The Roles and Responsibilities of the COVID-19 Elementary Principal in Relation to Job Descriptions and Utah School Leadership Evaluation Metrics: A Case Study

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THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COVID-19 ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL IN RELATION TO JOB DESCRIPTIONS AND UTAH SCHOOL LEADERSHIP EVALUATION METRICS: A CASE STUDY

by

Sarah R. Nielsen

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Education

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ABSTRACT

The Roles and Responsibilities of the COVID-19 Elementary Principal in Relation to Job Descriptions and Utah School Leadership Evaluation Metrics: A Case Study

by

Sarah R. Nielsen
Utah State University, 2021

Major Professor: Dr. Alyson L. Lavigne
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The purpose of this study was to examine the alignment between elementary school principal’s job descriptions, evaluation metrics, and day-to-day activities. Burnham and Jackson (2000) found that school counselors’ day-to-day activities do not align with expectations, yet little or no research has been done to determine whether principal day-to-day actions align with expectations for the principalship. Further, the COVID-19 pandemic may have influence on the priorities of principals. This study utilized a mixed methods case study approach. First, seven elementary principals from the same school district were interviewed to determine what roles and responsibilities they are fulfilling during the COVID-19 pandemic. Analysis of this data, as well as their job description and state evaluation metrics, assisted in the creation of a survey that asked principals how much time they spent on these activities and responsibilities over a three-week period. Descriptive statistics, similar to Burnham and Jackson’s alignment study, were used to determine the alignment between six principals’ day-to-day activities with job descriptions and evaluation metrics. This study found that principals felt that they had
many roles and responsibilities particularly in relation to student learning and safety. Leithwood et al.’s (2004) framework was utilized to separate principal roles and responsibilities into Classroom Conditions, School Conditions, and Other Conditions. Principals spent most of their time participating in school condition- and other condition-related responsibilities, aligning with previous research (Grissom et al., 2008; Horng et al., 2010; Lavigne et al., 2016; May et al., 2012). While principals participated in most of the activities required by their job description and the evaluation metric, the evaluation metric and job description did not align and principals felt responsible for several things that were not included in either metric. This lack of alignment may lead to role ambiguity or role conflict. Further study should examine how to make these metrics more dynamic in order to account for unusual circumstances, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, and create alignment between these metrics to reduce the possibility of role ambiguity or role conflict.

(212 pages)
PUBLIC ABSTRACT

The Roles and Responsibilities of the COVID-19 Elementary Principal in Relation to Utah School Leadership Standards: A Case Study

Sarah R. Nielsen

The purpose of this study was to examine the roles and responsibilities of elementary school principals in relation to how they are evaluated and what is included in their job descriptions during the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of the numerous policies that surround education and the COVID-19 pandemic, this study examined elementary school principals from a single school district in Utah. Seven principals agreed to participate in an interview that asked principals about their day-to-day responsibilities as a principal and how COVID-19 affected those responsibilities. Six principals agreed to participate in a daily reflection on how much time they spent participating in a variety of principal responsibilities. These principals reported feeling a great responsibility towards student learning and safety. However, they spent most of their time working on responsibilities either relating to the whole school (such as in formal meetings or watching out for students during recess, drop-off, etc.) or participating in responsibilities that do not directly affect the classroom or school such as their own professional learning or filling out reports. When compared to the district’s job description and the state’s evaluation template, there was evidence that principals were participating in nearly every job description item and evaluation strand. However, the job description and evaluation do not cover the same items or responsibility topics and principals reported participating in several responsibilities, particularly related to COVID-19, that were not included in
either document. Suggestions are made for future research to examine these documents to ensure they are aligned and that the documents are dynamic enough to adjust to unusual circumstances, such as COVID-19, to ensure that principals do not feel conflicted in their responsibilities due to misalignment and the needs of the unforeseen moment.
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To all who made this dissertation possible, know that whenever I use the title of Doctor, it is a tribute to you.

Sarah R. Nielsen
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Chapter I

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Principals play a critical role in the school system (Babo & Ramaswami, 2011; Fullan, 2014; Leithwood et al., 2004; Porter et al., 2008; Wallace Foundation, 2013). As leaders of classroom and School Conditions, principals have a great influence on students and teachers (Bush & Jackson, 2002; Kose, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2004; Mette et al., 2017). For example, principal effects have been found to explain as much as one-quarter of the variance in student outcomes (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Hattie, 2009; Huang et al., 2020; Leithwood et al., 2004). In recent years, government policies focused on holding educators who influence student achievement accountable (Guilfoyle, 2006).

Federal policies focusing on increased accountability began with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (2002), which required teachers and schools to be held accountable for student achievement. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015) expanded accountability measures to include principals. As part of ESSA (2015), principal accountability measures, specifically through principal evaluations, were required but the extent and ways in which principals were to be held accountable were left up to the determination of the states. Despite national standards for principals (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015), there is limited uniformity across the United States. In a review of what each state requires in its principal evaluations, Nielsen and Lavigne (2020) found the legal requirements for principal evaluations have little consistency across the United States. After reviewing the literature
on what items should be included in principal evaluation, they examined state statutes, codes, and regulations. They found only four states required student achievement data, multiple sourced data, and goal setting to be part of the evaluation, in addition to trained supervisors who oversee the evaluation process and ensure results are provided to the principal frequently and in a timely manner. On the other end of the spectrum, one state, New Hampshire, had no requirements for principal evaluation.

Sitting about center of the spectrum of requirements regarding principal evaluations was the state of Utah (Nielsen & Lavigne, 2020). Utah’s principal evaluations were required to include student growth scores and supervisor observations as well as input from students, parents, teachers, and support professionals. While Utah did not require districts to utilize a standard evaluation, an evaluation metric was developed and published in December 2019 that was based on state policy and school leadership standards (Utah State Board of Education [USBE], 2020a). Further, Utah developed its own school leadership standards (USBE, 2019).

Utah was an interesting context for studying principal evaluation for several reasons. While Utah was ranked as having the 28th most K-12 students in 2017, Utah ranked 49 out of 50 states in spending the same year (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2019). In 2020, Utah ranked 50th in spending (World Population Review, 2020). Between 2017 and 2029, Utah is projected to be the 5th greatest in K-12 enrollment growth and increase by 10.2% (NCES, 2018). Perhaps due to the number of students in Utah and the budgetary constraints, Utah also had the third-largest student-to-teacher ratio in the nation at 22.9 students per teacher. The growing number of students,
financial restrictions, and high student-to-teacher ratio, in conjunction with the influence of the principal on student outcomes, highlight the importance of principals in Utah.

As previously mentioned, Utah required student achievement, observations, and stakeholder input on principals’ annual evaluations (Nielsen & Lavigne, 2020). While “more states have retreated from research-backed policies over the past four years than have adopted them” (National Council on Teacher Quality, 2019, p. 2), Utah was one of only five states that have implemented or maintained research-based policies in principal evaluation measures. The fact that the state has taken a research-based approach to principal evaluation measures historically made Utah an ideal location to investigate potential issues surrounding principal evaluations. Additionally, Utah’s Department of Education had revised its principal evaluation template not long before this study was conducted (USBE, 2020a). The importance of the principal in Utah schools and the state’s principal evaluation policies, coupled with a new evaluation template regarding principal accountability made Utah an interesting context for studying what principals’ responsibilities are and how they are influencing students.

**COVID-19**

The release of Utah’s new principal evaluation system model came only a few months prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (USBE, 2020a). The impact of COVID-19 on Utah’s K-12 public schools began on March 13, 2020, when Utah’s governor Gary Herbert announced Utah’s public schools would close for two weeks in an effort to slow and prevent the spread of COVID-19 (Herbert, 2020). What began as a two-week closure for schools led to closure for the remainder of the school year (Tanner, 2020a). From March to June 2020, principals and teachers scrambled to provide students with online-
and packet-based learning opportunities (Cortez, 2020a). Many schools provided
Chromebooks and other electronic devices to parents and students and some districts
placed Wi-Fi buses throughout neighborhoods so students would have internet access
(Al-Arshani, 2020; Elassar, 2020). Despite these efforts, Utah school districts struggled
to obtain and provide the laptops needed for students to do schoolwork online despite
vendor and other donations (Nelson, 2020).

As part of Utah’s school accountability measures, by law, principals were
required to be evaluated every year (Nielsen & Lavigne, 2020). Due to the ongoing and
unusual circumstances, the USBE created waivers to state policies regarding school
accountability, including standardized testing and educator evaluations, for the 2019-20
school year (USBE, 2020b). As the new school year approached in Fall 2020, principals,
teachers, and district personnel across the nation prepared COVID-19 preventative plans
and alternative plans in case of COVID-19 outbreaks (Education Week, 2020; KSL,
2020a; USBE, 2020b). Education Week (2020) tracked first school day plans for 907
districts in the United States. They found that 74 of the 100 largest school districts in the
nation and 49% of the nation’s 907 districts began school with remote learning. Only
24% of districts began with in-person learning options available to all students. In Utah,
only Salt Lake City School District began the school year offering only remote learning
(Vaifanua, 2020). With this exception, school districts within the state created plans that
included, but were not limited to, student and faculty return to school campuses at least
part-time (KSL, 2020b). As of November 2020, many individual schools had transitioned
to remote or virtual learning based on quarantine and infection rates for two-week periods
and then returned to face-to-face learning models and Salt Lake City School District
continued its remote-only learning model until February 2021 (Dunphey, 2020; Madden, 2020; Roberts, 2020; Winslow, 2020). Meanwhile, on November 6, 2020, the Utah Education Association (UEA), Utah’s largest teacher’s union, called for more schools to transition to remote learning. They wrote:

The Utah Education Association calls on the governor to require all public secondary schools in communities of high COVID transmission to adopt at-home instruction and to suspend all extracurricular activities that cannot be conducted under social distancing guidelines. This change should take place, at a minimum, from the Thanksgiving holiday through Winter Break or until such time as COVID-19 cases significantly decline. (UEA, 2020, para. 3)

The UEA was calling on the governor of Utah to transition areas where there was “high COVID transmission” (UEA, 2020, para. 3) to remote learning for three to four weeks. While the UEA and other groups called for students to transition to remote learning, others pointed out that the limited available research was already beginning to predict and show negative impacts of school shutdowns and remote learning due to COVID-19 (Kaden, 2020; Lynch, 2020; United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, 2020). As schools began in Fall 2020, predictions were made that the summer slide might be exacerbated by the “COVID slide” (Godsey, 2020, p. 24). Kuhfeld et al. (2020) developed a model that predicted “students who did not receive remote instruction in the spring would begin this fall [2020] with approximately 63% to 68% of the learning gains in reading relative to a typical school year with 37% to 50% of the learning gains in mathematics” (p. 560). Students who received about half of the regular instruction during that time are projected to have had 60% to 87% of typical learning gains.

Perhaps more concerning than the COVID-slide is that enrollment in Utah public schools reportedly dropped approximately 9,000 students from previous projections for
Fall 2020 (Cortez, 2020b). Between the unofficial count at the beginning of September and the official count on October 1, approximately 1,000 students were re-enrolled in school, having lost between half and a full month of time in the classroom in addition to the COVID- and summer-slide (Cortez, 2020b; Godsey, 2020; USBE, 2020c). Despite the addition of 1,000 students, there were still 1,500 fewer students enrolled in Utah on October 1, 2020, than during the 2019-2020 school year (Cortez, 2020b; USBE, 2020c). While some of these students transferred to home school, principals, teachers, and staff struggled to track down many of their previous students who did not report their intention to transfer and determine why these students were no longer enrolled (Cortez, 2020b; Goodnough, 2020). Nationwide, schools struggled with attendance, particularly when schools were shut down for quarantine or when students were enrolled for virtual classes (Barmore, 2020; Goodnough, 2020; Tanner, 2020b).

Similar to natural disasters, one consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic was the highlighting of social and educational inequities (Dancy & Brown, 2013; Kuhfeld et al., 2020; Walters, 2020). In particular, internet and computer access were major issues (Harris & Jones, 2020; Walters, 2020). The Washington Post reported, “more than 21 million Americans do not have access to high-speed internet” (Romm, 2020). A RAND report found that while half of teachers nationally reported all or nearly all of their students had home access to the internet, Only 30 percent of teachers in schools in the highest category of school poverty (76-100 percent of students eligible for FRPL [free or reduced-price lunch]) reported all or nearly all of their students had access to the internet, which was 53 percentage points lower than reports of teachers in the lowest-poverty category (0-25 percent FRPL eligible). (Stelitano et al., 2020, p. 3)
Stelitano et al. (2020) reported students in low poverty areas had greater access to the internet, according to their teachers, than students in high poverty areas. Further, in schools where students relied on free breakfasts and lunches, educators scrambled to develop COVID-19 appropriate ways to distribute food to students first, subsequently slowing their capability to develop and provide remote or online educational opportunities to students (Walter, 2020).

The inequities that manifested themselves throughout the COVID-19 pandemic became part of the political debate in Utah regarding the role the government should play and how COVID-related policies were carried out. Lawmakers debated over the implementation of mask mandates in businesses and schools and when schools should be reopened for face-to-face instruction (Ballotpedia, 2020; Rogers, 2021). The state capitol was not the only place where COVID-related school policy debates took place. Throughout the 2020-2021 school year protests and debates took place in weekend rallies, county commissioner meetings, and school board meetings primarily by parents or other groups who wanted an end to school mask mandates (Bink, 2021; Cortez, 2021; Pereira, 2020). In the midst of the debate, school leaders were expected to follow state and local health policies regardless of the desires of students and their guardians.

**Study Purpose and Research Questions**

The COVID-19 pandemic, though a major influence on education worldwide, was only one of many impactful events on schools in Utah and across the nation and world. Hurricanes, earthquakes, and fires were among other influencers on schools during the 2020-21 school year. These disruptions to schooling placed school leaders, specifically principals, in a difficult position as they worked to adapt to the needs of students and
teachers in addition to adapting to the changing “processes, procedures, and protocols” (Harris & Jones, 2020, p. 244) of government agencies. Adapting to the situational needs of environmental disasters and health scares, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, may lead to misalignment between principal job descriptions, day-to-day activities of the principal, and principal evaluation metrics and rubrics. While it is assumed that job descriptions, day-to-day activities, and evaluation metrics align under typical circumstances, Kaden (2020) points out the pandemic led to many changes for educators. In addition to their typical duties, the pandemic forced principals to consider, plan for, and put plans into place for duties such as socially-distanced bus drop-off and pick-up, desk placement and spacing in classrooms, lunch pickup and seating, hand sanitizer dispersal, mask-wearing enforcement, student computer purchasing and assignment, and the ensuring arrival, distribution, COVID reporting and tracking, and installation of faculty and staff protective gear, to name a few. Even if schools had a COVID point-person, principals could ultimately be responsible legally for the implementation of pandemic policies. Health policies and cleaning needs led principals to consider and, in some cases, implement alternative schedules (Perkins, 2020). Principals also needed to be aware of and prepare for higher rates of student “anxiety, depression, health problems, abuse and deprivation” (Thrupp, 2020, p. 33). Further, principals and other educators were reminded to remember their own physical and mental health as they navigated the pandemic (Bintliff, 2020; Harris & Jones, 2020; Yale University, 2020). Hauseman et al. (2020) warned that “leaders often pay a high emotional toll for shepherding a school during a crisis, feeling burdened by their responsibilities to serve others and placing the needs of their school community above their own health and wellness” (p. 70). Principals
were required to ensure teachers had plans in place so that teachers could quickly transition from in-person to remote education if and when case numbers in the school increased (Gewertz, 2020). Principals also needed to ensure that students with disabilities continued to receive services, whether the student was attending their schools in person, under quarantine, or online (Sider, 2020). Recess schedules had to be redesigned to accommodate social distancing (Muller & Baum, 2020). Throughout all of this, perhaps the greatest difficulty educators faced was the unknown (Gewertz, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic and other uncontrollable events may have major effects on the roles and responsibilities of the principal. In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, other current events, such as natural disasters and societal calamities highlighting social justice issues, may have a great influence on principal roles and responsibilities as well (Diem & Welton, 2020; Noyce, 2020). The problem is that research has shown these additional roles and responsibilities being added to the roles and responsibilities already assigned to the principal (Grissom et al., 2015; Neumerski et al., 2018). In 2015, Grissom et al. explained that there was a

…large and diverse set of school functions with which principals engage on a daily basis, spanning instruction, personnel, budgeting, student services, external relations, and a host of other areas. The large set of job responsibilities with which principals are faced make time a scarce resource. (p. 773–774; Neumerski et al., 2018)

These additional responsibilities of principals, as explained by Grissom et al. (2015), and any additional responsibilities due to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as social distancing procedures and enforcement, may have caused strain on principals, leading to role conflict or feelings of conflicting expectations (Kahn et al., 1964). Further, the changes in principal responsibilities may have caused principals to experience role
ambiguity, as principals were unsure what they needed to do to meet the needs of the events of the moment. Research has shown that principals’ perceptions of role conflict and role ambiguity have been related to levels of insubordination towards superiors and district personnel, emotional exhaustion, and job satisfaction (Bauer & Brazer, 2013; Bauer et al., 2019; Eckman, 2004, 2006; Gmelch & Torelli, 1994; Haynes & Licata, 1995). In order to avoid role conflict and role ambiguity, principals may not have fulfilled all of their responsibilities as written in their job descriptions. Further, responsibilities may have been given or taken on by principals that were not in their job descriptions or part of their evaluation of effectiveness as a principal. For instance, Burnham and Jackson (2000) found that school counselors who were given responsibilities outside of their job descriptions were less effective as they were unable to complete the responsibilities that were included in their job descriptions. Another reason principals may have experienced perceptions of role conflict and role ambiguity is because they were setting responsibilities aside as they sought “ways forward that are sensitive to local conditions” (Thrupp, 2020, p. 33). For example, principals may have spent more time on substitute teacher protocols during COVID-19 than was required in the past or filling in themselves for absent teachers. As they made adjustments based on local COVID-19 protocols and procedures, principals may not have felt they were able to fulfill all their responsibilities and be responsive to the immediate needs of their students.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, a call was made for education to improve (Phillips, 2020; Waller et al., 2020). The National Council on Teacher Quality and other organizations posted assistance for evaluating and supporting teachers through the COVID-19 pandemic (Facing History and Ourselves, 2020; Nittler & Saenz-Armstrong,
2020; Resilient Educator, 2020). Principals, too, should have found ways to improve their practices from this experience. Prior to the pandemic, principal evaluation and improvement literature was limited (Nielsen & Lavigne, 2020). As of November 2020, the resources for assisting principals continued to be scarce as the research focus was on the classroom – teacher and student learning. Therefore, it was important to examine how current, school-disrupting events affect the school principal’s roles and responsibilities. By examining how current events were affecting the principal’s roles and responsibilities, researchers will be better equipped to know how they can help principals improve. Harris and Jones (2020) argued,

School leadership practices have changed considerably and maybe, irreversibly because of COVID19. As a result of the pandemic, school leadership has shifted on its axis and is unlikely to return to ‘normal’ any time soon, if ever at all. (p. 245)

While the COVID-19 pandemic may have altered school leadership practices, some return to “normalcy” did occur. For instance, the evaluation of principals took place during the 2020-21 school year, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, utilizing an evaluation with measures that may or may not be appropriate for the conditions of the current school year. Whether school leadership practices changed or not, while circumstances are not “normal,” misalignment between principal’s actions and evaluations and job descriptions could result in role ambiguity and role conflict, leading to lower job satisfaction, emotional exhaustion, role overload, and burnout (Bauer et al., 2019; Bauer & Brazer, 2013; Eckman & Kelber, 2009; Gmelch & Torelli, 1994; Kahn et al., 1964). Low job satisfaction, emotional exhaustion, role overload, and burnout also lead to principal turnover (Bauer et al., 2019; Bauer & Brazer, 2013; Eckman & Kelber, 2009; Gmelch & Torelli, 1994; Kahn et al., 1964). Principal turnover is costly. The
National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP, 2019) reported that principal turnover can result in decreased student achievement scores, instability within the school leading to teachers and staff being unwilling to support the incoming principal, and higher teacher turnover (Babo & Postma, 2017). Further, the monetary cost to replace principals has the conservative cost of $75,000 (NASSP, 2019).

Little if any research has been done to examine whether principals’ roles and responsibilities are aligned with what is expected from them, through job descriptions and onsite circumstances, and how they are evaluated. Further, any potential misalignment during a “typical” school year may be exacerbated by unusual circumstances such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the alignment between the principal’s perceived roles and responsibilities during the COVID-19 pandemic with their job descriptions and Utah’s principal evaluation measure. Specifically, this study examined what relationship existed between principal job descriptions, day-to-day activities of school principals, and state principal evaluation measures. To facilitate the purpose of this study, the following research questions were developed:

1. What do principals perceive as their day-to-day roles and responsibilities?
   a. How has the COVID-19 pandemic influenced principals’ day-to-day roles and responsibilities?
2. How do principals spend their time?
3. How do the findings from research questions 1 and 2 align with principal job descriptions and evaluations?
Limitations

As with all research, there were many limitations to this study. Firstly, this study was a mixed methods case study. The study was bound to a single school district which meant the results were not intended to be generalized (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2010). Binding this study to a single district was due, in part, to the potential variance in implementation of educational and governmental policies across districts. School districts may have had differing approaches to and interpretation of state and federal education and health policies. Local policies may also have differed between counties, cities, and districts.

Data collection was limited as well due to this study taking place during the COVID-19 pandemic. While there were changes in schools due to the pandemic (Kaden, 2020) that should have been studied, pandemic protocols limited researcher data collection options due to health department, school, and Institutional Review Board (IRB) pandemic protocols. For example, observations of principal activities would have provided direct insight into the day-to-day activities of principals. Pandemic protocols, however, limited the study to data that could be collected without face-to-face interactions. A further discussion of the use of self-reporting and other methods is provided in Chapter 3.

Another possible limitation was that research has found there is variance between principals in how they spend their time (May et al., 2012; Sebastian et al., 2018). May et al. (2012) examined how 39 elementary and middle school principals spent their time during seven-week blocks. The researchers found variance in all of the principals’ activities. The greatest variance in activities was in how much time principals spent on
district activities (72.8% variance) and the least variance in time spent was on instructional leadership activities (23.7% variance). Sebastian et al. (2018) examined daily self-reported time-diaries for 15 days in a school year from 68 principals from the same urban school district. The variance in activities between principals ranged from 3.35% in community or parent relation activities to 48.78% in instructional leadership activities. Sebastian et al. went on to discover that school level, specifically elementary versus other schools, may have influenced these variances. Therefore, while research shows there is variance in time spent by principals on different roles and responsibilities, it is unknown to what extent variance in time spent on different activities across elementary school principals may have influenced this study.

**Significance of the Research**

Since role ambiguity and conflict have been found to be related to burnout, job satisfaction, and emotional exhaustion (Bauer & Brazer, 2013; Bauer et al., 2019; Eckman, 2004, 2006; Gmelch & Torelli, 1994; Haynes & Licata, 1995), this study provided some insight as to whether or not, and to what extent, role ambiguity existed for principals participating in this study. This information may be useful for districts that hope to support and retain effective principals (National Association of Secondary School Principals, 2019). This information may also be useful for districts as they consider the effects of unusual circumstances on principals’ responsibility loads and the possible association with role ambiguity (Burnham & Jackson, 2000).

The Utah Model Principal Evaluation (USBE, 2019) was developed without foreknowledge of the pending pandemic. Principal evaluations are important as they aim to assist principals in becoming better school leaders as principals engage in goal-setting
activities with evaluators and principals develop positive relationships with evaluators (DeMatthews et al., 2020). This study was an opportunity to examine how the evaluation measure captured the day-to-day activities of principals during uncommon or disruptive circumstances. Further, it examined whether job descriptions were adaptive to unusual circumstances. By examining principal’s perceptions of their roles, responsibilities, and day-to-day activities during the COVID-19 pandemic, I began to understand how the role of principals may have changed and adapted due to local, national, and global variables and whether assessment and expectations for principals likewise adapted. Though this study only examined these variables within a single district, this study provided a baseline for future alignment studies in other districts and in future disruptive circumstances other than a global pandemic.

This study did not examine the legitimacy of the current policies and practices regarding the principalship. However, insights from this study may assist in examining whether accountability measures and expectations for principals are situationally dynamic as the study examines the roles and responsibilities of the principal during the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, the results of this study may provide useful and timely suggestions for responsible adjustments to accountability measures that can be refined to better capture the impact of unusual working conditions and times on principals.

This study may also provide useful information for principal preparation programs. Harris and Jones (2020) note that if the pandemic has the long-term effects on school leadership practices they expect, school leadership programs will require “radical re-think[ing] and significant modification[s] to remain relevant for aspiring and practicing school leaders” (p. 245). By examining what principals are doing in
comparison to state evaluation metrics and district job descriptions, the study provides insight into the principalship during a crisis which may help principal preparation programs to better prepare students to be effective principals during a crisis.
Chapter II

Review of Literature

This chapter reviews the literature related to this study. This review first provides a background on the importance and influence of principals followed by an examination of the roles and responsibilities of the principal. Then a review of the barriers principals face in seeking to achieve these roles and responsibilities is described. These barriers will provide a background for the theoretical framework that was used to guide this study. Following a description of the theoretical framework, a review of job alignment or the alignment of a principal’s roles and responsibilities with evaluations or standards is provided.

