

Squaring circles and hybridizing school design: A principal's autoethnography of socialization and personal wellness

by

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B.A., Fort Hays State University, 2000
M.A.H., Fort Hays State University, 2002
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AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Abstract

This autoethnography explores a personalized account of an assistant principal making the transition to the head principal position during the design phase of a new high school, focusing on salient critical incidents. The purpose of this study is to describe and interrogate contextually rich experiences that integrate educational leadership, and personal wellness as depicted through work life balance. Findings of this study might offer possibilities for other practitioners to avoid the mistakes I made, and benefit from the practices that proved successful.

This study uses qualitative research as its foundation and as a means to study a social context, while causing as little disruption as possible in the natural setting (Eaton, 2002; Merriam, 1998). Under the umbrella of qualitative research, from a constructivist lens, in the form of an autoethnography, a qualitative genre of research, I play the role of both the researcher and the participant. As a researcher, I use ethnographic methods to explore and interrogate my experiences as a participant within the context of Educational Leadership culture specifically in the MidWest, and broadly in the U.S.

I uncover a pattern of dynamic dichotomies, common for practicing school leaders, who frequently find themselves striving to find balance between work and family, as well as navigating the external and internal political factions that exist in every school culture. Such findings indicate an essential need for more qualitative scholarship to uncover the principal's personal wellness both inside and out.

The implications for this study raise a need for dialogue across Educational Leadership practitioners and trainers to explore how others make such negotiations and balance personal wellness. Further dialogue with Educational Leadership training program could examine the curriculum and training to interrogate whether such trainings are culturally homogenous and in

need of diversification, whether there should be focus on exploring work life balance skills as part of the training. Due to the dearth of such personally situated insights, yet with the critical need for such insights, it is clear that there needs to be more discourses and space making for practitioners' experiences juxtaposed against the broader culture of educational leadership to explore issues of transition, socialization, leadership training, and personal wellness in a field with high pressure, rampant turnover, and feelings of isolation.

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Last but certainly not least, I must thank my family. Theresa, Emmalina, and Olivia you have all been in my thoughts as I wrote these narratives. I love all of you! Thank you for supporting me through the best and the worst of times. **Now, let's go do something fun!**

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to Allie Saum. Allie's life will always be remembered at Salina High School South. In the wake of her tragic death—a diverse school was unified and a creed at Salina High School South was created. Our students follow that creed daily by working to stop violence in our community.

Prologue: Landing in the Principal's Office Once Again

The event fell during the week of the big 4-A Kansas State Championship football game, in late November of 1991; I landed in Principal Barton's office. My strong will, untamed temper, and rebellious nature proved a toxic combination for the Sparta-like conservative western Kansas polis of Scott City. As I sat waiting for the worst in a glass office lobby that mimicked a fish bowl, I experienced the disapproving eyes of faculty members and nosey students. Each one of them passed by glaring at me and burning holes into what was left of my shrinking self-respect.

Judging by the onlookers' headshakes, one would have thought I was a murderer. However, a convicted murderer would have garnered greater empathy, especially in a community that viewed the mayhem of football as being third on life's priority list, only to God and country. I committed the unforgiveable sin, especially in Scott County, by publicly declaring support of a democrat. My hometown of Scott City is nested within Scott County, the most Republican per capita county in one of the most Republican states in the nation, Kansas. My misdeed included the added aggravating circumstances of challenging the dogmatic conservative thinking of an omnipotent teacher. Little doubt existed among the dissenters; I warranted an immediate quarantine to prevent such infectious thinking. At the moment, I was Tess being summoned to Mr. Summers's lottery. Perhaps that was not really how the event went down—but at that time, the young age of 12, it sure seemed this way.

"Curtis, why can't you be more like your brother?" was a frequent question most teachers and classmates asked. Perhaps some of the teachers and students at Scott City Middle School viewed my behavior as seeking some of the attention that my older brother, the super-star quarter-back, earned when he acquired local hero status for achieving yet another trip to the state football game in Wichita. While such an overused dime-store psychological analysis comforted

the disapproving onlookers, their assessment was bunk, nothing more than *post hoc ergo propter hoc* (after this, therefore because of this). Quite the opposite, I really enjoyed the overwhelming attention of being the super star quarterback's little brother. Riding his coattails of popularity, out of the obscurity that was so frequently encountered by the nerd caste of small-town America, proved enjoyable. I did not want to take away from his shining moment.

