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ABSTRACT

Successive waves of school reform since 1985 have brought about massive transformations in the roles and responsibilities of principals in Chicago Public Schools. The time period has also been marked by high principal turnover. This report presents findings of a study conducted in the fall of 1994 by the Department of Research, Evaluation, and Planning of the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). Researchers examined demographic data on CPS principals from personnel records, analyzed results of a 1992 survey of Chicago principals, and constructed an administrative history of all schools since 1987-88. They also conducted interviews with 61 former principals who had left their jobs after July 1, 1993. Findings show that after the 1989 wave of reform, the principalship became more accessible to women and minorities. However, few former principals reported that their academic training had been a key factor in preparing them for the job. Principals also require better-trained staff with more diverse knowledge and skills. The CPS should provide and require improved leadership training, institute continuous public recognition for successful schools and individuals, and disseminate information on successful change strategies. Three tables, seven figures, and eight endnotes are included. (Contains 55 references.) (LMI)

OFFICE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

A REPORT ON PRINCIPAL TURNOVER IN THE CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Chicago Public Schools
February 1996

Acknowledgments

The need to study principal turnover as it related to school reform initiatives in Chicago was identified in the early 1990's. This study was undertaken in the fall of 1994 by the Department of Research, Evaluation, and Planning (DREP) of the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). John Easton provided ongoing support during each stage of the study. DREP staff collaborated with many individuals and organizations to design and carry out the study. Geraldine L. Oberman, DREP administrator and currently Director, Dept. of Compliance in the Office of Accountability, was the lead researcher. Data Analyses, to identify the characteristics and track the movement of principals, were conducted by Peter Wallin, DREP consultant and currently Database Manager for the CPS Office of Accountability.

An interview team was formed of DREP evaluators and outside researchers with varied backgrounds in the field of education. Responsibility for conducting interviews as well as transcribing, editing, coding. and sorting responses was handled by Rose Nalbandian, Geraldine Oberman, Carla O'Connor, Lisa Pickens, Heidi Rock, and Judith Wood. Rose Nalbandian provided additional support through extensive coding, cross-coding, and sorting of responses.

Anthony Bryk, Co-Director of the Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR) lent his expertise to the design of the study. The conceptual framework for the principal study evolved through discussions with the Co-Directors of the CCSR: Albert Bennett, Anthony Bryk, John Easton, Penny Sebring, and Mark Smylie. Conceptual and methodological discussions were held with Kent Peterson, professor in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Wisconsin and a principal investigator for the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools. Beverly Tunney of the Chicago Principals and Administrators Association (CPAA) provided a perspective of the practicing administrator to the research plan.

Editorial assistance was provided by Kay Kirkpatrick, Director of Communications for the CCSR, and Leon Lynn, an independent consultant.

This study became possible due to the interest and cooperation of all the former CPS principals who agreed to share their time and experiences that we may all learn more about the changing nature of leading urban public schools.

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Historical Perspective

During the last half of this century, the role of the principal in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) has changed dramatically. A principal's job once consisted largely of organizing the peripherals of schooling, such as staffing, scheduling, and pupil assignment. Relations between the principal and the central administration were generally top-down and patriarchal: The administration set the rules, and the principal was expected to follow them. Women and minorities had only meager hopes, at best, of becoming principals.

Today, CPS principals are still responsible for organizing the peripherals, but they also are expected to play pivotal roles in planning and leading school efforts to restructure. Their new responsibilities include developing better ways to govern schools, crafting school-improvement plans, and actively managing school budgets. In addition, they are expected to serve as instructional leaders, by taking on such tasks as helping teachers integrate instruction and assessment across curriculum areas. This expansion of the principal's role parallels the view, promoted by the Effective Schools movement of the 1970s, that a principal's efforts can directly affect student performance.

At the same time, changes also have been taking place in principal pre-service programs, as well as in-service training and development, selection and hiring, and accountability and evaluation. The introduction of school-based management and shared decision making in the 1980s further signaled a change in local school governance, and in relations between schools and the central administration. The decentralization of decision making created new roles, constituencies and relationships. These changes set the stage for transforming the role of the central administration from mandating compliance with standardized rules to providing support services to schools.

The Principal's Traditional Role

Throughout the history of CPS, the central board's administrative staff traditionally has handled many administrative tasks related to the operation of schools. Principals typically have been assigned to schools by this bureaucracy, and then held accountable for implementing centralized policies and procedures. Principals earned opportunities to advance in their careers by demonstrating success. Good principals from small elementary schools qualified to run larger elementary schools, for example, or a principal from a large elementary school was promoted to a high school. Becoming a principal wasn't necessarily connected to a candidate's teaching experience: Candidates with high-school teaching experience might find themselves assigned to run elementary schools, or vice versa.

The central administration also assigned each school's prospective teachers, clerks, lunchroom staff, and custodial workers. Teachers received curriculum guides (for most subjects and grades) that sought to rigidly control the delivery of instruction in each classroom. Each school principal was responsible for delivering the same instructional product, with little room for creativity or innovation. Supplements to the regular instructional program often came from funds for categorical programs that targeted specific students, such as underachievers or those in special-education, bilingual-education, or gifted-and-talented programs, among others.

School Reform in Chicago

Since the 1980s, legislation passed by the Illinois General Assembly has sparked three waves of reform affecting the principal's role in CPS.

The first wave, in 1985, established state goals and specific learning objectives across subjects and grades. It also required schools to conduct local assessments (leading to the development of the Illinois Goals Assessment Program, or IGAP), and provided financial support for early childhood education, gifted education, and reading improvement. The Assembly also established the Illinois Administrator's Academy within the Educational Service Center, a cluster of 18 centers statewide for training the holders of Illinois administrative certificates.

The second reform wave, in 1988, was the Chicago School Reform Act, which applied only to CPS. Spurred on by a coalition of city and state officials, busine ss representatives, and community organizations, this act sought to decentralize decision making and shift power to schools.

The act created Local School Councils (LSCs), which include the principal and two teachers, as well as six parents and two community members elected to two-year terms (and one student member at high schools). Inaugurated in October 1989, the LSCs were given specific powers to select principals, award four-year performance contracts with annual evaluations, approve the local school budget, and advise the principal on the development of a three-year School Improvement Plan (SIP) to guide the school's restructuring efforts. Teachers, meanwhile, were encouraged to form Professional Personnel Advisory Committees (PPACs) at each school, to advise the principals on developing SIPs and to advise on schoolwide curriculum and instruction issues.

The third and most recent reform wave, in 1995, reconstituted the Board of Education, dismantled the school district's central bureaucracy, and increased the authority and power of principals. The CPS general superintendent was replaced by a chief executive officer, and a five-member board of trustees directly appointed by the mayor replaced the 15-member board, which the mayor previously appointed with the guidance of a nominating committee. A new, streamlined management team was created to increase support services to schools. Principals were given more power to set the building hours and to supervise service staff, such as custodians and lunchroom workers, and were made more accountable for student and school performance.

Transforming the Principal's Role

Through the influence of school reform groups, local politicians, and state legislators, principals in Chicago schools have experienced massive changes in their roles and responsibilities since the passage of the Chicago School Reform Act of 1988. Principals gained more direct influence over personnel assignments, curriculum and instruction, the use of discretionary funds, and staff development, among other areas, and became more accountable to parents and each school's immediate community. Perhaps the greatest evidence of this transformation is the new, central roles principals play in developing and implementing each school's three year SIP, and in preparing school budgets.

With the assistance of LSCs and the PPACs, principals were given latitude to make curriculum innovations and other changes that embodied a vision to restructure schools and better serve students. Gone was the "one-size-fits-all" mentality that permeated education in Chicago for many decades. In its place was a vision of principals working collaboratively with teachers, parents, and community representatives to rejuvenate school climate, redesign curriculum, and link instruction with assessment in ways that improved student performance.

The challenge for many school communities became retaining or selecting principals who could help develop and implement a school vision. For Chicago principals and principal candidates, that meant applying for vacancies and securing four-year contracts. Principals were now accountable to an elected body much closer to the site of daily school activities. The emergence of community politics in this new process of administering schools further influenced the changes in the role of the principal. Principals were compelled to develop or refine skills for working with a variety of school and community constituencies.

Earlier Studies of School Reform

A 1992 study conducted by the Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR) provided the first early indications of just how much the principal's role was changing. The report, *Charting Reform: The Principal's Perspective*, included results of a comprehensive survey of 457 principals (out of 550 who were asked to respond). Their answers to questions on roles, school leadership and other topics revealed that management issues--including governance, district and central office demands, planning, and budgeting--consumed most of a principal's work week. Even though reform legislation had sought to help principals become strong instructional leaders, principals found that their other new responsibilities conflicted with that mission.

The report further identified principals' opinions about their jobs. While they felt more accountable for student achievement, they also identified several impediments that they felt were keeping them from making the progress toward school improvement they were expected to make. Major issues included staff development, difficulty removing ineffective teachers, time use, inadequate funding, parental apathy, and collective bargaining agreements.

The 1992 study also revealed another important trend: Unlike school leaders of decades past, most of the principals did not expect to keep their jobs after five or 10 years, or until reaching a specific retirement age. The impact of reform on the changing role of the principal led the CCSR researchers to comment:

> Principals are optimistic about their schools and see positive practices emerging, but they do not necessarily feel better about their own work. While they feel they are helping their students and are valued in their own communities, doubt remains about the role they are being asked to fill. When we combine this doubt with the very real constraints of time, resources, and personnel... a very challenging picture of school leadership emerges.[i]

The report expressed concern for "whether the current career plans of principals will promote the institutionalization of positive initiatives, or just contribute to a repeated cycle of innovation which is never fully implemented and then abandoned as new leadership arrives."[ii] The CCSR study further noted that as of 1992, 43 percent of CPS principals had been hired since July 1990.