Importance and Influence of the Principal

School leaders, including principals, have been identified as the most influential in-school factor, after teachers, on student outcomes (Grissom et al., 2021; Leithwood et al., 2004). The principal’s influence focuses on both leading and managing the school as they work to “align the strategies and activities of the school with the school’s academic mission” (Hallinger, 2005, p. 224). Research has shown that although principals have a more indirect influence on student achievement and growth than direct influence, their indirect influence accounts for about one-quarter of the variance in student outcomes (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Hattie, 2009; Huang et al., 2020; Leithwood et al., 2004). Researchers have also identified many principal actions that influence student outcomes, including: creating a school vision, overseeing teaching and curriculum, using data to inform and improve instruction, monitoring student progress, and creating a safe learning
environment (Grissom & Loeb, 2011; Grissom et al., 2013; Huang et al., 2020; Robinson et al., 2008). Despite the lack of evidence for the direct influence of principals on student achievement, the NASSP and National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) maintain student achievement as part of their leadership frameworks and 33 states require student achievement to be used in principal evaluations (Clifford & Ross, 2011; Nielsen & Lavigne, 2020).

As the principal’s influence, through their actions and in conjunction with their roles and responsibilities, on student outcomes is commonly used in evaluation and standards-related practices (Clifford & Ross, 2011; Nielsen & Lavigne, 2020), it is practical to use a similar approach in this study. However, there are many ways in which a principal may influence student outcomes (Leithwood et al., 2010). In order to examine the principal’s roles and responsibilities, a framework will be utilized. Perhaps the most common approach to framing what principals do is by categorizing principal actions and responsibilities under the titles of instructional and managerial leadership (Goldring et al., 2020; Grissom et al., 2013; Neumerski et al., 2018). The difficulty with this type of framework is that researchers are not always clear on what activities and responsibilities fit within each category. For example, Neumerski et al. (2018) explain “actions associated with principal instructional leadership are often broad or vague, such as having a visible presence, setting goals for the school, visiting classrooms, supervising instruction, providing feedback to teachers, and coordinating the curriculum” (p. 272; Grissom et al., 2013). To add to this confusion, some research utilizes similar subcategories for both instructional and managerial leadership categories. For example, in Goldring et al.’s (2020) study, the researchers created lists of activities aligned with
instructional leadership and management. However, several activities are listed under both headings, including decision-making groups and committees, district meetings, office work and preparation, parents/guardians, and student supervision.

Grissom et al. (2015) categorized principal actions differently. Instead of only categorizing how principals spent their time into the two categories of management and instruction, these researchers also used the following categories: administration, internal relations, external relations, transition, and personal time. Additionally, they subcategorized instructional time into coaching, evaluation of teachers, classroom observation, professional development training for teachers, developing education programs, and other activities. Horng et al. (2010) used similar categories: administration, organizational management, day-to-day interactions, instructional program, internal relations, and external relations. The problem with utilizing either Grissom et al.’s (2015) or Horng et al.’s (2010) categories is similar to that of instructional and managerial leadership categories – there are many activities the principal may engage in that could be situated in more than one category.

Leithwood, et al. (2004) also provides a framework regarding the roles of principals on student outcomes. The framework classifies the actions of the principal that influence student learning through School Conditions and Classroom Conditions (Leithwood et al., 2004). Leithwood et al. (2004) provide examples of principal actions for both categories. School Conditions include creating school goals, building and maintaining a good school culture and environment, and overseeing the logistics and structure of Classroom Conditions. Classroom Conditions include instructional practices and content. The benefit of this framework is that principal actions can be clearly and
easily categorized into classroom and School Conditions without minimalizing the influence, direct or indirect, on student learning.

Additionally, the Utah Model Principal Evaluation (USBE, 2019) and Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (National Policy Board for Education Administration [NPBEA], 2015) align closely with Leithwood et al.’s (2004) framework. The Utah evaluation model focuses on seven tenets, called strands, each with a description of how the strand can be identified in the principal’s actions (USBE, 2019). The strands and a brief description from the evaluation form are provided in Appendix 1. The national standards, formerly known as Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards, focus on 10 standards for educational leaders (NPBEA, 2015). These standards and their descriptions can be found in Appendix 2. Leithwood et al.’s (2004) framework aligns with Utah’s evaluation (USBE, 2019) and the national standards (NPBEA, 2015) and is shown in Table 1.
Table 1

Framework Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leithwood et al. (2004) Framework</th>
<th>School Conditions</th>
<th>Classroom Conditions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Utah Model Principal Evaluation (USBE, 2019) strands</td>
<td>Strand 1 – Visionary Leadership</td>
<td>Strand 2 – Teaching and Learning</td>
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<td>Strand 3 – Management for Learning</td>
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<td>Strand 4 – Community Engagement</td>
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<td>Strand 5 – Ethical Leadership</td>
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<td>Strand 6 – School Improvement</td>
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<td>Strand 7 – Equity and Cultural Responsiveness</td>
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<td>Standard 2 – Ethics and Professional Norms</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Standard 3 – Equity and Cultural Responsiveness</td>
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<td>Standard 5 – Community of Care and Support for Students</td>
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<td>Standard 7 – Professional Community for Teachers and Staff</td>
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<td>Standard 8 – Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community</td>
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<td>Standard 9 – Operations and Management</td>
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<td>Standard 10 – School Improvement</td>
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Leithwood et al.’s (2004) school leadership framework provides a background from which this study examined principal roles and responsibilities, principal evaluations, and job descriptions as well as the literature provided in the following section.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Principal

The purpose of this section is to examine the roles and responsibilities of the principal to provide a literature-based background from which the current study can draw. Research has shown that implementation of the principalship differs “not only through institutional rules, regulations, and job descriptions, but also through values, shared beliefs, and social norms” (Shaked et al., 2020, p. 22). Lee and Hallinger (2012), in a study of 5,927 principals across 28 countries, likewise found that principal roles
differ across nations and societies. For this reason, this review of principal roles and responsibilities will focus on literature from the United States. Aligning with Leithwood et al.’s (2004) framework, the literature will be examined by the type of influence principals have on classrooms – through Classroom Conditions and School Conditions. An examination of how principals spend their time will then be presented. Then, a description of how stakeholders perceive the responsibilities of the principal will be given.

**Classroom Conditions**

One of the primary responsibilities of the principal regarding Classroom Conditions is to assist teachers in improving their classroom instruction. One way the research describes principal fulfillment of this role is by providing opportunities for teachers to improve through professional development training opportunities and evaluation processes (Campbell et al., 2019; Graczewski, et al., 2009). Also referred to as instructional leadership in the literature, improving Classroom Conditions by providing coaching and other improvement opportunities to teachers is generally considered part of the principals’ responsibilities (Balyer, 2014; Mestry et al., 2013; Shoho & Barnett, 2010). Improvement opportunities increase when principals have positive relationships with their teachers (Kose, 2009). Mette et al. (2017) interviewed eight elementary school administrators from the same school district in the Midwest regarding “their perceptions of instructional supervision and evaluation” (p. 712). The researchers found that these principals purposefully used supervision and evaluation to “empower highly effective teachers” (p. 717) and focus classroom instruction improvement on an individual level.
Principals may also distribute power which allows teachers and students to feel empowered, thus influencing classroom instruction (Sibanda, 2018).

While principals empower teachers to improve their instruction, principals must also understand, at least to some extent, the curriculum teachers are utilizing in the classroom. Ediger (2014) explains that principals lead curriculum improvement in an effort to meet students’ needs. As they understand curriculum and instructional strategies, they are better able to provide useful supervision and coaching for teachers (Mette et al., 2017; Vogel, 2018). Further, principals can assist in the improvement of instruction by diagnosing the needs of students and teachers and providing innovation and change to meet those needs (Martinez & Everman, 2017). From this literature, we find that principals participate in changing Classroom Conditions when they coach, provide feedback, evaluate, and supervise teachers as well as diagnose and implement strategies to the needs of students and teachers.

**School Conditions**

In addition to caring for Classroom Conditions, research describes caring for School Conditions. The responsibilities of caring for School Conditions, in addition to Classroom Conditions, can be enormous and overwhelming (Kochan et al., 2000). In a study of 514 principals, Kochan et al. (2000) found that school finances were the principal’s biggest challenge, followed by feeling overwhelmed by the enormity of the responsibilities of the principalship. Caring for School Conditions includes responsibilities such as student safety, personnel concerns, and finances (Anast-May et al., 2012; Bana & Khaki, 2015; Chan et al., 2018; Machin, 2014; Shaked, 2019; Tomàs-Folch & Ion, 2015).
Individual schools may have “extra” principal responsibilities that differ from other schools (Chan et al., 2018; Mncube, 2009; Richardson et al., 2016). For example, some schools require principals to take part in school governing bodies (Mncube, 2009). Some schools may require their principals to be “tech-savvy” in order to fulfill their responsibilities (Richardson et al., 2016). Richardson et al. (2016) examined how cyber-school principals view their jobs differently than “brick-and-mortar schools” (p. 218). Based on data from semi-structured interviews, 15 of the 18 principals interviewed suggested these differences. These principals felt that they did not need to focus so much on student management. Instead, they focused more on facilitating changes in technology and data management.

No matter the school, principals have a responsibility to school culture (Hernandez & Fraynd, 2014). Hernandez and Fraynd (2014) argue that school leaders have a responsibility to implement school visions and cultures based on social justice. The literature has specifically mentioned the importance of the responsibility to school vision, culture, and environment in regard to the needs of students, particularly students who identify as LGBTQ, are a religious minority, are a racial minority, or live in poverty (Haycock & Jerald, 2002; Hernandez & Fraynd, 2014; White-Smith & White, 2009; Zirkel, 2016).

The principal’s stance and beliefs may also influence and be influenced by the relationship they have with the staff and community (Balyer, 2014; De Jong et al., 2017; Shoho & Barnett, 2010; Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). Building relationships between an inexperienced principal and staff members and the community is critical according to Shoho and Barnett’s (2010) study of 62 principals who each had less than three years of
experience. One of the participants noted their biggest challenge was “getting everyone on the same page and counteracting staff resistance to change and commitment to continual learning” (p. 575). Many of the principals were also “surprised by the amount of time they devoted to working with parents and community members” (p. 583). The time spent in building relationships is one way that principals build their school’s environment and culture (Devos & Bouckenooghe, 2009; Martinez & Everman, 2017). These relationships may also influence the perceptions and expectations others have about the principal’s roles and responsibilities.

This research shows there are many school condition-based responsibilities for the principal. These responsibilities include understanding curriculum changes, awareness of and checking on absenteeism and tardiness, caring for student safety, caring for personnel concerns, and overseeing school finances. With so many responsibilities, principals may need to prioritize and spend more time on certain responsibilities than others. The next section discusses what research has found regarding what principals spend their time on.

Principal’s Time

What is known is that principals spend a great deal of time on their jobs. In a study of self-reported data from the Schools and Staffing Survey in the 2011-12 school year, Lavigne et al. (2016) found that principals worked an average of 59 hours a week. High school principals spent significantly more time on the job (62.5 hours) than middle or elementary school principals (59.2 hours and 57.8 hours respectively), but no explanation was given as to why such a difference existed. Of the average 59 hours per week all principals spend at work, principals spent 18.1 hours (31%) of their time on administrative tasks and 15.8 hours (27%) on instructional-related tasks. Principals also
spent 13.6 hours per week (23.2%) interacting with students and 7.8 hours (13.3%) interacting with parents.

How principals spend their time seems to have changed over the past decade. In 2010, Horng et al. observed 65 principals in the Miami-Dade school district to determine what principals spent their time on. The researchers, in their study of 41 high, 12 middle, and 12 elementary school principals, found that principals were spending 27.46% of their time on administration and 29.95% on organizational management. Only 6.73% of principals’ time was spent on instructional programs and 5.88% was spent on day-to-day instruction. However, studies since 2010 have shown that principals’ time spent on Classroom Conditions and instruction has increased (Lavigne et al., 2016; May et al., 2012; Sebastian et al., 2018).

May et al.’s (2012) longitudinal study of 39 principals from elementary and middle schools in a southeastern school district further broke down how principals spent their time. These principals reported spending 23.3% of their time on student affairs, followed by 19.3% of their time on instructional leadership. Finances, district functions, and personal professional growth made up 4.8%, 6.6%, and 6.9% of their time. Nine to ten percent of their time was spent on building operations, relationships with parents, personnel issues, and creating goals. Sebastian et al. (2018) did a similar study, examining daily self-reported data for 15 days in a single school year from 52 schools and 68 principals. The researchers found that principals spent most of their time each day on student affairs (21.48%), followed by instructional leadership activities (16.25%) and personnel issues (10.33%). They spent the least amount of time on finances (4.39%), personal professional growth (5.18%), and district functions (7.20%).
Goldring et al. (2020) also reported how principals spend their time when they examined the influence of implementing the school administration manager (SAM) process. As part of the study, principals and SAM-associated individuals filled out a time tracker labeling how principals spent their time, whether it be on instruction or management. The difference in time spent on instruction by principals from the year prior to SAM implementation to afterward was an “increase from 38 to 48 percent…. Concomitantly, time spent on management decrease[d] from one year to the next the same amount” (p. 31).

The focus of principals on improving student performance by placing greater time and resources into classroom instruction was also found by Grissom et al. (2015). In a study of 83 principals from a single school district, the researchers found that these principals spent a significantly greater amount of time on instructional management tasks, such as observing and evaluating teachers, providing teacher professional development trainings, and developing educational programs, than they did on organization management, internal and external relations, transition time, and personal activities.

Huang et al. (2020) asked a random sample of 530 U.S. principals in 2011 to rank how often (none, some, or a lot) they participated in 13 different leadership activities during the past year. Over 50% of principals responded they spent a lot of time maintaining order, ensuring rule clarity, monitoring the implementation of school goals, monitoring student learning, promoting the school’s goals, developing curricular goals, and building a trusting relationship among teachers. The item with the greatest percentage of response for spending some or no time on was “visiting other schools or
attending educational conferences for new ideas” (p. 313) with 70.2% spending some time and 15.6% of principals spending no time on it.

These studies show that while principals tend to spend more time on instruction and Classroom Conditions, there is great variance in the amount of time spent on classroom and School Conditions even within a single school district. However, the focus and actions of principals may also be influenced by stakeholder expectations and perceptions.

**Stakeholder Perceptions**

While the research reviewed in the previous four sections examined what principals said or perceived about their roles and responsibilities and how they spend their time, this section examines what stakeholders perceive regarding the principal’s roles and responsibilities. As they work closely with principals, teachers have expectations of what the principal should be doing. One of these expectations is that principals will provide support to teachers. In a study of over 300 general education and 370 special education teachers, Littrell et al. (1994) asked how important it was for teachers to receive support from administrators, including the principal, on a scale of 1 (not important) to 4 (very important). These general education teachers ranked emotional support as most important (3.63) followed by appraisal or feedback (3.44) and instrumental or assisting teachers (3.27). Special education teachers ranked these supports in the same order and at similar rates. Littrell et al.’s (1994) study demonstrates a desire from teachers for principal support that is common in the literature (Hallinger & Lee, 2014; Mafora, 2013; Martinez & Everman, 2017; Quilici & Joki, 2011). Quilici and Joki (2011) found that teachers expected principals to be onsite so they could better guide
teachers rather than merely evaluating them and moving on. In a case study of a high school in central Texas, teachers reported that they appreciated the high expectations provided to them by the principal (Martinez & Everman, 2017). Further, they appreciated that the principal distributed leadership responsibilities and worked to create change.

Teachers are not the only ones who feel that it is the principal’s responsibility to create change. Students likewise desire change in schools and believe it is part of a principal’s responsibility to make schools more effective and inclusive (Nace, 2011). The expectations of students and teachers show that principals are held to high standards by those they work closely with. This high standard is raised even higher by the trust parents and community members have in principals. A survey by the Pew Research Center (2019) found that U.S. adults had more confidence and trust in K-12 principals than police officers, military leaders, religious leaders, local elected officials, journalists, members of Congress, and leaders of tech companies. Further, those surveyed felt principals were most likely to admit or take responsibility for mistakes and were most likely to receive serious consequences for unethical behaviors.

**Barriers to Principal Roles**

Research has shown there are barriers between principals and their ability to fulfill their roles and responsibilities (Bana & Khaki, 2015). For example, Niño et al. (2017) surveyed 231 Latina/o school leaders in Texas about what they did and what they wished they could spend more time on. While 73% of school leaders wished they could spend more time in classrooms, 70% wanted to spend more time on their own professional development trainings, and 66% wanted to connect more with students. However, 41% said they spent most of their time planning while 27% did paperwork,
30% were in classrooms, and 36% were connecting with students. The desire to reallocate and have more time does not diminish when principals were taken away from their schools in order to participate in other activities of the principalship such as district meetings or their own professional development trainings. Spanneut et al. (2012) suggested that principals should have more autonomy in selecting their own professional development trainings. This study of 129 principals from west-central New York found that when principals were able to self-select the professional development trainings they attended, the principals felt more satisfied and were less likely to feel the professional development training was a waste of time. In addition to feeling there is not enough time to fulfill all the roles and responsibilities principals had in the manner they desired, research also shows that principals do not feel like they are receiving the support that they need to adequately do their job (De Jong et al., 2017; Maforah & Schulze, 2012; Starr & White, 2008). A qualitative study surveyed 176 United States principals to find sources of dissatisfaction in their jobs (De Jong et al., 2017). In searching for themes, the researchers found that many principals felt a lack of support from supervisors – particularly from their superintendents. These principals wanted to be empowered to make decisions and receive positive reinforcement rather than being micromanaged.

Principals have also reported they may not be fulfilling their roles and responsibilities as a principal because they have roles outside of the principalship that they also wish to fulfill (De Jong et al., 2017; Newton & Wallin, 2013; Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). A majority (77%) of 176 middle and high school principals reported balancing outside-of-school roles with principalship responsibilities as “the most taxing or difficult part of the job” (De Jong et al., 2017, p. 363). These principals described how
this conflict between home and work was exacerbated by long hours and evenings spent at work. In other research, principals described feeling overloaded because they have too many responsibilities (Mestry et al., 2013; Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). Principals have attributed this overload to the nature of the job and as an effort to spare others, such as teachers and staff members, from additional responsibilities (Mestry et al., 2013; Newton & Wallin, 2013).

There is research that suggests principals may overcome feelings of role conflict or being overwhelmed by implementing a distributive leadership style (Sheng et al., 2017; Sibanda, 2018). In a study of middle and elementary schools in Iowa where administrative managers were provided so principals could distribute their responsibilities, teachers reported that principals felt more like instructional leaders and had improved in those responsibilities (Sheng et al., 2017). However, research shows that there are principals who do not use distributive leadership to reduce their feelings of overload and conflict because (1) they felt their faculty was already overloaded, (2) they did not know what responsibilities to distribute, and (3) they were unsure what their responsibilities were and were therefore unable to distribute them (Hameiri et al., 2014; Newton & Wallin, 2013). This research demonstrates that feelings of role conflict may inhibit the principal’s ability to distribute responsibilities and cope effectively with the responsibilities of the principalship.

This section demonstrates there are a variety of barriers principals perceive in their efforts to fulfill their roles and responsibilities during “typical” circumstances. The research shows principals desire to spend more time on a variety of responsibilities but are lacking the time to do it. Unusual circumstances, such as the COVID-19 pandemic,
may exacerbate the situation that principals already consider overwhelming (Dancy & Brown 2013; Hameiri et al., 2014; Mestry et al., 2013; Newton & Wallin, 2013; Wieczorek & Manard, 2018). Principals may not have the support they feel they need to do their job and they feel conflicted between work and home. While some principals are overcoming their feelings of conflict and being overwhelmed by utilizing distributive leadership, others are purposefully not distributing responsibilities because they feel others are already overloaded as well, they don’t know what to distribute, or, perhaps most concerning, they are unsure what their responsibilities are.

**Theoretical Framework**

Uncertainty as to the roles and responsibilities of the principal could have extreme and widespread effects based solely on the influence principals have on teachers and students (Leithwood et al., 2004). This role uncertainty can be caused by role ambiguity. Kahn et al. (1964) described role ambiguity as “a direct function of the discrepancy between the information available to the person and that which is required for adequate performance of his role” (p. 73). Bogotch (1993) defined role ambiguity as “the perceived lack of information that is necessary in order to fulfill the obligations of the position” (p. 488).

Role ambiguity is often researched in conjunction with role conflict. Kahn et al. (1964) described role conflict as “conflicting expectations…[that] create psychological conflict for the person who is their target” (p. 19). Other researchers have similarly defined role conflict as incompatibility of roles or responsibilities (Bogotch, 1993; Cranston et al., 2003; Eckman, 2004; Goodwin et al.; 2003; Nir, 2011). Nir (2011) described four types of role conflict: intrasender, intersender, interrole, and person-role
conflicts. Intrasender conflict is experienced when perceived incompatible expectations are received from a single source. For example, intrasender role conflict may be perceived when a school district places emphasis on the principal spending more time in classrooms but also increases the number of meetings and professional development trainings principals are required to attend during school hours. Interrole conflict is experienced when the perceived incompatible expectations come from multiple sources. Interrole conflict may occur as principals perceive conflicting demands from stakeholders, such as parents, teachers, students, and staff. Interrole conflict is experienced when perceived incompatible expectations come from multiple roles a single person has. For example, within the principalship, Goodwin et al. (2003) point to conflicts “between the roles of strategic leader, instructional leader, organizational leader, and political and community leader” (p. 27). Eckman (2004) also highlighted the perceived incompatibility of home- and work-related roles. Finally, person-role conflict is experienced when perceived incompatible expectations occur between the individual’s values and others’ expectations. Cranston et al. (2004) explained this occurs when conflict occurs “between what they [principals] think they should be doing and what others’ expectations might be” (p. 169).

There have been a variety of studies examining principal perceptions of role conflict and role ambiguity, such as how isolation affects principal role ambiguity (Bauer & Brazer, 2013; Bauer et al., 2019), how female and male principals experience role conflict (Eckman, 2002; Eckman, 2004; Eckman & Kelber, 2010), and the effects of geography on feelings of conflict (Ewington et al., 2008; Nir, 2011). These studies demonstrate the complexities associated with role conflict. Even more so, they show the
perceived difficulties principals have in trying to do their jobs. Yet there is one area in which ambiguity and conflict can be mitigated.

**Job Alignment**

Role ambiguity and conflict can be lessened when principals are clear about what their job descriptions are and how they will be evaluated. While Utah requires principals to be evaluated on a yearly basis (Nielsen & Lavigne, 2020), job descriptions are not required by state law. However, the USBE’s (2020a) website provide the following examples of principal responsibilities that could be included as part of a principal’s job description:

- Principals guide the development and implementation of a school mission, vision, values, and goals.
- Principals ensure equitable educational opportunities for all students.
- Principals guide the creation and implementation of sound school-wide systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
- Principals create a safe and caring school community.
- Principals develop the capacity of teachers through job-embedded professional learning structures (mentoring, coaching, professional learning communities, data meetings).
- Principals engage families and community in meaningful ways.

Along with Utah’s examples of principal responsibilities, Utah provides schools and districts with leadership standards (USBE, 2019). Utah’s standards, job responsibility examples, and leadership standards cover similar principal responsibilities. This study assumed that the responsibilities and roles described within these documents are not
conflicting. This benefits principals as the lack of conflict, or lack of discrepancies between the documents, ensures principals are unlikely to experience role ambiguity or role conflict, particularly intrasender conflict, from the state level.

The lack of conflict or discrepancies between roles and responsibilities might be called alignment. Merriam-Webster (n.d.) defines the word align as “bring[ing] into line” and “to be in or come into precise adjustment or correct relative position”. When roles and responsibilities are aligned, it removes conflicts and ambiguity within the job. Alignment has been a topic of research and discussion in relation to many educational topics, including curriculum (Cizek et al., 2018; Seitz, 2017; Trigwell & Prosser, 2014) and undergraduate education with professional schools and professions (Cho & Taylor, 2019; Mardis et al., 2018; Wickam et al., 2020). However, research and scholarly articles regarding principals and job alignment is limited. One of the few articles about job alignment for principals was a study of Catholic secondary schools where principals also serve as school presidents (James, 2009). The keys to success for these president-principals include alignment or elimination of conflict between the two roles and clear job descriptions and expectations. Bailey and Qualls (2018) examined whether superintendent expectations for candidates of school principal positions aligned with state and national principal standards. Neither of these studies examined whether principal actions align with job descriptions or evaluations. However, Burnham and Jackson (2000) have examined whether school counselor actions align with models for counseling. Burnham and Jackson used a convenience sample of 80 school counselors from two southeastern states. A questionnaire was completed by each counselor. The questionnaire was previously developed based on school counseling literature and
addressed the roles and responsibilities of school counselors. Descriptive statistics were analyzed by counseling theme, such as individual counseling, consultation, and non-guidance activities. The results were then compared to two counseling model recommendations. Among the suggestions for improvement, Burnham and Jackson note that school counselors had been assigned responsibilities that did not align with what the models showed their job should entail which led to decreased time spent on counselor responsibilities. These extra responsibilities did not align with counselor responsibilities and could be related to feelings of role ambiguity and role conflict. The purpose of this study was to examine whether principals are working under similar circumstances – where actions do not align with expectations - namely job descriptions and evaluation metrics.
Chapter III

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine the alignment of principal actions with job descriptions and evaluations. This chapter first provides the rationale for a mixed methods case study, beginning with a case study rationale and then a rationale for mixed methods. Then a description of the case is provided with case specifications and boundaries. Finally, the data collection and data analysis processes are described.