Quite honestly, there was not a day that went by that I did not ask myself the same question—why couldn't I be like all of my older siblings? The youngest child in most families usually struggles much of his or her life to cast off the yoke of being typecast as “the other siblings” or the coveted title of “baby of the family” even after reaching adulthood.

Cut to that moment, the phones of a busy school office were ringing, and the sound of a door, desperately in need of WD-40, opened, making a loud creaking noise and revealing my weary and disappointed-looking mother. Donning dark circles under her eyes, desperately needing to get back to work, Mom walked into the office. Her attire was a conservative tailored navy suit and skirt. She was always sure to avoid gaudy jewelry, keeping accessories minimal by only wearing a simple necklace of pearls. Mom said, “Hello, Ann.” Mom was on a first-name basis with the school secretary because she used to be her former deputy county clerk at the courthouse before leaving her position to work for the school district. “Hello, Jan. Principal Barton will be with you in just a few minutes.” Ann's voice inflected as she talked with mom, almost as if to display her empathy for having a bad apple son like me.

My heart broke for Mom. She had a heavy load, dealing with five kids and working several jobs, and I was making it heavier. She reared all of us to be independent critical thinkers—perhaps I took the mantra to a whole new level. I was a debate nerd without a debate team, a novice violinist without an orchestra, a Louis Skolnick without a Lambda Lambda

Lambda, living in a football-loving, gun-wielding, four-wheel driving, Hee-Haw re-run-watching village in the middle of the Midwest. Outcast, I most certainly was. I am sure even Mom doubted her style of parenting as she endured the painful looks of disapproving adults, all who subliminally screamed “We told you so!” during her all too frequent walks of shame into Principal Barton’s office.

Landing in the principal’s office is never a pleasant experience; this was something that even I, a 12 year-old in 1991, understood well. This specific life experience taught me to be empathetic to the troubled and downtrodden, for in the land of Sparta, they frequently were the meek who never inherited the massive tracts of land routinely bestowed upon privileged descendants meeting the sole qualification of primogeniture. The meek seemed to lose out the most in the principal’s office. The advocacy of the “chosen few” or “privileged” (e.g., athletic, attractive, popular, powerful, wealthy) seemed to always be present, whether I was watching it from afar as a student living in poverty or as an adult professional struggling to reach the bourgeoisie class in order to overcome an agrarian caste system imposed by my unremarkable nonathletic nerdism.

November of 1991 shaped me as a student, teenager, adult, teacher, and eventually, principal. From that moment on, I looked around at what my options were without an education and without a super natural talent as an athlete, and I did not like what awaited. I decided to focus on academic achievement. The agrarian social class system defined opportunity as one of two possibilities: marrying into wealth or waiting around long enough to inherit it. I knew from the start that inheriting wealth was not going to happen. After spending several summers working as a farm-hand in a feedlot, my focus for future success sharpened. I knew I would have

to work like hell to make up for my lack of *skill* by using the elbow grease of sheer *will*.

In 2000, eight years after my encounter with the principal's office, I graduated from Fort Hays State University with a bachelor's in education. One year later, I earned a master's degree in history. In the fall of 2002, I became a teacher at Salina High School South. Five years later, in 2007, I accepted a position as an assistant principal at Salina South Middle School. A letter arrived at the school on my first day working as an assistant principal. Upon opening the envelope postmarked from Scott City, I saw a weathered yellow copy of the office referral I received back in November of 1991. Who keeps this type of stuff? My Mother, she is like an archivist for our family. Mom sent me this note as a reminder to not forget my experience that day when I was sitting in the principal's office. I kept the referral on my desk as a reminder to not forget that although everyone receives consequences for his or her actions, the disciplinarian can always be fair, firm, consistent, and above all, compassionate and committed to educating those in trouble.

Following my tenure as a middle school assistant principal, I transferred back to the high school where I had previously taught before entering the world of administration. After serving as an assistant principal for one year at Salina High School, I landed back in the principal's office.