A later study, conducted by the CPS Department of Research, Analysis, and Assessment, which looked at the progress of school improvement in 70 schools from 1988 to 1995, [iii] found that 51 of the 70 schools had changed principals at least once during seven years. In all, 85 changes of principal were recorded in those schools. Some specific systemwide events sparked considerable turnover, the report noted, including the Chicago School Reform Act of 1988, changes in the principal selection process, and opportunities for early retirement. By August 1994, 30 percent of principals had one year of experience or less, and 72 percent had five years of experience or less, according to CPS data. This instability "affected the ability of the school leadership, faculty, and staff to stay on a steady track in terms of initiating, supporting, and sustaining their restructuring efforts," the report said.[iv]

STUDYING PRINCIPAL TURNOVER

The high rate of principal turnover raised some serious questions: Was reform in the Chicago Public Schools driving principals away? Were the principals who were leaving the school system the "best and the brightest?" If good principals were indeed leaving, what could be done to persuade more of them to stay? These and similar concerns also were being voiced by school system administrators and representatives from reform organizations.

The creators of Chicago school-reform legislation, and the community at-large, had high expectations that principals, along with the Local School Council, would lead the transformation of urban schools. As with any organization undergoing massive upheaval, stability of leadership at the school level was viewed by many as an essential ingredient to realizing the overall goal of school improvement. They recognized that the progress of reform in CPS would be impacted by the movement of individuals in and out of the principal's role, as well as the amount of experience each principal brought to the job. Also, examining the movement of principals in and out of the system, as well as from one school to another, was seen as critical to gauging where reform was headed.

These concerns played a major role in prompting the CPS Department of Research, Analysis, and Assessment--with the assistance of the *Consortium on Chicago School Research* and the *Chicago Principals and Administrators Association*--to study principal turnover in Chicago. This study seeks to shed light on the relationship of educational leadership to the progress of school reform, and to help explain why principals have been leaving CPS.

Research Methods

Beginning in the fall of 1994, researchers examined demographic data on CPS principals from personnel records, analyzed results of the CCSR's 1992 *Principal Survey*, and constructed an administrative history of all schools since 1987-88. This analysis included a look at overall principal turnover from 1987 to 1995, and a closer look at turnover from 1992 to 1994.

In addition, a random sample of 61 former principals who left their jobs after July 1, 1993 (31 women and 30 men; 52 from elementary schools and nine from high schools) was selected from an eligible population of 157.[v] This sample included principals from each of four categories:

- 31 who left under the "5+5" early retirement plan offered in 1993 and 1994.
- 16 who resigned.
- 12 who left to take different jobs in the school district, including 10 who became administrators and 2 who took teaching positions.
- 2 who left under the regular retirement plan.

The former principals were interviewed between February and May 1995. Interviewers were selected who had general knowledge of the CPS system, had experience working with CPS schools, knew the process of school reform, and were able to commit several weeks to conducting, transcribing, and coding interviews.[vi]

This study includes both data analysis and personal interviews because, as Miles and Huberman (1994) noted, "Stories without variables do not tell us enough about the meaning and larger import of what we are seeing. Variables without stories are ultimately abstract and unconvincing...." Through detailed

reading of interview transcripts, combined with specific coding and analysis of principals' stories, interviewers and researchers have woven a pattern that depicts the collective careers of many educators spanning a 25-year period in CPS history.

Turnover Among Principals, 1987 to 1995.

The greatest turnover among CPS principals occurred during two school years marked by major events: 1989-90, when the Chicago School Reform Act went into effect; and 1993-94, when the district first offered the "5+5" early-retirement incentive plan.

(INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE)

In each of those two years, more than 24 percent of the CPS schools saw at least one principal depart. Only in 1990-91, the second year of the new reform law, did CPS approach the turnover rates posted for those two years (about 19 percent of the schools lost at least one principal that year).

(INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE)

These waves of principal turnover did not affect all schools equally. Between July 1987 and July 1995, 21 percent of the high schools and 14 percent of the elementary schools saw three or more principals leave. In 2 percent of the elementary schools and 4 percent of the high schools, at least five principals left during those years. During the same period, 20 percent of the elementary schools and 15 percent of the high schools had no principal turnover at all.

(INSERT FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE)

Schools with different ethnic compositions posted different principal turnover rates.[vii] Racially mixed schools had the highest rate of turnover from 1987 to 1995. Predominantly minority schools had the next highest rate, followed by predominantly Hispanic and racially changed schools. The lowest turnover rates were posted by integrated and predominantly African-American schools.

(INSERT FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE)

Changes in Demographics

As principals left and new principals were hired, the ethnicity of principals began to more closely match the predominant ethnicity of their schools. (Note: Figures 1 to 7 can be found on pages 8 to 14).

- **In predominantly African-American schools**, the percentage of African-American principals rose from 66 percent in 1989 to 91 percent in 1994. The percentage of white principals in those schools dropped from about 34 percent to 9 percent during the same period (there were only two Hispanic principals in those schools in 1989 and none in 1994.)

- **In predominantly Hispanic schools,** the percentage of Hispanic principals rose from 50 percent in 1989 to 61 percent in 1994, while the percentage of white principals dropped from 50 percent to 39 percent (there were no African-American principals in those schools).

- **In predominantly minority schools,** the percentage of white principals also fell. In 1989, 61 percent had white principals, compared to 44 percent in 1994. During those same years, the percentage of African-American principals rose from 23 percent to 30 percent, and the percentage of Hispanic principals rose from 16 percent to 26 percent.

- **In racially mixed schools**, whites held 71 percent of the principal jobs in 1989 and 75 percent in 1992. By 1994 whites were down to 68 percent. The percentage of African-American principals in those schools dipped only slightly, from 18 percent in both 1989 and 1992 to 17 percent in 1994. Hispanics held 11 percent of the principalships in those schools in 1989, dropped to 7 percent in 1992 and then rose to 15 percent in 1994.

- **In integrated schools,** the percentages of principals by race were the same in 1989 and 1994: 84 percent white, 9 percent African-American, and 7 percent Hispanic. In 1992, however, the percentage of white principals was higher -- 91 percent -- while African-Americans and Hispanics held only 7 percent and 2 percent of the principalships, respectively.

District-wide, whites had held 63 percent of all principal jobs in 1987, but by 1995 they were down to 38 percent. During that same period, the percentage of African-American principals rose from 35 percent to 53 percent, and the percentage of Hispanic principals rose from 3 percent to 9 percent.

The gender balance among CPS principals also shifted: Women held 42 percent of the district's principalships in 1987 and 58 percent in 1995.

A Closer Look: 1992 to 1994

To better understand which principals left schools and why, researchers examined Chicago Board of Education data on 548 people who held principalships on May 1, 1992. By November 1, 1994, 229 of them had left their jobs. According to the data:

- About 52 percent left to take advantage of the 5+5 early retirement program.
- About 32 percent resigned or took regular retirement.
- About 13 percent transferred to other positions in the school district.
- About 4 percent left for other reasons, such as death or nonrenewal of contract.

Half of the white elementary principals in this sample left their jobs, compared to 35 percent of African-American principals and 22 percent of Hispanic principals. In high schools, 57 percent of white principals left, compared to 48 percent of African-American principals and 33 percent of Hispanic principals.

Overall, 54 percent of those who left were white, 42 percent were African-American and 4 percent were Hispanic. Among those who stayed, 38 percent were white, 52 percent were African-American and 10 percent were Hispanic.

(INSERT FIGURE 5 ABOUT HERE)

Age and gender were both significant factors as well. The average age among the principals in this sample who left their jobs was 58; the average age of those who stayed was 53. And men left principalships at both elementary and high schools at higher rates than women. Overall, 57 percent of those who left their jobs were male, while 55 percent of those who stayed were female.

(INSERT FIGURE 6 ABOUT HERE)

Researchers also sought to measure the attitudes of principals who left, and compare them with those who stayed, by looking at survey data collected from principals by CCSR in 1992. This survey provided very useful data because it polled principals on the role of the Local School Council at their school, the professional lives of teachers and principals, and the extent of restructuring activities taking place. Of the 548 principals in this sample, 457 completed the survey.

(INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE) (Note: Table 1 can be found on page 15.)

The results of the surveys are shown in Table 1. For each statement, a positive number indicates that principals who stayed were more likely to agree. A negative number means that principals who left were more likely to agree. The asterisks indicate responses considered especially significant: That is, one type of principal was far more likely to answer that question in a certain way, and enough principals responded to the question to make the answers statistically valid.

Among the results:

- On the measures of attitudes about local school governance, there were no significant differences between principals who left their jobs and those who stayed. This was true at both the elementary and high school levels.

- Similarly, the measures of attitudes about the work life of principals revealed little difference between those who stayed and those who left, at both the elementary and high school levels.

- On the measures of attitudes about the work life of teachers, significant differences emerged at the elementary level. Principals who stayed were far more likely to report improvements in staff development, while those who left were more likely to report greater levels of teacher commitment. These differences in attitude were not seen at the high school level.

