthroughs, and discussions of standards-based student work, for example) as helping to build assistant principals' knowledge and skills in curriculum and instruction, neither Johnston not London acknowledged these efforts. It is interesting to note that their emphasis, as well as Davis's, was almost exclusively on hands-on experience in the trenches of campus and district administration, despite the fact that all have master's degrees in education and two are seeking doctorates.

Summary: The Associate Principalship at Great Plains High School

Perspectives on the Role of the Associate Principal

All three PISD administrators concurred that experience as an associate principal for C and I was a clear advantage for a campus administrators pursuing principalships. They also acknowledged career "pigeonholing" among high school assistant principals, whose responsibilities for student services such as discipline, attendance, textbook management, school safety and security, and supervision of events and activities
preclude them from gaining the experience in curriculum, instruction, and assessment necessary to be considered for principalships.

**Role Expectations for Associate Principals**

The C and I associate and the principal both emphasized the expectation that the C and I associate's primary role was to improve curriculum and instruction in alignment with TAKS and AP tests. While the principal discussed the associate's role in terms of improving student learning and achievement in general, the associate saw his role explicitly in terms of improving TAKS and AP scores and AP exam participation in order to raise the school's accountability ratings. In contrast to the campus administrators, the PISD assistant superintendent emphasized the expectation that the associate principals would handle parent complaints, leaving the principal free to focus on her oversight of the campus organization as a whole.

Because the GPHS principal believed that role specialization among the administrative team improved organizational efficiency and effectiveness, there was a relatively strict division of labor between the two associates and between the associates and the assistant principals. From the principal's point of view, it was up to assistant principals to manage student discipline and attendance while also taking the initiative and finding the time to gain C and I experience in order to avoid career "pigeonholing." She also implied that the role of the C and I associate was more fundamental to the school's educational goals than the role of the associate for administration. On the other hand, the assistant superintendent saw less of a clear distinction between the two associates' roles in support of student performance and campus improvement efforts.
Each of the administrators defined instructional leadership in different terms. The C and I associate viewed instructional leadership through sports metaphors, as a kind of competition to be won by developing a winning game plan for TAKS and AP testing. In contrast to the principal and the assistant superintendent, who defined instructional leadership primarily in relation to curriculum, instruction, and assessment, the C and I associate saw the assistant principals' role in managing student discipline and attendance as a form of instructional leadership.

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities for Associate Principals

The administrators' perceptions of the knowledge, skills, and abilities that qualify candidates for the associate principalship parallel their definitions of instructional leadership. For the C and I associate, leadership and program management skills such as those practiced by a coach or theater, band, or choir director are most important. On the other hand, for the principal and the assistant superintendent, expertise in the leadership of curricular, instructional, and assessment programs is paramount. While each of the administrators has a master's degree in education, two are seeking doctorates, and all had the administrative certifications required for their positions, none of them made any mention of graduate degree or certification programs as having any value in preparing candidates for the associate principalship.

Smithfield High School

Of the three high schools in Westfield Independent School District (WISD), Smithfield High School (SHS) was the last to open and the largest in student enrollment. It serves a large, middle-income suburban community that is part of one of the fastest growing small cities in the United States during the years 2000 to 2008. SHS opened in
2006 and was constructed in two phases to accommodate up to 3000 students. The campus is modern and comprehensive, with facilities for a full range of curricular and extracurricular activities: ample classrooms and laboratories, separate band and choir rooms, tennis courts, two gymnasiums, and separate fields for band, football, baseball, and softball. Table I presents detailed demographic information for this campus. The campus administrative team consists of one principal, two associate principals (one for student services, one for curriculum and instruction), and six assistant principals.

SHS was ranked "Recognized" by TEA for 2008-2009 and also received three Golden Performance Acknowledgments: College-Ready Graduates (Class of 2008), Recommended High School Program (Class of 2008), and Commended on Social Studies. The average SAT score for the class of 2008 was 1056 (state average: 987), the average ACT score was 23.0 (state average: 20.5), and the school offers comprehensive Advanced Placement and Dual Credit programs for students seeking concurrent high school and college credit.

The enrollment growth of WISD has followed the rapid population growth of the community it serves. Like PISD, WISD is one of the fastest growing school districts in Texas, gaining between 1000 and 1500 students annually. During the 1999-2000 school year, the district included a total of 10,720 students in grades K to 12 and operated a single high school. By 2008-2009, K to 12 student enrollment stood at 22,791 and the district operated three comprehensive high schools, five middle schools, 19 elementary schools, four alternative schools, and an early childhood education center. WISD is the 2nd largest employer in the community with 2722 employees; a major defense contractor is the largest with around 3000 employees. With 23.8% of
students classified as economically disadvantaged and an ethnic distribution of White 61.1%, Hispanic 22.9%, African American 12.1%, Native American 0.5%, and Asian/Pacific Islander 3.4%, WISD was rated "Academically Acceptable" by TEA for 2008-2009.

Dr. Laura Carr, Associate Principal for Curriculum and Instruction

After earning a bachelor's degree in special education, Laura Carr began her career as a high school special education teacher and swim coach. She then spent five years teaching and coaching, earned a master's degree in educational administration, and eventually relocated from a small city in southwest Texas to a suburban community in the vicinity of WISD. After teaching and coaching for two more years and completing a one-year high school administrative internship in her new district, she moved into a middle school assistant principalship, a position she held for three years before taking a high school assistant principalship and earning a doctorate in educational administration. Looking to move up professionally after three years as a high school assistant, she accepted her current position as associate principal for curriculum and instruction at SHS.

Sandra Williams, Associate Principal for Student Services

While all campus administrators in Texas are required to have teaching experience (currently two years) for certification purposes, Sandra Williams spent 19 years in the classroom before she became an assistant principal. Nine of those years were in middle school teaching 7th grade Texas history, and 10 were in high school teaching government and economics and supervising the dance/drill team. She has a bachelor's degree in education and a master's in educational administration.
Once Williams moved into an administrative role, her movement up the career ladder was rapid. After only one year as a 9th grade assistant principal in a large (around 3000 students) suburban high school, she was selected to be the associate for curriculum and instruction at the same campus. In November of Williams' second year as associate for C and I, the campus associate principal for administration was tapped for a middle school principalship in the same district, and she was chosen to replace him. She only spent a year and a half in that position before she was given middle school principalship herself. When her husband was transferred to the WISD area, she sought a building-level administrative position in the district and was selected to help open SHS as the associate principal for C and I. She took her current position as associate principal for student services at SHS following the 2007-2008 school year, when, because of rapid enrollment growth, the district decided to hire Dr. Laura Carr as the SHS associate for C and I and add a second associate to work more exclusively with the principal on administration, building operations, and student services. Interviews with both administrators were conducted in their offices at SHS shortly after they completed their first year as dual associates.