It is not uncommon for anyone new to a profession to enter a job with a certain amount of naiveté—that is why the term rookie exists. I thought I knew what a principal's job was like through the lens of a teacher and a student; after all, everyone knows of at least one principal during their K-12 experience. I was wrong! Although many think of a principal as the chief disciplinarian of a school, this is just a small portion of a principal's duties. One of the most important factors in a school's student achievement is the principal, second only to teachers; yet

so little is understood about what principals do on a daily basis (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, 2004). What is known is that 50% of all principals leave their jobs after their first three years (Neal, 2014). While I do not expect to have all of the answers as to why so many principals are leaving, in this autoethnography I seek to explore and unpack common critical incidents that impact the personal wellness of a first-year principal thrown well in over his head during the designing of a new school.

I would like to formally thank Mr. Long, Mr. Barton, the late Dr. Rawdon, and Mr. Walker for their dedication, patience, and resiliency serving as my K-12 principals. At the time, I had no idea that I was job shadowing all of you for a future career.

Preface: Caveat Lector

Welcome to this non-traditional dissertation format that might be frowned upon by traditionalists in academia. I equate reading this dissertation to a roller coaster ride. The autoethnography is written with an academic start but then the narrative journey speeds up. The story is replete with critical incidents (e.g., challenges, dreams, nightmares, flashbacks, subjectivities, and temperament) as experienced by me, a lowly novice school leader, thrown into a chaotic, challenging, and what sometimes seems like an impossible situation that is frequently inherent within school leadership. I apologize in advance for being an ongoing student of the English language. Any bastardization of the written word is purely coincidental and not intended to offend any of my talented past educators who, simply put, did the best they could to educate me over the past 20 years.

Although this is a non-traditional dissertation, the first two chapters are aligned with traditional expectations. The other chapters of the dissertation deviate from a traditional structure due to the creativity that is required to write an autoethnography. Chapter 1 provides an

overview, background, description, context, and rationale for the study. It also provides a vivid description of why Salina High School South transitioned from its 1968 structure (open-space classroom concept) to a hybrid of the open-space classroom concept and traditional model. The reader will find the research purpose and central questions in Chapter 1 to be similar to those of traditional dissertations. Chapter 2 consists of a review of the literature, the theoretical and methodological frameworks used to construct this autoethnography, and a justification for this type of scholarship.

Chapter 3 provides the reader with a narrative of how and why I gained access to this unique culture of being a novice administrator during a school design project. The narrative also provides the reader with a rich understanding of how my positionality is embedded within the social context of the culture studied in this autoethnography. Moreover, Chapter 3 reveals a novice leader's salient daily challenges, raw emotions, and error prone thought-processes as he applies limited pre-service leadership training during chaotic personal, professional, and institutional transition. This narrative vividly highlights my positionality as a Kansas native, white, male, 35 year old who is married with two kids, both under the age of six. Moreover, the narrative provides insights into daily challenges in K-12 educational leadership through the framework of Villani's Five Stages of Socialization (2006). The story does not stop with the transition from being an assistant principal to becoming a principal.

Next, in Chapter 4 and 5, I investigate, uncover, and explore critical incidents, experiences, and their influence on the personal wellness of being a first-year principal during the design phase of a major construction project. Through the narratives of both chapters, the reader gains major access to an example of a culture that all too often remains shrouded in secrecy or limited in the existing educational leadership literature. The reader is also able to

contextualize one principal's experience of the added roles and pressures that illustrate on a micro scale the larger national issue of why principals are leaving the profession (Neal, 2014). This dissertation uses narratives to highlight key educational leadership issues like how pre-service training influences the manner in which a principal navigates the socialization process during his first year. Moreover, this dissertation's narratives illuminate how the socialization process influences a principal's personal wellness when making decisions within a culture of dynamic factional dichotomies at the building, district, and community levels. Again, the reader is able to witness the metacognitive process of a novice leader, during a critical time in the formation of a leader's development all while navigating the liminality of Villani's Five Stages of Socialization (2006). In a career where professionals are leaving, a need exists for opening a space to explore such liminality in educational leadership.