- The measures of attitudes about restructuring found significant differences at both the elementary and high school levels. Elementary principals who left were more likely to report structural changes in teachers' work, as well as strong efforts to build school-community ties. At the high school level, principals who stayed were more likely to report more emphasis on authentic instruction.[viii]

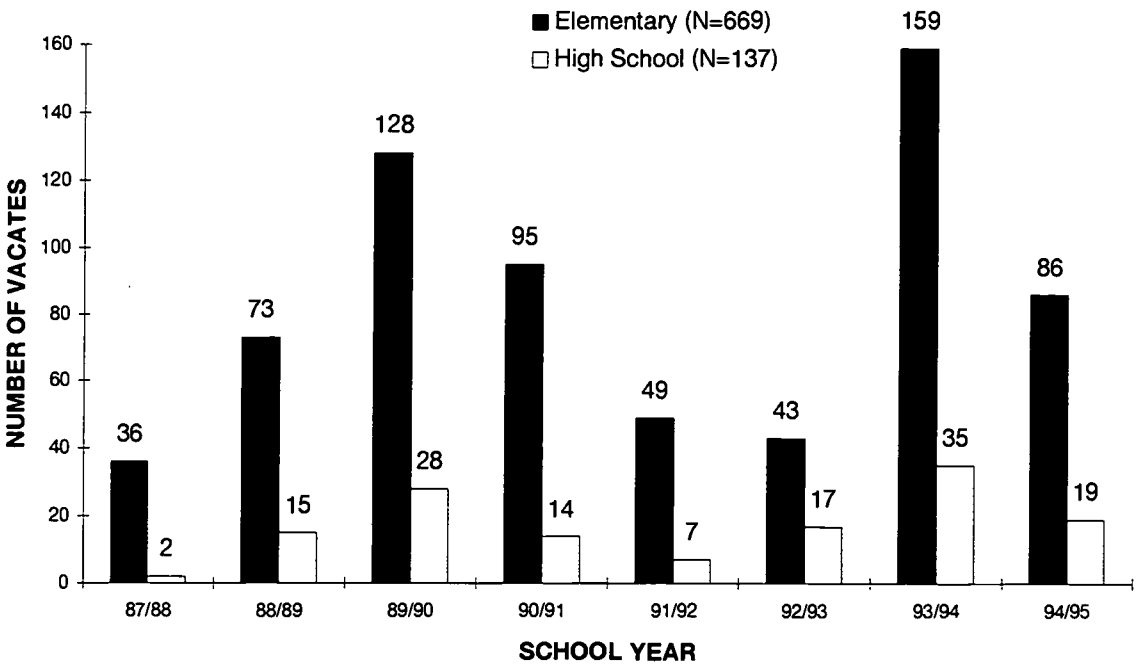
The 1992-94 study also provided data on the different rates at which principals from different ethnic groups left schools with different ethnic balances.

(NOTE: INSERT FIGURE 7 ABOUT HERE)

Whites left all five types of schools at relatively even rates, though they were somewhat less likely to leave schools classified as integrated. African-American principals left at much more varied rates: 63 percent of the African-American principals left racially mixed schools, for example, while only 20 percent of the African-American principals at integrated schools left.

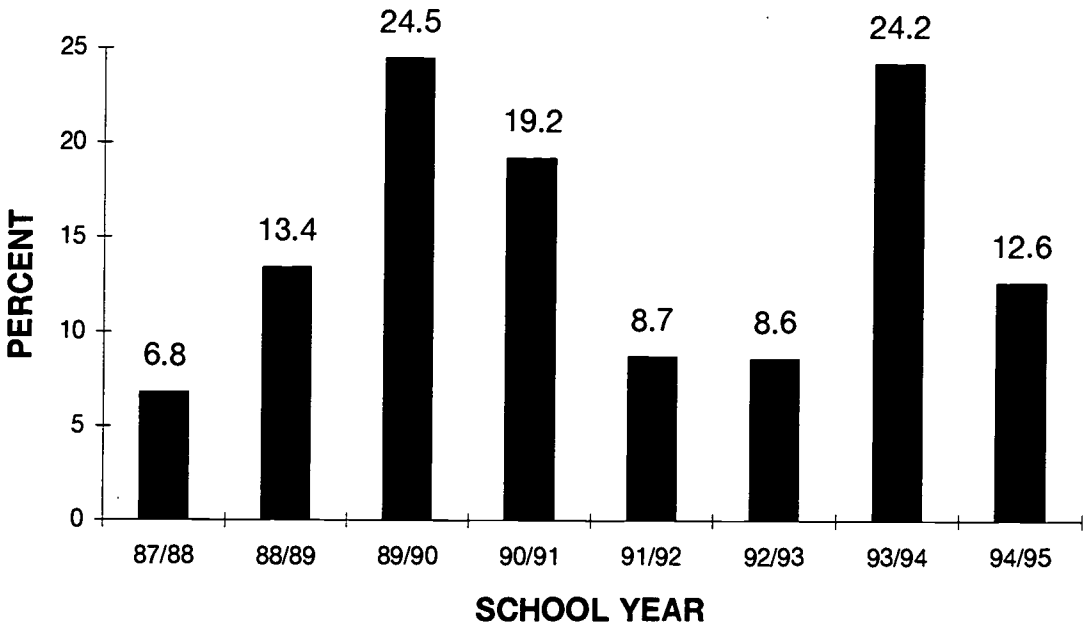
CHARTS TO ACCOMPANY PRINCIPAL TURNOVER STUDY REPORT - DEMOGRAPHICS SECTION

Figure 1: Total Number of Principals Who Left Elementary and High Schools



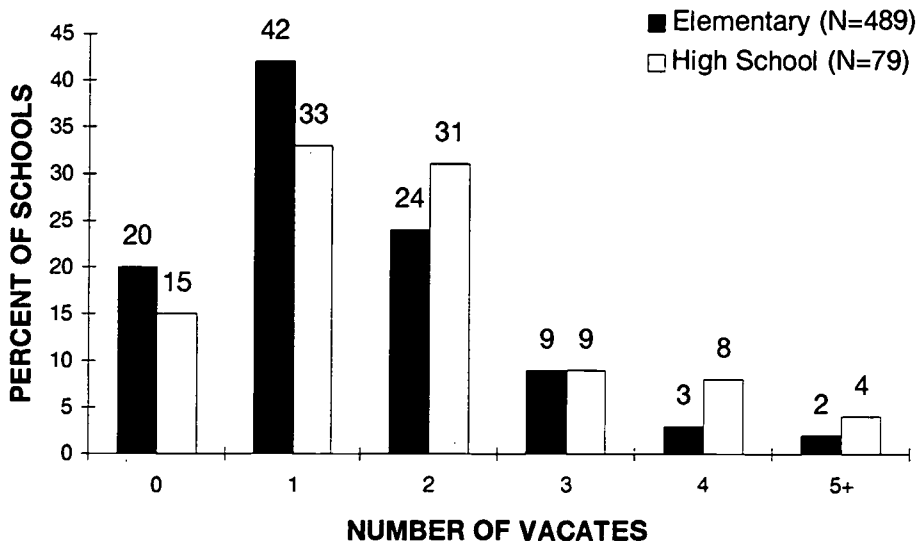
Source: CPS personnel files

Figure 2: Percentage of Schools with One or More Principals Leaving Within a Year



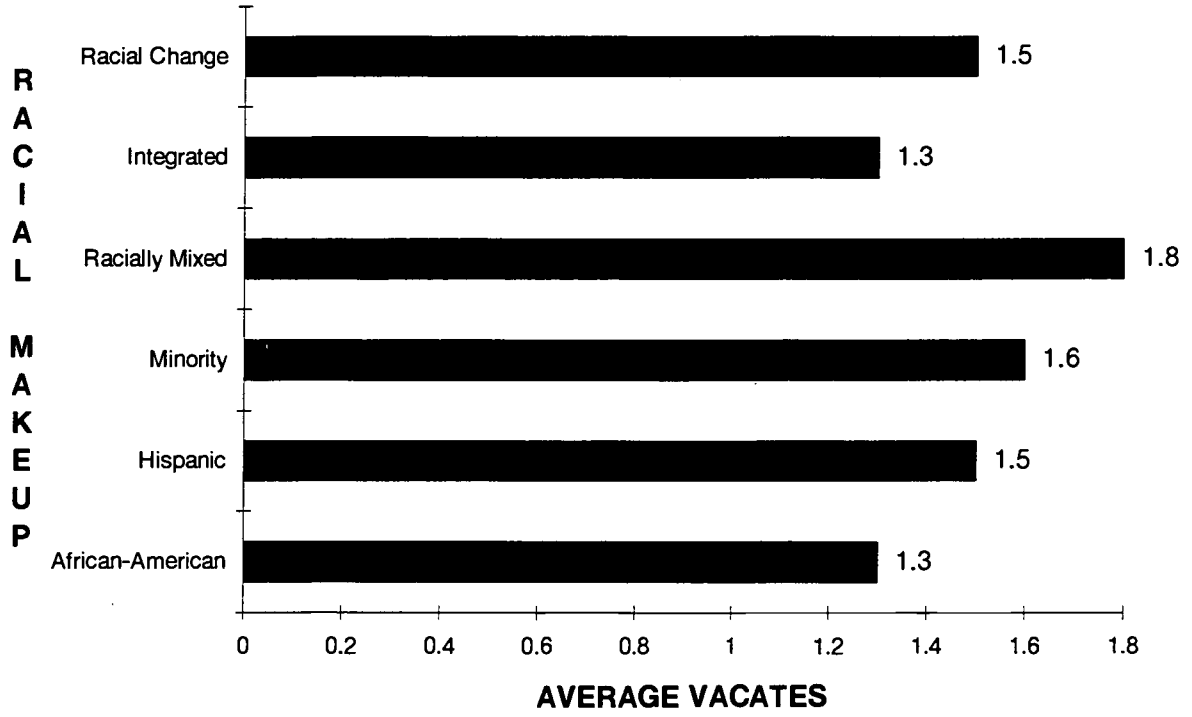
Source: CPS personnel files

Figure 3: Breakdown of Elementary and High Schools by Number of Principals Who Left During an Eight-Year Period (7/1/87 to 7/1/95)