Case Study

There are two primary reasons for utilizing a case study methodology for this study. First, this study took place within a setting where there were many variables that could not be controlled due to the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic. Creswell and Poth (2018) explain that the purpose of a case study is to “develop an in-depth understanding of a single case or explore an issue or problem…within a real-life, contemporary context or setting” (p. 96). Beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, Smith (2013) studied how principals spent their time each week. Utilizing data from over 2,500 schools from communities ranging from rural to urban, Smith (2013) found a significant difference in principal activities across community types. Smith’s findings demonstrated that generalizing the average principal’s experience has little value due to the wide variation of experiences due to context. However, studying within a particular context may provide a greater contribution to policy and practice.

As noted previously, differences in principal- and COVID-19 pandemic-related policies influenced this study. Yin (2018) explains that the scope of a case study
“investigates...when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (p. 15). Case study methodology binds the study to a particular case, in this study a single district, wherein the contemporary situation may be examined in-depth without controlling all of the extraneous variables (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Harrison et al., 2017; Yin, 2018). Second, case study is commonly utilized in researching issues surrounding schools and the principalship (Bush-Mecenas & Marsh, 2018; Devos & Bouckenooghe, 2009; Gomez-Hurtado et al., 2018; Graczewski et al., 2009; Kose, 2009; Mafora, 2013; Maforah & Schulze, 2012; Martinez & Everman, 2017; Newton et al., 2010; Sibanda, 2018; Smith et al., 2016; Sun & Gao, 2019). The rationalization for utilizing case study in these studies included investigating phenomena in everyday contexts through theoretical lenses, to provide for triangulation in data analysis, and gaining a deepened understanding of a phenomenon (Graczewski et al., 2009; Kose, 2009; Martinez & Everman, 2017; Sibanda, 2018). While there are other possible ways to study the principalship, case study demonstrates the complexity of the principalship. Many researchers may have also chosen to utilize case study due to its agnostic approach to epistemology and methodology (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Harrison et al., 2017; Yin, 2018).

Case study does not align with any particular epistemological views (Harrison et al., 2017). Further, case study has methodological flexibility. Yin (2018) explains, “Traditional case study research has not usually included the idea of having formal designs, as might be found when doing survey or experimental research” (p. 47). Instead, case study methods focus on logical connections between the research questions, data collection, and data analysis (Harrison et al., 2017; Yin, 2018). This study likewise
utilized case study’s logical methodology and flexibility to examine job alignment of principals in acknowledgment that discrepancies exist between principal actions, evaluations, and job descriptions within the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Mixed Methods Approach**

One of the features of case study is the utilization of multiple forms of data, including qualitative and quantitative data (Guetterman & Fetters, 2018; Harrison et al., 2017; Yin, 2018). The mixing of qualitative and quantitative data is often referred to as mixed methods. Traditionally, quantitative research aligns with the epistemological belief that there is one reality and truth is objective while qualitative research aligns with interpretive beliefs and philosophies of truth and reality (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Hoy & Adams, 2016, Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). Mixed methods researchers, however, are more focused on finding the best answers to research questions and thus do not necessarily have common epistemological viewpoints (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Mayoh & Onwuegbuzie, 2015; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009; Sablan, 2019). The focus on answering research questions rather than focusing on utilizing a particular methodology leads to methodological eclecticism. Methodological eclecticism is defined “as selecting and then synergistically integrating the most appropriate techniques from a myriad of QUAL, QUAN, and mixed methods to more thoroughly investigate a phenomenon of interest” (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2010, p. 8). The determination of whether a study should utilize quantitative, qualitative, or both types of data resides in the research questions of the study according to Teddlie and Tashakkori (2010). Utilizing multiple types of data is advantageous in that it allows the
researcher to find more complete answers to the research questions. The research questions for this study were as follows:

1. What do principals perceive as their day-to-day roles and responsibilities?
   a. How has the COVID-19 pandemic influenced principals’ day-to-day roles and responsibilities?
2. How do principals spend their time?
3. How do the findings from research questions 1 and 2 align with principal job descriptions and evaluations?

The first question required an understanding of how principals perceive their actions. The literature identifies questionnaires and interviews as common qualitative data collection methods used to discover principal perceptions (Goldring et al., 2020; Grissom et al., 2015; Sebastian et al., 2018; Spillane et al., 2007). The second question required an understanding of quantitative time allocation. To answer this question, I utilized the qualitative findings from the first question to create a questionnaire that asks principals to show how they spend their time each day, in a manner similar to previous studies, that produced quantitative data (Horng et al., 2010; Lavigne et al., 2016; May et al., 2012). The third question required the use of both quantitative and qualitative results to examine the alignment between the interviews, time logs, job description, and evaluation rubric. A description of the wording and comparison of each data set is a valid analysis of such data (Burnham & Jackson, 2000). Burnham and Jackson (2000) utilized descriptive statistics to examine how much time was spent by counselors on their roles and responsibilities. A similar method would provide data on the alignment of principal actions to evaluations and job descriptions. For these reasons and in support of
methodological eclecticism, this study utilized a mixed methods approach. A description of how qualitative and quantitative data was utilized to answer the research questions is provided in the data collection and analysis section.

While some researchers have suggested particular models to be utilized in mixed methods research (Creswell, 2014), other researchers argue that the base concept of utilizing mixed methods is that the research questions are answered in the best way possible and therefore utilizing a particular model may be counter to the base philosophy of mixed methods (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2010). In order to best answer the research questions, this study did not follow a singular design from another researcher.

Case

This study utilized a single-case design that was bound to elementary school principals in a single school district (Yin, 2018). There are two reasons for focusing on elementary school principals and not including secondary principals. First, the roles and responsibilities of the elementary and secondary principal may differ. Buckner (n.d.) explains that elementary school students may require more supervision while secondary students typically require less supervision due to students’ growing maturity. Supervision of students may also be less of a priority as secondary schools tend to house more students than elementary schools. In the 2011-12 school year, an average of 453.1 students attended each primary school in the United States while 575.7 students attended middle schools and 846.6 attended high schools (Keaton, 2012). Similarly, Utah primary schools averaged 565.4 students while middle schools averaged 811.8 students and high schools averaged 927.3 students. Further, Utah had 551 primary schools, 134 middle schools, and 134 high schools. This data shows that there are a greater number of
elementary school principals and that these elementary principals oversee fewer students than secondary school principals. Further, researchers for the Utah Education Policy Center found that 94% of students and 81% of parents/guardians knew their elementary school principal while only 83% of students and 69% of parents/guardians knew their secondary school principal (Swenson & Rorrer, 2016). In addition, elementary school principals are less likely to be assigned a vice principal, meaning the elementary school principal is 100% responsible for all operations of the school, even if these responsibilities are dispersed to staff assistants or faculty members (NAESP, 2018). Further, research has shown that elementary principals have a larger effect on achievement outcomes than other school levels (Bartanen, 2020).

The second reason for focusing on elementary school principals is that elementary schools do not typically have the extensive extracurricular programs that secondary schools do. For instance, secondary schools commonly host athletics, clubs, and course extensions that are not available to elementary schools. Since the principal is ultimately responsible for everything that occurs at the school (Ch et al., 2017; Workable, n.d.), the role of the principalship would differ between elementary and secondary schools due to educational and extracurricular offerings at the school.

This study focused on head principals rather than assistant or vice principals. Research shows that assistant and vice principals have responsibilities of the principalship but their roles do not encompass the breadth of responsibilities of a head principal (Barnett et al., 2012; Kwan & Walker, 2012; Leaf & Odhiambo, 2017; Shore & Walshaw, 2016). Further, assistant and vice principals often have their responsibilities assigned to them by head principals (Sun & Gao, 2019). For this reason, this study
focused on head principals while recognizing the fact that head principals may be delegating some of their responsibilities to assistant and vice principals as well as other members of the school faculty and staff.

While case study allows the researcher to examine issues without controlling them, this study dealt with many issues that could not be controlled. COVID-19 policies and regulations regarding schools differed all over the country (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2020; Kaiser Family Foundation, 2020; Multistate, 2020; National Association of Counties, 2020; United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2020). The CDC (2020) offered guidelines for the public as well as school openings, closures, and operations. In Utah, where this study took place, differences in policies occurred. For instance, some counties put mask mandates in place while others focused on providing information on the pandemic and related services (Davis County Health Department, 2020; Salt Lake County Health Department, 2020; Utah County Health Department, 2020). School districts in Utah likewise implemented different instructional and operational policies as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As of November 2020, one school district had not yet offered face-to-face instruction while several schools had transitioned to remote or virtual learning based on quarantine and infection rates for two-week periods and then returned to face-to-face learning models (Dunphey, 2020; KSL, 2020b; Madden, 2020; Roberts, 2020; Vaifanua, 2020).

Beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, individual school districts may have had differing policies and job descriptions for principals which would influence the principal’s day-to-day activities. Smith (2013) found, in a study of data including “293 city, 518 suburban, 758 town and 1040 rural schools” (p. 29) from the High School
Longitudinal Survey of 2009, a significant difference in principal activities and community settings. Specifically, there was a significant difference in time spent working (a) with teachers on instruction, (b) on internal school management, (c) on external school management, (d) on monitoring school locations such as the lunchroom, (e) on personal teaching assignments, (f) with parents, and (g) with students. Horng et al. (2010) examined what principals within the same district spent their time on and found that there were significant differences between principals of differing school levels. Similar findings to Horng et al.’s (2010) and Smith’s (2013) studies were found by May et al. (2012) and Sebastian et al. (2018). Therefore, this study focused on elementary school principals within a single school district.

By limiting this study to a single case of elementary school principals from one school district, some of the uncontrollable variables, such as health and district policies, had a smaller impact on the findings because all principals in the district were required to follow the same policies. However, Khan et al. (1964) point out that “the most troublesome features of a conflict situation confronting one person may be quite unlike those facing another, even if the individuals occupy similar positions in industry” (p. 60). While each principal may have experienced different levels of conflict or ambiguity, the purpose of this study was to examine the alignment between what principals were doing with their job descriptions and evaluation measures. By examining this on a district level, this study provided the opportunity to discover whether district-wide alignment was occurring rather than alignment for a single principal who may have been experiencing the situation differently than the rest of the district’s principals (Khan et al., 1964).
Setting

This study took place in a large school district in the state of Utah. When school districts were being considered for this study, there were three district characteristics that were determined as important for the study. First, it was vital that the district supported the research project not only because it was required for IRB purposes, but also so that principals would feel more comfortable participating in the study, knowing that the district had approved the study. Second, it was important that the district’s mission and priorities aligned with the purposes of this study. It was important to align with the district’s mission because it would be more likely that they would agree to participate in the study and because I wanted to engage with a district that would potentially use the findings from this study to improve principals’ jobs and practice. Lastly, larger districts were targeted first because larger districts have larger numbers of elementary schools which provide a larger number of potential principals. A larger pool of participants was critical as it was assumed the COVID-19 pandemic may also lead to a lower response rate and previous research has shown that principal response rates can be quite low (Lavigne & Chamberlain, 2017).

Once these priorities had been determined, school districts within the state of Utah were examined online through public websites to determine what districts may be a good fit for the study. The top three districts matching the criteria were identified and applications were sent requesting approval. The first district to provide approval was used for this study.

Rockcliff School District (pseudonym) is a large school district in Utah. The district has over 50 schools that serve over 50,000 students and over 6,000 employees.
The district primarily serves suburban communities. Over 30 of the schools in the district are elementary schools. (An exact number is not given in order to provide anonymity to the district and participants.)

At the beginning of March 2021, all elementary school principals in the district were invited to participate in the study. A copy of the emailed invitation to participate is provided in Appendix B. A copy of the online consent form is provided in Appendix C. The email invitation was sent out twice. Since fewer than 50% of potential participants agreed to participate, follow-up phone calls were made. Between the email and phone call invitations, eight elementary principals agreed to participate. One principal who agreed to participate only in the interview, however, did not show up for multiple interview appointments. Of the seven who did participate in the study, all agreed to participate in the interview portion and six of the seven agreed to participate in the Time Reflection, an approximate participation rate of 15%. Of the participants, one principal was male and six were female. The female-to-male ratio in the district is approximately 4:1. As a point of comparison, Grissom et al. (2021) reported 68% of elementary schools had women principals in 2016. A brief description of each participant and school, as given by the principal, follows.

**Ms. Emery**

Ms. Emery was the principal at Hilltop Elementary. The 2020-21 school year was her first year as a principal. Prior to her appointment as the principal of Hilltop, Ms. Emery worked as a 2nd-grade teacher and an instructional coach. She also has endorsements in ESL, math, and administration. Hilltop Elementary hosted approximately 750 students whose economic backgrounds range from low-medium to
Of the 750 students, about 30 were English language learners. In addition to the students within Hilltop’s regular boundaries, Hilltop hosted a unit for students struggling with speech or language delay for grades 1-6 for students across the district.

**Ms. Day**

Ms. Day had been the principal for over four years at Colombia Elementary when, on January 19, 2021, she was assigned to open Aspire Elementary, a new school that will open its doors to students in Fall 2021. While this assignment was not the norm, Ms. Day was still considered an elementary school principal. Colombia Elementary served over 900 students and had about 100 employees including 45 teachers. Ms. Day described Colombia as “a more affluent demographic in that our free and reduced lunch percentage is very low. We had… not a lot of diversity. Our ESL population had about 20 kids…. But of those kids they spoke German and Portuguese and Russian and Spanish…. ” Colombia also provided a dual immersion language program. Aspire Elementary was expected to open with about 550 students with the expectation that “enrollment will double in the next five years” due to new housing construction in the area. Prior to being an elementary principal at Colombia and Aspire, Ms. Day was a 6th-grade teacher and an assistant principal.

**Ms. Hunter**

Ms. Hunter was the principal at Hook Elementary. Hook opened to students during the 2020-21 school year and had only been open for about six and a half months at the time Ms. Hunter was interviewed. Ms. Hunter had been an elementary principal for eight years prior to her appointment at Hook and had also worked as an assistant principal, math specialist, and classroom teacher. Hook Elementary, like Aspire, was
built in anticipation of future housing projects. At the time of data collection, Hook served about 500 students and employed about 30 teachers and 20 support staff. About 16% of students were low income and 8% were identified as racial minorities.

**Ms. King**

Ms. King was the principal at Mann Elementary. The 2020-21 school year was Ms. King’s second year at Mann. Ms. King spent 10 years as a teacher, P.E. coach, instructional coach, and assistant principal prior to becoming the principal – all at the same elementary – before being transferred to Mann. According to Ms. King, Mann Elementary served a “high” socio-economic status. Mann had diagnostic kindergarten classes (classes for students who are being diagnosed with learning disabilities) as well as three socio-emotional disabilities classrooms.

**Mr. Miller**

Mr. Miller has been at Jefferson Elementary for two years and has been a principal for 12 years. He was the only principal that mentioned having grown up in another state. Jefferson was an older school, the building is approximately 40 years old, but serves a higher socio-economic demographic “than normal.” The school offers a dual immersion language program.

**Ms. Canton**

Unlike the other principals, Ms. Canton was not originally an educator. Instead, education was a second career after working in business. The 2020-21 school year was Ms. Canton’s first year as a principal, having worked as an assistant principal and classroom teacher. Washington Elementary, where Ms. Canton was the principal, hosts
approximately 600 students, 27% of which were English language learners. Ms. Canton described the school as “hav[ing] a lot of diversity.”

Ms. Timmer

Ms. Timmer was the principal at Bell Elementary. She began her career as a kindergarten teacher and eventually taught 2nd and 3rd grade as well. She taught for 16 years before becoming a literacy coach and then an administrator. This year was her 4th year as an administrator at Bell. Bell Elementary served over 900 students with 13% on free or reduced lunch. About 45 students were English language learners. Bell also had a dual immersion language program.

Data Collection and Analysis

The purpose of this study was to examine the alignment of principal job expectations and evaluations with what the principal actually does. To do this, this study took a mixed methods approach. One of the features of mixed methods studies is that the “mixing” can take place during data collection, data analysis, and results (Creswell, 2010). This study collected quantitative and qualitative data together and presents both sets of data together. A diagram of the data collection, analysis, and results is given in Figure 1. The research questions were answered throughout this data collection and analysis as shown in Table 2. The design was sequential (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2011) with each piece of data collection or analysis leading to the next stage of data collection or data analysis or the results of data collection and analysis as shown by the numbers and arrow directions. A description of these processes follows in Figure 1.
**Figure 1**

*Visual Representation of Data Collection, Analysis, and Results*

Data Collection

- Semi-structured interviews with principals
  - 1
- Job descriptions
  - 1
- Utah Model Principal Evaluation System Rubric
  - 1
- Survey principals regarding time and emphasis placed on roles and responsibilities
  - 3

Data Analysis

- Analyze for themes and codes of roles and responsibilities to principal framework
  - 4
- Analyze for themes and codes of roles and responsibilities and alignment to principal framework
  - 4
- Analyze the amount of time or emphasis spent on activity
  - 4
- Analyze open-ended responses for themes and codes
  - 4

Results

- Present qualitative findings on roles and responsibilities
  - 6
- Present quantitative findings on alignment
  - 7
**Table 2**

*How the Research Questions were Answered*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What do principals perceive as their day-to-day roles and responsibilities?</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>Thematic coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. How has the COVID-19 pandemic influenced principal’s day-to-day roles and responsibilities?</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>Thematic coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How do principals spend their time?</td>
<td>Time Reflection</td>
<td>Descriptive statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How do the findings from research questions 1 and 2 align with principal job descriptions and evaluations?</td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews, time log, principal job descriptions, Utah principal evaluation metric</td>
<td>Descriptive statistics and thematic coding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This study began by collecting data on the roles and responsibilities of the principal from (1) the Utah Model Principal Evaluation System Rubric, (2) job descriptions from Rockcliff School District, and (3) from principals themselves. The Utah Model Principal Evaluation System Rubric and associated handbook (USBE, 2019) was publicly available and was collected as part of the preparation process for this study. Job descriptions regarding the roles and responsibilities of the principal were collected from Rockcliff School District’s public websites.

Data collection began with the semi-structured interview. All seven principals agreed to participate in the semi-structured interview. The semi-structured interview questions, as provided in Appendix D, focused on the principal’s perceptions of their job. The interviews took place via Zoom conference. The interview was video recorded and stored in Box. The interview was then transcribed by the researcher. Identifying
information was replaced with pseudonyms. The transcript was saved in an access-restricted Box.com folder. The Zoom interview was then deleted.

An analysis of interviews, the evaluation rubric, and job description documentation followed Creswell and Poth’s (2018) case study analysis process. Beginning with themes from Leithwood et al.’s (2004) framework, the data were read through and initial codes were developed. Coding took place by hand. Themes and patterns were noted. The data were examined multiple times until saturation was found and no new or existing codes and themes were found.

After coding was completed, a Time Reflection was constructed based on codes and themes found in the interview, evaluation, and job description data. The Time Reflection asked principals to self-report how much time they spend on their roles and responsibilities. Research has shown that reliance on principal perceptions may result in bias (Horng et al., 2010; Spillane et al., 2010). However, end-of-the-day logs have been found to reduce bias (Horng et al., 2010). Surveys and time logs are commonly used in research to examine individual’s perceptions of events and responsibilities (DeMatthews et al., 2020; Horng et al., 2010; Lavigne et al., 2016; May et al., 2012).

Another possible bias in the data could have resulted from examining a single day for an individual principal. Previous research combatted this potential bias by administering the same survey to the same administrators over a period of time, such as a week (Goldring et al., 2020; Horng et al., 2010). In this study, the Time Reflection was also administered on multiple days. The Time Reflection was sent out to all elementary school principals for fifteen consecutive school days (approximately three weeks). The extension to a three-week collection period as opposed to the one-week period utilized by
Goldring et al. (2020) and Horng et al. (2020) was due to common COVID-19 school practices. When schools changed their instructional models from face-to-face instruction to remote instruction, the shut-down period advised by the Utah Department of Health (2020) was a two-week period. By collecting data during a three-week period, there was a greater chance that if a school did change instructional models, data could be compared on what principals are doing when students are receiving face-to-face instruction versus during remote instruction. It should be noted that none of the schools were placed on a two-week hiatus due to COVID-19 during the Time Reflection data collection period. Another reason for extending the administration period was so that if principals did not fill out the Time Reflection every day, hopefully most of them would fill it out at least seven days (46.67%) so that the data would be useable and, to some extent, representative of their daily practices. The three-week administration of the Time Reflection was over the course of the same three weeks across all principals in the district to ensure any policy or district-wide health concerns would apply equally across all principals.

Six of the seven participants agreed to participate in the Time Reflection. As a reminder to those who chose to participate in the Time Reflection, a reminder email was sent to participants, as provided in Appendix E. As noted previously, the Time Reflection asked principals how often they participated in responsibilities and roles of the principalship based on themes and codes from the document analysis. Past research measured the amount of time principals spent on particular tasks or leadership activities and reported the percentage of time spent (Goldring et al., 2020; Horng et al., 2020; Huang et al., 2020). May et al. (2012) went as far as having principals log which activities they participated in and how long they participated in those activities each hour.
of the day so the researchers could analyze and compare activities across time and principals. The Time Reflection for this study followed the ideas provided in May et al.’s log in that it asked principals to log how much time they spent on a variety of responsibilities and activities but the Time Reflection did not ask for the time of day each activity was performed. Instead, principals were asked to estimate how much time they spent on each activity and time segments were provided for them to choose from. The Time Reflection is provided in Appendix F and was hosted through Qualtrics.

The Time Reflection primarily utilized close-ended responses. Open-ended responses were provided to allow principals to respond to previously found roles and responsibilities as well as provide additional insight that may not have been found in the interview, evaluation, and job description data. In addition to what the principal spent their time on that day, the Time Reflection asked for the name of the elementary school the principal is working at. This allowed interview data to be connected to the Time Reflection data and allowed multiple responses to be compiled.

Analysis of the Time Reflection took place in two phases. First, open-ended responses were coded similar to the interview data, utilizing the same themes and allowing for themes to emerge (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These codes and themes were also examined for frequency and utilization in the second (quantitative) phase of analysis. Second, the closed-ended responses and applicable analyzed data from the first phase were analyzed using descriptive statistics and compared to the principal evaluation metric and district’s job description. This analysis parallels Burnham and Jackson’s (2000) job alignment study of school counselors. The data collection period for this study spanned from March 1 to April 30, 2021.
Validity and Reliability

In order to increase the validity and reliability of this study, several measures were taken. First, while the qualitative pieces of this study were only reviewed by me, the transcripts and other documents were reviewed closely and multiple times to ensure misinterpretations were kept to a minimum. Further, where possible, the exact wording of the participants and documents collected was used whenever possible in order to reduce such misinterpretations. Second, all documentation used in this study was kept to ensure replication could be easily achieved utilizing the same or similar data. Third, while Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the results of this study and suggestions for future research, it is not intended to assume that the perceptions of the participants in this study are similar to the experiences of principals across the country at large. The results of this study are not valid for generalizations. Rather, they portray the experiences and perceptions of principals within this case study.
Chapter IV

Results

The results of this study will be addressed sequentially, as the data collection took place, and by research question. The research questions were:

1. What do principals perceive as their day-to-day roles and responsibilities?
   a. How has the COVID-19 pandemic influenced principals’ day-to-day roles and responsibilities?

2. How do principals spend their time?

3. How do the findings from research questions 1 and 2 align with principal job descriptions and evaluations?

Research Question 1: What do Principals Perceive as Their Day-to-day Roles and Responsibilities?

Answers to this question came from the semi-structured interviews with the elementary school principals. Principals were asked about their roles and responsibilities in general and then what they did on a typical day (see Appendix D for full interview protocol). The responses were coded utilizing Leithwood et al.’s (2004) framework. The two themes related to school leadership and day-to-day activities from Leithwood et al.’s (2004) framework are Classroom Conditions and School Conditions. The day-to-day roles and responsibilities are presented within these two themes and then additional items that principals gave that did not fit within these two themes are presented.
Classroom Conditions

Principals noted several day-to-day activities they participate in that have a direct influence on Classroom Conditions. These activities related either primarily to teachers or primarily to students.