Although a need for more autoethnographies exists to assist novice principals with the journey of socialization, implications of this study go beyond just the novice principal. Aspiring principals and veteran principals both can study my mistakes through the narratives of critical incidents that transpired during my process of socialization and the unique school design process. Moreover, district administrators can gain insights on how to better support novice principals by understanding the covert thoughts and emotions one principal exhibited during a chaotic time. Finally, implications of this study also include exploring relationships with architects and engineer firms tasked with the challenge of coordinating and executing school design projects within a K-12 school culture, and better understand the pressures from dynamic external and internal factions principals encounter in the design process.

Caveat lector! I have intentionally amplified my voice with hopes to make the story more engaging for an arts-based project, and to mimic a robotic goal-oriented novice leader who loses

ground in his emotional, physical, intellectual, psychological, social, and spiritual wellness. My voice is annoyingly present and pompous at times, and at other times I offer deep interrogation of my position and privileges. I do so to demonstrate the various stages of emotional and cognitive negotiations I had engaged in, as I navigated a difficult terrain of educational leadership. While this dissertation is non-traditional, it does not lack merit. The principalship across the United States is in crisis due to so many leaving the poorly constructed profession (Neale, 2014). Although one autoethnography will not likely stop principals from leaving the profession, it is my intent to help open the door, remove the shroud, and promote the idea that this methodology opens space for practicing principals to collaborate, connect, and more importantly, cope during the process of socialization despite the added roles and pressures of the principalship.

This dissertation seeks to shed light on how autoethnographies focused on the added duties and pressures of practicing principals can help support novice leaders in their personal wellness. Unfortunately, few autoethnographies of practicing principals exist due to a variety of reasons. Principal turnover may not only be a consequence of too few autoethnographies being written, but it may also be a cause in addition to lack of time; 25,000 principals (one quarter of those in America) quit their current positions each year and fifty percent of new principals quit the profession during their third year in the role (Neale, 2014). Those principals that remain in the profession more often than not lack quality time to write about such experiences due to the added roles and pressures of the position. Those who choose to stay and choose to write may worry about damaging their careers or losing out on future opportunities, thus, conceal their errors as they transition through and move in and out of Villani's Five Stages of Socialization (2006). This dissertation could not only help to support future novice principals explore the

movement through and within Villani's Five Stages of Socialization and Adam's Personal Wellness Model, but also could help widen the acceptance of autoethnography as a methodology for scholarly practitioners in educational leadership.

Chapter 1: Avoiding Procrustes's Solution by Squaring Circles

Procrustes, one of the sons of Poseidon (the God of the Sea), owned an inn on a road called the “Sacred Way” which ran from Athens to Eleusis. Procrustes, a metalworker, created a bed of iron that would fit anyone who lay upon it. The problem was, the bed did not work quite the way one would think it should. Nevertheless, he offered travelers a meal and a good night's sleep. After dinner and some lousy entertainment, Procrustes would show a tired traveler his bed, the Procrustean bed. Oddly enough, the bed did not resize to fit the traveler, the traveler resized to fit the bed. Imagine Procrustes showing the bed to a tired traveler, letting him lie on it, and then with the strength of which a son of a God would only have, held the traveler down and locked them to the bed. That was when Procrustes would look at the legs of the traveler. Were they too short for the bed, or too long? Too short? Then some stretching was in order. Too Long? Procrustes would go get his saw. The moral of this classic story is that one-size-fits-all solutions, also known as Procrustean Solutions, are a bad idea. A leader who make reality, data, subject or problems, fit his/her ideas, theories, beliefs or solutions is not wise. When designing a school as a novice principal it is imperative to be aware of Procrustes's Solution.

Overview

Salina High School South, originally built in 1968, was an open-space concept school, or a building with classrooms that had three walls and consisted mainly of circular pods. Over the years, the school's structure started sinking and crumbling. In 2014, the voters of Salina, Kansas recognized that what used to be termed as the “new high school in Salina” was now a school in desperate need of repairs. The citizens of Salina, Kansas approved a \$110 million bond issue to add all-day kindergarten (prior to 2016 kindergarten students in Salina only attended school for half a day), secured entry (all visitors must be buzzed into the building rather than being allowed

to walk in any door), and storm shelters (a place where all students can be safe during a tornado) to all schools, with the lion's share of the money being used to significantly update both high schools: Salina Central and Salina High School South.