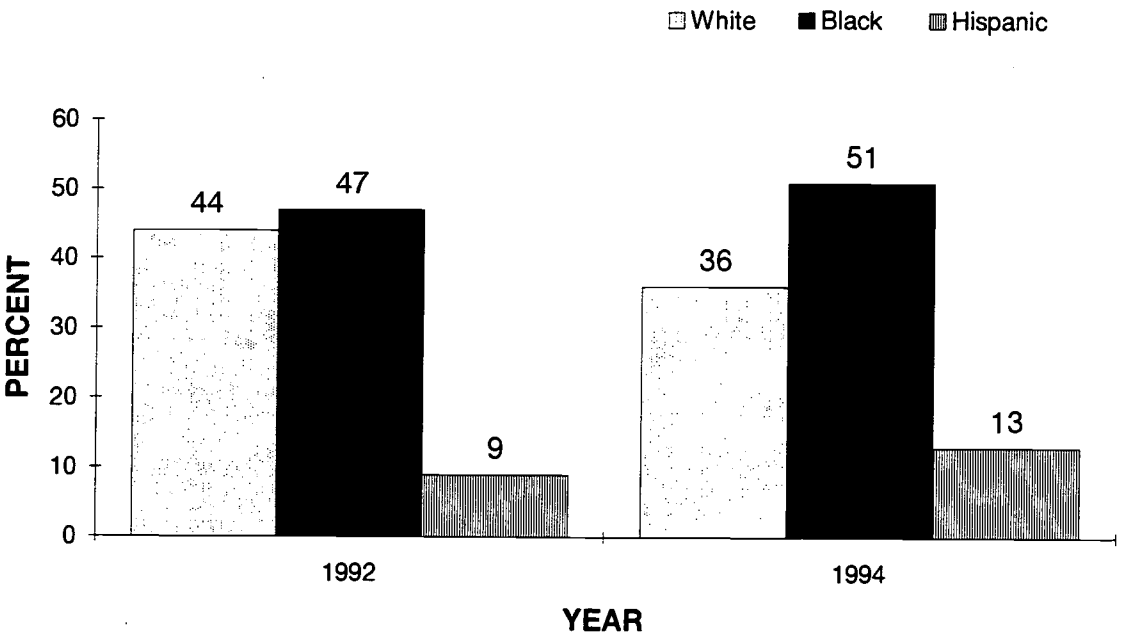
Source: CPS personnel files

Figure 4: Average Number of Principal Vacancies by Racial Makeup of School (1987-1995)



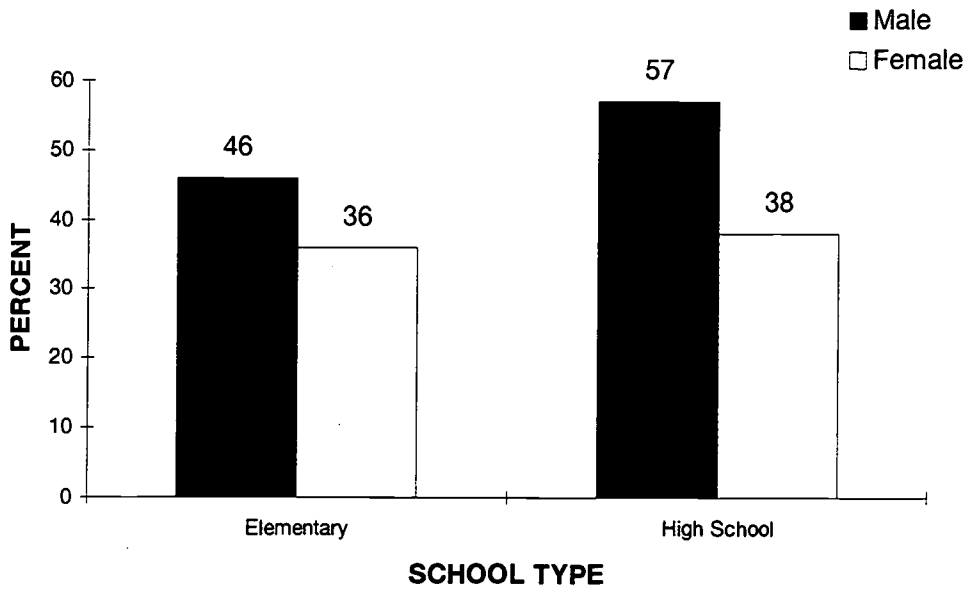
Source: CPS personnel files

Figure 5: Demographic Comparison of May 1992 Principals and November 1994 Principals



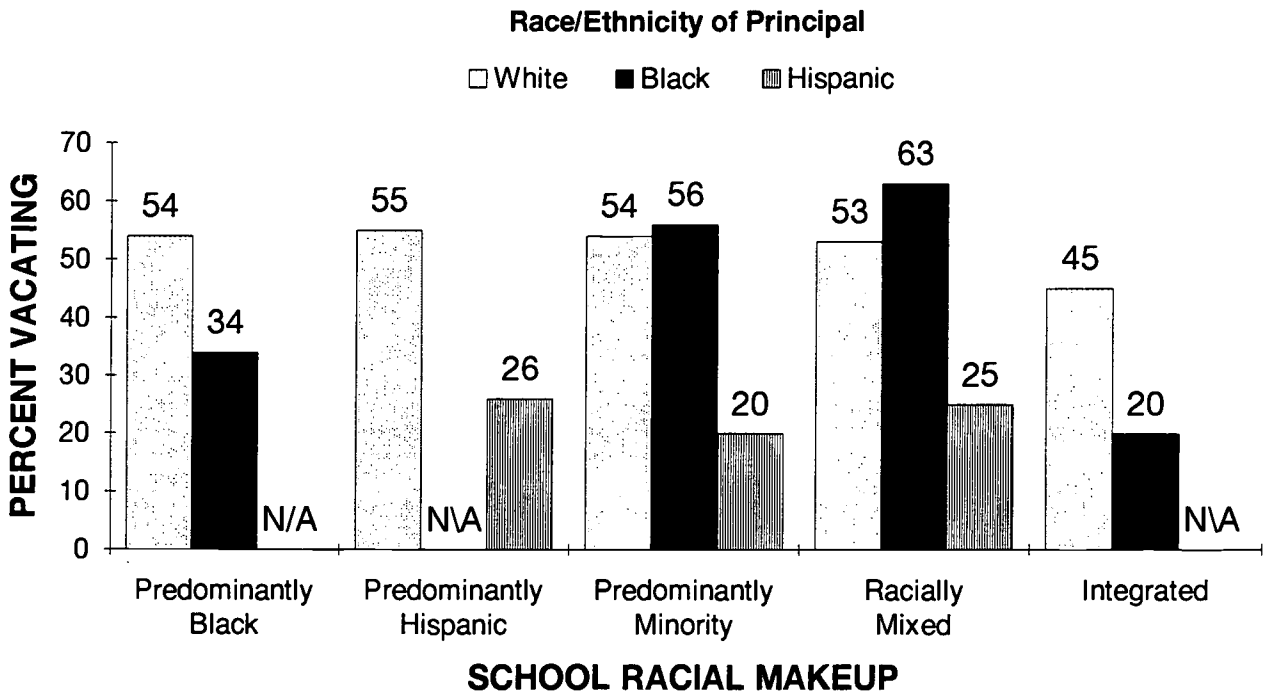
Source: CPS personnel files

Figure 6: Percentage of Principals Leaving Their Positions, Broken Down by Gender



Source: CPS personnel files

Figure 7: Probability of a Principal Leaving by Racial Makeup of School and Race/Ethnicity of Principal



Source: CPS personnel files

Table 1: Differences in Attitude Between Principals Who Left and Principals Who Stayed

MEASURES	ELEM	HIGH SCHOOL
Better affect and relations brought about by reform	0.00	-0.01
LOCAL SCHOOL GOVERNANCE		
Principal has greater influence over the LSC	0.14	0.01
LSC view of its role *vis-a-vis* professional staff is clear	0.07	0.06
Principal gauges the effectiveness of the LSC higher	0.16	0.27
LSC does not exceed its authority	0.14	-0.14
Principal works better with the PPAC	0.05	-0.10
PPAC offers more constructive contributions	-0.02	-0.08
PPAC and LSC cooperate and collaborate more	-0.14	0.05
More extensive implementation of the SIP	0.19	0.66
Broader participation in SIP development	0.06	0.26
LSC evaluation of principal was fair and constructive	0.21	0.16
PROFESSIONAL WORK LIFE OF TEACHERS		
Staff exhibit more collegial behavior	-0.11	-0.42
Staff have more collegial feeling	-0.12	-0.35
Process for improving staff are better since reform	0.26 *	0.07
More active teacher development activities in school	0.31 *	-0.05
Greater teacher commitment in the school	-0.39 *	-0.40
PROFESSIONAL WORK LIFE OF PRINCIPAL		
Principal feels more efficacious & satisfied with work	0.17	-0.10
Greater feeling of loss of status since reform	0.07	0.02
More administrative demands since reform	-0.13	0.56
RESTRUCTURING ACTIVITIES		
Roadblocks stand in way of principal doing his/her job	-0.03	-0.14
Structural change in the organization of teachers work	-0.45 *	-0.34
More emphasis on introducing authentic instruction	0.17	0.65 *
Strong effort to create ties between school & community	-0.31 *	-0.21

NOTE: Positive values indicate that principals who stayed had a higher mean on the measure than principals who left.

* indicates significance at the .05 level.

Source: CPS data

IN THEIR OWN WORDS--INTERVIEWS WITH FORMER PRINCIPALS

Through a combination of open-ended discussion and structured questions, interviewers engaged 61 former principals in discussions of 45 minutes to an hour, focusing on four main themes:

- Paths to becoming principals.
- Leaving the principal's job.
- Reflections on the Chicago Public Schools system.
- Their current jobs and professional activities.

The experiences and behaviors captured by these interviews do much to inform our understanding of educational leadership in transition. The degree to which CPS principals have been successful at creating new types of learning centers may be revealed by examining the experiences of this group of educators, who led them during the initial stages of a bold experiment in educational restructuring.