Teachers. There were four teacher-related Classroom Conditions principals felt responsible for: classroom observations and evaluations, coaching teachers, PLC and team collaborations, and curriculum implementation. The most commonly mentioned and accepted teacher classroom condition-related responsibility or role of the principalship was observing or walking through classrooms. While all seven principals recognized that observing, walking through classrooms, and doing evaluations were part of their jobs, some found this easier to do than others. Ms. Timmer said, “I visit classrooms every day.” Ms. King said they assign their assistant principal much of the paperwork related to the principalship “because if not I’d be sitting in my office all day. I like to go out and be in the classrooms and so [the assistant principal] helps me with a lot of [the paperwork].” Mr. Miller not only concentrates on his teachers’ classrooms but also has made a special effort to check in on the substitutes in his building. However, Ms. Canton admitted that much of what she has been doing recently is sitting in her office doing paperwork. While she wishes she were in the classrooms more, she said “this year… I didn’t have any teachers that needed to have evaluations.” She went on to say, “That’s where I spent the least of my time this year. I had to make the effort to get out to the, into the classrooms and observe their teaching and be with the kids because it wasn’t something that was required of me this year.”
While perhaps intended implicitly by all of the principals, only two of the participants discussed coaching teachers and giving them feedback on their instruction. Ms. Ewell utilizes her instructional coach to coach teachers and give them feedback. Ms. King, however, gives a lot of feedback and coaching. After observing or walking through classrooms, Ms. King writes feedback to teachers on feedback cards or emails. On Fridays while teachers are planning, she “walk[s] around giving [teachers] feedback as well.

The feedback Ms. King gives is in addition to anything that might come up during PLC or team collaborations. Five principals (71.43%) noted that they work to spend time in PLC and/or team collaborations. However, it was unclear what their roles were in those PLC and team meetings, whether it was as an observer or that they tried to go help in the classrooms while teachers were in meetings. If these meetings included curriculum, it is likely that these principals participated in the meetings.

Curriculum for students was a high priority to many of the principals. Five of the principals (71.43%) discussed curriculum during their interviews. Three of them (42.86%) were particularly concerned with selecting and implementing social-emotional curriculum. Ms. Hunter referred to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, saying, “It doesn’t matter what we’re trying to teach them if their mind’s a mess and their heart’s a mess.” While her school had implemented a social-emotional curriculum, she did not feel that it was “enough” for the students, so she and a committee were looking to implement a new program in the upcoming year. Ms. King also would like to change her social-emotional curriculum but was unable to do so due to a lack of community support. “…our School Community Council advocated for something far more superficial.” In addition to
implementing a social-emotional curriculum, these principals also felt it was their role to ensure the core curriculum, as set by the state, is implemented in classrooms.

**Students.** While classroom observations and evaluations, coaching teachers, PLC and team collaborations, and curriculum implementation focus on the teacher aspect of Classroom Conditions, these principals also felt they had responsibilities for students in classrooms. These responsibilities were student assessments and Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings.

Student assessments were mentioned directly by two of the principals (28.57%). This is unsurprising as Readiness Improvement Success Empowerment testing (more commonly known as the RISE assessment) was set to begin within one month of the interviews taking place. One principal mentioned assessments as part of a school-wide effort to improve academically. The other used assessments to know “which kids are getting it, which kids need extra support, [and] which kids need some enrichment.” As for the actual testing and coordinating, Ms. Ewell said this is a responsibility they delegate to their instructional coordinator but that the primary responsibility for ensuring assessments take place lies with the principalship.

IEP meetings were also delegated but considered responsibilities of the principalship. Ms. King said “I have 150 students here on IEPs. I would be in a meeting if I didn’t share” with her assistant principal. Likewise, Ms. Hunter has “two classrooms full of students with IEPs.” While Ms. Hunter did not mention delegating IEPs to her assistant principal, she acknowledged that the district-adjusted COVID-19 schedule allowed for IEPs to take place when students are not in class.
Based on the interviews in this study, the Classroom Conditions that these principals are responsible for are classroom observations, coaching teachers, PLC and team collaborations, curriculum implementation, student assessments, and IEP meetings.

**School Conditions**

While the participating principals mentioned just a few things they were responsible for regarding Classroom Conditions, there were many roles and responsibilities mentioned regarding School Conditions. These roles and responsibilities were grouped by the following themes or categories: safety, needs and concerns, student activities, office-related activities, planning, formal meetings, and other School Conditions.

**Safety.** While four of the principals (57.14%) mentioned their roles regarding safety, Ms. Williams and Ms. Smith placed great emphasis on their beliefs that safety was important and a major responsibility for them as a principal by talking a lot about safety and coming back to safety throughout their interviews. When asked to talk about what their roles and responsibilities as a principal are, the first comment Ms. Williams gave was, “Safety was one of my top priorities. Making sure students, staff and everyone was safe and we had protocols in place for that…and then academics.” Likewise, Ms. Smith’s first comment was, “I always tell the students that I have two most important jobs and the first one is keeping them safe and the second one is making sure everyone’s learning.” While many of the comments principals gave regarding safety dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic, there were several other comments made about caring for the safety of everyone in the school. Safe walking routes or crosswalks, school entrance security,
student/faculty safety patrols, and environmental/psychological safety were each mentioned by a principal.

All four principals discussed safety in regard to COVID-19. Ms. King described the COVID-19 pandemic as bringing “a whole new definition” to safety. There were some challenges trying to meet pandemic guidelines. Ms. Williams said, “We had some real challenges in just coming up with the plan for our school, what it would look like, putting kids in school with masks on, the cleaning, the protocols of how to sit them at lunch, how to do rotations….” Mr. Miller explained that he “always chose the safest route possible.” This meant changing the way some classes were taught. In some cases, this created a feeling of strain or conflict between the principal’s responsibility to the safety of students and their responsibility to student learning. Ms. King lamented,

I’m now making decisions about what’s most safe instead of what’s best for kids’ learning. I feel like before [the pandemic], in my role, it was so easy ‘cause everything I did I could just say what is best for the kids and that’s how I try to make every decision. But now, what’s politically correct with the pandemic and mask-wearing, and then what’s best for kids. That’s sad that that’s had to happen.

Ms. King felt that the COVID-19 pandemic and the political dialogue and beliefs associated with it, including mask-wearing, was interfering in her ability to do “what’s best” for student instruction.

Needs and Concerns. Five principals (71.43%) described part of their responsibility as filling the needs and addressing the concerns of teachers, students, and parents/guardians. Ms. Emery described this responsibility as ensuring her building was “ready for learning.” When issues do come to her attention, she works to “address [stakeholder’s] concerns and their needs in the ways that are appropriate and…follow our district’s policy.” Another principal described the importance of meeting teacher, student,
and parent/guardian needs by saying, “As a principal...you will drop everything to deal with...student issues, parent issues, and staff.”

For the most part, principals generalized how they met the needs of teachers by stating that they provide them with resources and “listening.” However, Ms. Timmer explained that at her school, meeting the needs of students included putting meals together for students to take home for the weekend to ensure they would have something to eat while they were not in school. Addressing the needs and concerns of parents/guardians, like teachers, was primarily listening as well, but several principals also talked about engaging district officials in those conversations when parents/guardians did not seem satisfied with the answers the principals gave. Mr. Miller described a situation where a parent wanted to have a crosswalk location moved. After he was unable to satisfy the parent, he arranged for a district official to meet with them and discuss the situation. Although the parent did not get their way, Mr. Miller felt the situation ended on a good note because the parent “was at a level of understanding by the end.”

**Student Activities.** All seven principals (100%) discussed spending time at recess, school pickup/drop-off, or lunch duty. While some of them mentioned that this was something they tried to do (as opposed to required), Mr. Miller explained that he felt it was a major responsibility to “be visible” during these activities. He felt it “makes everyone’s job easier if I can have good PR [public relations].” Ms. Day felt it was a priority to “be with the kids. To be in the lunchroom, to be out at recess, to be in their classrooms as much as possible.” However, another principal spends as little time as possible “in the parking lot ‘cause I hate parking lot duty secretly in my heart.”
principal went on to explain that the layout of the parking lot is not set up well “and I don’t know how to fix it.” However, this same principal placed an emphasis on being in the lunchroom with the students.

**Office-Related Activities.** All seven principals (100%) discussed being responsible for several office-related responsibilities. Budgeting (including requisitions and purchasing), managing school resources, producing school newsletters and notices, coordinating testing, analyzing student data, completing federal, state, and district reports and paperwork, and maintaining school social media accounts were mentioned. Budgeting and social media accounts were most often mentioned in connection with some sort of delegation. For example, administrative assistants were mentioned as taking a part in purchasing, requisitions, and budgeting although the principals did take some part in the process. In regard to social media, one principal said, “I hate Facebook and Instagram so I always assign that to [the assistant principal] ‘cause I don’t, I just don’t care.”

While some of the office-related responsibilities may not be a priority for some principals, maintaining schoolwide contact with parents/guardians through newsletters and other office contacts was considered important. Ms. Canton described an incident that led her to realize she needed to be in more and different contact with parents/guardians throughout the year. She said, I do a thing here called positive office referral and the teachers nominate kids to come down to my office and we call their parents and talk to them about how awesome they are and I made a phone call…in late December, right before we went off on winter break and…I told the mom I was calling with a positive office referral and she’s like, ‘Oh. Do I have to come pick him up?’ And I knew then I’d been talking to too many parents about positive COVID tests as opposed to [anything else]. …So I realized at that point in time that families had gotten used
to hearing me calling with that instead and...[I] tried to really amp up communicating with parents in other ways too.

Ms. Canton found that her relationship with parents and guardians had been focused solely on COVID-related matters and that she needed to increase other forms of communication so her relationship with them would not be solely based on the pandemic. Most other office-related responsibilities were commented on in passing. Examples of these passing comments included “there’s also the...responsibility of budget,” “non-people related stuff like reports,” and “looking at data.”

Planning. Many of the comments related to planning were in relation to adapting to COVID-19 pandemic guidelines and creating procedures that aligned with those guidelines. Most principals described creating those procedures as difficult and one mentioned they used the procedures another principal in the district had created. Another principal felt immense pressure regarding these procedures. “I had nightmares. Like, these kids are going to get COVID and it’s going to be because of me and the guidelines that I put and the procedures that I made....” However, once school started this principal was able to relax as they found their procedures had worked. Different than the other principals, Ms. King felt confident and had little problem creating her school’s procedures. She explained that when the district made the decision that “we’re coming back in person, it was really clear and I...knew so clearly what my procedures were going to be.” She went on to say that there were “people unhappy with my plan” but that she was “happy with how the plan turned out.”

Apart from planning for COVID, Ms. Emery and Ms. Hunter described responsibilities to plan for the future needs of the school. This may have been more present in these two principals’ minds as Ms. Emery’s current position as an elementary
school principal is preparing to open a new school in the fall while Ms. Hunter just opened her new school this school year. Ms. Hunter took this responsibility seriously as she planned for the future in her purchasing. She said she tried to remember “that in 20 years whatever I buy will probably still be in use and I have to buy good quality or it won’t be there for the next generation.” In addition to planning purchases, Ms. Emery talked about planning academic goals and school expectations. Other principals talked about the need to create school improvement plans for this purpose.

Planning also included preparation for professional development trainings and faculty meetings for several principals. While a couple of principals delegated these meetings, others seemed to take these meetings on alone and prepare the necessary instruction and plans.

**Formal Meetings.** In order to care for School Conditions, these principals participated in several formal, pre-arranged meetings to both encourage and ensure the school ran smoothly. These meetings included staff, faculty, and leadership meetings, student meetings, School Community Council meetings, PTA meetings, and, in some cases, vendor meetings. All seven principals (100%) mentioned having regular meetings with the faculty in faculty and professional development meetings. However, based on the way in which they talked about professional development meetings, principals did not necessarily connect professional development meetings with direct implications in the classroom. Instead, principals talked about faculty meetings and professional development meetings as one meeting. One principal referred to such meetings as “whatever the [school] needs.” Further, principals discussed planning the agenda for such meetings, although one principal delegated professional development trainings to their
school coach, pending input from the principal. For this reason, professional development trainings and opportunities for teachers were categorized in the “School Conditions” category here and throughout the rest of the study.

In addition to faculty or professional development meetings, several principals also talked about having regular meetings with key staff including their assistant principal, instructional coach, administrative assistant, janitor, lunch manager, and school nurse. However, the consistency of meetings with the school nurse differed from school to school. One principal said, “I’ve never been in closer contact with our nurse than this year,” while another said their school’s nurse “spent most of her time helping the high school and middle school” because the nurse was assigned five or six elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school.

While several principals discussed having meetings with students, most of these meetings were on an as-needed basis. However, Ms. King does have regular meetings with students. “My favorite thing is to be like an incentive for kids. I have kids using their class money to…meet with me at lunch.” She described how she uses these lunch-time meetings to check in on the students.

Formal meetings with parents/guardians, aside from those scheduled by a parent/guardian, were described through School Community Council meetings and PTA meetings. Mr. Miller tries to “stay in close contact with our PTAs…. PTA meetings happen and I want to be there because I want to show that…we’re all in this same team together.” School-community council meetings were considered critical to Ms. Day who “had to put together a temporary school community council so that we can get our land trust plan written.”
Unlike all of the formal meetings with teachers, students, and parents/guardians, meeting with vendors is common for elementary principals who are opening or who have recently opened a new school. Both Ms. Day and Ms. Hunter described meeting with multiple vendors to buy furniture, books, and other school supplies. Those principals whose schools have been running for a while did not mention the need to meet with vendors.

**Other School Conditions.** There were a few responsibilities related to School Conditions discussed by six principals (85.81%) that did not fit in the previous categories. These included communicating expectations, maintaining a positive learning environment, enforcing school policies, building relationships, and problem-solving school-related issues.

Three principals (42.86%) talked specifically about the need to communicate expectations and ensure those expectations were known to teachers, students, and parents/guardians. Ms. Hunter talked about how the pandemic led her and the school to work hard communicating the COVID-19 expectations from the beginning not only to students and parents/guardians, but to teachers and staff as well. Apart from COVID-related expectations, Ms. Timmer talked about the importance of “putting expectations on teachers to keep them accountable and to help our students…achieve.”

Part of helping students achieve was described by these three principals as maintaining a positive learning environment. Ms. King said, “Culture is my job to set up at my school…I can help to set the tone for how students and teachers treat each other and how this…environment feels for students and for staff members.” Ms. Timmer described how when she was assigned to Bell Elementary, the school environment was
poor and bullying was common. Since then she said she has “created an excellence team that focuses on culture and climate.” Ms. Day’s “main focus is to create [a] positive climate at the school” as she opens the doors of the school to students next year.

Five principals (71.43%) described enforcing school policies as part of their roles as a principal. Ms. Emery described following district policies as a constant “that won’t ever change no matter what’s going on in the climate and community.” Another principal felt that their responsibility to enforce district policy was part of her employment agreement. Some of the principals made references to not enjoying this responsibility. One principal described her enforcement of mask-wearing as “play[ing] hardball” and being “very rigid.” Other principals talked about having meetings with students or teachers when school policies were not being followed.

Principals who talked about having policy-related conversations felt that these conversations were easier to have because they had good relationships with students and staff. One principal, when talking about their staff, said, “I love them and I think they love me.” Ms. King felt that her responsibility went beyond having her own good relationships with students and faculty. She wanted to “enable [teachers] to have better relationships with students” because it was something they “need[ed] to be able to do their job in the best way.” Mr. Miller felt that creating relationships with parents/guardians was important as well so that they could “take care of [concerns] as quickly as possible” and reduce any escalation that may result from an “angry parent.”

Finally, four principals (57.14%) mentioned that they felt it was their responsibility to problem-solve school-related issues. Ms. Canton felt that one of the skills that helped her prepare to have unusual circumstances occur within her role as a
principal was that she is “a problem solver. I’m always looking for…a different way of
doing it, thinking outside of the box and just being flexible with whatever needs to
happen during the day.” Ms. King said, “I feel like I spend most of my time on problem-
solving. Problem-solving with parents who have an issue or with a teacher issue, or with
student issues….”

*Other Roles and Responsibilities*

There were many roles and responsibilities principals felt were part of their jobs
that did not fit directly within the Classroom Conditions or School Conditions categories.
These responsibilities fit within the following categories: personal professional learning,
communications, community, facilities, other district-related responsibilities, and self-
care.

*Personal Professional Learning.* Four principals (57.14%) discussed their own
personal professional learning. These principals seemed to agree that they were
responsible for their own continuous learning, particularly in regard to learning about the
curriculum teachers are teaching. However, not all of them felt that they had the time to
do so on a regular basis because unless the principal sets time aside on their own or the
district mandates participation in a professional learning course, time is not set aside
specifically for principal professional learning opportunities. One principal said that they
always attend district-required professional development trainings because “I always
want to be up to speed” but that they generally passed on any professional development
opportunities that were extra or optional. Other principals described attending optional
professional development training groups or courses offered by a local university. Some
of the less-experienced principals described working with a district-assigned mentor.
Another way principals worked to continue their learning is through networking. Six principals (85.71%) mentioned they felt that they could pick up the phone and call any elementary principal in the district at any time and that principal would be willing to work with them on any issue. Ms. Timmer said, “I feel like I could call any principal at any time for anything…and they call me too…Our district administration is so supportive.” This networking, reportedly, goes beyond other principals. Mr. Miller explained,

There’s people at the school district that can help, that are well versed in their different topics that we get to cover each day and…I can call them and ask them for help or guidance. Even if they don't have the answer…they can point me in the direction of someone at the district who can answer my question.…That’s my biggest resource…just my, my phone list that I have behind my desk.

Mr. Miller felt that his network went beyond other school principals to anyone at the district office and that they would be there and willing to help with whatever he might need.

**Communications.** As mentioned previously, principals feel they are responsible for communication to the entire school on a regular basis. However, emails and phone calls from individuals (stakeholders and non-stakeholders) were also mentioned by six principals (85.71%). Multiple principals mentioned that they like to get to the school early so they can “sort through some of [their] email.” However, one principal stated, “I don’t usually get to emails until 9….Most emails don’t get answered until I get home.” This principal felt they had to do this to “keep a well-functioning school.”

**Community.** Though the COVID-19 pandemic reduced the frequency of visits, principals mentioned entertaining visitors to the school as part of their responsibilities.

Ms. Hunter mentioned that in a non-COVID year a new school like Hook Elementary
would expect to be “inundated with all kinds of stuff that I didn’t know [was] coming” such as district and state visitors or television crews.

**Facilities.** Not only are principals responsible for the people in the school, two principals (28.57%) discussed responsibility for the facilities and materials inside the school. Ms. Emery explained, “I feel like I have a huge amount of trust for my building custodian and my…admin assistant, so I think I probably spend the least amount of time on…facility-related things and ordering and supply and all that kind of stuff.” However, this delegated responsibility still becomes a part of the principal’s day-to-day role when facility upgrades take place. For instance, Mr. Miller described a recent experience when the custodian pulled him aside to approve work on security upgrades with the installer.

**Other District-Related Responsibilities.** Every principal (100%) mentioned at least one district-related responsibility that did not fit in any other category. These ranged from monthly pre-arranged meetings with the principal’s supervisor to principals’ meetings. It should be noted that some of the principals felt that their principals’ meetings were a type of professional development while others felt they were informational meetings instead. The principals ambiguously described attending other state and district meetings and the responsibility of traveling to these meetings throughout the school day. In the case of these district-related responsibilities, it was unclear whether they were directly related to Classroom Conditions or School Conditions.

**Self-Care.** While self-care was only mentioned by one principal (14.29%), this principal felt it was a principal’s responsibility to “take care of ourselves.” This principal went on to say “I never had to worry much before the pandemic but since the pandemic just taking care of…your own mental state, that became more of an issue than the actual
job for me.” It was interesting to see that this principal felt self-care was not only important but the responsibility of a principal.

In summary, these seven principals perceived they had many day-to-day roles and responsibilities. Their day-to-day responsibilities toward Classroom Conditions primarily revolved around helping teachers and students. Safety, individuals’ needs and concerns, student activities, office work, planning, and formal meetings were the primary day-to-day responsibilities principals perceived regarding School Conditions. Principals also felt they had some responsibilities that were not necessarily directly related to Classroom Conditions or School Conditions, including personal professional learning, daily communications, community relations, facilities, additional district responsibilities, and self-care.

Research Question 1a. How has the COVID-19 Pandemic Influenced Principals’ Day-to-day Roles and Responsibilities?

In Question 3 of the interview protocol (see Appendix D), I asked the seven participating principals, “Have your roles and responsibilities changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?” Four principals (57.14%) answered that the COVID-19 pandemic has changed their roles and responsibilities while the others said their roles and responsibilities did not change but the amount of time they spent on different responsibilities did.

Ms. Emery was a new principal this year and so does not have pre-COVID principal experience to rely on. However, she said she felt like some of her roles will change in the future if the COVID pandemic is contained. These roles include “contact tracing and quarantining of kids.” She described that early in the school year she spent a
lot of time “calling parents and notifying parents with letters from the health department.” Ms. Hunter agreed that her duties have changed due to the pandemic. She noted that, along with contact tracing, she felt a responsibility to keep “misinformation at bay and mak[e] sure parents have the correct information and the community.” Ms. Hunter added that there were many “little things” that were added to her responsibilities towards the school, such as procedure planning and implementation and assigning COVID-related tasks. Ms. King also felt her roles and responsibilities changed because “keeping kids safe – there’s a whole new definition to that now, right?” She also described her role as principal as being impacted by the community’s “lax approach to COVID-19” and mask-wearing. Not being able to engage with the community was something Ms. Timmer described as influencing her roles and responsibilities. Assemblies and yearly school celebrations were canceled or revamped. Ms. Timmer described doing assemblies “after school through…Zoom” because of social distancing and visitor policies.

The other three principals (48.86%) said that the COVID-19 pandemic did not change their roles and responsibilities. Ms. Day said that the pandemic “added some more, a new dynamic…and some more work, but I don’t know that it changed my roles and responsibilities….It was important to me to develop relationships with the kids. I was still able to do that.” While it was Ms. Canton’s first year as a principal, she felt that her “roles and responsibilities will stay the same, but I think how we’ve done it this year…will change.” Specifically, she discussed changing procedures for student interactions. Mr. Miller summed up this idea about COVID-19 roles and responsibilities by saying, “I guess I wouldn’t say [they] changed entirely, but…what areas of my job
have required more time – that has changed.” He then spoke of contact tracing and social distancing procedures as responsibilities he has spent more time on.

Regardless of whether or not principals felt that they had additional or different roles and responsibilities as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, all seven principals described responsibilities that would only have been required or needed during a pandemic. For example, Mr. Miller made great efforts to visit substitute teachers because of the pandemic situation.

…I guess in some cases we did have more subs because sometimes our staff needed to be quarantined and sometimes it was for a more long-term thing, and so maybe this year, more than other years, I really wanted to be in closer contact with our subs so I knew what our sub situation was.

Mr. Miller’s checking in with substitutes, due to quarantining, meant he spent more time checking in on those substitutes than he had during other school years.

Ms. Hunter felt that she spent more time dealing with student behavior than in the past. This, she said, was keeping her from spending as much time as she would like to in classrooms. “I am used to being in classrooms a lot more and this year not as much. Part of it has [been] this increased amount of student behavior that I’m seeing.” She has felt the COVID has been a “disruption to life. So that looks like increased anxiety, increased behavior in students. Faculty members as well. Me.” However, at Mr. Miller’s school he has seen the opposite effect. He said that “this year…the number of office referrals I’ve had, it was crazy. Like just looking at the first month of school…a year ago I had like 30 something office referrals….This first month of school I only had like two.” He attributed this decrease in misbehavior to the students’ desire to be in school as opposed to the online virtual learning that took place in the Spring of 2020.
Another significant change in responsibilities for some of the principals was that they were in charge of observing or supervising students who were virtual and the teachers who were teaching them. Principals mentioned that they had students who typically attended their school onsite but were online this year at the request of parents/guardians. One school had over 200 students enroll for virtual learning. With the exception of that school, the other principals noted that the number of online students shrunk and on-site students grew throughout the school year. The number of teachers principals were responsible for ranged from zero to 10. One principal noted that they had a teacher who taught online but there were not enough students from the school who enrolled for online learning so the teacher was teaching students from another school while still reporting to their original school.

Supervising and observing online teachers and students seemed difficult for all of the principals with that responsibility. One principal said, “I never had to worry about being an online principal…but now that’s kind of necessary.” Another principal noted, “Now I’m supposed to be doing online observations,” but none of the principals acted like they had done this as often as they felt they should have. One principal lamented that managing online students and teachers “was ambiguous to me and I thought it was difficult…I had what was going in in the building already…and so I almost feel like I[‘ve] neglected them and, unless there was a fire to put out, I [haven’t felt] like I gave them much attention.”

In summary, there was some discrepancy among principals as to whether the pandemic had influenced their roles and responsibilities as a whole, but all of them mentioned things they spent more or less time on due to the influence of the pandemic.
These major time adaptations included contact tracing and quarantining, student behavior, and supervising online teachers and students.