An autoethnography is a research method that engages an individual in cultural analysis and interpretation (Change, 2008). This autoethnography represents my personalized account of transitioning from an assistant principal to a head principal within a unique culture of a design phase of building a new high school (Salina High School South) in Salina, Kansas. This project focuses on the time period from May 2014 through August 2015, or my first year as a building principal.

This first-year timeframe is ripe for exploration because United School District (USD) 305, Salina Public Schools, was one of only a handful of school districts in Kansas to be authorized, overwhelmingly by its taxpayers, to spend a large amount of money to update educational facilities. The project remains unique, especially since Salina passed a bond issue (a means by which a government entity can borrow a large sum of money beyond its budget for a building project) during a national and statewide economic recession. The design process is important to study because the final product, Salina High School South 2.0, eventually became one of the first high schools in the nation to embed a Career and Technical Education (CTE) program (career specific classes, such as carpentry, cooking, fire science, graphic design, nursing, and welding) throughout the building within the core content areas where a natural nexus existed. The new high school also became one of the few remaining open-space classroom concept schools (where classrooms only have three walls, with the back of the classroom unobstructed) to transition to a hybrid collaborative/traditional structure (a classroom visible from the hallway but is blocked with glass so sound does not become an issue) — while

preserving the positive open-space classroom concept culture. Exploring, uncovering, and unpacking this multidimensional and contextually rich experience through the lens of a first-year principal will hopefully provide other leaders with insight into the socialization process of becoming a principal, and the toll it takes on the individual's physical, spiritual, psychological, social, emotional, and intellectual dimensions of holistic wellness. Moreover, my experience will provide other principals a place to start if ever faced with the overwhelming task of designing a new building, or in this case, avoiding Procrustes's solution by squaring circles.

Method

This autoethnography utilizes qualitative research as its foundation, specifically a constructivist lens and employing narrative inquiry in the form of an autoethnography. This study represents my maiden voyage in the world of narrative inquiry; consequently, I apologize in advance for any inadequacy I exhibit during my maturation into a narrative scholar and autoethnographer—since no novice has years of experience.

Autoethnographies provide an appropriate canvas for narrative inquiry. To grasp the understanding of autoethnography, one must first break it down into parts: the prefix “auto” means “self,” while the prefix “ethno,” means “culture.” When the concepts are merged, they form autoethnography, which constitutes a research method that engages the individual or self in a broader cultural analysis and interpretation (Chang, 2008). In the context of this project, I, Curtis Stevens, represent the “auto,” and the “culture” is a school leadership culture where I had to make decisions as a professional leader using as a guide the researchers, authors, and gurus I encountered during my pre-service preparation as an educational leader.

Comparing qualitative research from the past to the advances of what constitutes current qualitative research is analogous to comparing the Wright Brothers' first airplane to a modern

Airbus A-350¹. Autoethnography continues to mature into a rigorous method, especially in the realm of educational research, primarily because it has opened up spaces for personal, critical, and scholarly reflections, useful for multiple audiences. Star (2010) contrasted and distanced autoethnography from traditional forms by focusing more on the nexus with qualitative attributes when analyzing autoethnography's rigor:

Autoethnography falls well within the rigorous standards expected of scholarly research but is also reflective of the continuous negotiation throughout evaluation, analysis, and interpretation. Whereas traditional standards for methodological rigor limit interaction between participant and researcher to a linear, transactional exchange of communication and disclosure, constructivist inquiry relies on a more cyclical exchange. (p. 1).

Through Star's analysis, it becomes evident that the cycle of illumination, reflection, and action as a critical process of self-analysis and understanding in relation to cultural and social discourses make autoethnography a rigorous method in examining the complex, diverse, and sometimes messy world of education. Autoethnography uses the researcher's personal experiences as primary data, intends to expand the understanding of social phenomena, and can result in different writing products (Chang, 2008). As autoethnography matures as a qualitative methodology, and texts of autoethnographic work evolve into different formats, one constant remains, autoethnographers emphasize subjectivity rather than minimize it or consider it a liability.