Perspectives on the Associate Principal's Role

The C and I Associate's Perspectives on Her Role

Carr's interview began with a discussion of her personal and professional perspectives on her role as an associate principal, in addition to a consideration of how her experience in this role fits into her career path as a campus administrator. Her career goal was to eventually become either a middle school or high school principal. She viewed her experience as a middle school assistant principal as "an awesome
training ground." As a middle school assistant, she and her principal were responsible for all aspects of campus leadership and administration: "I learned almost everything I know at middle school because there's only two of us; we had to do everything. At high school, you start to get pigeonholed because there's so much going on, you can't do everything."

Carr maintained that, to be prepared for the demands of a principalship, it's important to have experience both as a high school assistant and as an associate: "I think you almost have to do both. The reason why is, when you're an assistant, you have to focus so much time on the discipline, and the parents, and the attendance. And that's great experience because you learn how to task and--some days I miss this--you learn how to work with the kids and their parents."

While acknowledging that her experience as an assistant principal at both the middle and high school levels was useful, Carr was nevertheless very clear that, in her mind, for an educational administrator on a career path to become a principal, there is no better preparation for the principalship than serving as an associate:

It's just a great preparation for becoming a principal. I'm finally getting to really, really get into that curriculum and get into how teachers teach. . . . I never would have had the time as an assistant principal to do all that, as much as I wanted to. . . . I did PLCs at my old school [as a high school assistant] and spent many long hours outside of the school day on that, but now, instead of just talking to department heads and listening to them saying it's going on, I have the time to go out there and sit in meetings and watch those PLCs in action.
Having a close professional relationship and a great deal of everyday interaction with the principal was another feature of the associate’s position that makes it the ideal preparation for the principalship. Carr explained that, at SHS, both associates are:

just another arm of the principal. So pretty much everything [the principal] does, we’re right there with him. . . . I get to see on a day to day basis what he deals with, whereas I might not as an assistant principal. That’s one thing I’ve noticed: if he’s going to a meeting about something, one of us is right there with him, and that’s the best way to learn about the principal’s role.

The Student Services Associate’s Perspectives on Her Role

Williams, on the other hand, was satisfied with her current job and did not plan to use the position as a stepping-stone to another principalship. She noted that, while she hoped to have the opportunity to be a high school principal, she was late in her career, nearing retirement, and would therefore probably stay in her role as an associate. She was offered a middle school principalship last year, but she turned it down "because I’ve already done that. . . . I was very successful at middle school, teaching and being a principal, but why would I go back? There’s just so many things about high school that I love: the choir performances, the level of talent in all the activities . . . "

The Principal’s Perspectives On The Associates’ Roles

The principal of SHS, Jim Scott, spent nine years teaching physics and coaching football and baseball at a large high school in East Texas before he left teaching and coaching and moved into building-level educational administration. In addition to a bachelor’s degree in education, he has a master’s in educational administration. After four years as an assistant principal on the same campus where he taught and coached,
he was selected to be a middle school principal in the same district. When the principalship at his old high school came open, he returned in that role for three years before he applied for and was selected for his current position at SHS.

Scott did not have experience as an associate and, during the interview we conducted in his office in the fall of his fourth year at Smithfield, he made no mention of performing any of the curriculum and instruction roles typically performed by an associate during his stint as a high school assistant principal. He likewise made no mention of the two associates at Smithfield using the role as a stepping stone on a career path to a principalship.

*The District Administrator's Perspectives on the Associates' Roles*

The WISD administrator who works most closely with the high school campus administrators in the district, in particular the principals and associate principals, was Chris Smith, the Senior Director of Secondary Curriculum and Instruction. Throughout his discussion of the associate principals' roles in WISD, Smith focused almost exclusively on the C and I associate’s role, with little if any consideration of the role of the SHS associate for student services (of the three high schools in WISD, only SHS has a student services associate). Smith began his career in education as a composite social studies teacher specializing in high school government and economics before earning a master's degree in educational administration and moving into a middle school assistant principalship. He came to WISD as a middle-level assistant but soon after was selected for an elementary principalship, a role he performed for several years at two different campuses. His success at the campus level eventually led him into district administration at WISD as the Senior Director of Technology and Administrative
Services, a position in which he served for 6 years before he moved into his current role.

The fact that he has no experience whatsoever in high school administration did not prevent Smith from sharing the SHS curriculum and instruction associate’s perspective that her role is the best means for WISD to groom campus administrators for principalships. As the district's leader of secondary curriculum and instruction, he participated in campus-level "standing committee" meetings that prepare each campus's curricular and instructional responses for presentation to district-level "work group" meetings following major district "data events" (TAKS testing, semester exams, Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT), and AP testing, for example). The standing committee meetings included key campus instructional leaders and were led by the C and I associate rather than the principal. According to Smith, these meetings gave him "an opportunity to evaluate what we hope will be our next principals at the high school and middle school levels." Later in the interview, when asked if the associate principalship was a useful and appropriate preparation for the principalship, Smith explained that:

If districts are looking for principals to lead rather than manage, if they are concerned with instruction being the primary focus, . . . the they should look at associates first as candidates for the principal's role. . . . You have got to be successful instructionally and know to lead instructionally to sit in a principal's chair in this district. . . . Associate principals in our district have an absolute opportunity to show what they know and be considered for a principal's job, whether it be at the high school or middle school level.
Although he did not use the term "pigeonholing," Smith made it clear that assistant principals need to acquire experience in curriculum and instruction if they are seeking career advancement in WISD. To provide this experience, assistant principals at WISD high schools are assigned use their teaching experience and expertise to supervise academic departments, attending all department meetings, evaluating department chairs and teachers, and collaborating on curriculum, instruction, and assessment. In Smith's words,

We expect assistant principals to be in department planning sessions. If you don't, then lunch duty becomes a priority. . . . The best learning activities will be delivered when teachers know [an administrator is] coming, so assistant principals need to be in academic planning sessions and they need to be in the classrooms doing walkthroughs. That really enhances their ability to know and direct instruction and hopefully be able to grow into associate principals; that's a nice transition.

At another point in our conversation, Smith clarified that providing assistant principals opportunities to gain C and I experience benefits both the district and the administrator looking to advance professionally: "We've got to be about capacity building, and I don't know too many people that would sign up to do strictly discipline at a high school or a middle school."

Role Expectations for Associate Principals

The second focus for the interviews that were conducted with the SHS and WISD administrators concerned role expectations for the two associates: what exactly are
their primary roles and responsibilities? How do the roles and responsibilities of the C and I associate compare and contrast with those of the associate for student services?