**Research Question 2: How do Principals Spend their Time?**

This question was answered through a quantitative descriptive analysis of the Time Reflection that was completed by six of the participating principals. The Time Reflection was administered every day over the course of 15 school days (three weeks) beginning April 12 and ending April 30. Principals were sent an email reminder every day between 11:30 a.m. and 12:15 p.m. While the dates of completion were not used in the statistical analysis, it is worth seeing that the number of completed Time Reflections did vary from day to day, as shown in Table 3. It should also be noted that although principals were asked to do the Time Reflection each day, some principals completed the Time Reflection afterward, though no more than two days afterward. Table 4 shows the rate of completion from each principal.

**Table 3**

*Percentage of Time Reflections Completed by Day*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>4 (67%)</td>
<td>6 (100%)</td>
<td>6 (100%)</td>
<td>5 (100%)</td>
<td>4 (80%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>3 (60%)</td>
<td>5 (100%)</td>
<td>3 (60%)</td>
<td>2 (40%)</td>
<td>5 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>4 (80%)</td>
<td>5 (100%)</td>
<td>3 (60%)</td>
<td>3 (60%)</td>
<td>2 (40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11 (69%)</td>
<td>16 (100%)</td>
<td>12 (75%)</td>
<td>10 (67%)</td>
<td>11 (73%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The percentage complete was measured based on how many principals had the possibility of completing the Time Reflection, which was six for April 12-14 and five for April 15-30.
Table 4

*Time Reflection Completion Rate by Principal*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal’s Name (School)</th>
<th>Days Completed</th>
<th>Percentage Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Day (Aspire)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Hunter (Hook)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. King (Mann)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Miller (Jefferson)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Canton (Washington)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Timmer (Bell)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As demonstrated in Tables 3 and 4, most participants completed the survey over half of the days. When the notification email was sent to participants informing them of the exact start date, Ms. Hunter informed me she was only able to complete the first three days of the Time Reflection due to a medical procedure that had been moved up by a month. Additionally, a principal emailed me that they had stayed home from work one day (though they still answered emails and did other work) and that there were two days that they would be at a conference. While this principal was instructed that they could still fill out the Time Reflection, other principals may not have done so if they found themselves in similar circumstances.

As shown in Appendix F, the Time Reflection asked principals to estimate how much time they had spent that day on particular responsibilities. These responsibilities were clumped into themes (Classroom Conditions, School Conditions, and other) and subthemes (including those used to answer Research Question 1) that were taken from the semi-structured interviews with all seven principals, the district’s job description for principals, and the Utah Model Principal Evaluation System Rubric. The instructions for the Time Reflection asked principals to select, from the time ranges provided, how much time they had spent on each item that day. The time ranges were 1-15 minutes, 15-30
minutes, 31-60 minutes, 1-2 hours, and 3+ hours. The instructions also told principals to leave blank any items they did not participate in that day. At the end of each section or subsection of the Time Reflection, optional items were provided so that principals could add items they participated in but may not have been listed. At the end of the Time Reflection, principals were asked if there were any other things that they spent their time on and how much time was spent. Because the principals had been given the opportunity to place these things under one of the three sections (Classroom Conditions, School Conditions, and other), these were placed in the “optional items” sections in the Other category for the quantitative analysis.

Because principals were asked to estimate using time ranges provided to them, data is provided for the median, mode, high, and low for each item. A mean was not considered appropriate since principals were unable to specify exactly how much time they had spent on each responsibility. Further, in large group analysis, such as analysis by heading or subheading, non-answers to “optional items” were not included in order to reduce possible skewing. Table 5 is a summary of the findings for the Time Reflection headings.
Table 5

*Time Reflection Findings by Category*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Classroom Conditions</th>
<th>School Conditions</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count (n)</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>3020</td>
<td>1329</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Classroom Conditions</th>
<th>School Conditions</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 minutes</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>1011</td>
<td>457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-15 minutes</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>1287</td>
<td>602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-30 minutes</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-60 minutes</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 hours</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+ hours</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 5, principals were more likely to recall spending 1-15 minutes on particular tasks with the Classroom Conditions, School Conditions, and other headings, followed by no time at all. A comparison of the subheadings under School Conditions and other are provided in Tables 6 and 7.
Table 6

Time Reflection Findings for School Conditions Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Safety</th>
<th>Faculty/Staff support</th>
<th>Student Activities</th>
<th>Concerns/Issues</th>
<th>Office Related</th>
<th>Planning</th>
<th>Formal Meetings</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count (n)</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>480</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Safety</th>
<th>Faculty/Staff support</th>
<th>Student Activities</th>
<th>Concerns/Issues</th>
<th>Office Related</th>
<th>Planning</th>
<th>Formal Meetings</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 minutes</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-15 minutes</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-30 minutes</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-60 minutes</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 hours</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+ hours</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7

Time Reflection Findings for Other Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Personal PD</th>
<th>District Personnel</th>
<th>Additional Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count (n)</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 minutes</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-15 minutes</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-30 minutes</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-60 minutes</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 hours</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+ hours</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To answer Research Question 2 regarding how principals spend their time, it is also necessary to examine how many different activities principals participated in. An analysis was done examining the average number of activities that were participated in by day and by principal. Table 8 shows statistics regarding the number of tasks principals participated in each day throughout the three-week period.
Table 8

Tasks Recorded in Time Reflection Daily

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4/12/2021</td>
<td>71.5</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/13/2021</td>
<td>48.333</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/14/2021</td>
<td>48.167</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/15/2021</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/16/2021</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/19/2021</td>
<td>79.667</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/20/2021</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/21/2021</td>
<td>35.333</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/22/2021</td>
<td>79.5</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/23/2021</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/26/2021</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/27/2021</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/28/2021</td>
<td>56.667</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/29/2021</td>
<td>56.667</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/30/2021</td>
<td>79.5</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of tasks participated in each day ranged from four to 83 tasks per day with an average of 53.55 tasks completed each day. The average number of tasks was the least on Tuesday, April 27. Interestingly, all five available principals that day completed the Time Reflection. Two of those principals spent large amounts of time (more than one hour) in personal professional development opportunities and two other principals spent large amounts of time working with district personnel, collaborating with other principals, or meeting with their supervisor.

The greatest number of average tasks participated in took place on Monday, April 19, followed closely by Thursday, April 22, and Friday, April 30. On all three dates, two common principals completed the Time Reflection – Ms. Canton and Ms. Timmer. These two teachers accounted for the highest average number of activities participated in across
all teachers, as seen in Table 9. Mr. Miller averaged the fewest number of activities per day.

Table 9

*Tasks Completed Daily by Principal*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Day</td>
<td>53.909</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Timmer</td>
<td>80.154</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Hunter</td>
<td>33.333</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. King</td>
<td>16.375</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Miller</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Canton</td>
<td>79.533</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9 demonstrates that while some principals participated in a wide range from few to many activities in a day, such as Ms. Day (79) and Ms. Hunter (72), other principals participated in a smaller range of activities such as Ms. Canton (5), Ms. King (11) and Ms. Timmer (12). The average number of activities participated in a day across all principals was 53.55. Ms. Day’s average activities were nearest to the overall total.

Research Question 2 asked how principals spend their time. Overall, the Time Reflection showed that principals spent a great deal of time on School Conditions, followed by other activities. Principals were least likely to report spending time on Classroom Conditions. Within their participation in School Conditions, principals were most likely to spend the greatest amounts of time (three or more hours each day) on planning or other activities. The most frequent response to every activity across all three themes was that principals spent 1-15 minutes each day participating in each activity. The average number of activities participated in each day was 53.55. However, when separated by principal, Table 9 showed that there was a wide range in average tasks per day depending upon the principal.
Research Question 3: How do the Findings from Research Questions 1 and 2 align with Principal Job Descriptions and Evaluations?

To answer this question, this section will be split into two sections. The first will demonstrate how the quantitative and qualitative findings previously presented align with the job description from Rockcliff School District. The second will demonstrate how the same findings aligned with the Utah Model Principal Evaluation Rubric.

District Job Description

While Rockcliff School District’s job description is provided in Appendix G, this section will address each piece of the job description through the three themes used to answer the previous research questions: Classroom Conditions, School Conditions, and Other Conditions.

Classroom Conditions. Five items from the job description related to Classroom Conditions: (1) supervising instructional programs, (2) monitoring instructional effectiveness, (3) developing, implementing, and supervising instructional programs, (4) implementing assessment, and (5) developing and implementing student behavior and discipline programs. Table 10 shows whether these items were addressed in the semi-structured interviews or the Time Reflection.

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Description Item</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Time Reflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Supervising instructional programs</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Monitoring instructional effectiveness</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Developing, implementing and supervising instructional programs</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Implementing assessments</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Developing and implementing student behavior and discipline programs</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As shown in Table 10, principals reported having participated in all five classroom condition-related job description items. Evidence for each item from the interviews came from the principals’ descriptions of observing classrooms, providing feedback to teachers, and selecting and implementing instructional and student behavior curriculum and programs as provided in detail under Research Question 1.

Evidence for Items 1, 2, 3, and 5 came from questions 2, 3, 6, and 7 of the Time Reflection. There was a total of 60 responses from all principals. While most of the responses indicated principals spent 1-15 minutes on Items 1-3 of their job descriptions, there were 11 indications that principals spent 15-30 minutes observing or walking through classrooms, four responses that 31-60 minutes were spent in a single day, and three responses that the principals spent 1-2 hours observing or walking through classrooms. Further, there were three responses that principals spent three or more hours in PLC or other team collaborations and three more responses that principals spent 1-2 hours in similar meetings. While principals reported spending less time on Item 3 from the job description, regarding assessments, there were only 18 responses (30%) that principals spent no time on student assessments.

Overall, both the semi-structured interview and Time Reflection provided evidence that principals are participating in their Classroom Conditions-related duties as given by their job descriptions.

**School Conditions.** Ten items on Rockcliff’s principal job description aligned with School Conditions. Table 11 and the following individual-item descriptions demonstrate evidence that principals participated in all of the school condition-related job description items.
### Table 11

*Evidence for School Condition Job Descriptions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Description Item</th>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Time Reflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Develop, implement, and manage appropriate budgets to provide fiscal accountability</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Assist in the preparation of reports and recommendations regarding administrative activities and assist others in such requests from the district</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Determine educational needs</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Provide leadership and direction to school operations and activities</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Disseminate information to employees and media regarding the school</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Utilize parents/community members as volunteers and committee members</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Implement and direct personnel programs and assist the district HR department with employment and employee discipline</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Implement staff professional development</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Develop and implement procedures, policies, and guidelines for physical school facilities usage.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Develop short- and long-term plans, implement the plans and evaluate their effectiveness</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Items 1 and 2 fall into the office-related subcategory of School Conditions.

Regarding budgets, every principal reported either in the semi-structured interviews or in the Time Reflection that they spent time working on budgets. Out of the 60 possible occurrences, principals worked on their budgets 43 times (71.67%). On most of the days, principals did spend time on budgets, they spent 15-30 minutes with them, though two of the occurrences were reported to have spent 30-60 minutes. Interestingly, budgets must have seemed like an important role to principals since six of the seven principals mentioned budgeting early on in the interviews yet at the time of the Time Reflection, little time was actually spent on budgets.
The other item related to office work was reports regarding administrative activities. While principals talked about doing state or district reports, no mention was made of reports dealing with their administrative responsibilities. The Time Reflection did ask principals how much time they were spending on paperwork or reports both related to and not related to federal, state, or district reports (that are delineated separately due to comments made in the semi-structured interviews and analysis of the job description and Utah Model Principal Evaluation). Both of these items on the Time Reflection showed that principals typically spent under 30 minutes working on reports. However, it is unclear and unknown whether these reports were related to administrative responsibilities.

Item 3 from the job description fell into the planning subcategory. Both the semi-structured interview and Time Reflection results provided evidence that principals do work to determine educational needs. For example, Ms. Day described taking assessment data and analyzing it “to know which kids are getting it, which kids need extra support, which kids need some enrichment.” Principals reported spending a great deal of time planning for the future needs of their schools. There were 10 occurrences when principals reported spending 3+ hours on the future needs of the school, seven occurrences when they spent 1-2 hours, 14 when 30-60 minutes were spent, and 18 occurrences of 15-30 minutes. Additional time was spent using data to determine the school’s needs, although most principals reported only spending 1-15 minutes on these tasks.

Item 4 – providing leadership and direction to school operations and activities – is a vague description that could encompass many responsibilities of the principalship. For the purposes of this analysis, the analysis of this description was narrowed to providing
leadership for student activities, though it should be noted that this is only an example of one way this descriptor could be interpreted. Student activities, such as lunchroom duty, recess duty, student drop-off and student pick-up, were mentioned both in the semi-structured interview and in the Time Reflection. Principals rarely spent more than 15 minutes participating in these activities each day. Principals were most likely to spend more time supervising students in the lunchroom than anywhere else. However, a couple of other student activities principals reported spending time on were student reading activities and a “Principal’s Book Club.”

Item 5 was split between the faculty or staff support category subcategory and office-related activities category. Disseminating information to staff fell into the formal meetings subcategory as most information from the district would be disseminated in faculty meetings. Principals talked about faculty meetings but mostly to say they planned or helped plan the meetings and attended them. Most principals reported on the Time Reflection that they only spent 1-15 minutes in faculty meetings, although there were four occurrences that were 1-2 hours and one more that was 30-60 minutes.

Disseminating information to media was part of the office-related activities subcategory. While, as previously mentioned, one principal did comment about the possibility of meeting with the news media due to opening a new school, most principals disseminated information to social media. Facebook and Instagram were most commonly mentioned by principals. According to the Time Reflection, principals were most likely to spend 1-15 minutes on this responsibility, but no one spent over 30 minutes. There were 20 occurrences where principals spent no time working on the school’s social media.
Item 6 discusses using parents and community members to volunteer and work on committees. Due to COVID-19 district guidelines, there have been “no volunteers in our building[s] this year.” Despite this fact, parents/guardians and community members have still been asked to work on committees for the school including the PTA and school community council. These groups were mentioned in the semi-structured interviews and were placed in the formal meetings subcategory. Principals met with one or both of these groups just over half of the days the Time Reflection was administered but for no more than 30 minutes (60% school community council, 55% PTA).

Like Item 4, Item 7’s description - implement and direct personnel programs and assist the district HR department with employment and employee discipline – is very broad. For the purposes of analysis, this study focused on hiring and disciplinary practices principals engaged in. Several principals talked in the semi-structured interview about hiring for the upcoming year. One principal was hiring for the current school year due to the sudden death of one of the lunch workers, despite the fact that school was only in session for another two to three months. Only one principal discussed potential disciplinary measures they were forced to take with one of their teachers. Additionally, two principals talked about having to release teachers from their contracts at the school or encourage them to look for positions at other schools in the district due to a lack of enrollment for the upcoming school year.

Staffing fell into the faculty or staff subsections on the Time Reflection. Principals reported 44 occurrences (73.33%) of participating in staffing activities. While 23 occurrences only took 1-15 minutes and 12 took 15-30 minutes, six occurrences took 30-60 minutes and three took 1-2 hours. In one of the “optional items” sections on the
Time Reflection, one principal described having “a major concern with a teacher that could lead to job action.” This item took, according to the principal, 45 minutes.

Item 8 discusses staff professional development meetings, which fits under the formal meetings subcategory. Several of the principals mentioned planning and attending faculty professional development meetings in their interviews. In the Time Reflection, principals reported spending time most days in faculty professional learning or development. However, half of all reports on how much time principals spent in faculty professional learning or development was for only 1-15 minutes. Only five reports were 15-30 minutes, two reports were for 31-60 minutes, and one was for 1-2 hours.

Item 9 - develop and implement procedures, policies, and guidelines for physical school facilities usage – envelops several items from several subcategories. Facility usage includes how teachers and students use the facilities during school but also includes how those facilities are used outside of the school day. This section will address usage during the school day while outside of the school day will be addressed in the Other category. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, principals discussed procedures for facility use during school through the lens of COVID-19 guidelines and procedures. Principals talked about making changes in their “recess procedures” and “lunch procedures” because “we’re trying to keep kids in their classes…to minimize the contact.” For instance, “only one grade level [was allowed] in the lunchroom at a time.” Within the Time Reflection, these procedures fit within the planning subcategory. Principals reported 19 occurrences of spending 1-15 minutes creating schedules (which would include planning for the use of facilities), procedures, and guidelines. They reported nine occurrences of spending 15-30 minutes, seven occurrences when they spent 31-60 minutes, and three occurrences of 1-2
hours. One principal spent 3+ hours one day on creating schedules, procedures, and guidelines.

Item 10 focuses on planning, implementing, and evaluating plans. This item encompasses all of the previous items. The evidence provided from the semi-structured interviews and Time Reflection for each of the preceding items demonstrates evidence that principals participate in the planning, implementation and evaluation of short- and long-term plans.

**Other Conditions.** Eighteen of the 31 items in Rockcliff School District’s job description do not align with either Classroom Conditions or School Conditions. Table 12 shows the job description items along with whether the item was discussed by principals in the semi-structured interviews and whether principals recorded spending time doing those activities.
Table 12

Evidence for Other Condition Job Descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job Description Items</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Time Reflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Continuous learning regarding research and best practices in curriculum and instruction</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Comply with district goals, policies and guidelines</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Implement parental progress reporting systems as directed by the district</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Administer enrollment and attendance policies and procedures</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Maintain proper student records</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Respond to community problems and concerns (as needed)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Implement a systemic approach to public relations</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Provide professional educational leadership to the community</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Develop and implement procedures, policies and guidelines for physical school facilities usage</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Follow district guidelines and manage usage of the distribution and inventory of instructional materials</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Maintain and protect records in a secure location and maintain student and employee confidentiality</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Assist in school boundary changes and coordination of student assignments</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Implement and comply to state and federal programs and projects</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Represent the district at local, state, and national meetings</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Participate in professional organizations where appropriate</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Attend meetings outside of normal work hours</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Travel using own method of transportation</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Punctuality and regular daily attendance required</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item 1 designates continuous learning as part of the principal’s responsibility. In both the interviews and in the Time Reflection, principals showed evidence that they felt
it was part of their responsibility to continually learn about best practices. One principal felt it was important to be “up to speed on programs” because they did not feel “teachers will respect me if I don’t know my stuff.” In the Time Reflection, there were nine responses from principals indicating they had spent 3+ hours learning about best practices or new curriculum.

The semi-structured interview and Time Reflection were unable to measure whether principals were fulfilling Items 2 or 3 – compliance with district direction and implementation of parental progress reporting systems. The semi-structured interview was created prior to the selection of Rockcliff School District as the case for this study and the purpose of the interview was to determine what principals perceived as their day-to-day roles and responsibilities. The Time Reflection’s purpose was to gain an understanding of how much time principals spent on their roles and responsibilities. Since principals either comply with Items 2 and 3 or do not, it was not possible to measure these in this study.

Item 4 describes implementing enrollment and attendance policies. Principals discussed enrollment and attendance in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. Several principals discussed trying to sort out at what time periods, as well as how many students could be enrolled in, on-site classes (coming from online). Additionally, as one principal pointed out, “Attendance has been a huge issue this year.” This was in part due to school-required quarantining. However, a principal pointed out that for some “it’s just families that are choosing to keep kids home.” Despite the attendance issue, the Time Reflection showed that on half of the reported days, principals only spent 1-15 minutes on both
enrollment and attendance. Further, principals reported spending no time on enrollment and attendance 24 times.

Items 5 and 11 are closely related in that they relate to securing records and keeping confidential student and faculty information. None of the principals discussed student records or confidentiality in the semi-structured interview. On the Time Reflection, principals recorded spending 1-15 minutes maintaining records 35 times. There was only one occurrence that took more than 15 minutes.

Item 6 refers to responding to community needs and concerns. Principals did not mention responding to community needs and concerns outside of the students that they were responsible for and the students’ parents/guardians. Further, no evidence was shown in the Time Reflection that principals worked to respond to community needs or concerns outside of the students and their parents/guardians.

Item 7 requires principals to implement a systemic approach to public relations. While principals did talk about the importance of public relations, stating that “PR is a big part of my job,” none of the principals mentioned implementing a particular approach to public relations. Nothing was mentioned in the Time Reflection about approaches to public relations either.

Providing educational leadership to the community is Item 8 from the job description. While two principals mentioned being a face for the school in their interviews, none of them mentioned being an educational leader outside of the immediate school setting. On the Time Reflection, principals recorded spending time, albeit minimal, acting as a community educational leader. One of the recorded occurrences took 31-60 minutes, while 15 took 15-30 minutes and 20 took 1-15 minutes.
Item 9 - develop and implement procedures, policies and guidelines for physical school facilities usage – was a descriptor that was split between this, the other, section and the School Conditions section. This section focused on the implementation of physical school usage, in particular usage of school facilities outside of regular school hours. This was not mentioned at all by principals during the semi-structured interviews. In the Time Reflection, there were 24 recorded occurrences where principals did not spend any time overseeing facility use outside of school hours. There were 35 occurrences where principals spent 1-15 minutes and only one occurrence when a principal spent 15-30 minutes overseeing facility use outside of school hours.

Item 10 focuses on distributing and inventorying school materials. In the semi-structured interviews, one principal mentioned that Chromebooks were checked out to online students. No other mention was made regarding distributing or inventorying school materials. In the Time Reflection, principals spent little time inventorying materials, with 35 occurrences of 1-15 minutes and one occurrence of 15-30 minutes.

There was no evidence that principals provided assistance in boundary changes (Item 12) from the semi-structured interview or the Time Reflection. Ms. Day and Ms. Hunter both mentioned boundary changes in their interviews due to their roles opening new schools, but they did not discuss having a role in the decision-making regarding those changes or any responsibility regarding coordinating changes for students.

Item 13 focuses on the implementation of federal and state programs. The only state or federal program principals mentioned in their semi-structured interviews was participating in IEP meetings which is a part of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), a federal law and program. Some principals described spending a
great deal of time in IEP meetings. On the Time Reflection, principals were asked about IEP meetings as part of the Classroom Conditions category. However, not all state or federal programs are directly associated with classrooms, hence this job description item’s inclusion here. Principals recorded 27 occurrences where they spent 1-15 minutes in IEP meetings, two occurrences of 15-30 minutes, four occurrences of 30-60 minutes, one occurrence of 1-2 hours, and one occurrence of 3+ hours. When principals were asked how much time they spent managing district, state, or federal programs, principals spent far less time on those than on IEP meetings, with 32 occurrences of 1-15 minutes and four occurrences of 15-30 minutes.

Principals did not specifically mention representing the district at local, state, or national meetings, as listed in Item 14. However, one principal talked about attending a professional learning meeting hosted by a local university for principals in the area. In such a meeting, it would be known that this principal worked for Rockcliff School District and, as an employee, they would then be a representative, to some extent, of Rockcliff School District. So it would be at any educational meeting, whether a local, state, or national meeting. When asked if principals attended meetings other than district principal meetings in the Time Reflection, most principals reported they spent 15 minutes or less. However, there were seven occurrences reported when principals spent 3+ hours in such meetings. For one of these occurrences, a principal noted that they had spent all day at the university’s professional learning meeting that they spoke of in the semi-structured interview and had given a presentation in the meeting.

Similar to Item 14, Item 15 pertains to principals’ participation in professional organizations as appropriate. The university-sponsored professional learning meeting is
part of a professional organization, and thus the evidence provided for Item 14 demonstrates that at least one principal did participate in a professional organization.

Item 16 refers to attending meetings outside of regular work hours. While principals spoke of attending meetings as part of their roles and responsibilities in the semi-structured interviews, none of them mentioned whether any of these meetings took place outside of the regular workday. Since the Time Reflection measured only amounts of time spent rather than what time of the day, it was unable to measure whether principals were attending meetings outside of regular work hours. Therefore, there was no evidence given that principals spent time outside of their regular work hours at meetings.

Traveling to other schools or district facilities was Item 17 of the job description. Principals did not mention traveling to other facilities during the semi-structured interviews. However, principals did record spending time on travel in the Time Reflection. There were 31 occurrences listed as spending 1-15 minutes in traveling to other schools or district facilities, five occurrences of spending 15-30 minutes, one occurrence of 30-60 minutes, one occurrence of 1-2 hours, and one occurrence of 3+ hours in traveling to other schools or district facilities.

Like Items 2 and 3, Item 18, which focuses on attendance and punctuality, was not measured by either the semi-structured interviews or the Time Reflection as these two measures’ purposes were not fit to measure the principals’ punctuality or attendance.

**Summary.** The semi-structured interviews provided evidence that principals are participating in most of the items from their district’s job description. Under the Classroom Conditions category, evidence was present from both the semi-structured
interviews and the Time Reflection that principals were participating in all of the related items in their job description. Evidence of participating in all of the School Conditions category items was provided as well. However, there were several job description items in the Other Conditions category that the semi-structured interviews and Time Reflection did not provide evidence for. These items are primarily related to things that would be required for many other employment opportunities, such as punctuality and following employer’s guidelines.