The notion that it is impossible to remove subjectivity from research is nothing groundbreaking. Bochner and Ellis (2016) quoted Leonard Cohen's song "Anthem" when describing how subjectivity must be embraced in scholarship: "there is a crack in everything . . .

¹ A big, bad plane.

that is how the light gets in” (p. 246). Kim (2016) noted that “researchers have become increasingly aware of the flaws and limitations of applying solely scientific knowledge to the understanding of human phenomena fraught with complexity, uncertainty, uniqueness, instability, ambiguity, and value-conflict” (p. 4). Through such cracks, as noted by Bochner and Ellis (2016), the light of narrative inquiry provides unique glimpses into human perspectives frequently stymied in rigid quantitative research, where subjectivity is limited.

Narrative inquiry, specifically autoethnography, serves as an appropriate vessel to navigate (or investigate, uncover, and explore) what Schön (1983) describes as the “swampy lowlands,” or research that centers on “experience, trial and error, intuition, and muddling through” (p. 43). The “swampy lowlands” is a metaphor Schön used to draw a contrast with the “high and hard ground,” where positivistic epistemology considers human conditions that are the focus of research as being value-neutral, fixed, stable, predictable, and generalizable enough that those prescribed solutions can be applied universally to every human condition (Kim, 2016). Prior to Schön, Thomas Kuhn, the author who coined the phrase “paradigm shift” and *authored The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1970), a postmodern foundation, whereby Kuhn (1970) argued that “there is no way to distinguish unequivocally what is in our minds from what is out there in the world” (p. 60). Such a premise placed human subjectivity at the center of the scientific progress. According to Kim, “to rely solely on scientific research to understand the complexity of human life seems like asking Siri on my iPhone to cry for me when I get lost on the road” (p. 4). Although scientific research may possess an inability to apply testable observation, general principles, and standardized knowledge to complex human concerns (Kuhn, 1962), this does not mean it lacks value. All types of tasks require a variety of different tools. Some tools are better suited to meet the need of a work task than are others. Quantitative and

qualitative tools have different purposes, and as such, both should exist in tandem and should be valued without privileging one over the other (Kim, 2016).

Autoethnography has no shortage of critics. Autoethnographers are frequently criticized for doing too little fieldwork, observing too few cultural members, and not spending enough time with (different) others (Buzard, 2003; Delamont, 2009; Fine, 2003). Furthermore, in using personal experience, autoethnographers are not only thought to use supposedly biased data (Anderson, 2006; Atkinson, 1997; Gans, 1999), but also considered by some to be navel-gazers, self-absorbed narcissists who do not fulfill scholarly obligations of hypothesizing, analyzing, predicting, and theorizing (Madison, 2006). It would be wrong for me to provide a blanket defense of all autoethnographies conducted in education and social science disciplines; however, when examining whether or not an autoethnography is rigorous, one must examine the self in a broader context of the culture being studied. If a writer focuses on his or her self, and fails to embed the self into a culture, the writer is engaging in autobiography not autoethnography.

Beyond embedding self within a culture, the writer should also be able to answer the question, “so what?” or justify “why the autoethnographic work matters and how it will create influence?” As a methodology, autoethnography draws on the concept of conscientization (Freire, 1971), which involves the individual becoming aware of one’s position and creating a space to change the perception of the resultant reality. Again, since autoethnography is a study of the space between self and culture that engages the individual in experiences that cultivate a contextually-rich cycle of “action based on reflection, and reflection based on action” (Blackburn, 2000, p. 7), it lends itself naturally to educational research given the central role critical reflection plays. Bochner and Ellis (2016) observed that “when you look closely at the history of human sciences, you find that the forms of inquiry that gain acceptance usually are the

ones that serve the needs of the culture at that time” (p. 44). Bochner and Ellis (2016) pointed out that many of the origins of the social sciences can be traced back to the 18th century, which focused more on what is good or right, not what *is*.