In some cases, this study uses quotes from a single former principal to capture the sentiments expressed by many.

Paths to Becoming Principals

Of the 61 principals interviewed:

- 5 first became principals in the 1960s.
- 21 became principals in the 1970s.
- 20 became principals in the 1980s
- 15 became principals in the 1990s.

The former principals gave many different reasons for seeking the position. Most said it was the next natural step in their education careers. Others cited upward mobility, opportunities for advancement, and financial security as motivating factors. Many had performed a variety of roles at the school level and, seeing peers moving into principals' jobs, wanted to do the same. About a third of the former principals said they'd experienced success as classroom teachers and wanted to have a greater impact on children, and to help them develop greater academic skills.

Another prominent factor was the desire to spur change, make an impact, or make things happen. About a third of the former principals named this as a reason for seeking the job, saying they were eager to "broaden their sphere of influence" or assume "some responsibility for what was going on in education." They recalled their hopes of making a contribution, affecting a community, and helping people improve themselves. They had spent time gathering and developing ideas and visions for working in schools and with people, and wanted to try them.

About half of the former principals said they were impatient with the pace of change they had observed and wanted to become principals "to transform schools." Roughly a third said they'd felt they had the skills and training--including curriculum expertise, administrative experience gained in other positions, recognition for past work, and self-confidence--to do the job well where others had faltered.

About a quarter of the former principals described themselves as long-term goal setters and planners, who had carefully prepared themselves to become principals. These preparations included completing graduate-level education, holding an assortment of positions besides teaching, and preparing for the

Chicago Principal's Exam (which was used to select principals in the years before the creation of Local School Councils).

Roughly a quarter of those interviewed said school-reform efforts had created new opportunities in a system that previously had been unreceptive to women and minorities. A small number said becoming a principal was a chance event triggered by a principal's retirement, an unexpected solicitation by a school community, or fortunate timing.

Many former principals said that mentors figured prominently in their decisions to become principals. They said they were guided by people who recognized their potential, encouraged them to set high personal goals, supported their ambitions, and gave them opportunities to gain useful experience. These mentors included principals, district superintendents, other administrators under whom they worked as teachers, and colleagues who became principals themselves. Many described working for principals who were role models, cheerleaders, and talent scouts who searched out and supported potential school leaders.

While many of the former principals said that working under a successful principal inspired them to become principals, an almost equal number said they were motivated by working under a principal who wasn't as successful, because he or she made them feel the job could be done better.

Early Difficulties

Most of the former principals said that the job's tremendous work load, and "realizing that everything is my responsibility," made the "whole job difficult" and made the first year "just hard." They recalled many formidable challenges, including "just getting to know the people" (teachers, students, and parents) and "establishing and getting comfortable with my identity as a principal." Managing time, people, procedures, and resources, with little scheduled time for planning, made for "extremely long days." A few former principals said the job demanded a great deal of on-the-job training, due to their "lack of knowledge" going in and "no previous administrative experience," combined with the "many things you had to be an expert in."

Difficulties with teachers loomed large for about half the interview subjects during their early years as principals. Their concerns included gaining teacher's confidence and trust, confronting unqualified staff, and encountering resistance to change. They said they were constantly challenged by trying to "break up old mind-sets and start anew" in an organization where "change is a slow process."

Other often-cited concerns during those first years included:

- How the LSC conducted business.
- Community, social, and political problems.
- Dealing with the demands of parents.
- Figuring out how to motivate students.
- Negotiating the central administration.
- The capacity and condition of the school building.
- Having responsibility for multiple school buildings.

About 10 percent of the former principals, however, said their first years were not difficult and provided enjoyable challenges in an atmosphere of acceptance and assistance. These principals fondly recalled their early years, saying they were marked by "knowing what we had to do" and having "time to get things done."

Sources of Support

More than three-quarters of the former principals said they found generous support during their early years from colleagues and friends who were themselves principals. They formed networks of support, both formal and informal, while participating in study groups for the principal's exam, attending regular subdistrict principals' meetings, and through workshops, institutes, and other training events. About half of the former principals said they had found support from other principals within their subdistrict, because of the strong identification with the subdistrict office.

Friends of all types--including classmates, teacher-colleagues, personal friends and friends who were principals--helped new principals stay on top of their jobs in their early years. The veteran principals and mentors who influenced many to become principals also were available to lend a helping hand. The subdistrict superintendent, administrator, coordinators, and clerks also gave new principals significant support. About a third of the former principals said the subdistrict superintendent was available, reliable, and ready with answers, information, and solutions. These former principals depicted the subdistrict office as a front-line resource where help, counsel, and an immediate response to a tough question could be obtained.

About half the former principals said their assistant principals were indispensable, as were teachers with specialized skills, subject matter expertise, or knowledge of the student body and community, who rallied to the new principal's side. These former principals also identified the LSCs as supporting agents, and said leadership-sharing emerged in their schools as planning teams--which included teachers and parents--were formed and provided input in the decision-making process. Some of the former principals, roughly a fifth of those interviewed, had developed contacts in the CPS central administration that they could approach in times of need.

Leaving the Principal's Job

Nearly all of the former principals interviewed for this study were able to describe their last year on the job in great detail, and pinpointed many sources of satisfaction and frustration.

Sources of Satisfaction

Most felt they had accomplished a great deal during their tenures. Some said they saw "evidence of a whole different level of caring about education" develop in their schools. Many remembered their final year as a time when "seeds that were planted were going into full bloom," especially in curriculum development and the introduction and expansion of numerous instructional programs.

Most said they felt they had built their schools into places "that people felt comfortable walking into and working in," which they said was gratifying. Many took pride in saying their day-to-day operations in their schools had run smoothly. And many felt their schools had made at least acceptable progress in developing and adopting school-based management techniques. They frequently spoke of their schools' efforts at shared decision making, describing efforts at "team building to get all groups working together," or "working as a complete unit," or "handling problems as a team."

About two-thirds of the former principals said they had derived much satisfaction from "seeing personal and professional growth" among their teachers and staff members. They lauded "teachers getting more involved in their own staff development" and more direct involvement of principals in teacher selection. The former principals felt that their more collaborative relationships with teachers had developed due to the school district's increased emphasis on school-level decision making. Also, teachers and schools

received recognition locally, from the school system, and even nationally through outside organizations and performance awards. And principals placed new emphasis on staff development and leadership development, with an eye toward "having teachers become principals, assistant principals, and administrators."

The former principals said school reform and local decision making helped schools develop or import innovative programs. School reform provided new money for instructional programs, staff development, and parent training to help in redefining the concept of parent involvement, and for attracting additional money from the business community and other organizations, they said. Many spoke with great satisfaction about "starting a program the school never had," such as extending the school day, opening the school on Saturdays as a "family center," or developing programs for enrichment or tutoring. Others recalled parents who started as volunteers and then became paraprofessionals, or returned to school and became teachers.

The Bottom Line

The question uppermost on the minds of the general public, researchers, and educators alike is whether school reform has meant greater student progress. More than half of the former principals pointed to the "success of the students" as a major source of job satisfaction, making such comments as:

- "Moving along steadily."
- "Improved rate of progress."
- "Growth in reading and math."
- "Scores which just soared."
- "Coming out of the lowest 100 schools due to test scores rising."

These former principals also spoke positively about school efforts to create a welcoming learning environment. They spoke of the "willingness, even eagerness, of children to do a lot of things," or observed that children "seemed happy in school," and "wanted to come to school," or "really believed in what they could do." Daily contact with students had helped make their jobs worthwhile, they said.

About a third of the former principals said they played an active role in building parent involvement by holding conferences, workshops, and other training events for parents. They reported "seeing growth in parenting skills" in their communities, saw progress in showing parents "what was expected of them," and felt their schools made strides in preparing parents "to work jointly with the staff." Some former principals said proudly that they'd seen parents go back to school to become teachers or take skills learned through the school and use them to get better jobs.

A handful of the former principals praised the school district's central office personnel for "becoming more responsive to principals' needs," for being "easier to contact by phone," and for trying hard given the job they had to do. Foreshadowing the 1995 wave of reform, which took place after these interviews were completed, one former principal observed: "If the central office recognizes that the intent of school reform is to put as many decisions as possible at the local level, I think the fact that they've put more personnel in the subdistrict offices is a step in that direction."

Sources of Frustration

The frustrations former principals described during their final year on the job bore some resemblance to the first-year difficulties they described. But these frustrations bear added scrutiny, because they provide insight into the experiences of principals who were involved in school reform efforts. These hindrances were often unique to the individual or the school setting, and didn't appear connected to a principal's length of experience. But there were many common themes.

One former principal summed up the opinions expressed by nearly all those interviewed by saying: "Trying to work with the bureaucracy was unbelievable." This sentiment applied to both the Board of Education and central office staff. Many complained of "conflicting instructions and/or regulations" on budget matters, payroll, maintenance requests, personnel issues, or purchasing. About a third of the former principals said their efforts to develop school improvement plans were plagued by shifting budget figures. Others spoke of spending up to a full day at the Central Service Center hand-delivering paperwork from office to office, a process they criticized as needlessly demanding and inefficient, and which often failed to produce the desired result.

Some principals went so far as to cast central office as the "greatest obstacle to reform," or "not committed to reform." They complained that the distance between the schools and central office was growing, and that despite all the talk of reform, many decisions that should have been made at the school were still being made by central office staff who didn't involve or consult principals.

Many former principals said they'd been confounded by losing teachers to early retirement or to transfers triggered by budget cuts. Others said their instructional programs had been hurt by overcrowded buildings, lack of space for special-group instruction, losing resources that had been earmarked for special programs, and changes in special-education policies.