While, overall, evidence was provided that principals are fulfilling the conditions of their job description, there are many things principals are doing that were not included in their job descriptions. Just a few examples include evaluating teachers, planning and implementing emergency drills, and working with students and staff who are struggling with anxiety or depression. Based on these findings, I argue that this means principals are participating in many activities outside of their job descriptions. While it should be noted that the last item on Rockcliff School District’s principal job description is, “Other responsibilities as assigned,” none of the principals mentioned having any special assignment that differed from what would be expected of any other principal. As such, it is possible that the “extra” activities principals are doing on a day-to-day basis, including the activities listed above, are considered an “assigned” part of the duties of a principal. It should also be noted that there was no mention of improving student learning or classroom instruction in the principals’ job description.

**Utah Model Principal Evaluation**

The Utah Model Principal Evaluation is based on seven strands. As detailed in Chapter 2, these strands align with the Classroom Condition and School Condition
themes. The following sections will discuss what evidence was provided by the semi-structured interviews and Time Reflection regarding each strand and the day-to-day roles and responsibilities of these principals.

**Classroom Conditions.** There is only one strand that aligns with the Classroom Conditions category: Strand 2 – Teaching and Learning. Strand 2’s description states, “Effective educational leaders support teaching and learning by facilitating coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to promote each student’s academic success and well-being” (USBE, 2013). In the semi-structured interviews, two principals specifically discussed curriculum, one of whom specifically discussed making adjustments to curriculum to assist students who are struggling or have missed previous content. All seven principals discussed observing instruction and the importance of helping teachers improve instruction. Finally, four principals discussed using student assessments to improve student learning. In the Time Reflection, principals reported spending time on curriculum, instruction, and assessments. Principals reported spending the greatest allotments of time regarding curriculum, instruction, and assessments on walking through and observing classes, with three occurrences of 1-2 hours and four occurrences of 30-60 minutes.

**School Conditions.** The remaining six strands align with School Conditions. These strands are visionary leadership, management for learning, community engagement, school improvement, ethical leadership, and equity and cultural responsiveness.

Strand 1’s description states, “Effective educational leaders facilitate the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a shared vision that
promotes each student’s academic success and well-being” (USBE, 2019). Only Ms. Hunter talked about her school vision. Since she was opening a new school this year, she explained she felt it was important to make sure all of her faculty were very clear on a singular vision of what students would take away from their time at Hook Elementary. When she was hiring, Ms. Hunter presented a visual of the school vision and “if they didn’t get excited about [it], I didn’t hire them because I want people at the end of the day that want to really have students at the center of our work.” According to the Time Reflection, principals spent only small amounts of time working on their school visions. There were four reports of 31-60 minutes, 13 occurrences of 15-30 minutes, and 22 occurrences of 1-15 minutes.

Strand 3 states that principals will “manage school operations and resources to promote the success and well-being of faculty, staff, and students” (USBE, 2019). In the semi-structured interviews, principals primarily discussed managing operations and resources through budgets and procedures. Six of the seven principals discussed budgeting during their interviews and all of the principals discussed making changes or adapting procedures this last school year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the Time Reflection, principals reported spending time planning school procedures and budgeting, as shown in Table 13.

Table 13

Budgeting and School Procedures Occurrences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Spent</th>
<th>Budgeting</th>
<th>School Procedures/ Protocols</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No time</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-15 minutes</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-30 minutes</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-60 minutes</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 hours</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Strand 4 – Community Engagement explains “effective educational leaders engage families and the community in order to create an inclusive, caring, safe, and supportive school environment to promote each student’s academic success and well-being” (USBE, 2019). One principal explained that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the relationship and engagement principals had with parents and the community changed. Instead of “talking face-to-face, you know, it’s more through email.” Despite this, principals still found ways to work with parents/guardians and the community through PTA and school-community council organizations. These organizations were described as having influence in at least two schools. At one school, the school-community council influenced what social-emotional curriculum would be used in the school. At another school, the principal described purposefully attending PTA meetings so members would know he supported their work and their efforts to improve the school. However, principals reported spending little time in these meetings in the Time Reflection. Principals reported only 12 combined occurrences, out of 120 possible, when they spent 15-30 minutes in PTA- and school community council-type meetings.

Strand 5 describes the principal’s role to “act ethically and professionally to promote each student’s academic success and well-being” (USBE, 2019). Ethical leadership has a great impact on School Conditions but can be difficult to measure. Within the Utah Model Principal Evaluation System Rubric, suggestions are given regarding possible evidence that principals are acting ethically and professionally (USBE, 2019). This evidence includes transparency of policies and procedures, feedback from colleagues, parents, and community members, observations, and climate surveys. Such pieces of evidence were not included within the semi-structured interviews or Time
Reflection and, as such, this study did not provide evidence regarding principals’ ethical leadership.

Strand 6’s description states, “Effective educational leaders act as agents of continuous improvement and foster a professional community of teachers and staff to promote each student’s academic success and well-being” (USBE, 2019). In the semi-structured interviews, six principals discussed creating and implementing professional development trainings for their teachers. One explained that they invested in professional development trainings “to get teachers to truly collaborate” because “that’s best for kids.” In the Time Reflection, principals did report spending time on professional learning for teachers, as shown in Table 14. Overall, principals reported spending more time on planning professional learning for faculty than on participating in the professional learning meetings.

Table 14

Planning and In-meeting Teacher Professional Learning Occurrences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Spent</th>
<th>Planning Professional Learning</th>
<th>In-Meeting Professional Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Time</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-15 minutes</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-30 minutes</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-60 minutes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 hours</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Strand 7 – Equity and Cultural Responsiveness states, “Effective educational leaders honor the heritage and background of each student, use culturally responsive practices, and strive for cultural competency and equity of educational opportunity to promote each student’s academic success and well-being” (USBE, 2019). As part of the semi-structured interview, principals were asked if they envisioned addressing social...
issues as part of their role as a principal and why. While all principals agreed that it is "always your role and responsibility as a principal to take care of the needs of your students and community," there were differing degrees to which principals were willing to address social issues within their schools. In describing how students at the school had come "to school crying" when Donald Trump was elected President of the United States, how there had been "rumblings with Black Lives Matter" in the community, and a local "movement to help support the LGBTQ and transgender students," one principal said:

...None of these issues really have room in our curriculum to be taught as a formal lesson to students. I think things creep into the curriculum and teacher bias and all of that. I mean, how we treat students here is what’s important to me but that’s not changing...the lessons and instruction we are giving to kids.

This principal felt that social issues were not part of their job because it wasn’t explicitly given in the state core for student learning. This principal summarized by stating, “We don’t need to be instructing on [social issues].” Another principal felt that it was part of their role to address social issues. After “a couple of incidents” regarding racism in the school, this principal implemented staff professional development trainings “about diversity in the classroom.” A “diversity team from the classroom [came] out and did some training” for teachers and then did “some classes in some of our upper-grade classrooms.” While noting that the classroom instruction did cause “some controversy in my community,” this principal held firm to their position that the diversity training was needed.

“...I always want my stakeholders to feel like they can give me feedback but,...I will address their concerns and their needs in the ways that are appropriate and follow...our district’s policy. So, I feel like [addressing social issues is] part of my role and responsibility that won’t ever change, no matter what’s going on in the climate and community.”
This principal knew that their role was to address social issues and social justice in their school. In the Time Reflection, principals recorded spending little time on social issues or issues of diversity. Principals recorded four occurrences that lasted 15-30 minutes, 32 occurrences lasting 1-15 minutes, and 24 times when no occurrences were recorded.

**Summary.** Through the semi-structured interviews and Time Reflection, principals provided evidence that they are participating in six of the seven evaluation strands on a day-to-day basis, as shown in Table 15. The only strand evidence that was not provided for was Strand 5 – Ethical Leadership.

**Table 15**

*Evidence for Utah Model Principal Evaluation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strand</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Time Reflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strand 1 – Visionary Leadership</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strand 2 – Teaching and Learning</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strand 3 – Management for Learning</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strand 4 – Community Engagement</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strand 5 – Ethical Leadership</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strand 6 – School Improvement</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strand 7 – Equity and Cultural Responsiveness</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary**

This chapter demonstrates that principals engaged in many day-to-day activities as a principal. In semi-structured interviews, they reported having responsibilities related to classroom and School Conditions as well as having additional responsibilities not directly related to either condition. Additionally, principals reported responsibilities that were either new or an extension of regular responsibilities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the Time Reflection, principals reported participating in similar activities to the interviews on a daily basis but, primarily, for short amounts of time. The semi-
structured interviews and Time Reflection provided evidence that principals were participating in most of the responsibilities their job descriptions and the evaluation model required. Those items that no evidence was provided for were not measured by the interviews or Time Reflection so it is unknown whether principals are attending regularly to those responsibilities. However, a lack of alignment was found between the job description and evaluation and principals reported spending time participating in responsibilities that were not included in either document.
Chapter V

Conclusion

This chapter begins by discussing the results of this study and its implications, followed by the limitations of this study. Finally, recommendations are given for future research.

Discussion and Implications

To address the results of this study, the discussion addresses the data by research question.

Research Question 1: What do Principals Perceive as their Day-to-day Roles and Responsibilities?

This section discusses and describes implications of the principals’ day-to-day roles and responsibilities in regards to (1) safety and student learning and (2) flexibility and multitasking.

Safety and Student Learning. Principals felt that their most important roles and responsibilities were primarily to one of two things: (1) the safety of students, faculty, and staff, or (2) student learning. The focus on safety may have been at the forefront of principals’ minds because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Interestingly, all discussions about safety except one seemed to focus on health safety, due to the pandemic, rather than other forms of safety that may have been discussed in other contexts or previous years such as legal guardianship issues, suicide, or school shootings. The focus on COVID-related safety may have created a permanent shift in the way principals understand their responsibility to student safety. Further, student safety was not included
in Rockliff School District’s job description for principals and is only included in the Utah Model Principal Evaluation (USBE, 2019) so far as to say that principals should care for students’ wellbeing and engage with the community to create a safe environment for students. Thus, the responsibilities principals felt towards student safety, which are not listed in their job descriptions, may have been altered by the COVID-19 pandemic and deserve a closer examination.

While a major focus of this study and the semi-structured interview was to delve into the influences of the COVID-19 pandemic, principals were quick to bring up the pandemic as a cause or reason for their actions and choices as a principal even when they had not been prompted to discuss the influence of the pandemic. For example, the third question of the semi-structured interview asked principals to describe their roles and responsibilities as an elementary school principal. Prior to this question, I had made no mention of the COVID-19 pandemic. In five of the seven responses, principals mentioned either the pandemic or a reference to altered responsibilities that were later attributed to the pandemic. These alterations in responsibilities included attending alternative meeting formats, such as Zoom versus in-person and a responsibility not only to physical health but also mental health. The two principals who did not mention the pandemic or pandemic-forced changes both described safety as their top responsibility. Findings from this study indicate that the pandemic may have placed safety at the forefront of principals’ minds though Chan et al. (2018) identified safety as one of principals’ major responsibilities prior to the pandemic.

As equally present as safety to principals’ roles and responsibilities was their responsibility to student learning. Martinez and Everman (2017) explained that principals
are responsible to assist in improving instruction but, both in the literature and in this study, there seems to be little a principal actually does within the classroom setting that influences classroom instruction. Instead, observations and coaching teachers, the principal-teacher interaction of which takes place outside of the student-filled classroom, are the primary responsibilities principals have that regularly affect Classroom Conditions (Ediger, 2014; Mette et al., 2017; Martinez & Everman, 2017; Vogel, 2018). Teacher evaluation coupled with feedback has been found to benefit student learning (Grissom et al., 2021). Another way to benefit student learning is through class sizes and teaching loads (Leithwood et al., 2004), but these were not discussed or included in the interviews or Time Reflections by principals. This lack of inclusion may have been because class sizes and teaching loads had already been determined for the coming year. While they discussed many roles and responsibilities they had, principals always came back and focused on their role in influencing student learning despite feeling that they didn’t spend much time on it. This was particularly interesting in the case of the principal who stated that they had done no formal evaluations of their teachers all year. When asked what their roles and responsibilities were as a principal, this principal’s first statement was that they “supervise teachers and staff.” However, as the principal continued to discuss their roles and responsibilities, and throughout the rest of the interview, this principal focused much more on their School Conditions than any other principal. This shows that policies, such as policies regarding school reports or contact tracing, may dictate the day-to-day activities of the principal. Another probable reason for this individual principal’s increased focus on School Conditions is that this principal entered the education field as a second occupation, coming from business where budgets
and reports are a regular focus as opposed to education where a great emphasis is placed on student learning rather than all of the organization and management associated with it (Martinez & Everman, 2017).

**Flexibility and Multitasking.** While not a role or responsibility, several principals discussed the necessity to be able to move from one activity to another and the ability to adapt to the responsibilities of the moment. One principal described this as “being flexible with whatever needs to happen during the day.” Another principal described not knowing exactly what tomorrow would look like because priorities and time allotments changed based on the most urgent need of the moment. This means that though they may have felt their most important roles were safety and student learning, principals may not have spent the majority of their time participating in those activities. The necessity to move from one task to another, even when the original task has not been complete is concerning. Research shows that multitasking, dual tasking, and task switching in a variety of situations lead to lower productivity and lower efficiency as it leads to a greater chance for mistakes to be made (Lin et al., 2016; May & Elder, 2018). Yet the principals in this study and in other research have shown that multitasking is perceived as a desirable and necessary skill as well as an efficient use of time (Hwang et al., 2014; Lin et al., 2013). Thus, while they may feel like they accomplish a lot by multitasking or being able to move from necessity to necessity, principals may not be as efficient or effective as if they would or could focus on completing one task before moving on to another. Further, while the principals in this study considered it a necessity to deal with the issues of the moment in the moment, these principals also expressed frustration that they were not able to spend more time on some responsibilities because
their time was taken by other responsibilities. This may lead to inter-role conflict where principals perceive incompatible expectations from their multiple roles or responsibilities, such as the expectation to spend more time in the classroom and the expectation to discipline students or participate in contact tracing (Nir, 2011). Such role conflict may lead to feelings of overload and burnout (Cranston et al., 2004; Goodwin et al., 2003; Kahn et al., 1964).

One of the results of switching from a task to another task of necessity is that certain tasks may not be completed. For example, principals noted that not only were they not able to get into classrooms as often as they desired, but they also did not observe and monitor online teachers and students as much as they “should have.” One principal admitted, “I didn’t… give the attention to the online teachers like I wish I would have.” These online students and teachers were not in-person to showcase their needs and so principals did not have a physical reminder to check in on them. Further, the necessities in the physical space of the school may have taken precedence over the virtual needs of the school.

There are several implications for these findings. Firstly, principals perceived safety and student achievement to be their most important job roles and responsibilities. Student achievement implications will be discussed in more detail in the discussion for Research Question 2. In relation to safety, principals brought up the COVID-19 pandemic and the effects the pandemic had on their responsibilities, particularly as policies were reported to have changed multiple times throughout the school year. Policymakers should consider whether the continual change in policies is beneficial and whether or not they are providing enough opportunity for those who enact those policies, such as principals,
to do so in an orderly and appropriate manner. Supervisors and district personnel should then provide additional support, as needed, when policies are changed in order to ensure principals have the appropriate structures and manpower to enact changes. Principal preparation programs can also assist future principals in preparing principals to care not only for the academic needs of the student but for the whole student by including course material that does not focus solely on academic outcomes (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development [ASCD] Whole Child Network, 2020).

The ability to change tasks in the middle of tasks or the ability to multitask was considered a necessity by the principals in this study but research has shown it to have drawbacks (Lin et al., 2016; May & Elder, 2018). Principals and their supervisors should take the time to consider which responsibilities are important enough not to leave for later or stop doing during the task. Professional development training creators and principal preparation programs should consider strategies they might teach current and future principals so that principals are more effective and efficient when they are called to jump from task to task and responsibility to responsibility with little or no notice.

**Research Question 1a: How has the COVID-19 Pandemic Influenced Principals’ Day-to-day Roles and Responsibilities?**

This section discusses and describes implications of how principals perceived the COVID-19 pandemic’s influence on their roles and responsibilities. Despite claims by some principals that the COVID-19 pandemic has changed their roles and responsibilities, the pandemic has seemed to shift attention and time within the principals’ responsibilities rather than add to them. For example, principals and school nurses should have been working together prior to the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure the
physical and mental health of students (Davis et al., 2020). However, principals in this study said they were spending a great deal more time working with their school nurses than ever before. The communication between the principal and the nurse, according to one principal, was already an expectation. Davis et al. (2020) explain that school nurses should have relationships with the principal, faculty and staff, and students in order to meet the needs of the “whole child” (p. 98; ASCD Whole Child Network, 2020). Despite the expectation that there should be regular communication between the nurses and principals, most principals in this study acted as if the COVID-19 pandemic was the only reason they were having regular contact with their school nurse. Due to the need to contact trace and quarantine students, the communication between the principal and nurse did take place on a more consistent and frequent basis. Since principals were spending more time in communication with the nurses, and the resulting communications with parents/guardians of students who were in potential contact with the COVID virus, principals said they were unable to spend as much time doing other things, such as classroom observations.

While principals reported spending more time working with school nurses, there were conflicting reports regarding how much time principals were spending on student behavior. Ms. Hunter felt that she was spending more time on student discipline at the beginning of the year while Mr. Miller felt that he was spending less. While Mr. Miller noted in his interview that he had spent less time at the beginning of the school year on student discipline, he noted in the Time Reflection that student discipline had increased and reached pre-pandemic levels. Changes in student behavior, from fewer reported acts of aggression at the beginning of the year to more at the end of the year, are
not uncommon and have been found in previous research (Jones & Molano, 2016). While research is still scarce in relation to student behavior and the COVID-19 pandemic, one study sent a survey to 74 parents of elementary students in Turkey during the COVID-19 pandemic and found that about two-thirds of the students included in the study “exhibited some behavioral and adaptation problems that had not been observed before the pandemic” (Yaycı & Kendirci, 2021, p. 375), such as anger, hyperactivity, and anxiety. Such behavioral issues may have led principals to spend more time working with students on these behaviors taking away from the time they spent in previous years on other responsibilities.

The alteration of time spent on responsibilities did not end with time spent (or not spent) on student behavior. Principals related that the additional responsibilities added to their jobs were a result of policies regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. While the addition of responsibilities during unusual circumstances, such as the pandemic, due to policies may be unavoidable, districts and supervisors should consider whether these “extra” responsibilities could be assigned to individuals other than principals or whether additional supports and personnel could be provided to principals to either care for the new responsibilities from the unusual circumstances or take on normal responsibilities of the principal. Further, principals should consider what responsibilities are “essential” to them and consider ways in which they can delegate other “non-essential” responsibilities.

The responsibility of student behavior is shared between principals and teachers, principals often being teachers’ last resort. Principal and teacher preparation programs can assist in providing better tools and strategies for dealing with student misbehavior. These strategies and tools would be useful both in typical and atypical circumstances.
Research Question 2: How do Principals Spend their Time?

This section discusses and describes the implications of how principals spent their time. In particular, this section discusses (1) the numerous responsibilities principals had and participated in and (2) the time principals spent in their jobs and how that time was allocated across responsibilities.

Numerous Responsibilities of the Principalship. Previous research has identified many things principals are responsible for, including finances, professional development trainings, personnel concerns, student safety, and teacher evaluation, to name only a few (Anast-May et al., 2012; Bana & Khaki, 2015; Campbell et al., 2019; Chan et al., 2018; Graczewski et al., 2009; Machin, 2014; Shaked, 2019; Tomás-Folch & Ion, 2015). However, this study brings to the forefront the sheer number of responsibilities principals participate in on a daily basis. Across all principals, the average number of activities principals participated in was 53.55. This means that in an eight-hour workday, principals change activities about every 9 minutes. In a 10-hour workday, principals would change activities every 11 minutes. Due to this rapid need to switch between activities, it becomes far less surprising that principals were most likely to report spending 1-15 minutes on each responsibility.

Several principals showed a wide range in the number of items they participated in on the Time Reflection. One possible reason for this wide range is that when principals are only at their own school, without their own district meetings, they get pulled in multiple directions more easily than if they are in meetings at another location such as collaborating at another school, attending a professional development training or participating in a district meeting. On several of the dates with lower item counts,
principals did report spending large amounts of time attending professional development trainings or at district meetings. It is critical for districts to support principal development, as time set aside specifically for principals to participate in professional development opportunities may be “the most efficient way to affect student achievement” (Grissom et al., p. 40, 2021). Without time specifically set aside for principals to engage in professional development opportunities, principals will find that they do not have the time for their own professional learning as their time is filled by their other numerous responsibilities.

**Time Spent and Allocation of Time.** Research has shown that principals average 59-hour workweeks (Lavigne et al., 2016). While principals were not asked how much time they spent working, all principals expressed that there were times and circumstances that led to them working more than their “regular” hours. One principal said that they typically don’t get to their emails until 9:00 p.m. An analysis of the Time Reflection showed that if the items principals recorded spending time on took the least amount of time possible in the range principals selected (e.g. 1-15 minutes = 1 minute; 31-60 minutes = 31 minutes), principals were spending an average of 10.53 hours a day working or 52.63 hours a week. However, it should be noted that this time would not include transitions or any personal time the principal took during the day.

The Time Reflection was not completed every day by every principal, which may have influenced the results. With one exception, principals completed the Time Reflection at a rate of 53% (eight days) or better, with one principal completing 100% (15 days) and another completing 87% (13 days). This response rate was similar to the principal participation rate in May et al.’s (2012) study which ranged from 65-93%. What
was not shown by the current study is what principals spent their time doing on days when they did not report their time on the Time Reflection. Were principals more or less likely to report their day-to-day activities on busy or slow days? Other research has shown that this missing data is unlikely to be random data and principals may have purposefully chosen not to complete the Time Reflection on the “missing” days (Porter & Ecklund, 2012). Adding researcher observation of principals’ day-to-day activities to the Time Reflection could address this and show what principals may purposefully or accidentally choose not to report.

The allocation of time principals spent was also notable. As shown previously in Table 5, principals spent less time on Classroom Conditions than School Conditions or Other Conditions, adding to the mounting literature that principals spend more time on School Conditions rather than Classroom Conditions (Grissom et al., 2008; Horng et al., 2010; Lavigne et al., 2016; May et al., 2012). This is also interesting given that all seven principals indicated student learning as a top priority and research shows that being in classrooms, evaluating teachers, and giving good feedback is the most direct and productive way principals can influence student achievement (Grissom et al., 2020; Leithwood et al., 2004) but all of them spent less time participating in Classroom Condition activities than School Condition activities. Principals in the current study described a desire to spend more time in classrooms and noted that responsibilities such as student behavior and discipline, the need of the moment, and contact tracing were barriers to this desire. These barriers and desires to spend more time in classrooms align with previous research (Bana & Khaki, 2015; De Jong et al., 2017; Maforah & Schulze, 2012; Niño et al., 2017; Starr & White, 2008). This brings to the forefront the following
questions: If principals spend so little time on Classroom Conditions, why is it prioritized so highly in research and in the priorities of the principals in this study? Based on the items in Rockcliff School District’s job description and the Utah Model Principal Evaluation (USBE, 2019), principals are responsible for much more related to School Conditions than Classroom Conditions. By spending less time participating in classroom-related activities, principals may have a lesser, insignificant, or negative effect on student achievement (Bush & Jackson, 2002; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood et al., 2004). Since more time is being spent by principals on School and Other Conditions and their job description and evaluation metrics focus more on School and Other Conditions, it is possible that principals’ perceived focus on Classroom Conditions is creating role ambiguity or role conflict. This may lead to job dissatisfaction and ultimately principal turnover (Bartanen et al., 2019; De Jong et al., 2017).

How principals’ time is allocated is something policymakers should seriously consider. With so many responsibilities connected back to policy, including principal evaluations and standards, these policies may be dictating the number of activities principals are spending their time on (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015; Nielsen & Lavigne, 2020; USBE, 2019). Serious consideration should be taken as to whether these policies allow principals to effectively do their jobs in ways aligning with recommendations from research or whether the vast number of responsibilities is stretching principals too thin. District supervisors and superintendents can likewise assist in this consideration for their own districts. District personnel can also clarify priorities and help principals to know or understand how much time they should be spending on each of their roles (Classroom Conditions, School Conditions, and other
roles). This may help principals to better distribute responsibilities and delegate tasks to members of their staff and faculty. Districts could also create and staff a new administrative position, such as a building manager, who takes care of some of the School Conditions, such as maintenance issues and budgeting, freeing more of the principals’ time to spend on Classroom Conditions such as instruction.

These findings also point out the importance principal preparation programs have in preparing future principals not only to care for Classroom Conditions but also for school and Other Conditions. Classroom Conditions and instruction only accounted for a small amount of time principals spent in their days. Principal preparation programs should focus on how that short amount of time can be maximized to assist in increasing student achievement as well as focus on the numerous other responsibilities principals have.