The C and I Associate's Role Expectations

As the C and I associate principal, Carr had a hand in nearly every aspect of the school's academic program. As she ticked off the list of her responsibilities, the broad scope of her job became clear:

- PLC coordinator
- TAKS testing (an assistant principal seeking testing coordination experience handles AP testing)
- AVID program oversight (Advancement Via Individual Determination, a college-readiness system designed to increase the number of students who enroll in four-year colleges).
- Staff development planning and implementation
- Master scheduling
- Oversight of counseling and special education departments
- Planning of parent meetings with counselors for course registration
- Induction of new teachers
- Oversight of RTI (Response to Intervention) and EIT (Early Intervention Team) programs, designed to improve the academic performance of students with learning needs that do not qualify for special education services.
- After school extracurricular and co-curricular supervision
The Student Services Associate’s Role Expectations

In contrast to Carr’s role in leading and administrating the key academic programs on the SHS campus, Williams’s role was essentially that of a chief of staff for the principal. In a management note published by the National Governors Association in 2006, Robert Behn sketches the chief of staff’s role in state governors' offices, and his description of that role mirrors Williams's at SHS. Her relationships with the campus leadership team were remarkably similar to those that Behn observes operating among the chief of staff, the governor, and the other members of the governor's staff. According to Behn's research, chiefs of staff perform the following roles in a governor's office:

- Chief Operating Officer;
- Office Manager;
- Chief Strategist;
- Policy Advisor;
- Gubernatorial Vicar;
- Guardian of the Palace;
- Headhunter;
- Crisis Coordinator; and
- Personal Confidant (2006, p.1)

Not every chief of staff performs all these roles personally, however:

Each of these responsibilities must be carried out, but they need not be done by the person with the formal title of “chief of staff.” . . . Even if someone else has the primary responsibility, most chiefs of staff are somewhat involved in every one of these roles, . . . and most governors assign a majority of these roles to
their chief of staff. Rarely will any single person be best suited to performing all nine roles; some inevitability will be shared with others. However, just as inevitably, the chief of staff is drawn into each of these roles . . . (Behn, 2006, pp. 1-2)

One of the chief of staff roles that Williams performed at SHS is Chief Operating Officer (COO), "monitor[ing] and manag[ing] what is going on, . . . and orchestrat[ing] the strategy designed to focus attention on the [principal's] agenda" (Behn, 2006, p.5). Describing her relationship with the principal, she explained that "he is the PR [public relations] for the school, I am the organization for our school. Anything that you see as far as the school layout, the policies, the procedures: even though we do it collaboratively, I'm the one that puts that in place."

Another chief of staff role that describes Williams' associate principal position is Office Manager. In this role, she "oversees the daily operations of the . . . staff and manages their interrelations" (Behn, 2006, p. 5). She noted, for example, that she was responsible for "anything that's with administrators' duties, the before and after duty schedules, the drug dogs, . . . a monthly calendar that shows when administrators will be off-campus. . . . These are just organization pieces." The office manager also conducts staff meetings (Behn, 2006, p. 5); concerning an important annual meeting at the beginning of the summer recess, Williams explained that, "after graduation on Friday, Monday and Tuesday we're off-campus for two days dividing up the tasks. . . . I write everything that needs to be done during the summer. . . . That way, [the assistant principals] are just not spending time in the office cleaning out files. They really have things they're planning and working on."
In addition, the office manager "serves as guidance counselor by being attentive to personnel problems, internal staff politics, and the need to keep staff out of trouble" (Behn, 2006, p. 5). To that end, Williams described how she had been negotiating between the assistants and the principal because the assistants came to her as a group to express their concerns about the campus tardy policy, to which the principal was committed:

We've done it one way for three years and our principal is set on doing it that way. The assistant principals are saying, "it's not working, it's not working, it's not working," so now the tardy policy is . . . up for debate. . . . The six assistant principals have to have buy-in; it has to be their plan. . . . At our last meeting in June, I said, "They think that the other way will work, so let's try it--they might prove us wrong." But he [the principal] and I have been in it so long; we know that what they're proposing hasn't worked. . . . I've tried to persuade him to let them try it, that the best lesson for them is learning by doing it.

A third chief of staff role that Williams performed was Policy Advisor. In this role, she "ensures the [principal] receives the information, analyses, and views necessary to make a decision" (Behn, 2006, p. 5). As she explained it,

There's one thing that I've told every assistant principal, and I follow it myself, anything that affects this campus, he's got to be informed of it. There's no reason for him to ever be caught off guard, be it an angry parent, be it an angry teacher, be it an angry student, as far as problems that we need to resolve. Everything that I send out to the administrators, I carbon copy him.
Behn’s research suggests that another aspect of the chief of staff's policy advisor role "consists of eliminating any inconsistencies" (2006, p. 6) in the executive's policy messages; Williams left no doubt that this was one of her responsibilities as well. When asked to describe her role as the principal's chief of staff, she replied:

> What I would say, and [the principal] would acknowledge this, if someone . . . asks him a question that deviates from something that we’re doing . . . sometimes he will give an answer and he has not thought through all the ramifications. He’s given a politically nice answer, one that the teacher wants to hear. . . . So I'll talk to him and I'll say, "But this is why we're doing it this way," and he'll say, "Oh my gosh, I didn't even think about that" because he's not really in the policy making of the campus.

Williams also served as what Behn calls the Guardian of the Palace, the gatekeeper that "convince[s] people that the person who can address their problem or request most effectively is someone other than" the principal (2006, p. 6). She explained that the principal "doesn't have time to do the minute scheduling and policies and everything those entail. . . . I have to have his back at all times." She shared this role with her colleague Dr. Laura Carr, the SHS associate for curriculum and instruction:

> I do all the discipline appeals so the parents do not pick up the phone and call the principal if they disagree with an assistant principal's decision. . . . If it's a curriculum question, he doesn't hear that, either; it goes to our associate for curriculum. So that has really helped his workload. We had to change the parents' mindset; no, you just don't go straight to the principal.
The Principal's Role Expectations for the Associates

Although Scott did not directly acknowledge Williams's role as his chief of staff, his comments concerning her responsibilities generally confirmed that she serves as his COO, Office Manager, Policy Advisor, and Guardian of the Palace. He explained that, as SHS grew to its current enrollment, it was necessary to add a second associate because the job became too difficult for the C and I associate to manage. He and the district administration found that:

we needed a layer at the student services level to organize student events, to make sure that duty rosters were filled out, to keep the school calendar and inform the teachers about weekly activities, and to handle discipline appeals. . . . Anything that's a discipline issue at the campus level, when assistant principals' decisions get appealed, she's the middle person that keeps things from reaching my office.