Almost half of the former principals said their schools had suffered due to two major events during the 1993 school year: the delayed school opening, and changes mandated in the length of high-school classes. These were both events which disrupted restructuring plans, reduced students' time-on-task, and crushed enthusiasm built during summer teacher-training events, they said.

Many also complained that school reform had forced them to play a more political role, for which they had minimal interest, knowledge, skill, or expertise. This created new pressures on principals to live up to the different perceptions and expectations of different groups--including the LSC, faculty members, parents, the larger community, and the central administration--and created new conflicts that were never resolved.

About a third of the former principals said they had been concerned by the "inability of the LSC and administration in the school to move in the same direction." They said they had struggled with council members over the different roles that principals and LSCs need to play in a school: the LSC as policymaker, and principal as the overseer of day-to-day operations. These former principals said their relations with LSCs were undermined because some council members were unduly influenced by outside organizations or other council members, due to a lack of information or due to language and cultural barriers. About a fifth of the former principals said that "conflicting relationships with the Local School Council" were at least somewhat influential in their decisions to leave their jobs.

These frustrations affected different former principals to different degrees. About a third said they had grown tired, both physically and emotionally, by the time they left the job, or had become discouraged and disillusioned. They were impatient with the progress of change in CPS and in their particular schools, and felt they had done all they could. Rather than face continued run-ins with an administration they felt was unresponsive and always demanding more from them, they decided to leave.

But slightly more than a third of the former principals interviewed for this study claimed that the frustrations of the job hadn't gotten them down. "They were just that, frustrations," said one. These principals said they could have continued, despite concerns over the uncertain direction of the Chicago Public Schools, but other factors--including personal circumstances, outside job offers and, especially, the early retirement option--made them decide to leave.

Relationships with Groups

The former principals were asked to rate their relationships with 11 different groups on a five-point scale, ranging from "highly conflictual/contentious" to "very agreeable/cooperative." Table 2 provides a complete report of these ratings. The groups receiving the most negative ratings were central office and the Chicago Teachers Union. Significant numbers of former principals also reported less-than-agreeable relationships with teaching staffs, district offices, and LSCs.

But overall, most principals related most of their relationships as agreeable or very agreeable. Those who gave high marks to relations with LSCs, for example, said they found the groups especially supportive of principals, teachers, and staff. They said LSC members were well-focused on school improvement, and they provided elaborate descriptions of their efforts to help LSC members receive training and information. Former principals who reported successful relationships with teachers said faculty members were actively involved in staff development and were willing to expand their roles and take on new responsibilities, much as principals were.

When asked to elaborate on their least successful relationships, the former principals described many different scenarios. Those who gave low ratings to district or central office staffs, for instance, said they hampered principals' efforts to resolve persistent problems.

In some cases, former principals had characterized their relationships with teachers as negative due to problems with one or two teachers who were unwilling to buy in to the school's vision and mission, or who openly thwarted principals' efforts and had negative influences on others. These disagreements sometimes grew into confrontations with the teachers union, contributing to negative feelings about that group. In other cases, former principals gave mixed ratings to their relationships with Local School Councils due to problems with an occasional LSC member who had difficulty with the role, was negatively oriented, and stalled the proceedings of the group. Other former principals noted problems with non-teaching staff, and described frequent run-ins with janitorial staff over the upkeep of the school building.

A handful of former principals felt they'd enjoyed good relationships with everyone, or at least had no outright unsuccessful relationships. These former principals recounted how they had invested extra effort in working with particular groups, to ensure that everyone's needs were met. They generally reported that developing good working relationships with many groups of people was based on developing mutual respect. Former principals often referred to school communities using "family" metaphors, describing how everyone cared for, and looked out for, each other.

Making the Decision to Leave

The former principals were asked to rate 13 possible influences on their decisions to leave their jobs. The accompanying table provides a complete report of these ratings.

Table 2

Former Principals' Relationships With Groups

	Highly Conflictual Contentious	Distrust Some Conflict	Mixed Bipolar	Agreeable Cooperative	Very Agreeable Cooperative
• Local School Council.....	1	0	7	21	29
• Teaching Staff.....	0	1	10	27	20
• Non-Teaching Staff.....	0	3	2	26	27
• Professional Personnel Advisoty Committee.....	0	1	6	24	25
• Chicago Teacher's Union....	2	3	11	21	18
• Students.....	0	0	0	23	35
• Community.....	0	1	3	22	31
• Central Office.....	4	7	14	22	10
• District Office.....	0	2	10	17	28
• Your Peers.....	0	1	1	17	39
• Parents.....	0	0	1	28	29

Table 3
Degree of Influence of Different Factors
on Principals Who Left their Jobs

	Number of Principals Selecting Each Response (out of 58)	
	Influential*	Not Influential
Most important		
Overall burden of the job	38	20
Attractiveness of early retirement	33	25
Very important		
Conflicting policies to implement	29	29
Level of compensation, salary	27	31
Personal or family issues	26	32
Interactions with the central office	24	34
No opportunities for career advancement	21	37
Working conditions in your school	20	38
Somewhat important		
Lack of tenure	17	41
Attractiveness of outside job offers	14	44
Conflicting relationships with the Local School Council	12	46
Difficulty working with the teachers	12	46
Less Important		
Conflicting relationships with the local community	4	54

*Combines two responses, "very influential" and "somewhat influential."

Particularly noteworthy is the relatively low influence former principals attributed to "lack of tenure." The introduction of four-year performance contracts was received with much negative reaction when initially proposed in the Chicago School Reform Act, yet apparently this did not figure strongly in principals' decisions to leave. Also noteworthy is the relatively low importance the former principals attached to conflict with Local School Councils, which many observers thought would be a major source of frustration and contention for principals. The former principals reported considerably more frustration with central office personnel than with their LSCs.

The two most influential factors were "overall burden of the job: and "attractiveness of the 5+5 early retirement." Most of the former principals interviewed for this study whose departures were prompted by the early-retirement offer said they definitely would not have left otherwise. Many said they would have preferred to complete their contracts, working until they acquired the maximum number of years for retirement. Some would have been ineligible for retirement without the incentives, or said financial constraints would have prevented them from leaving.

Others said that without early retirement, they would have stayed in order to facilitate projects they had initiated. These former principals reported they were satisfied with their schools, and were "seeing a turnaround happening." in them. A few early retirees said they were leaning toward leaving their jobs anyway, however, and the incentive plan made early retirement even more attractive.

School/System Influences to Stay

During interviews, the former principals reflected on what their schools might have done to encourage them to stay. Some mentioned incentives such as more pay or eliminating particular nuisances of the job. But most acknowledged that, even though they sometimes tried, their schools couldn't have done much to change their minds.

The former principals had a great deal more to say, however, when asked what the school system might have done to encourage them to stay. Their comments focused primarily on the central administration's handling of information, policies, and procedures. Many said they might have been influenced to stay by more timely responses to their requests for assistance, more lead time for requested reports, paperwork reduction, greater overall efficiency, more clarity in instructions, and improved human relations between the administration and schools.

Many former principals also called for more "principal autonomy," meaning less bureaucratic interference, especially with regard to hiring teachers, freeing up assistants, or eliminating teacher "bumping." And many offered specific suggestions for improving central office operations, based on their own particular experiences.

On the human relations side, more than a third of the former principals criticized the Chicago Public Schools for failing to recognize, support, and encourage principals. Collectively, the former principals' comments portrayed an uncaring organization that was quick to criticize them, but slow to show appreciation for their efforts. Also, a few of the former principals who left in 1993, believing it was their one and only chance to accept the early-retirement offer, said they resented the decision to offer the option again in 1994.

PRINCIPALS' VOICES - SELECTED RESPONSES

Is there anything the system might have done to encourage you to stay?

- "The system does not give principals any strokes."
- "There should be some way to tell a teacher --principal--(they're doing a) good job."
- "Not one person in the system congratulated me on winning (an) award."
- "(When I retired I) got a form letter from the mayor's office, but nothing from the BOE (Board of Education)."
- "They could have said periodically, 'keep up the good work.' "
- "Recognition of people who were leaving."
- "Let principals know that you understand what they are trying to do."

Regrets About Leaving

About a third of the former principals expressed regrets about leaving their jobs, and almost all said they missed something about being a principal, most notably their interactions with children and faculty. A few said they felt they'd left their jobs unfinished and wondered if all their hard work would be undone in their absence.

For many, leaving jobs as principals, often abruptly, meant leaving a familiar routine, the stimulation of meeting daily challenges, and familiar contact with other educators. But these feelings may dissipate as they seek new directions for their lives.

PRINCIPALS' VOICES
Thoughts on leaving the principal's job:

- "It's the most unique job in education because you can make a difference."
- "Really involved myself deeply and personally in my job."
- "There is prestige there - it's a powerful position."
- "The price is too high - this is the time to do other things."
- "No regrets about leaving.... This is as good as it gets."

Doing it Again

Nearly three-quarters of the former principals interviewed for this study said that if they had it to do all over again, they would once again accept jobs as CPS principals. They thought back on their careers and recalled the challenges, fulfillment, satisfaction, and rewards they had experienced. A handful were toying with the idea of becoming principals again some day.

About a fifth of the former principals surveyed dismissed the idea of returning, but many of these refusals were qualified: Former principals said they wouldn't return "under today's conditions," for example, or to their former schools.

PRINCIPALS' VOICES

Would you consider becoming a principal in Chicago again?

"Yes"

- "It's a unique job where you can make a difference, especially with reform."
- "Absolutely. I see it as a leader, modeler, supporter of good teaching."
- "Definitely. It was professional growth I don't think I could get anywhere else."
- "Gave me a different range of experiences and opportunities."
- "Yes, I think it is a wonderful job. I'm jealous I don't still have that position."
- "Reform is opening the principal up to be a more free agent."