**Research Question 3: How do the Findings from Research Questions 1 and 2 align with Principal Job Descriptions and Evaluations?**

This section discusses and describes implications of how principals’ perceptions of their roles and responsibilities aligned with job descriptions and evaluations. First, alignment between principal perceptions and the evaluation is discussed. A discussion on the dynamics of the evaluation and job description is then given in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is followed by a discussion regarding the misalignments found between principal perceptions, the job description, and the evaluation. Finally, a focused discussion on the discrepancies found regarding diversity and social justice responsibilities is provided.
Principal Perceptions and Evaluations. The day-to-day activities and actions of principals provided evidence that these principals were fulfilling their job description and the strands in the Utah Model Principal Evaluation (USBE, 2019) with only a few exceptions. The exceptions in the job description included responding to community problems and concerns (as needed), implementing a systemic approach to public relations, and attending meetings outside of normal work hours. The exception in the Utah Model Principal Evaluation was Strand 5 – Ethical Leadership from the Utah Model Principal Evaluation (USBE, 2019). The measures used in this study were unable to determine whether principals were ethical because the Time Reflection and semi-structured interviews were not created to measure ethical behavior. Measuring ethical behavior can be difficult. Studies have created instruments that measure the ethics of individuals and internal financial audits are commonly used to evidence ethical behavior (Ma’ayan & Carmeli, 2016; Pope, 2005). The Utah Model Principal Evaluation suggests utilizing documentation such as leadership team agendas, feedback from stakeholders, climate surveys, and transparency of policies and procedures as evidence that principals are providing ethical leadership (USBE, 2019). However, the purpose of the measures used in this study was to determine the day-to-day roles and responsibilities of the principal and how much time was spent on them. Since principals did not discuss being an ethical leader as part of their roles and responsibilities and ethical behavior cannot be measured through time, this study was unable to determine whether principals were providing ethical leadership to their schools.

Despite the inability to measure ethical behavior, principals were asked in the semi-structured interview whether they viewed addressing social issues as part of their
responsibilities as a principal. Strand 5 of the Utah Model Principal Evaluation does consider addressing social justice issues as a part of being an ethical leader. As discussed in Chapter 4, there was some discrepancy across principals as to whether addressing social issues was part of their job. However, as Dantley and Green (2015) argue, social justice leadership helps keep school leaders accountable. Further, school district personnel and principal preparation programs should consider how they are accountable to their communities in preparing and employing principals as social justice leaders.

**Dynamics of Evaluation and Job Description.** In addition to comparing the day-to-day roles and responsibilities of the principal to job descriptions and evaluations, this research question considered whether the job description and evaluation metric were dynamic enough to adjust for unusual circumstances, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. While principals did participate in activities relating to both the job description and evaluation metric, as described above, neither recognized the additional responsibilities that were placed on principals in a comprehensive manner. The district included a caveat at the end of their job description that states “other responsibility as assigned.” However, I argue that it is unlikely that the original intention of this “responsibility” was to encompass such a wide range of responsibilities brought by the pandemic, including planning and implementing completely new procedures for the entire school and nearly every activity in the school and contact tracing with its myriad phone calls, tracking, and documentation. The evaluation metric, likewise, was not dynamic enough to include the responsibilities of the COVID-19 principal. Based on the descriptions of their day-to-day activities in the semi-structured interviews, had they been evaluated on a random single day during Fall 2020, there was a good chance that principals were spending very little
time leading the school vision, working to improve teaching and learning, managing school operations or resources, engaging with the community, working on school improvement, or ensuring equity and cultural responsiveness. They were too busy ensuring that health and district policies were being followed so that COVID-19 wouldn’t spread between students, teachers, and staff. The results of this study show that the job description and evaluation metric are not dynamic enough to account for unusual circumstances such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Without dynamic job descriptions and evaluations, principals may feel, as some principals described in this study, that they are unsure of what they should be doing or that they should be working on other things when the need of the moment is caused by unusual circumstances that are not part of their “jobs.”

Beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, whether assigned consciously or not by the district, principals are expected to do far more than what they sign up to do when they apply for the job. While recognizing that principals may have times when they need to do “extra” things, as is common in nearly every job from time to time, and without any additional context that may not be available to the public from Rockcliff School District, I argue that the line “other responsibilities as assigned” may have been used as an evasion tactic so the district does not have to admit to the ever-changing and ever-growing responsibilities being heaped upon the elementary school principal. Alternatively, Rockcliff and other districts with similar job descriptions should consider updating their job descriptions and consider ways in which the principal’s load can be lessened. One potential model might include two full-time principals who work on the same level (no head and assistant principal) who completely share the entire load and work together to
create the vision and direction of the school. If funding is an issue, as is often an issue in education, updating the job description could also be used as a tool and signal to lawmakers that current funding is not sufficient and as a springboard for local schools and statewide education groups to utilize in highlighting and clearly demonstrating the complexities and enormity of the roles and responsibilities placed on the shoulders of school principals.

**Misalignments.** In addition to the lack of dynamics within the job description and principal evaluation and the need for an updated job description that includes more of their roles and responsibilities, these two metrics did not match one another even though evidence was provided from the semi-structured interviews and the Time Reflection for the majority of items on the job description and the Utah Model Principal Evaluation (USBE, 2019). For instance, the Utah Model Principal Evaluation (USBE, 2019) metric requires principals to address issues of diversity within their schools and act using cultural responsiveness but that is not part of the job description for Rockcliff School District’s principals. Similarly, 18 items from the job description aligned with the Other Conditions category but no strands from the evaluation aligned with the Other Conditions category. Principals also acknowledged additional responsibilities that were not directly included in either measure, such as contact tracing and quarantining of students, problem-solving issues, meeting with staff heads or leadership teams, addressing non-academic concerns, and addressing local and national issues that influence or affect students and staff. The lack of alignment between the job description and evaluation, along with the additional responsibilities principals perceive as part of their jobs, points to a discrepancy
between what principals are expected to do and what they are evaluated on. This discrepancy may lead to role conflict and role ambiguity (Kahn et al., 1964).

The principal job description may be causing role conflict and role ambiguity without any other variables, such as evaluation metrics. The job description is a general job description used for all levels of the principalship (elementary, middle, and high schools). However, research has shown a difference in time and responsibilities principals from different school levels have (Grissom et al., 2021; Keaton, 2012; Lavigne et al., 2016; NAESP, 2018). For example, the Rockcliff School District job description included an item regarding facility management that included after-school usage, however, elementary principals are less likely to have after-school activities to monitor than a high school with full sports and arts programs. While this was the only major difference between a high school and elementary school principal based on the wording of the job description, more explicit differences could be elaborated on, particularly in regards to the implementation of the items in the job description, could be explored if the job descriptions for each school level were separated. Further, separating job descriptions by school level could reduce confusion and inappropriate assumptions for principals as to their role and district expectations.

Studies have found that role conflict and role ambiguity are related to insubordination, emotional exhaustion, and job satisfaction (Bauer & Brazer, 2013; Bauer et al., 2019; Eckman, 2004, 2006; Gmelch & Torelli, 1994; Haynes & Licata, 1995). In the current study, one principal in particular, seemed to be suffering from emotional exhaustion. Whether as a result of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the lack of alignment of principal expectations, or a combination of the two, this principal felt that
this year, apart from other years, they were “failing in terms of what I wish I could be.”
This principal described feeling conflict in their responsibilities “in every way possible. What I want to do, in some ways, is different than what I am doing.” Further, this principal described having reoccurring health issues that they attributed to the stress they were feeling from this school year. While not to the extent of the principal mentioned previously, another principal discussed how important it was to take care of their physical and mental well-being.

**Diversity and Social Justice.** As previously mentioned, one of the discrepancies between the job description and the principal evaluation was the requirement for principals to address diversity-related issues within their schools. Principals in this study, likewise, were in conflict with one another as to whether it was part of their responsibilities or not. However, the literature includes, as part of school culture, the need for principals to support students of diverse races, religions, and gender orientation (Haycock & Jerald, 2002; Hernandez & Fraynd, 2014; White-Smith & White, 2009; Zirkel, 2016). Likewise, multiple principal-related organizations emphasize the need for principals to “build a school climate in which diverse students are valued” (Grissom et al., 2021, p. 76; NAESP, n.d.; NASSP, 2021; NPBEA, 2018). Perhaps one reason principals were unclear on their responsibility towards diversity is because there was no mention of diversity in their job descriptions.

While research and national policies are clear that cultural responsiveness and support for diversity is a responsibility of the principalship, principals in the current study did not have such clarity. Local policies, including job descriptions, should be clear that support for diversity and cultural responsiveness are responsibilities of all school
employees, including the principal. Likewise, principal preparation programs should have clear objectives that teach principals how to be culturally responsive and support diversity in every aspect of their roles and responsibilities. Continuing education through professional development opportunities within districts should also support the benefits of and need to celebrate and support students of diverse backgrounds and beliefs.

The lack of alignment between the evaluation metric and job descriptions, highlighted above, may lead to role conflict and role ambiguity. Policymakers, particularly on the local level, should consider how local, state, and national policy can become better aligned and updated to parallel best practices in research. This alignment should also include the development of appropriate and reasonable measures that can accurately demonstrate whether principals are fulfilling their roles and responsibilities. Further, policymakers should consider how policies for principals at different levels of schooling (elementary, middle, junior, high) should differ based on the needs of each level. Principals and supervisors can assist by pointing out antiquated and inapplicable responsibilities to those who can change district and state policies. Principal preparation programs should likewise align their programs with national policies that dictate principal roles and responsibilities.

Limitations

As with all research, this study has many limitations. This section will address the major limitations of this study. Firstly, while this study does attempt to examine how principals’ roles and responsibilities have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, principals reported in their interviews that many of the things they had spent time on earlier in the school year due to the pandemic had been greatly reduced or eliminated
near the end of the school year when the current study was conducted. While principals said they sometimes had spent the whole school day on contact tracing, communicating with the health department, and informing parents/guardians that their students would have to be quarantined for two weeks, the number of cases in schools were much lower in March and April when data collection for this study was taking place. In addition to fewer COVID-19 cases, new policies had recently been given that said as long as students were wearing masks, making contact with a positive case mask-to-mask, students did not need to quarantine.

Second, this study only provides a glimpse into the roles and responsibilities of seven principals within a single school district over the course of only a few days. In their semi-structured interviews, principals stated that part of their job was adapting to the current, most urgent need and knowing that the “to do” list would still be there the next day. The amount of time principals spent on their responsibilities changed depending on the time of the year. For instance, this study took place during the RISE testing period, the state end-of-year assessment. Some principals reported that they had spent a bit of time working on assessments, which likely included RISE testing. However, had the Time Reflection been given during weeks 5-7 of the school year, principals may not have reported spending any time on assessments. Similarly, while principals placed emphasis on the importance of budgets in the semi-structured interviews, they reported spending little time working on them on the Time Reflection. During the early part of the school year, however, purchasing and budgeting may take much more of their time.

Third, user or participant error may have led to errors in the data. Principals may not have read all of the instructions for the Time Reflection or they may not have been
truthful on the Time Reflection. On the instructions for the Time Reflection, principals were instructed to select how much time they had spent on each item and that if they had spent no time on the item, to leave the item blank. It is known that at least one principal selected 1-15 minutes when in reality they had spent no time on several items over several days because they had not read the instructions closely. Because it was unclear whether this principal altered their practice after receiving clarification on the instructions, I was unable to correct for this error and thus there were more 1-15 minute reports than actually occurred. Further, principals knew that the items on the Time Reflection were intended to reflect their roles and responsibilities as a principal. Therefore, it would be unsurprising if a principal read the item and selected spending 1-15 minutes thinking that they must have spent some time that day doing whatever the item said.

Another potential participant error issue is that although principals were asked to do the Time Reflection each day, some principals completed the Time Reflection afterward, though no more than two days later. While Horng et al. (2010) found that utilizing end-of-the-day logs reduced bias in perceptions of what principals had done throughout the day, filling out the Time Reflection days later may have led to bias and principals may not have completely remembered what they had done two days previously.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

While there are many limitations to this study, this study provides many opportunities for further research regarding the roles and responsibilities of the elementary school principal. While this study set out to discover the roles and
responsibilities of principals during the COVID-19 pandemic, additional studies are needed to examine whether principals’ roles and responsibilities change or differ due to other extraordinary circumstances. These circumstances might include natural disasters or civil unrest. Further, additional studies could examine how such circumstances affect the roles and responsibilities of teachers and staff members. As the most influential individuals on a child’s education outside of the home, teachers, principals, and school staff hold important roles and any change to those roles may lead to a change in their ability to serve students (Leithwood et al., 2004).

As previously mentioned, the findings and results of this study are based on the perceptions of principals. While using principals’ perceptions of their responsibilities is not an uncommon practice (Goldring et al., 2020; Grissom et al., 2015; Sebastian et al., 2018; Spillane et al., 2007), there are more accurate ways of examining principal day-to-day responsibilities, such as observation or using principal calendars to verify and corroborate the responsibilities principals report. This additional data could provide useful insight into not only the accuracy of principal perceptions and what they are actually doing, but, if studied during unusual or extenuating circumstances, demonstrate the influence of extenuating circumstances on the perceptions principals have about their roles.

This study found that the district job description and evaluation metric were not dynamic enough to account for the unusual circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. This may have been, in part, why the state provided options for waiving educator evaluation requirements during Spring 2020 (USBE, 2020b). However, COVID-19 was not the first or last unusual circumstance to influence schooling in Utah or across the
nation. Natural disasters, such as fires, hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods, as well as social upheavals and other health-related issues, are common disruptions to everyday life and schooling every year. Researchers, educators, and policy creators should work together to create evaluations and job descriptions that are dynamic and can account for or adjust to such atypical circumstances.

While evaluations and job descriptions need to be adaptable to circumstances, principals are responsible for teacher professional development trainings regardless of the circumstances of the moment. Research describes the professional development trainings provided by principals for teachers as a way principals influence instruction and Classroom Conditions (Campbell et al., 2019; Graczewski et al., 2009). However, the ways in which principals referred to professional development opportunities for teachers in this study were more generalized and were placed in the School Conditions category. For example, principals in this study described synonymously collaboration meetings, faculty meetings, and professional development or professional learning meetings. It was unclear whether professional development meetings were for the purpose of learning and improving instruction or whether such meetings included other agenda items such as discussing the assessment calendar, new social distancing procedures, or emergency procedures. A closer examination of whether meetings termed as “professional development” or “professional learning” related to Classroom Conditions would provide greater clarity as to how much time principals are spending on Classroom Conditions. Further, if professional learning meetings are focused on instruction, schools and districts could collect data to know whether implementation of instructional strategies and
curriculum are being implemented and to what degree they are improving student learning (Ansyari et al., 2020).

While a couple of principals discussed how easily their students had adapted to social distancing and wearing masks, other principals described having regular issues with students keeping masks over their mouths and noses. Some principals attributed this compliance or non-compliance to community support. Future research may examine the influence of community on principal priorities and school policy as well as students’ level of adherence to policy. Such research would be valuable as there is little research on the subject and, within the current study, principals who felt a lack of support from the community felt that their ability to do their job was diminished, which may have led to feelings of role conflict. Further, feelings of lack of community support have been linked to principal turnover (Norton, 2002). If principals are adapting their priorities based on community support or lack thereof, it may be a coping mechanism to avoid feelings of role conflict leading to turnover (Kahn, 1964; Norton, 2002). However, the adaptation of priorities based on community approval or popularity may lead principals to place a greater priority on less important responsibilities and avoid or neglect responsibilities of greater importance. Research has shown that this could lead to lower student achievement and higher teacher turnover (Bartanen et al., 2019; Kim, 2019).

This study reports there are many roles and responsibilities of the principalship. The vast number of roles and responsibilities, along with each responsibility’s complexity, particularly in regard to teacher evaluation, school culture, diversity, and safety, may create an issue with regard to prior and on-going training of principals as principals in this study noted that they were not setting apart time for their personal
professional learning activities. Few studies have examined whether principals have received the training they need in order to fulfill their responsibilities (Brodie, 2008; Steinberg & Cox, 2017; Vanderharr, 2006). Future studies should examine whether districts are providing enough training and professional development opportunities for their principals, particularly regarding content and pedagogy (Brodie, 2008; Steinberg & Cox, 2017) and whether additional and focused training leads to higher student achievement (Ford et al., 2020).

Finally, there are many ways in which principals’ roles and responsibilities can be framed. This study utilized Leithwood et al.’s (2004) framework while many others use variants of instruction and management (Goldring et al., 2020; Grissom et al., 2015). The problem, as Neumerski et al. (2018) explained, is that “actions associated with principal instructional leadership are often broad or vague” (p. 272). Even within the Time Reflection items in this study, the responsibilities of the principal were combined or generalized because a detailed list of principal responsibilities would have been too overwhelming for a principal to read and record time for over the space of three weeks. Additionally, many responsibilities of the principal require planning, implementation, and evaluation stages. Does, then, the responsibility encompassing planning, implementation, and evaluation or should each part be considered a separate responsibility? The complexity of the roles and responsibilities of the principal creates a multitude of issues for framing the principalship. Future studies regarding these roles and responsibilities should consider whether these frames are actually aiding research or causing overgeneralizations that are causing researchers to underestimate or place limits on beliefs about what principals are and should be doing in their role as the principal.
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Appendices

Appendix A. Utah Model Principal Evaluation System Rubric (USBE, 2019)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Standard Correlation</th>
<th>Minimally Effective</th>
<th>Effective</th>
<th>Highly Effective</th>
<th>Possible Evidence</th>
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</table>
| 1.1, 1.4             | Develops and       | Collaborates with faculty, staff, parents, and the school community to develop and implement a student-centered mission, vision, and core values that promote the academic success and well-being of all student groups. | Shares responsibility with faculty, staff, parents, and the school community in developing and implementing a student-centered mission, vision, and core values that promote the academic success and well-being of each student in the school. | • Sources of communication—meeting agendas—newsletter items  
  • Accreditation or documentation from accreditation process  
  • Sources of communication  
  • Evidence of collaborative stakeholder engagement  
  • Analysis of stakeholder surveys  
  • Evidence of other stakeholders as well as staff knowing the School vision, core values, and mission statements |
| 1.2, 1.3             | Uses data to inform school actions that promote student success in alignment with school’s vision, mission, or core values. | Uses data and input from stakeholders to inform the development of a mission and vision that promotes effective organizational practices, high-quality education, and academic success for each student. | Implements a systematic and comprehensive analysis of multiple sources of data and collaborates extensively and effectively with school and community members in order to shape a shared vision and set of core values that results in a high level of student growth/achievement, closing of achievement gaps, and enhanced student well-being | |
| 1.4, 1.5             | Evaluates actions to achieve the school’s vision and initiates continuous improvement efforts. | Provides evidence that stakeholder groups (e.g. parents, teachers, students, community members) advocate for and are supportive of the school’s vision, mission, and core values. | Reviews and evaluates stakeholder (e.g. parents, teachers, students, community members) feedback and other data sets regularly and collaboratively to identify strengths, address challenges, and modify the school mission and vision, as needed. | |
# Strand 2 – Teaching and Learning

Effective educational leaders support teaching and learning by facilitating coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

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<th>Minimally Effective</th>
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</table>
| 2.1, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5   | Requires implementation of curriculum aligned with the Utah Core Standards. | Provides leadership to ensure the implementation of coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment aligned with the Utah Core Standards that promote the mission, vision, and values of the school. | Provides systematic and collaborative leadership to ensure implementation of a rigorous curriculum, highly effective instruction, quality assessment practices aligned with the Utah Core Standards, and accepts accountability for student academic growth and learning. | - Professional learning sessions  
- Educator evaluation data  
- Student learning data (formative and summative)  
- PLC agendas, minutes, observations  
- School improvement plan |
| 2.1, 2.2, 2.5, 2.6   | Provides time in the schedule for teachers to work collaboratively within grade levels and/or disciplines. | Provides time in the schedule for teachers to collaborate on curriculum, instruction, and assessment within and across grade levels and/or disciplines, to improve coherence and alignment. | Builds the capacity of staff to collaboratively research, identify, and implement evidence-based instructional strategies and practices that address the diverse needs of each student. | - Curriculum guides  
- Lesson plans  
- Faculty meeting agendas, minutes, observations  
- Teacher formative assessments  
- Student learning goals or objectives and indicators of academic growth and development |
| 1.1, 2.1, 2.7        | Reviews data to monitor student progress. | Works collaboratively with teachers to collect and share data in an understandable way to monitor and inform improvements in instructional practices for all student groups. | Builds capacity of staff to use a wide range of data to guide ongoing decision-making to address student and/or adult learning needs and progress toward school or district vision, mission and goals. | - Professional learning sessions  
- Educator evaluation data  
- Student learning data (formative and summative)  
- PLC agendas, minutes, observations  
- School improvement plan |
| 2.2, 2.8, 6.5        | Promotes appropriate technology use in and out of the classroom. | Establishes expectations, models, and monitors the use of technology and literacy to support teaching and learning in alignment with grade-level or course standards (e.g. rigor and fidelity). | Promotes an environment of professional learning and innovation that empowers educators to enhance student learning through the infusion of contemporary technologies and digital resources. | - Professional learning sessions  
- Educator evaluation data  
- Student learning data (formative and summative)  
- PLC agendas, minutes, observations  
- School improvement plan |
## Strand 3 – Management for Learning

Effective educational leaders manage school operations and resources to promote the success and well-being of faculty, staff, and students.

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<th>Standard Correlation</th>
<th>Minimally Effective</th>
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<th>Highly Effective</th>
<th>Possible Evidence</th>
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</table>
| 3.2, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6   | Displays a basic understanding of and willingness to carry out school management functions. | Ensures a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment for students and staff by competently managing the organization, operations, and resources of the school in accordance with the vision and core values of the school. | Has a broad and deep understanding of school management functions and systematically undertakes them. Highly effective management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school results in a school climate that is safe, accepting, highly efficient, and in accordance with the vision of the school. | • School or district budget documents or processes  
• Leadership team agendas, minutes, observations  
• Parent group agenda, minutes, observations  
• School community council agendas, minutes, observations  
• Schedules  
• Safe school procedures and logs  
• School conditions  
• Maintenance of facilities, playgrounds, equipment, etc.  
• Processes for arrival and dismissal  
• Safety procedures  
• Use of electronic systems for student or staff data and communication  
• Phone logs, bulletins, website  
• Use of social media  
• Teacher placement procedures |
| 3.1, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6   | Places teachers in grade level and content areas based on qualifications. | Places teachers in grade level and content areas based on their qualifications and demonstrated effectiveness. | Strategically places teachers in grade levels and content areas based on their skills, strengths and qualifications; assigns highly effective teachers to students most in need; capitalizes on the strengths of existing staff by teaming them with new teachers. | |
| 1.1, 3.2, 3.3, 6.4   | Identifies school or program financial/educational resources that support achievement of the district’s vision, mission and goals. | Advocates for and works to secure school or program financial/educational resources that support achievement of the district’s vision, mission and goals. | Practices responsible resource allocation while balancing programmatic needs with district goals and continuous improvement efforts. | |
| 3.4, 3.6             | Demonstrates understanding of school, local, state, and federal policies to promote student success. | Demonstrates a thorough understanding of school, local, state, and federal policies, articulates the purpose of policies, and applies policies as intended to promote student academic success and well-being. | Applies school, local, state, and federal policies in a fair, equitable and unbiased manner ensuring that the focus of compliance is always student learning. | |
Strand 4 – Community Engagement

Effective educational leaders engage families and the community in order to create an inclusive, caring, safe, and supportive school environment to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

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</table>
| 4.1, 4.2             | Articulates a belief that building and maintaining relationships is important and works to establish or enhance relationships; supports meaningful connections between students and adults. | Enhances and maintains trusting relationships among and between stakeholder groups; fosters strong connections among students and adults by ensuring that every student has at least one trusting and supportive adult connection. | Develops school-wide capacity to establish trusting relationships and supports positive relationships among and between all stakeholder groups; ensures that each student is valued through systems that foster and facilitate strong connections with other students and adults. | - Communications (social media, website, newsletters, public appearances, etc.)
- Feedback from climate survey
- School Community Council agenda, minutes, observations
- Participation in community groups
- School or district improvement plan
- Family resource centers or outreach programs
- School or district community collaborations
- Use and organization of community or parent volunteers
- Data on parental involvement
- Parent handbook |
| 4.3, 4.4             | Understands and can explain the importance of cultural perspective in the school and community. | Works collaboratively with all members of the school and community to ensure they can be fully engaged in the school community to drive higher levels of student academic growth and achievement. | Leverages the influence and synergy of the school and community stakeholders, including cultural perspectives and practices, to work together to support high levels of student academic growth and achievement. |               |
### Strand 5 – Ethical Leadership

Effective educational leaders act ethically and professionally to promote each student's academic success and well-being.

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<th>Highly Effective</th>
<th>Possible Evidence</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| 5.1, 5.2             | Acts with fairness, integrity and an acceptable level of professional ethics and advocates for policies of equity and excellence. | Consistently acts with fairness, integrity, and a high level of professional ethics, and advocates for policies of equity and excellence in support of the vision and core values of the school. | Models an exceptionally high level of fairness, integrity, and professional ethics and provides leadership to staff and colleagues in these qualities. Is a strong advocate for policies of equity and excellence in support of the vision and core values of the school. | • Transparency of policies and procedures  
|                      |                     |           |                  | • Leadership team agendas, minutes, observations  
|                      |                     |           |                  | • Professional organizations or memberships  
|                      |                     |           |                  | • Feedback from colleagues, parents, community members  
|                      |                     |           |                  | • Perceptions Surveys  
|                      |                     |           |                  | • Observations  
|                      |                     |           |                  | • Survey results-parent-student  
|                      |                     |           |                  | • School culture surveys  
|                      |                     |           |                  | • Climate surveys  
|                      |                     |           |                  | • Faculty or staff handbook  
|                      |                     |           |                  | • Faculty or departmental meeting agendas, minutes, observations  
|                      |                     |           |                  | • Social media efforts  

5.2, 5.3

Demonstrates ability to use good judgment in exhibiting professional responsibility and ethical practices in accordance with the Utah Educator Professional Standards described in Board Rule R277-515.