At another point in the interview, Scott cited the same annual post-graduation administrative retreat and staff meeting that Williams mentioned during her interview, and his description of those meetings corroborated Williams's role as his COO and Office Manager:

We did an off-campus trip the last two summers; it really helped us. We wrote down a list of all the things we are about: honesty, integrity . . . then we signed it and posted it in the office. . . . We're a tight-knit group; our assistant principals, we are really tight--kind of like a coaching staff--we may argue, fuss, and fight behind closed doors, but when we walk out you'd never know it.

He also acknowledged Williams's role as his Policy Advisor and Guardian of the Palace:
We will not be successful as an administrative staff if we don't have each other's back. It's alright to respectfully disagree behind closed doors, but when we reach consensus, and you've had your say, and you step out into the mainstream, teachers will pick up that you don't have each other's back. If you're rolling your eyes because so-and-so made this or that decision, that undermines the whole organization.

Scott's discussion of Carr's role confirmed her responsibilities overseeing the campus academic program. He emphasized her management of TAKS testing as well as her supervision of the special education and counseling departments. He noted that her background as a former special education teacher in particular "was the thing that really made her attractive in my eyes when we were hiring for her position. . . . She understands all aspects of special education and special education law." Given that special education issues typically present school administrators with their thorniest legal challenges, this focus on his part was not surprising.

After commenting on and comparing the roles of the two associates, Scott contrasted his leadership roles with theirs. He explained that "first of all, I'm on the front line in dealing with parents and the publicity of the school; . . . I've always been able to be that front guy who represents the school and talks to parents." His other roles related to his supervision and oversight of the campus organization as a whole; as he put it, "I heard someone say this once and there really is a lot of truth to it: as a principal, your job is not to make sure that you're doing things right--that's why you have associates--your job is to make sure you're doing the right things. I try to fly at 25,000 feet instead of 10,000 and see the big picture." Continuing in the same vein, he noted that, "once we've
divvied up the responsibilities in the summer--every assistant and associate principal has a list of things they're in charge of--my job is to consistently make sure that timelines are being met and that I keep the campus plan of action forefront in our minds."

**The District Administrator’s Role Expectations for the Associates**

In his consideration of role expectations for the associate principals at all three WISD high schools, including Smithfield, Smith, the district administrator, focused almost exclusively on their responsibilities for curriculum and instruction. He suggested that, at least to some extent, their role in instructional leadership superseded even that of the principal: "Not to diminish the role of instructional leader for the principal, but we see the associate principal as really what we would call the Chief Instructional Officer for the campus. When you're the principal of a campus of 3000 students, it really helps to have someone in that role."

Smith also talked at length about the associates' leadership roles in college readiness initiatives, in building the annual campus improvement plan, in supervising and facilitating campus PLCs and professional development activities, and in conducting classroom observations both to appraise and to coach teachers in their instructional and assessment practices. Although all assistant principals in WISD high schools are assigned, based on their teaching backgrounds, to appraise and coach teachers by content area department, they do so with the guidance of the C and I associate. Smith explained the approach this way: "The associate really helps coach the assistant principal in charge of a content area in what to look for, and then they compare notes." Through this process, "the associate becomes the instructional
standard-bearer on the campus. . . . That's another reason why I spend a lot of time with them."

_Negotiation of Role Expectations for Associates_

The next focus for the interviews with the SHS and WISD administrators was the question of whether role expectations for the associate principals are negotiated among the administrative team at the high school, as well as between the district and campus administrations. Prior to the 2008-2009 school year, SHS operated with one associate principal. While Carr was hired to focus on the areas of curriculum and instruction so that Williams could concentrate on administration, building operations, and student services, the division of labor between the two associates is not rigid as it might be in other contexts. Williams had been responsible for curriculum and instruction before Carr was brought on board, and she was willing to share her expertise and institutional knowledge with Carr. In her discussion of the negotiation of roles and responsibilities between Williams and herself, Carr explained that:

> Because she's been here, she opened the school and then they decided to add a second associate: when I came into the picture, it was already worked out that she was going to be the student services and facilities side and I was going to be the curriculum and instruction side. But you know, we all work so well together--they especially do--since I'm new, I'm still trying to learn the ropes, so I'm not very good at sharing [responsibilities] just because I feel I need to learn how to do it before I can tell somebody else to do it--but they are awesome about saying, "Hey, let me help you out," and there are a lot of things she helps with, with her knowing about the school culture, how this works here.
Williams, on the other hand, was more concerned with negotiation of roles between the associates and the assistants, as well as among the assistants. She believed that one of the more important responsibilities in her current role was building campus leadership and administrative capacity among the six assistant principals. Another important purpose of the campus administrative retreat and staff meeting that occurs annually after graduation was the negotiation of the assistants’ duties and responsibilities in a way that will best develop their knowledge and skills. In her role the principal’s chief of staff, she managed that retreat to ensure that all assistants had responsibility for some aspect of standardized testing, either TAKS, PSAT/NMSQT, or Advanced Placement. In addition, responsibilities for AP testing and the teacher mentoring program were rotated from year to year, with one assistant training another to take his or her place. One of the assistants also had built the master course schedule. In these ways, Williams explained, “we’re building leadership capacity in everyone.”

The SHS principal noted that, in addition to hand-picking his own administrative staff, one of the most empowering aspects of his role in opening the new campus was having the freedom to negotiate roles among his newly hired staff. This was in sharp contrast to his first high school principalship at a district in East Texas, when he returned to the campus where he had taught, coached, and served as an assistant principal for most of his career. He explains that this created some difficult organizational and leadership issues:

The assistant principals were so pleased that I was coming back to be the principal. In their minds, ”We’ve got one of our own coming back now . . . ” But everyone knows that if you’ve been one of the guys and you become the boss,
that's a hard transition. . . . If you put it in perspective, I started out as a teacher there, and those very same assistant principals were my evaluators when I was a teacher. So I went from being a teacher/coach, to their compadre as an assistant principal, to now their boss, all in the same building over a 20-year span.

The principal he replaced had negotiated an associate principal position for one of his former assistant principal colleagues, which created a dilemma for Scott:

I certainly wanted to have an associate, and the principal that preceded me . . . had an associate on his staff that was responsible for overseeing and coordinating the APs. But I was going back to a situation where I had been an AP with some of those APs, . . . and now I had this guy the previous principal had hand-picked to be his associate. So I basically said, "Look, I'm coming back, but everybody's going to be an assistant; there won't be any hierarchy underneath me . . . ."