PRINCIPALS' VOICES

Would you consider becoming a principal in Chicago again?

"No"

- "No, (there) isn't a great deal of respect from central office for the job-- work increasing without pay increase--too political a role."
- "Not under today's conditions: social problems, unfunded mandates, expectations and animosity toward principals (who are) totally disrespected now."
- "It all worked out the way I thought it would except for the end."

Advice for New Principals

When the former principals were invited to offer advice to newcomers, they placed a tall order for the successful administration of urban schools. The most unifying theme that emerged focused on human relations and communications skills. If principals are to be expected to implement and sustain a decentralized form of school-site decision-making, such as school-based management (as required by the second wave of reform in 1989), they must attend to many different constituencies, often simultaneously. The former principals identified a heavy emphasis on human relations as an essential ingredient for being a successful reform-minded principal, whether interacting with students, teachers, support staff, parents, community members, or the Local School Council.

PRINCIPALS' VOICES

Advice to new principals on human relations

- "Bring all segments of the community together to work on the school mission."
- "People work a lot harder if they feel they've had something to say about what they were doing."
- "Along the way, get as much advice as you can, try to include as many people as you can... and develop consensus."
- Be careful about the area of communication. Communicate with everybody concerning the goals of the institution and things that affect children's welfare, and also make sure that communication is going in several directions."
- "Try to get as much information (as possible) from those constituent groups about what they want, and how they feel they can best perform their roles. Try inclusive decision-making."
- "Individuals don't accomplish much, but groups accomplish a great deal."

About a fifth of those interviewed recommended centering all decision making on what is best for students or what will improve student achievement, in order to ensure that sound decisions are made. Many former principals also said that the success of an instructional program depends on cultivating

good relationships with faculty members, especially when it comes to "inspiring and regenerating" teachers. Several stressed the importance of listening to teachers, in order to gain and sustain their cooperation. And even though school reform deals with restructuring schools and curriculum, a couple of the former principals cautioned against introducing many drastic changes all at once.

A few former principals spoke explicitly of the need for principals to maintain their integrity and stay true to their own convictions, despite the many pressures exerted by different situations and groups. Principals must "do that which is right," they said, because being a principal is "a job of educational and moral leadership," one concerned with "building a future, not simply earning a salary." Most of the former principals probably would have agreed with one who said, "Consider what it is that you are about to do in terms of the ramifications of who it will affect ultimately. It should be that it affects the children in terms of their education, and that it affects you in such a way that it doesn't make you not like your job."

The former principals also offered advice on what new principals should *not* do. Without mincing words, they emphasized how time-consuming their jobs had been. Several said they often worked 60 to 70 hours a week, leaving little personal or family time. "I just didn't have a life," one former principal said. Another said: "If I hadn't worked so hard, 12, 14, 16, or 18 hours a day and all weekends, I may have stayed longer."

Most of the former principals said that the principal's job has become more complex, and that resources designed to prepare people for the job fall short. As a result, they said, being a principal requires an enormous investment of physical, mental, and emotional energy.

PRINCIPALS' VOICES
Advice to new principals on self care

- "Pace yourself and make time for yourself on the outside."
- "Save time for reflection."
- "Don't forget to take your lunch everyday. You need to get away for a few minutes."
- "You have to find ways to get those strokes for yourself."
- "Don't waste energy worrying why you have to do something."
- "Don't be afraid to lose your job."
- "Make sure your families know who you are."
- "Be your own person, don't be bowed down."

Perhaps recalling the support systems that helped them as newly appointed principals, about a third of the former principals spoke of the value in seeking out and using networks and mentors. These could be formal relationships established through universities or professional associations, or informal alliances. "Find an old principal," said one. "You need a kind of buddy system."

About a quarter of the former principals said it was important for principals to get away from the school and confer with peers. They saw this reflection and collaboration as essential to maintaining perspective and overcoming the lonely and insular aspects of the job, and to obtaining new insight and information on how to handle specific issues.

About a quarter of the former principals urged newcomers to put serious effort into mastering all phases of the job, including the rules and regulations of the system, the union contract, and the intricacies of

paperwork. About 10 percent also urged new principals to learn management skills. Running a school is like running a business, they said, and people in schools, who must rely so heavily upon on-the-job training, have not been schooled in business principles.

Advice for the Central Administration

It seemed appropriate to ask the former principals how the school district's central administration (i.e., members of the Board of Education, the superintendent, and the central office staff) could better support the work of principals.[ix]

As the second wave of reform in Chicago Public Schools began in 1989, and schools struggled to introduce site-based management, principals looked toward the central administration for support in carrying out school improvement plans. Instead, however, most of the former principals said they found a heavily layered organization moving in the opposite direction. As schools were being told to decentralize, they said, the central administration retrenched and centralized most daily operations. Central office administrators were speaking the language of facilitation and support, but behaving like directors and monitors.

Virtually all of the former principals said that the central administration needs to do more to support principals and show them respect. They criticized the administration for the general way they were treated, for the way directives were communicated, for unwieldy deadlines, and for failing to include them in the decision-making process. About a fifth of the former principals had served on systemwide committees, and wondered whether requests for their input were genuine, for they saw no visible evidence that their committee work resulted in any real change.

PRINCIPALS' VOICES
Advice to central administration on human relations

- "Accept principals as intellectual equals."
- "Treat principals like professionals."
- "Have more respect for the principalship."
- "Recognize the principal as the school leader to go along with all the responsibility."
- "Understand, never lose sight of, how difficult that job is."
- "Recognize and respect principals for the job they do."
- "Be aware that the principalship is a very stressful job now."
- "Find some way to hear principals, create forums for their input."
- "Spend some time with principals and find out what the issues are."
- "Listen to what the needs of the principals are."
- "Include principals in decision-making."
- "Work together as a team, cooperatively."
- "Learn to agree to disagree."
- "Hammer things out behind closed doors without publicly exhibiting all that bitterness."
- "Respect one another."

Decentralization can work only if principals can rely on a supportive mechanism to help them get the job done. As the former principals began flexing their new CEO-like muscles following the awarding of four-year performance contracts in 1990 and 1991, they encountered numerous roadblocks systemwide.[x] The school district makes relations with central office "very difficult for principals," said one, capturing their collective sentiments.

Three additional themes emerged from the former principals' comments on the central administration:

1 - The structure and function of the central office. Using the language of reform, virtually all of the former principals called for a central administration that is streamlined, downsized, and more efficient at handling their calls for information and assistance. Principals, they said, expect central-office staff to be knowledgeable and focused on supporting the day-to-day operation of schools. But many spoke of their frustration at calling for help and reaching only answering machines or uninformed and non-responsive staff members. Their comments made it clear that they felt they were running into obstacles created by remnants of the old, centralized system. "Some don't understand," said one, "and it hasn't been communicated to some.... They are staff and they are there to support the schools." Another former principal said that "some people at central office seem as though they are too busy to be bothered by principal requests or a need for information."

2 - The use of technology. About a third of the former principals advised the system to make better use of technology to allow quicker access to information and as a way to "alleviate the paperwork." Decision making may be decentralized to the principal and LSC, they pointed out, but that process relies on information that is often difficult to access, received in an untimely way, or unavailable when needed. These former principals advocated improved access to the computer system (including new communications equipment) which they said would help to address principals' desires for more autonomy in personnel, purchasing, and budget issues. Right now, the lengthy approval process, and the many directives "get in the way of management," said one.

3 - Principal autonomy. Many of the former principals called for reforms that would, in the words of one interview subject, "have the school board and superintendent deal with policy, and let the principal deal with implementing their instructional program." Principals want "to be able to do things on their own rather than to follow-up on someone else," said another.

Many former principals acknowledged that certain tasks are better handled by central office staff. But they also believed that many of those tasks could be handled more quickly and efficiently, and that many tasks now handled at the central office level could indeed be shifted to schools.

The overall preferences of the former principals could be summed up in the words of one: "Download everything to the local level, including money." Indeed, money was a very sensitive issue for many former principals. One suggested that Chicago Public Schools "start a process where schools can have money directly deposited in their general accounts, so that they can access it for goods and services and be more accountable." Another said that "schools should be fully funded and once there, funds should not be taken away, because it disrupts everything."

About a third of the former principals suggested, rather convincingly, that central office staff members should spend more time in schools, in order to "relearn the environment of schools." Central office staff were advised to visit schools often but to "avoid superficial walk-throughs," in order to stay familiar with the real-world context of schooling. The goal of these visits should be "to help, and not to point out what

is wrong," they said. Central office staff members also should "support the work of teachers and find out where wonderful things are going on, in terms of excellent teaching, and use those as examples of ways to improve the system."

More than a third of the former principals advised the central administration to provide "intensive pre-service and in-service (training) for principals," to help them cope with increased professional demands and changing work conditions. These development opportunities could include training provided by the school system or by external organizations, and is especially important for new, inexperienced principals, they said. Suggestions included "training for one month--maybe during the summer--and ongoing sessions held once a month for a least a year," or "some kind of internship or training period...." Former principals frequently spoke of the need for "mentoring," a "buddy system," or "nurturing," especially for "principals just coming out of the classroom (or from jobs as assistant principals) who just do not have that kind of training." One keen observer commented: "All of us need professional development, from the janitor to the superintendent."

Many of the former principals also wanted CPS to assume responsibility for training LSC members, instead of leaving this task to individual schools. Some former principals said they had made a point of attending all scheduled training sessions with their council members, in order to see what information they were getting and to assess the reliability of what the councils were being told, especially by external organizations.

Current Professional and Work Activities

At the end of each interview, former principals were asked about their current jobs, and whether they were employed in education on a full-time or part-time basis. Of the 20 who were working full-time in education:

- 7 were working as principals in suburban or out-of-state school districts.
- 5 had taken jobs in the Chicago School District's central administration.
- 3 had taken jobs as assistant superintendents with CPS or other school districts.
- 3 were working as assistant principals.
- 2 had gone to work at a university or a private organization.