Exhibits, models, and promotes professional responsibility and ethical practices in accordance with the Utah Educator Professional Standards described in Board Rule R277-515.

Models and maintains the highest standards of professional conduct and holds high expectations for themselves and staff to ensure educational professionalism, ethics, integrity, justice and fairness.

<p>| 5.4 | Considers student academic success and well-being as a factor in decision making and actions. | Student academic success and well-being are important factors in decision making and actions. | Makes the academic success and well-being of every student the fundamental value in all decision making and actions. Accepts responsibility, in partnership with parents, faculty and students, for the academic success and well-being of each student. |</p>
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| 6.3, 6.4, 6.5        | Leads a continuous school improvement process. | Leads a systematic continuous school improvement process that results in improved student academic performance, enhanced student well-being, and greater school effectiveness. | Engages the school community in an ongoing process of evidence-based inquiry, strategic goal setting, planning, implementation, innovation, and evaluation for continuous school improvement that results in change initiatives promoting improved student academic achievement, enhanced student well-being, and greater school effectiveness. | • Data analysis processes  
• Results of student performance  
• Data, instruction, goals, and professional development and action plans all aligned  
• Norm and criterion-referenced data, other school and community information  
• School improvement plan  
• Calendar showing time for teacher collaboration  
• Walk-through data  
• External review report  
• Student Growth Measures  
• Faculty meeting agendas  
• Student achievement data  
• External review report  
• Evaluation report  
• Leadership team rosters, meeting minutes.  
• Log of leadership opportunities and development offered to teachers |
| 6.2, 6.3, 3.6        | Conducts evaluation of teachers in accordance with school system policies. | Establishes performance expectations for all staff members and holds staff members accountable for meeting expectations through the evaluation cycle in a collaborative continuous improvement process. | Creates and maintains a culture that promotes collaborative and continuous professional growth of all educators to strengthen teaching and ensure that each student can achieve at a high level. Ensures that the evaluation cycle contributes to this culture. |  

| 6.1, 6.3, 6.5        | Provides data-informed professional learning experiences. | Provides job embedded professional learning and continuous improvement experiences that are differentiated, data-informed and results in improvements to professional practice and student learning. | Provides and leads data-informed personalized professional learning opportunities and resources for teachers to improve their practice based on needs identified through continuous improvement experiences. |  

| 6.1, 6.5, 6.6        | Provides leadership opportunities to teachers who express interest; attempts to support their development in leading other adults. | Establishes a leadership team made up of effective teachers with a range of skill sets and supports the development of teacher leaders and leadership team members. | Actively provides meaningful leadership opportunities to effective teachers; mentors and supports teacher leaders and leadership team members in leading other adults; communicates a clear leadership trajectory to those teachers with leadership potential. |  

Strand 6 – School Improvement

Effective educational leaders act as agents of continuous improvement and foster a professional community of teachers and staff to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.
### Strand 7 – Equity and Cultural Responsiveness

Effective educational leaders honor the heritage and background of each student, use culturally responsive practices, and strive for cultural competency and equity of educational opportunity to promote each student’s academic success and well-being.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.1, 7.6</td>
<td>Plans actions that cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community for students.</td>
<td>Plans, implements and supports actions that cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community for each student resulting in a positive impact on the care and support of the school community.</td>
<td>Plans, implements and supports actions that cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community for each student. Shared ownership by staff and students leads to significant improvements in or sustained excellence in the care and support of the school community.</td>
<td>• Plans and actions for an inclusive, caring, and supportive community.</td>
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<td>7.1, 7.2</td>
<td>Asserts belief that all students can achieve at high levels with staff and school community; attempts to learn about and to share successes to challenge low expectations.</td>
<td>Builds expectation for students, staff, and parents that success is possible for every student; challenges low expectations and confronts adults who display low assumptions about student potential.</td>
<td>Publicly models belief in the potential of every student to achieve at high levels; creates regular opportunities for staff and student exposure that demonstrate student potential and emphasize the staff's ability to help students reach their potential.</td>
<td>• Discipline data</td>
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<td>7.2, 7.3, 7.5</td>
<td>Provides student access to learning experiences that promote equity and culturally responsiveness.</td>
<td>Aligns and allocates resources such as effective teachers, learning opportunities, academic and social support to foster student learning environments that promote equity and culturally responsiveness.</td>
<td>Collaborates with all stakeholders to promote educational equity, dignity, and cultural responsiveness by allocating and targeting resources such as effective teachers, learning opportunities, academic and social support to ensure every student has equitable access to educational opportunities.</td>
<td>• Student surveys</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.1, 7.4, 7.5</td>
<td>Communicates the school’s values to staff and students; implements a code of conduct for students; attempts to fairly apply positive and negative consequences.</td>
<td>Translates the school’s values into specific expectations for adults and students; ensures staff explicitly teach expectations to students; implements systems to ensure the code of conduct and positive and negative consequences are consistently and fairly implemented.</td>
<td>Consistently models and teaches the school’s values and ensures staff explicitly teach expectations to students; implements systems to ensure the code of conduct is consistently and fairly implemented; tracks discipline data to ensure equitable application of positive and negative consequences.</td>
<td>• Observation of students and behaviors</td>
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<td>Faculty or departmental meeting agendas, minutes, observations</td>
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<td>Observations of faculty</td>
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<td>Leadership team agendas, minutes, observations</td>
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<td>Feedback from colleagues, parents, community members</td>
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<td>Climate surveys evidence of discipline/behavior</td>
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<td>Climate Survey Action plans</td>
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Appendix B. Email Invitation to Participate in Study

Dear <SCHOOL PRINCIPAL>

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Sarah Nielsen and I am a graduate student at Utah State University. As a former principal, I understand the critical, and often unseen, role you play in ensuring students receive a quality education. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided this school year with many highs and lows. I am interested in learning how the pandemic has influenced your roles and responsibilities this year. All elementary school principals in your district are being invited to participate in the Roles and Responsibilities of the COVID-19 Principal Study. This study has been approved by your district (#XXXX) and the Utah State University Institutional Review Board (#11701). The purpose of this study is to examine how elementary principals’ time and responsibilities during the COVID-19 pandemic align with job descriptions and evaluation metrics. Your experiences at <insert elementary school> would be a great addition to my project.

This study has two parts. You may choose to participate in both parts or one part or neither.

- Semi-Structured Interview: Participation in one 45-60 minute interview via Zoom to gain insights about your experiences and responsibilities as a principal during the COVID-19 pandemic. Any follow-up to this interview may take place via email or Zoom at your convenience.
- Time Reflection Log: Complete a time reflection log each day over the course of 15 school days estimating how much time you spend on different responsibilities. Each log should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please fill out the consent form <hyperlink to consent form>. Additional information about participating in this study can be found in the consent form link. If you have any questions or concerns regarding participation or this study, you may also reply to this email or call me at <insert phone number>.

Thank you for considering this opportunity,

Sarah R. Nielsen
Graduate Student Researcher
Utah State University

Primary Investigator: Alyson Lavigne
alyson.lavigne@usu.edu
Appendix C. Informed Consent Form

The following pages are screenshots of consent form that was hosted in Qualtrics.
Although you will not directly benefit from this study, it has been designed to learn more about alignment of principals’ roles and responsibilities with job descriptions and evaluation metrics during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Confidentiality**

The researchers will make every effort to ensure that the information you provide as part of this study remains confidential. Your identity will not be revealed in any publications, presentations, or reports resulting from this research study.

For the interview, we will collect your information through a recording of the interview and follow-up email(s) through Utah State University’s email system (hosted by Outlook). Online activities always carry a risk of a data breach, but we will use systems and processes that minimize breach opportunities. The interview will be recorded to the interviewer’s computer. You may choose to turn off your camera during the interview. Following the interview, the recording will be immediately uploaded to a restricted-access folder on Box.com, an encrypted, cloud-based storage and deleted from the interviewer’s computer. Once the interview has been transcribed by Sarah Nielsen, the video recording on Box will be deleted. Data from follow-up emails will be copied to the Box folder as well. A key for pseudonyms will be kept in the Box folder until all identifying information can be changed to pseudonyms and will then be deleted. This form will be kept for three years after the study is complete, and then it will be destroyed.

For the time reflection, we will collect your information through Qualtrics. Online activities always carry a risk of a data breach, but we will use systems and processes that minimize breach opportunities. This information will also be saved in a restricted-access folder on Box.com. Once the data collection is complete, any identifying information will be replaced with pseudonyms as described with the interviews.

It is unlikely, but possible, that others (Utah State University, your school district, or state or federal officials) may require us to share the information you give us from the study to ensure that the research was conducted safely and appropriately. We will only share your information if law or policy requires us to do so.

**Voluntary Participation & Withdrawal**

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. If you agree to participate now and change your mind later, you may withdraw at any time by contacting Sarah Nielsen at sarah.nielsen@usu.edu. If you choose to withdraw after we have already collected information about you, your interview and all follow-up data will be deleted.

IRB Review

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human research participants at Utah State University has reviewed and approved this study. If you have questions about the research study itself, please contact Sarah Nielsen at sarah.nielsen@usu.edu. If you have questions about your rights or would simply like to speak with someone other than the research team about questions or concerns, please contact the IRB Director at (435) 797-0567 or irb@usu.edu.

Sarah R. Nielsen
Graduate Student Researcher
sarah.nielsen@usu.edu

Alyson L. Lavigne
Principal Investigator
alyson.lavigne@usu.edu

PDF Version: https://usu.box.com/s/y69y16shcwmsm85bbponoiwpc10puy

☐ I consent to participate in the entire study (interview and time reflection)
☐ I consent to participate in only the interview portion of this study
☐ I consent to participate in only the time reflection portion of this study
☐ I do not consent to participate in this study

Please upload your digital signature.
Please provide the date

You have agreed to participate in The Roles and Responsibilities of the COVID-19 Elementary Principal in Relation to Job Descriptions and Utah School Leadership Evaluation Metrics: A Case Study.

Please provide the following information so that we may contact you.

Your name

Preferred Email Address
Preferred Phone Number

Do you prefer to be contacted via email or phone?

Below is a link that will take you to a paper copy of this consent form. Please print it for your records.

https://usu.box.com/s/y69yi8shcwmsrn85bbponioiwpc10puy
Appendix D. Semi-structured Interview Questions

Hello. Thank you for agreeing to talk to me today. It is <TIME> on <DATE>. This interview is regarding your daily responsibilities as principal during the COVID-19 pandemic. Are you ready to begin? [Wait for response.] Great, let’s get started.

1. Tell me about yourself (i.e. how long have you been a principal at your current school, how long have you been a principal).

2. Tell me about your school and the community it resides in (i.e. student demographics, staff, accomplishments, families the school serves).

3. What are your roles and responsibilities as an elementary school principal? In what ways have your roles and responsibilities changed (or not) as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic?

4. Besides the COVID-19 pandemic, what has influenced your roles and responsibilities as a principal throughout this school year? (i.e. racism, inequities).

5. Do you see addressing social issues (i.e. social justice, refugees, food insecurity) as part of your role as a principal? Why or why not?

6. What roles and responsibilities do you spend most of your time on? Least? Why?

7. Are there roles and responsibilities of the principalship that you delegate to others? What are those roles and responsibilities and to whom are they delegated?

8. How have your roles and responsibilities as a principal been clear during the pandemic? How have they been ambiguous?
9. Have you experienced conflict during the pandemic where your responsibilities have not aligned? If so, tell me about that. If not, what has helped you (i.e. district directives, personal prioritization) ensure your responsibilities have aligned?

10. Tell me about a typical day for you since the pandemic began when you have had students at school.

   a. What was a typical day like for you when students attended remotely?

      Potential prompts: district meetings; working with students, parents, and teachers; community and school board meetings; supervision of teacher and staff; curriculum, finances; promoting school goals (Goldring et al., 2020; Grissom et al., 2015; Horng et al., 2010; Huang et al., 2020; Lavigne et al., 2016).

11. What supports do you receive as the principal? Have these changed since the pandemic began? Potential prompts: mentorships, professional developments, supervisor check-ins (Niño et al., 2017; Spanneut et al., 2012).

12. What has best prepared you for being a principal in unusual circumstances, such as the COVID-19 pandemic? How did it prepare you and to what extent?

13. What are you learning in this time period about your role and responsibilities as a principal? What would you recommend that principal preparation programs begin teaching all pre-service educational leaders?
Appendix E. Email Reminder of Upcoming Survey

Dear <SCHOOL PRINCIPAL>

A few weeks ago, you agreed to participate in a Time Reflection, taking place over a 15 day period, regarding how much time you are spending on different responsibilities and activities each day. As a reminder, this study has been approved by your district (#XXXX) and the Utah State University Institutional Review Board (#11701).

The time-reflection log will examine how you spend your time as a principal over the period of 15 school days beginning <INSERT DATE>. An email with a link to the log will be sent to you each day. The Time Reflection will ask you to estimate how long you spent each day participating in different principal-related activities. You will be asked for the name of your school so that school-demographic data and your daily activities can be compared over time. Participation in the survey is expected to take less than 10 minutes each day.

For your convenience and as preview, I have attached a pdf version of the Time Reflection to this email. If you have any questions regarding this part of the study, you may reply to this email or call me at 801-814-9427.

Thank you again for your assistance in this study,

Sarah R. Nielsen  
Graduate Student Researcher  
Utah State University

Alyson Lavigne: Primary Investigator
Appendix F. Time Reflection

The following pages are screenshots of a .pdf download of the Time Reflection. Qualtrics hosted the Time Reflection and all participating principals completed the Time Reflection online through Qualtrics.
Default Question Block

Instruction: Please complete this Time Reflection at the end of your work day (when you are done working for the day).

Estimate the amount of time you spent today working on each item today. If you did not spend any time on the item, leave the item blank. If you feel like you spent time on something that is not included, please include it in the appropriate “Other” spots provided or at the end of the survey.

The time reflection is split into three sections: Classroom Conditions, School Conditions, and Other. You may preview the entire Time Reflection by downloading it here:
https://usu.box.com/s/bbxox7njvl9se3lme0om8bft3wz2fh1k

Please Note: The items on the Time Reflection will remain the same across all 15 days, though it is expected that your responses will vary from day to day.

To begin, enter your school’s name and today’s date. Then click
next.

Your school's name

Today's Date

**Classroom Conditions**

Estimate the amount of time you spent today on the following items.

**Instruction and Assessment**

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<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
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<th>3+ hours</th>
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<tr>
<td>Student Assessments (Rise, Acadience, etc.)</td>
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<td>Observing or Walking Through Classrooms (informal)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluating Onsite Teachers (Formal)</td>
<td>⬜️</td>
<td>⬜️</td>
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</table>
School Conditions

Estimate the amount of time you spent today on the following items.

Safety (Students and Staff)
### Contact Tracing and Related Communications Regarding Quarantine

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### Enforcing Mask Wearing

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### Planning and Implementing Emergency Drills (Fire, Lockdown, etc.)

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### Sanitizing

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### Negative Emotions (Suicide, Anger, Anxiety, Depression, etc.)

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**Other:**

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### Faculty or Staff

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### Supporting Non-Curricular Needs

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### Checking In on Teachers and Substitutes (Non-curricular)

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### Student Activities

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<tr>
<td>Lunchroom/Cafeteria Duty</td>
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<td>Recess Duty</td>
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<td>Student Drop-Off</td>
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<td>Student Pick-Up</td>
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<td>Morning Announcements</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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### Concerns and Issues

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<td>Social and Diversity-Related Issues</td>
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<td>Local and National Issues</td>
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<td>Parent Concerns</td>
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<td>Student Concerns</td>
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Other
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### Office-Related Activities
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<td>Budgeting (Requisitions and Purchasing)</td>
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<td>Maintaining Communication with Families (Newsletters, Emails)</td>
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<td>Testing Coordination</td>
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<td>Analyzing Student Data</td>
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<td>Federal, State, and District Reports</td>
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<td>Other Paperwork/Reports</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintaining School Website and Social Media Accounts</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<td><strong>Planning</strong></td>
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<td>For Future School Needs</td>
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<td>School Procedures/Protocols</td>
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Professional Learning/Development Opportunities for Teachers

School Vision, Initiatives, and Goals

Faculty Meetings

Using Data to Determine School Needs (Academic, Enrollment, etc.)

Creating Schedules, Procedures, and Guidelines

Other

Other

Other

Formal Meetings

1-15 minutes  15-30 minutes  31-60 minutes  1-2 hours  3+ hours

Staff (Custodian, Admin, Assistant Principal, Coach, Nurse, Psychologist, etc.)

Faculty

Professional Learning/Development (For Teachers)

Leadership Team
Other Items

Estimate the amount of time you spent today on the following items.

Your Personal Professional Development

1-15 minutes  15-30 minutes  30-60 minutes  1-2 hours  3+ hours
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<th>31-60 minutes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Learning About Best Practices or a New Curriculum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning About New District Initiatives or Policies</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal Learning Time</td>
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<td>Self-Care Time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participating in Professional Organizations</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<td>Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>District Personnel</td>
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<td>Working with a Mentor (Assigned or Otherwise)</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting with a Supervisor</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Networking or Collaborating with Other Principals</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Talking to District Personnel (Curriculum Specialists, HR, etc.)</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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### Additional Items

- Attending Principal's Meeting
- Attending Other District or State Meetings
- Going Through Emails
- Making and Returning Phone Calls (Including Voice Mail)
- Meeting with Visitors (Not Parents/Family)
- Facility Maintenance (Building, Playground, Equipment)
- Managing District, State, or Federal Programs
- Maintaining and Securing Student Records
- Ensuring Attendance and Enrollment Policies and Procedures are Followed
- Acting as a Community Educational Leader

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Overseeing Facility Usage Outside of School Hours

Inventoring Materials

Traveling to Schools or District Facilities Other Than Your Own

Other

Other

Other

Block 3

Are there any other things you spent your time on that should be noted? How long did you spend?

[Box for answer]

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Appendix G. Rockcliff School District Job Description

The essential roles and responsibilities of the principal include the following items. (Note: these items have been slightly adapted to maintain the anonymity of the district and participants of this study. No essential roles or responsibilities were excluded.)

- Develop, implement, and manage appropriate budgets to provide fiscal accountability
- Assist in the preparation of reports and recommendations regarding administrative activities and assist others in such requests from the district.
- Provide leadership and direction in all matters relating to the educational programs and practices of the school including
  - Continuous learning regarding research and best practices in curriculum and instruction
  - Determining educational needs
  - Supervising instructional programs
  - Monitoring instructional effectiveness
  - Managing district, state, and federal programs
  - Developing, implementing, and supervising instructional programs
- Provide leadership and direction to school operations and activities
- Comply with district goals, policies and guidelines
- Implement assessment and parental progress reporting systems as directed by the district.
• Develop and implement student behavior and discipline programs
• Administer enrollment and attendance policies and procedures
• Maintain proper student records
• Disseminate information to employees and media regarding the school
• Respond to community problems and concerns (as needed)
• Implement a systemic approach to public relations
• Provide professional educational leadership to the community
• Utilize parents/community members as volunteers and committee members
• Implement and direct personnel programs and assist the district HR department with employment and employee discipline.
• Implement staff professional development
• Develop and implement procedures, policies, and guidelines for physical school facilities usage
• Follow district guidelines and manage usage of the distribution and inventory of instructional materials
• Maintain and protect records in a secure location and maintain student and employee confidentiality.
• Assist in school boundary changes and coordination of student assignments.
• Implement and comply to state and federal programs and projects.
• Develop short- and long-term plans, implement the plans and evaluate their effectiveness.
• Represent the district at local, state, and national meetings.
• Participate in professional organizations where appropriate.
• Attend meetings outside of normal work hours

• Travel using own method of transportation

• Punctuality and regular daily attendance required.

• Other responsibilities as assigned
Sarah R. Nielsen, M.Ed.
Ph.D. Student – Instructional Leadership Emphasis, Curriculum and Instruction, Education
School of Teacher Education and Leadership
Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services
Utah State University
2805 Old Main Hill, Logan, Utah 84322
sarah.nielsen@usu.edu

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Education
2021 Ph.D. Curriculum and Instruction – Instructional Leadership Emphasis
Utah State University
2016 M.Ed. Curriculum and Instruction
Utah Valley University, Orem, Utah
2011 B.S. History Teaching, Minor: Physical Education and Coaching
Weber State University, Ogden, Utah

Teaching Experience
2019-Present Graduate Student Instructor, Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services, Utah State University, Logan, Utah
2013-2018 Social Studies and Physical Education Teacher, Pioneer High School for the Performing Arts, American Fork, Utah

Administrative Experience
2017-2018 Assistant Director, Pioneer High School for the Performing Arts, American Fork, Utah
2016 Interim Director, Pioneer High School for the Performing Arts, American Fork, Utah
University Professional Experience

2018-Present  Graduate Research Assistant, Mentors: Dr. Andrea Hawkman, Dr. Amanda Taggart; Utah State University, Logan, Utah
Responsibilities include reviewing literature, collecting and analyzing data, writing, and reviewing article drafts for publication.

2019-Present  Graduate Student Instructor, Mentors: Dr. Emma Mecham, Dr. Andrea Hawkman, Dr. Amy Piotrowski; Utah State University, Logan, Utah
Responsibilities include all requirements of a lead instructor, including instruction of elementary and secondary preservice teacher courses, coordinating lesson topics with instructors of other course sections, creating lesson plans, grading student work, and assigning final grades.

Graduate Course Experience

Summer 2020  Coursework development with Dr. Amanda Taggart; Utah State University, Logan, Utah
Collaborated in the creation of resource materials for a course final project of a master’s level and administrative licensure course: TEAL 6540 Data-Based Decision Making for School Leaders.

March 18, 2019  Substitute for Dr. Emma Mecham; Utah State University, Logan, Utah
Facilitate master’s level education course, TEAL 6190 Theories of Learning and Models of Teaching, student presentations and discussion and provide course reminders in the absence of Dr. Mecham.

RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY EXPERIENCE

Refereed Publications

Published
This study quantitatively compared coaching and non-coaching social studies teachers. Findings include disproportionate assignments to rigorous courses, differences in gender and teaching experiences, and contrasting teaching style preferences.

This study analyzed legislative and education board policies of all 50 states regarding principal evaluations. It was found that all 50 states have some mention of principal evaluations but vary greatly in their specificity and requirements. Inclusion of student achievement data was the most commonly required element of the evaluations.


An educational case study examining internal and external influences on whether to remove a principal from his position due to low student achievement. This article includes teaching notes and classroom activities for educational leadership course applicability.


The purpose of this lesson plan was to illustrate patriotisms throughout history by examining patriotic music. The lesson plan is set within the C3 Inquiry Arc. Critical media literacy is utilized in examining music lyrics for evidence of multiple patriotisms.

**In Progress**


This qualitative study will examine preservice teachers’ conceptions and understandings of patriotism.

**Projects in Progress**


This project examines how elementary school principals perceive their responsibilities and roles during the COVID-19 pandemic and how these perceptions align with state evaluation rubrics and district job descriptions.
Taggart, A., & Nielsen, S. R. (In Progress). Leading educational organizational organizations serving refugee students
This project examines district and school leaders’ perceptions of how to best serve refugee students and families and the major issues related to serving refugee populations.

Refereed Presentations
A lesson plan was presented on utilizing music to analyze patriotic sentiments in different eras of United States history.


TEACHING EXPERIENCE
Utah State University (2019-Present)

Face-to-Face Courses
Classroom Management and Motivation (SCED 5100)

Web Broadcast
Classroom Management and Motivation (SCED 5100)

Interactive Video Conferencing (IVC) Courses
Historical, Social and Cultural Foundations of Education (TEAL 3000)
Foundations Practicum (TEAL 3002)

Substitute/ Class Facilitator
Theories of Learning and Models of Teaching (TEAL 6190), Instructor: Emma Mecham, March 18, 2019

**Face-to-Face Courses**
- Fitness for Life
- Health
- Individualized Lifetime Activities
- Participation Skills and Techniques
- United State Government and Citizenship
- United States History II
- World Geography
- World History

**Online**
- Fitness for Life
- Health
- Individualized Lifetime Activities
- Participation Skills and Techniques
- United States History II
- World History

**SERVICE**
Judge for Utah State University’s Student Research Symposium, April 2020.
Judge online undergraduate research presentations according to symposium rubrics and provide individual feedback on the research and presentation.

**AWARDS**
2019 Graduate Researcher of the Year
Award received from the School of Teacher Education and Leadership, Emma Eccles Jones College of Education and Human Services, Utah State University.