Scott explained that the complications arising from this situation were one of the main reasons he took his current position at SHS. Instead of being obligated to eliminate the associate principal's position in order to mollify his former assistant principal colleagues, Scott, in collaboration with WISD administration, had the privilege of building his own hand-picked administrative team. He also was in agreement with the district's decision to create two associate principalships when the campus grew to its current enrollment, and he helped to define their roles and responsibilities. Compared to his previous experience as a principal, he felt he had a distinct advantage:

The advantage I've had here is that we were able to establish roles for the associates as we began the school. Instead of me walking into a situation in
where I was inheriting assumed roles and assumed ways of doing things, we got to establish how we were going to roll, for lack of a better way to say it, from the beginning.

The district Senior Director of Secondary C and I negotiated with the high school campus leadership teams to make sure that the C and I associate can keep a laser-like focus on instructional leadership. He suggested that, in WISD and in other districts that employ associates, "there is a difference between what's on paper" regarding the C and I associate's role and "what's actually occurring at the campus level." He cited the C and I associate's role in building the master schedule as an example of something that should be shifted to an assistant principal so that the associate could focus on other, more important instructional issues:

- They need to take a holistic approach . . . they need to take a balcony view of the construction of the master schedule; they need to be the ones that evaluate who we need to hand-schedule. What populations are not performing up to par? Which teachers' classes do they need to go in? Common planning periods: if you can't make it work with all teachers, who do you make it work with? They need to evaluate the resources and the teachers we have so that they can be a part of the hiring process that's coming up soon.

When working with campus leadership teams, Smith explained that he made every effort to "lean out" the associates' roles so that "they can truly be instructional leaders":

- If you don't stay on that, as you hire new principals who may come from outside the district and who may not know the role of the associate in [WISD], then they become the master schedulers, they sit in on all the ARDs [special education
staffing meetings]. Really, it's because they . . . don't do discipline in our district, which allows them to be loaded up with everything else. . . . I don't know of many districts that don't load up the associate principal in this way.

The Associates' Definitions of Instructional Leadership

Smith's discussion of how instructional leadership should be practiced by associate principals in WISD raised a related research question: how do the associate principals themselves define and practice instructional leadership? Carr, the SHS associate for C and I, understood instructional leadership in much the same way as Smith. In her previous position as a high school assistant principal, she was tasked with supervision of the campus PLCs but, because of her responsibilities for discipline and attendance, had little time to attend department meetings and observe classes to ensure that campus goals for the PLCs were being met. In her current role, however, instructional leadership was at the forefront: "Instead of having 80 referrals on my desk, I'm able to go visit 80 classrooms. This job has really given me an opportunity to see instruction even more than what I saw as an assistant principal because that's my focus."

Given that she was only in first year as a C and I associate after serving six years as a middle and high school assistant principal, during which her main focus was on student services relating to discipline and attendance, Carr defined instructional leadership more inclusively than Smith, who suggested that the focus on student and administrative services in campus leadership can draw administrators' attention away from curriculum and instruction. At one point in his interview, as he discussed why he had organized campus standing committee meetings led by the C and I associate rather
than the principal, in advance of the district-level work groups that follow major assessments ("data events"), he clarified his understanding of the relationship between administrative services and instructional leadership: "We meet in advance of the work group meetings so that the work group meeting becomes a decision-making meeting. The principal needs to be there because, if it requires funding . . . or a change in direction, he needs to be a part of that decision, but we don't want to mix administrative services with instruction; it really clouds the mission."

With experience both as C and I and student/administrative services associate, Sandra Williams understood how administrative services can complement instructional leadership. Her definition of instructional leadership, shaped early in her administrative career, was data-driven, based on the careful analysis of student performance. Her defining experience in instructional leadership came after only one year as a 9th grade assistant principal in a large (around 3000 students) suburban high school, when she was selected to be the associate for curriculum and instruction at the same campus and given a mandate to move the campus from a TEA "Academically Acceptable" accountability rating to "Recognized." With about 25% of the student population economically disadvantaged, 35% Hispanic, and 10% African American, she considered this to be a difficult but attainable task.

Williams built her strategy to improve the school's performance on TAKS around the INOVA data analysis system developed by San Antonio-based psychologist and statistician Dr. David Ramirez, who used what he called the INOVA process to determine how much progress a student is making from year to year in each content
area and pinpoint weak areas for teachers to address (LaCoste-Caputo, 2005, p. 3).

This process placed each student in one of five color categories:

- Red: students predicted to fail the TAKS test;
- Yellow: likely to fail;
- Gray: 50-50 chance of passing;
- Blue: likely to pass; and
- Green: likely to do well.

The color-coding system also provided a list of each student’s strengths and weaknesses as well as a list of academic interventions and recommended teaching methods to help teachers individualize instruction for every student (LaCoste-Caputo, 2005, p. 3). Williams detailed the instructional leadership she practiced to implement of the process:

I went to a seminar taught by Dr. David Ramirez on the INOVA data system. I fell in love with the INOVA system because of the information it could tell me. As far as the mentoring, the color-coding, the identification of students, the planning for intervention, I followed his program to a tee. I asked for two teachers, one math and one English, to have an additional conference period, and they were my right and left hands. We turned the school around in a year and became a "Recognized" campus.

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities for Associate Principals

The interviews with the WISD campus and district administrators concluded with a consideration of this study’s third research focus: What kinds of experience, academic background, and professional development do principals and district-level
administrators look for in selecting associate principals? What do candidates for a position as an associate principal need to know and be able to do to be considered seriously in the hiring process?

*Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities from the Associates’ Perspectives*

C and I associate Laura Carr’s experience facilitating PLCs as an assistant principal at her previous high school gave her an advantage when she was seeking her current position, providing her with the knowledge and skills to lead the campus faculty toward instructional improvement. Her colleague Sandra Williams, whom she replaced as C and I associate, also brought extensive experience in curriculum, instruction, and assessment to her position at SHS, having served as a high school associate principal for both C and I and administration in her previous district. Williams noted, however, that, while her experience as an associate earlier in her career put her on the fast track to get a middle school principalship, assistant principals who have acquired experience in curriculum and instruction also can be good candidates for associate principalships, "as long as your campus has given you opportunities to not just do discipline and attendance."

*Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities from the Principal's Perspective*

The principal believed that, as much as anything, athletics coaching could provide important experience for all candidates looking to move into campus-level educational administration, including the associate principalship. While he began his career in education intending to make his mark in coaching, he decided to pursue an assistant principalship when the opportunity came along:
I had no aspirations to be a principal; I wanted to be the next [legendary Dallas Cowboys football coach] Tom Landry. But an assistant principal who had been at [my campus] for 25 years retired, . . . and the administrators at [my campus] basically said that, if you're interested in this job, you have a good shot at getting it. So I was able to land that assistant principal job, and from that point on, I worked as hard as I could, and good things have happened. I've been at the right place at the right time, more than anything; it's all about timing and who you know.