Among 30 who worked part-time in education-related jobs or activities:

- 9 were serving as mentors to principals.
- 7 were school volunteers or Local School Council members.
- 4 worked as consultants.
- 4 were active with local education associations.
- 4 conducted workshops or training through universities or publishers.
- 2 supervised student teachers at local universities.

Other former principals who weren't employed directly in education were still giving time to social service and community involvement. The majority were volunteering as board members of hospitals, community organizations, and professional organizations; as tutors, supporters, and mentors for infants, children, adolescents, and adults; as promoters of community cultural activities; or as active members of

religious organizations. A few had started or expanded small businesses or entered private-sector management jobs.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS: IMPLICATIONS FOR PRINCIPALS' WORK LIFE

Successive waves of school reform since 1985 have brought about massive transformations in the roles and responsibilities of principals in Chicago Public Schools. This period has also been marked by high principal turnover, which can have a strong effect on the ability of schools to build and sustain restructuring efforts. The experiences of principals have important implications for building a durable foundation of education leaders in CPS.

As school reformers expanded the formal structure of school governance in order to include new constituencies--including teachers, parents, and community representatives--the new responsibilities facing principals grew far more quickly than support systems did. They often found themselves in sink-or-swim situations, and looked to the state, the central administration, corporations, foundations, universities, publishers, and community organizations, among others, to create training and support mechanisms.

The most dramatic changes occurred following the 1989 wave of reform, which created the Local School Councils. Principals were placed in a new spotlight, and were expected to find new ways to share leadership, to empower teachers and parents and to adapt their management styles to their new roles. This heavy emphasis on governance and management issues in the early years of reform often left principals with little time for curriculum and instruction issues. In addition, each school community presented a unique set of characteristics to address.

It is clear that some principals made the transition into their new management roles more successfully than others. For many principals, the changes in their job descriptions represented threats to their leadership and spawned complex relationship problems. The heightened political and public nature of school leadership also left many principals searching for ways to cope.

There is good news and bad news about the evolving path to becoming a CPS principal. The path clearly has widened to accommodate many more women and minorities. But unfortunately, the content of preparation programs for principal-aspirants has not kept pace with the transformation and expansion of the principal's role. During interviews, few, if any, former principals said their academic training had been a key factor in preparing them for the job. Most ended up relying on other principals for guidance, support, and on-the-job training. Many said their previous experience as administrators--both as assistant principals and at the central office level--were far more helpful and more likely to help them acquire the types of credentials that LSCs sought when hiring. This raises concerns about the quality and usefulness of the pre-service and in-service training available to aspiring principals and those new to the job, and points to the need for ongoing, system-level staff development, support groups, and resources for principals, especially since so many principals are new and inexperienced.

More training also is needed for other school personnel, notably teachers. Because reformers are trying to stimulate decentralization and site-based decision making, teachers are being called upon to assume roles in planning, budgeting, personnel management, building maintenance, and other areas in which they have little or no training or knowledge. Principals require staff with more diverse knowledge and skills, making access to new services (such as a business manager, strategic planner, human resources manager, and social service manager, among others) essential to effective school leadership.

To provide these resources at the school level may be financially prohibitive, yet the need exists. School officials must explore alternative training strategies to equip current and future school leaders with the specialized skills they will need to lead Chicago schools. The possession of the required graduate degree and a state administrative certificate should be viewed as the minimal entry level requirements to become a principal. Supplemental training such as mentorships and internships, provided through a principals' center, could reduce the learning curve for current and future principals. Also, with the introduction of the third wave of school reform in July 1995, school officials have demonstrated their intent to make a positive impact on the functioning of schools before the end of the century. Improved leadership training, utilizing modern technology, is one area ripe for intervention.

One simple way for the system to demonstrate a commitment to school leadership is to institute continuous public recognition for schools, principals, and teachers that have achieved success with some phase of school improvement. Accentuating the positive, along with recognizing that there are many problems to be solved, would restore confidence and boost morale for all educators and community groups. The system's natural tendency to focus only on what needs to be corrected leaves the public and school staff members with the impression that no matter how hard everyone works toward improvement, the goal is unreachable.

All communication systems (both internal and external) could adopt a policy to feature what is working, along with keeping everyone focused on the long-range goals. Cumulative progress could be publicized via departmental newsletters, the new bi-weekly *Chicago Educator,* the weekly *Bulletin,* regular press releases, video segments on the community access cable station, E-mail messages, and many others venues. The system's leaders cannot afford to overlook the motivating power inherent in practicing good human relations as a means of strengthening everyone's resolve to work toward school and system improvement.

Assisting principals already on the job addresses one set of system needs. Preparing and grooming the next group of CPS principals requires a more pro-active collaboration of system officers and managers, academics, and professional associations, along with the business and foundation communities. The stability of the principal's role over time will directly influence a school's ability to implement fully the restructuring efforts related to curriculum innovation and integration, faculty and staff development, alternative student assessment, technology upgrades, improved student progress, etc. Ensuring that principal candidates are well prepared and that LSCs perform their principal selection duties effectively would go far towards insuring that tomorrow's school leaders have successful tenures.

APPENDIX: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY OF THE INTERVIEW STUDY

Planning for the interview process began in the fall of 1994 with brainstorming meetings held with members of two collaborating organizations, the co-directors of *the Consortium on Chicago School Research* (CCSR) and the officers of the *Chicago Principals and Administrators Association* (CPAA) to identify primary research areas of interest. In addition, presentations were also made to the CCSR Constituent Advisory Board and the CCSR Steering Committee to solicit input. An interview protocol was developed, with open-ended and semi-structured items, and reviewed by both collaborative groups to refine the content and sequence of the questions.

Five interviewers were selected who had general knowledge of the school system, had experience in working with Chicago schools, knew the process of school reform, and were able to commit several weeks to conducting, transcribing, and coding interviews. Audio-taping equipment was purchased to facilitate conducting telephone interviews. Approximately three (pre-interview) training sessions were held for interviewers, along with weekly sessions conducted to monitor any difficulties in locating interviewees, gaining cooperation to be interviewed, selecting alternates, troubleshooting unusual interviewer experiences, and systematizing procedures for transcribing and coding.

The structure of the interview protocol facilitated transcribing, editing, coding, analyzing and interpreting the interview transcripts. The following steps were taken to collect and process interview data in preparation for writing:

- Each audio tape was fully transcribed into a word processing file and edited by the interviewer and lead researcher.

- Each interview question (and follow-up or probe question) was assigned a variable label or descriptor.

- After completing two to three interviews, interviewers met to discuss the emergent themes and their alignment with the variable labels. Though the interview protocol had a built-in question sequence, interviewers were perceptive in noting that many responses crossed variable labels and had multiple utility as descriptive data.

- Interviewers read each transcript for the interviews they conducted and highlighted relevant responses.

- Using the highlighted transcripts, interviewers compiled groupings of responses that aligned with each variable label into a word processing file. A system of "expanded categories" was devised to match variable labels and responses. This facilitated assigning a relevant response to more than one variable label, if applicable. Each interviewer developed a summary set of expanded categories in a computer file for the set of interviews they conducted. Interviewers collaborated and cross-verified the construction of expanded categories.

- The lead researcher and one or more interviewers reviewed and refined the computer files containing the summarized sets of expanded categories (by referencing original highlighted transcripts). Using a traditional method of "splitting and splicing," expanded categories were manually sorted to create subcategories within each variable label. This stage further identified patterns and themes within the major variable labels.

- In addition, responses to each structured or semi-structured item were tallied and summarized.

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[i] Bennett, Bryk, Easton, Kerbow, Luppescu, and Sebring, 1992, p. 27.

[ii] Ibid.

[iii] This study was titled *School Restructuring in Racially Identifiable Schools: An Evaluation of Creating a New Approach to Learning - Project CANAL* . Conceptualized in the latter part of the 1987-88 school year, Project CANAL sought, among other goals, to transform school leadership, in order to improve schools and boost student achievement.

[iv] Office of Accountability, 1995, p. XX.

[v] Three principals of the 157 were excluded for consideration for interviews because they were not offered new contracts. A percentage of the remaining principals in each group, equal to each group's representation in the overall sample, was interviewed.

[vi] A more detailed description of the research methodology can be found in the Appendix.

[vii] Comparisons of schools based on race were made using the following CPS definitions:

PREDOMINANTLY AFRICAN-AMERICAN: Schools where at least 85 percent of the students are African-American.

PREDOMINANTLY HISPANIC: Schools where at least 85 percent of the students are Hispanic.

PREDOMINANTLY MINORITY: Schools where at least 85 percent of the students are African-American and Hispanic.

RACIALLY MIXED: Schools where 15 percent to 30 percent of students are white.

INTEGRATED: Schools where at least 30 percent of students are white.

RACIALLY CHANGED: Schools that changed categories between 1987 and 1995.

[viii] The term "authentic instruction" refers to the concept as defined by Newmann and Wehlage (1995). Under this definition, student achievement is considered authentic to the extent it calls for the construction of knowledge, through disciplined inquiry, which results in work or achievement that has value beyond merely measuring success in school.

[ix] The former principals were interviewed before July 1995, when the third wave of Chicago school reform replaced the general superintendent and the 15-member board with a chief executive officer, a five-member board of trustees and a new management team. However, the former principals' advice is still relevant. Even though relationships between schools and the central administration have been evolving since 1989, schools will continue to depend on the central administration for essential resources.

[x] One of the selling points of the 1988 Chicago School Reform Act was that increased decentralization, a local school governance council, and a performance-contract system would transform principals into the chief executive officers of their schools, a role that is still slowly evolving.

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