In a world of (methodological) differences, autoethnographers find it futile to debate whether autoethnography is a valid research process or product (Bochner, 2000; Ellis, 2009). Unless scholars agree on a goal, they cannot agree on the terms by which to judge how to achieve it. Simply put, autoethnographers take a different perspective toward the subject matter of social science. In Rorty’s (1982) words, these different views are ‘not issue(s) to be resolved, only,’ but rather “difference(s) to be lived with” (p. 197). Autoethnographers view research and writing as socially just acts; rather than a preoccupation with an absolute or predictable truth, the goal is to produce analytical, accessible texts that change us and the world we live in for the better (Holman-Jones, 2005, p. 764). Calling an autoethnographer nothing more than a narcissistic individual engaged in naval gazing is equivalent to labeling John Dewey’s concept of critical reflection in the field of education as nothing more than egocentric. If personal critical reflection possesses some virtue for improving professional practice, then the process that autoethnographers engage in inherently possesses some value and rigor in the field of educational research. As Chang (2008) noted, “If it is indeed the personal voice of experience that is an antidote to balance or reposition existing research text, what led to this imbalance in the first place?” The void of personal experience voice permeates across disciplines. Autoethnography provides space, or an antidote, for a principal’s voice of personal experience embedded within a cultural realm of school critical incidents that occur during socialization. Moreover, autoethnography provides access to what is typically inaccessible due to time constraints of a principal and vulnerability that occurs during process of socialization.

Although there remains considerable creative latitude in authoring an autoethnographic text (Ellis & Bochner, 2000), this is not to say it is without risk. The researcher can still be limited and forced to assume risks by being vulnerable through the use of a personal narrative. Although autoethnographies are about the researchers' lives, by definition autoethnographic researchers also write about intimate others with whom they are in relationships (Ellis, 2009). For example, a husband who writes about his wife's experiences while also writing about his. Writing revealingly and vulnerably about oneself is one issue, but writing revealingly about other family members or intimate others can be quite another. Ethics necessarily and routinely hounds an autoethnographer with each keystroke. For example, an autoethnographer may write about personal details like his daughter with a disability, his wife's medical condition, and the autoethnographer's medical condition. A bell cannot be unrung, meaning, once the autoethnography is published it is published. Autoethnographers must find meaning amid the swirl of present events, move historically into his or her own past to recover and reconstitute origins, and imagine and create possible directions for his or her own future within the cultural landscape of the study.

Autoethnography is far from naval-gazing when the narrative is juxtaposed within the broader sociocultural discourses and structures. Autoethnography becomes a social process whereby individuals come to a deep, contextualized understanding of themselves, others, and the world through mutual reconceptualization (Shubert, 1986). As Bochner and Ellis (2016) describe, the writing should resonate with the reader: "Autoethnography is about connection. You have to accept and treat the reader as a co-constructor of the meaning of the text" (p. 247). Individuals are able to learn more about their own culture by understanding a contextually rich micro experience of one individual. For example, a novice principal may read about another

novice principal's experience of socialization to the profession and gain key insights they would not have gained through self-reflection of his/her own experience. Just as history provides a macro narrative of human lives and events, literature provides a micro narrative of the human experience. Both history and literary works are needed to contribute to meaning and substantial understanding of the written and experienced past. Autoethnographies are more than just telling personal stories. The purpose of an autoethnography is intended to expand the understandings of social realities through the lens of the researcher's personal experience within particular sociocultural contexts and constructs. For example, when Poplin (2011) shared her spiritual transformation experience after meeting Mother Teresa and its influence on her professional life in higher education, she created a nexus between her experience and her critique of cultural resistance to the spiritual discourse in higher education in the United States. In another autoethnographic work, Muncey (2010) wrote about her personal experience with teen pregnancy as a result of "repeated incestuous sexual abuse" (p. 7). In this work, the author utilized this vulnerable experience to produce a social critique of the dominant discourse equating teen pregnancy with teen promiscuity and ignorance, which, in turn, protected the perpetrators of violence and blamed the victims (Chang, 2008).