However, Instead of Johnston's focus on the expertise gained through competition, understood as creating and executing winning game plans, Scott stressed the knowledge and skills it provides in negotiating and managing parent issues or concerns:

You're a former coach yourself. You have to deal with parents not only from a teacher's standpoint concerning all the issues that go with teaching your students in class, but you've also had the opportunity to deal with parents that have a student that got cut from a team, or . . . they don't feel like you're doing the job the way they would do it, or whatever. . . . If you've had those experiences in coaching, it really does prepare you for dealing with all the parent issues that may come along as an assistant principal or associate principal.

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities from the District Administrator's Perspective

The district administrator, Chris Smith, made it very clear that experience, knowledge, and skills in curriculum and instruction were the key qualifications for candidates for associate principalships. He looked most favorably on candidates that could conduct effective classroom observations for both appraisal and coaching
purposes. To perform this and other instructional leadership roles effectively, he argued that associates need to have been master teachers:

If you're a leader of leaders, it always makes it easier if you've walked in the shoes of the people you're leading. Associate principals have to have been strong teachers. . . . They need to have a deep understanding of instructional strategies that can be used and have experience in application of those strategies. They may never have taught chemistry, but they really need to have an understanding of what strategies can be applied to teach it.

He also emphasized the need for skills in leading professional development activities such as the PLCs that WISD has initiated in its three high schools: "They absolutely have to have the ability to . . . provide professional learning to teachers. If they cannot do that, they cannot be an associate principal. If you can't get in front of a group and manage adult learning, presenting and designing strong professional development activities, that's not a position you'd be in, in our district." In addition, in order to provide strong professional development to a large staff of teachers with a wide range experience, knowledge, and skills, associates must be effective communicators:

You've got to have the ability to communicate. As an associate principal, no matter who you have on your campus, whether you've acquired, inherited, or hired them, you have to have the ability to . . . understand differentiation with adult learners, because the world is not a nail, and [the associate principal] can't be the hammer. . . . You may have to coach, you may have to lead, you may have to strongly encourage, but you have to have a lot of tools in your tool kit.
As a conclusion to this section, it is interesting to note that, like their peers in PISD, none of the WISD educational administrators cited academic qualifications such as graduate degrees or administrator certification programs as worthwhile preparation for the associate principalship. While all have master's degrees in education and one recently earned her doctorate, all mentioned their own academic qualifications only in passing and placed their main emphasis on job-embedded experience in campus administration.

Summary: The Associate Principalship at Smithfield High School

*Perspectives on the Role of the Associate Principal*

The C and I associate at SHS confirmed the GPHS C and I associate's perspective that middle school assistant principals are less likely to be "pigeonholed" in their careers because there is less specialization among assistants at that level and they are less likely to be consumed by responsibilities for discipline and attendance. Along with the district director of secondary C and I, the C and I associate believed strongly that her experience in the role would be excellent preparation for the principalship. On the other hand, the SHS principal stepped directly into his role from an assistant principalship, and the student services associate felt that assistants who could obtain experience leading academic programs could be just as well prepared for the principalship as associates.

*Role Expectations for Associate Principals*

Much as the GPHS C and I associate, the SHS C and I associate was responsible for a full array of curriculum, instruction, and assessment programs, although there seemed to be less pressure to improve TAKS scores in order to raise the
campus's TEA accountability rating. The student services associate at SHS essentially served as the principal's chief of staff, performing as his chief operating officer and office manager, his key policy advisor, and as "guardian of the palace" or gatekeeper. The principal expected the two associates to assume responsibility for much of the everyday leadership and management of the campus, leaving him free to take care of the "big picture," performing public relations duties and "representing" campus leadership to stakeholders in the school community. While he did not explicitly downplay the roles of the principal and the student services associate, the district director of secondary C and I viewed the C and I associate as the chief instructional officer of the campus, responsible as much as the principal for leading the campus forward academically.

There was more negotiation of roles among the leadership team at SHS than at GPHS. In only her first year, the C and I associate's role had largely been determined for her prior to her arrival. The student services associate, on the other hand, sought to give the assistant principals the kinds of experience in curriculum, instruction, and assessment that would prevent them from being "pigeonholed" in their current roles, while the principal appreciated the opportunity that came with opening a new campus to hand-pick his administrative team and more freely negotiate their roles. The district director of secondary C and I was focused on "leaning out" the C and I associate's role, keeping her from being "loaded up" with administrative tasks that would take her time and attention from working with teachers to improve instruction.

The principal spoke very little about instructional leadership and seemed to have delegated that responsibility to the C and I associate. Although the student services
associate's close collaboration with the assistant principals suggested an understanding that the management of discipline and attendance can be a form of instructional leadership, she also emphasized her own instructional leadership experience in aligning curriculum and instruction with TAKS. In contrast, the district director of secondary C and I defined instructional leadership almost exclusively in terms of curriculum and instruction and argued for a strict separation of instructional leadership from student and administrative services in order to ensure a laser-like focus on teaching and learning.

Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities for Associate Principals

The C and I associate at SHS was hired for her knowledge of PLCs and special education programming, and her selection to her current position from an assistant principalship in another district exemplified the SHS student services associate's contention that assistant principals with C and I knowledge and skills can be well-positioned to move up the campus administration career ladder. Like the C and I associate at GPHS, the SHS principal viewed coaching as an excellent training ground for school leadership, but, rather than emphasizing program management skills, he stressed the conflict resolution skills he acquired through his coaching experience. The district director of C and I believed that knowledge of instructional best practices and the ability to communicate that knowledge effectively to teachers were of paramount importance for the C and I associate. As was the case with the PISD administrators, the WISD administrators all had graduate degrees in education as well as the certifications required to hold their positions, but none indicated that graduate degree or certification programs had much value in preparing candidates to be associate principals.
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This chapter begins with a summary of this study, including a review of the problem it is intended to address and the research questions. Following a review of the results is a discussion of the implications of those results for campus and district educational leadership and administration, including some suggestions for practice and policy. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research.

Two high schools were selected for detailed analysis because the principals and district administrators as well as associate principals at each school site consented to be interviewed, and this permitted, as a form of triangulation, an examination of the roles of the associate principals from multiple perspectives. The data for this study were collected primarily by means of semi-structured interviews that combined both standardized and open-ended questions with the associates, principals, and district administrators.

The problem that gave rise to this study is the general invisibility of the associate principalship in educational administration literature. While relatively new, the position is becoming more common in large high schools similar to the sites in this study, and the depictions of the associate principals in Chapter 4 suggest that this role has become integral to the effective leadership and administration of curriculum, instruction, and assessment programs in those campus settings. The following research questions were posed:
1. How did the associates prepare educationally and professionally for their current positions? What career paths have they followed? How does the associate’s role fit into their career paths?

2. What are the primary roles and responsibilities of associate principals? How do the roles and responsibilities of associates compare and contrast with those of principals? With assistant principals? Are specific roles and responsibilities negotiable among principals, associates, and assistants? How do associates define and practice instructional leadership? Are their administrative and management roles and responsibilities in conflict with their leadership of teaching and learning in their schools?

3. What knowledge, skills, and abilities do principals and district-level administrators look for in selecting associate principals? How do candidates acquire the experience, academic background, and professional development necessary to qualify for consideration and selection as an associate principal?

Results of the Case Studies

Career Paths for Campus Administrators

A major theme revealed in the data is that the associate principal position is seen as a crucial step on the career ladder to a secondary principalship in the two districts. Assistant principals who have demonstrated instructional leadership are more likely to be selected as associate principals and are perceived to be better qualified than their peers for the responsibility of leading a campus. A closely related theme is that assistant principals who fail to acquire C and I expertise risk career "pigeonholing," a construct used by nearly all this study’s informants to characterize the pattern of
assistants without C and I expertise being denied opportunities to advance professionally. An interesting variation on this theme is that "pigeonholing" was perceived by the C and I associates to be less likely for middle school assistant principals because, given the smaller size of administrative teams at the middle level, they were more likely to have a broader range of leadership and administrative experiences.

The research also suggests that assistant principals who are more adept at managing the conflicts between their roles as instructional leaders and their roles delivering student and administrative services such as discipline and attendance are more likely to be selected as associates. This may account for the pattern in which the C and I associates, unlike principals and district administrators, saw an important relationship between effective administration of discipline and attendance on one hand and effective instructional leadership on the other.

*Roles and Responsibilities for Campus Administrators*

In a discussion of leadership in schooling that provides a useful model for understanding the central role of the associate principalship in campus administration, Sergiovanni (1984) distinguishes among five "forces" in educational leadership:

- *Technical*—derived from sound management techniques; examples include planning, organizing, coordinating, and scheduling
- *Human*—derived from harnessing available social and interpersonal resources; examples include providing needed support and encouraging growth and creativity
• **Educational**—derived from expert knowledge about matters of education and schooling; examples include diagnosing educational problems; counseling teachers; providing supervision, evaluation, and inservice; and developing curriculum

• **Symbolic**—derived from focusing the attention of others on matters of importance to the school; examples include presiding over ceremonies and rituals, and providing a unified vision

• **Cultural**—derived from building a unique school culture; examples include articulating school purpose and mission, developing and displaying a reinforcing symbol system, and rewarding those who reflect the culture (pp. 6-12)

Sergiovanni presents these forces as a hierarchy of leadership, with technical leadership at the bottom and cultural leadership on the top. The results of this study indicate that associate principals were squarely in the middle of this hierarchy, primarily responsible for the educational leadership but also involved with those forces above and below. At the bottom of the hierarchy, assistant principals were mostly responsible for technical and human leadership and had little involvement with educational, symbolic, and cultural leadership. At the top of the hierarchy, principals generally delegated technical, human, and educational leadership to their assistants and associates in order to focus on symbolic and cultural leadership.

In addition to clarifying why associates, situated at the center of the campus leadership hierarchy, are uniquely positioned to become principals, Sergiovanni’s model helps to explain why organizations the scope and complexity of the two campuses included in this study necessitate specialization and division of labor among the
leadership team. While some negotiation of leadership roles and responsibilities helps to ensure opportunities for career advancement for both assistant and associate principals, specialization among the campus administrators serves to limit role conflict and strain and increase organizational effectiveness.

One example of the positive organizational effect of role specialization among campus administrators was the way the WISD director of secondary C and I worked to keep the high school principals in his district from "loading up" their C and I associates with administrative roles and responsibilities. His efforts ensured that the C and I associates were able to devote most of their time and attention to their specialized roles as chief instructional officers. Another example is the chief of staff role performed by the SHS associate for student services; by specializing as the campus's chief operation officer, overseeing six assistant principals and student and administrative services for 2653 students and a staff of over 200 on a large campus bustling 12 to 15 hours every school day with curricular and extracurricular activities, she enabled the SHS principal to focus on his symbolic and cultural leadership roles. Last but not least, the assistant principals' specialized roles in delivering discipline and attendance services clearly helped to improve organizational effectiveness. That the principals and district administrators generally focused their attention on other leadership forces takes nothing away from the importance of discipline and attendance in relation to student achievement; the words of the GPHS C and I associate are worth reiterating in this regard:

A lot of your central office people will shy away from the institutional, administrative-type things; but if you don't have those things in place, your kids
will not learn because they don't have the structure to learn. . . . You can't run that wonderfully interactive, technologically literate classroom if the kids don't understand basic . . . rules and structure, because chaos erupts.

*Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities for Campus Administrators*

Three key themes concerning the kinds of expertise and experience considered to be necessary for success as an associate principal emerged from the data. The first is that knowledge of and experience in curriculum, instruction, and assessment is of paramount importance. Either explicitly or implicitly, all informants agreed that, without expertise in these areas, both C and I and administrative/student services associates are ill-prepared to serve effectively in their roles. Although she was no longer responsible for leading the instructional program at SHS, the students services associate served as an advisor to the C and I associate and coordinated student and administrative services in a way that complemented the campus's academic mission. The GPHS C and I associate, on the other hand, saw the lack of involvement in the instructional program on the part of the associate for administration as a leadership gap that he hoped the principal would address by restructuring the two associates' roles and responsibilities.

The second theme is that associates need to be able to lead and manage programs and people effectively. The associates as well as the principals in this study began honing these skills as teachers by supervising extracurricular and curricular programs as coaches or coordinators. Coaching experience was particularly valuable, giving the associates useful experience in marshaling human and material resources,
planning and implementing group activities, building teams, and resolving conflicts with students and parents.

The last theme is that the associates and other informants underplayed the value of graduate degree programs and administrative certification requirements as preparation for the associate principalship. When discussing their formal educational background and preparation, the pattern was for the informants to list their qualifications with little comment or elaboration. The emphasis was far greater on the knowledge and skills that they learned on the job.

Implications for Practice and Policy

The development of high school leadership and administrative roles in the United States during the 20th century suggests that the emergence of the associate principalship during the last few decades is a response to two trends: the growth in campus size at the high school level as districts sought economies of scale in order to offer more and more and better academic and extracurricular programs, and the passing of comprehensive state and federal school accountability legislation with its corresponding regulations shaping curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices at the campus level. The first trend created a demand in large high schools for multiple assistant principals or deans of students and for associate principals of administrative or student services. In combination with the growth in size of high schools, the second trend created a demand for associate principals for curriculum and instruction and other, similar positions such as assistant or vice principals for curriculum and instruction, or deans of instruction.
Neither of these trends is likely to reverse anytime soon. Despite the small schools and schools-within-schools initiatives promoted by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and other private and public organizations, high school sizes in most suburban and urban districts in Texas remain large. Accountability legislation isn't going away, either; Texas lawmakers change or add to existing accountability legislation every session, and the Obama Administration is using $4.35 billion in funding from the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) stimulus legislation for its Race to the Top program, designed to spur reforms in state and local educational systems.

_Teacher Instructional and Administrative Leadership: Flattening the Hierarchy and Sharing the Load_

While many campuses and districts in Texas have instituted associate principalships as an organizational strategy to address the effects of larger high school sizes and challenging government accountability mandates, there may be other ways to restructure campus level leadership and administration that could improve instruction and produce better student achievement. One approach that has shown promise is to democratize campus leadership by moving away from the traditional, top-down, bureaucratic style of educational administration, a legacy of industrial-age principles of scientific management that fosters a view of teachers as labor and administrators as management. Following this approach, teachers could be given opportunities to deliver student and administrative services and to provide instructional leadership, above and beyond the conventional department chair model. Teachers could be assigned fewer teaching periods in order to assume responsibility for a wide range of student and administrative services that are currently delivered by campus administrators, including
textbook distribution and record-keeping, facilities supervision and management, and discipline and attendance.

Faculty with lighter class loads could also take more responsibility for instructional leadership by conducting peer evaluations and appraisals, providing instructional coaching, and delivering staff development activities. To this end, one of the school districts in this study instituted a Campus Instructional Teacher (CIT) position to help develop teacher expertise in best instructional practices for faculty interested in leadership roles. To reprise the words of the GPHS principal in Chapter 4, the CIT was "someone who also has aspirations for some kind of leadership position in the building. They're very well versed on good instructional strategies, best practices, technology in the classroom, how to use instructional technologies most effectively."

There is nothing especially innovative about drawing from the ranks of faculty for administrative and instructional leadership in schools; it is a practice that has a history of viability in independent private schools, in colleges and universities, and in European secondary schools. In all these settings, campus-level administrators successfully teach and lead at the same time. An example of this approach in practice in American public education is the EdVision charter collaborative in Minnesota, which has developed campuses on which all instructional leadership and many administrative services are performed by teachers (http://www.edvisions.com). Another charter school initiative, The Equity Project (TEP) in New York City, pays teachers $125,000 annual salaries (with additional bonuses of up to $25,000) to assume all responsibility for running the campus (http://www.tepcharter.org).
Preparation and training for teacher leaders/administrators could be a joint effort among campuses, districts, and universities. This study's informants suggest that the most valuable learning activities for campus leaders and administrators are provided on the job rather than in the classroom. To assist in delivering these activities, university level clinical faculty could be employed to mentor aspiring leaders/administrators, observing, assessing, and giving feedback on their performance in providing instructional leadership and administrative services. This job-embedded training should be structured in a way that would award teachers with better pay, an improved level of certification, and credit toward a graduate degree. For these reasons, giving teachers more opportunities to lead at the campus level is promising approach for American education and deserves further exploration.

Suggestions for Future Research

The Academic Department Chair's Role in Campus Leadership and Administration

This study does not consider the perspectives of the educators that hold another key position in campus leadership and work closely with associate principals: department chairs. These teachers often perform substantial instructional leadership roles in the areas of staff and curriculum development and alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, and they frequently work closely with C and I associate principals on campus leadership in these areas. Their roles are particularly important in the instructional interventions and initiatives that are designed to raise TAKS and other standardized test scores and that, perhaps more than any other activities, define the associate principalship. Because of this close relationship, case studies of department
chairs could provide interesting insights into the practice of high school instructional leadership that would complement the findings of this study.

_Distribution of Leadership Roles Between Assistant and Associate Principals, Including Those Relating to Curriculum and Instruction_

Another potentially fruitful focus for future research would be to examine more closely the relationship between the roles of assistant principals and those of associate principals. This study’s results indicate that associates and assistants share many of the daily responsibilities for meeting the educational needs of students in larger high schools such as those that participated in the study. All three associates in this study served first as assistant principals but were able to acquire experience in instructional leadership to elude the "pigeonholing" phenomenon that can trap assistants in their narrow, non-instructional roles managing discipline and attendance and delivering other administrative and student services.

Decisions about how leadership and administrative roles are divided between associates and assistants are complicated by the conflict between short-term needs for organizational efficiency and effectiveness and longer term needs to develop campus and district leadership capacity. How principals and district administrators negotiate this conflict is crucially important both for aspiring educational administrators and for districts seeking a new generation of campus leadership. Qualitative research exploring how assistant principals view the associate principalship could give valuable information to district leaders and educational policy makers about how to design campus leadership teams that deliver everyday instructional and administrative services effectively but also build institutional leadership capacity.
The Role of Associate Principal in Urban High Schools with Majorities of Economically Disadvantaged Students

One last suggestion for future research is to investigate the roles of associate principals in low-performing urban high schools with a majority of economically disadvantaged students. Because the campuses in this study served relatively affluent communities (13.8% economically disadvantaged students in one case, 18.4% in the other), the leadership teams dealt minimally with the negative educational effects of poverty. These effects are extensive and well-documented; low-income students are less healthy physically and emotionally, are more likely to be subject to crime or violence at home, have more discipline and attendance issues and thus are more at-risk to drop out, and have fewer of the "soft skills" (optimism, empathy, self-confidence, emotional resilience, and ability to collaborate, for example) that give their more affluent peers a distinct advantage in school and in life.

The effects of poverty on students' readiness to learn in school are compounded by the fact that the most highly qualified teachers and administrators rarely choose to work on campuses with high percentages of economically disadvantaged students. Under these circumstances, the role of the associate principal as instructional leader, complex and difficult in the context of the relatively well-off schools that participated in this study, becomes much more challenging. Research examining the roles and responsibilities of associate principals in high schools that primarily serve economically disadvantaged students could lead educational policy makers to develop better strategies to compensate for the negative effects of poverty on those students.
REFERENCES