Carl Henry Dethloff, an autoethnographer, argued that "it is precisely this soft data (autoethnography) that gives qualitative research a hard edge" (Dethloff, 2015, p. 16). For example, yes, principals are leaving the profession in droves—but why? Unpacking the why of this question deserves more exploration (Dierksen, 2005; Sackney & Miller, 2000). It demands an in-depth exploration of what is happening with a principal during his or her first year, a unique and formative time for any professional. Any study that eliminates the role of the researcher who is also involved in the process fails to provide a comprehensive view regarding

the culture in which an experience occurs. One cannot answer the question “What is happening here?” by removing the researcher from the experience—especially one involving a first-year principal designing a new building to the tune of 45 million dollars, which is the focus of this autoethnography.

While the paradigm wars will continue to wage, one must not consider qualitative research—more specifically, autoethnography—as lacking any standards or criteria just because it teeters near postmodern tendencies. After all, an autoethnography can still be congruent with the American Educational Research Association (AERA) publication guidelines on humanities-oriented research by possessing the following seven critical attributes:

- Significance (timely, important, fills a gap in literature that has been previously neglected);
- Methods (attuned with audiences of AERA journals and should craft their manuscripts to be as explicit about methods as the rhetorical form and structure of their work permits);
- Conceptualization (manuscript merges topic and method forming perspective, aims and limits of inquiry for use by other scholars);
- Substantiation (claims and arguments are warranted, cited scholars are vetted, empirical evidence is utilized and appropriate and, demonstrates critical awareness);
- Coherence (encompasses methods, data, and intellectual resources within a framework using reasoning and meaning construction for both internal and external schemata);

- Quality of Communication (clear, concise, writing style; accurate titles, abstract, and headings);
- Ethics (fair treatment of participants, honoring privacy and confidentiality, appropriate presentation of perspectives, accurate citations, disclosure of any sources of funding) (AERA, 2009, p. 483-486).

Autoethnographies must contribute pressing and meaningful work that does not exist or is widely neglected in educational research literature. Although autoethnographies can appear radically different from traditional research, this is not to say that the work is allowed to go rogue and not articulate widely accepted methods, structure, conceptualization, substantiation and format norms expected of AERA journals and audiences. Moreover, the autoethnography must also honor the ethical treatment of participants and culture studied.

While AERA publication standards establish a minimum expectation, I also align my dissertation with the level of quality noted in Tracy's (2010) Eight "Big-Tent" Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research by ensuring that my work possesses the following attributes:

- Worthy topic (relevant, timely, interesting);
- Rich rigor (sufficient, abundant, appropriate, and complex);
- Sincerity (self-reflexivity, transparent about methods and challenges);
- Credibility (thick description—shows rather than tells, triangulation, multivocality, and member reflection);
- Resonance (aesthetic, naturalistic generalizations, and transferable findings);
- Significant Contribution (conceptually/theoretically, practically, morally, and methodologically);

- Ethical (procedural ethics followed for human subjects, situational and culturally specific ethics are followed, the scene is left intact when the research is shared);
- Meaningful Coherence (achieves what it purports to be about, uses methods and procedures that fit, interconnects literature and research with one another) (p. 840).

As a constructivist, I embrace the idea that although scholars develop criteria while critiquing my work— criteria are useful. Dreyfus, Dreyfus, and Athanasiou (1986) demonstrate that everyone starts out as a novice:

Novices and advanced beginners in any craft (whether cooking, skiing, dancing, or playing music) rely heavily on rule-based structures to learn. Guidelines provide a path to expertise. Musicians learn basic chords structures that in turn prime them for more advanced improvisation and jamming (Eisenberg, 1990). Cooks follow recipes as preparation for experimenting with novel flavor combinations. In short, guidelines and best practices regularly serve as helpful pedagogical launching pads across a variety of interpretive arts. (p. 50)

Just as cooks, skiers, dancers, and musicians have some basic criteria and fundamentals to learn before launching into the stratosphere of creator, innovator, and—dare I say—artisan, I, too, followed this expectation as I sought to structure the dissertation.

In addition to the AERA Guidelines and Tracy’s 8 “Big Tent” Criteria, I align this work with the tenets of arts-based educational research. As defined by Tom Barone of Arizona University and Elliot Eisner of Stanford University, arts-based education research (ABER) must meet two criteria:

Arts-based research is engaged in for a purpose often associated with artistic activity: arts-based research is meant to enhance perspectives pertaining to certain human activities. For ABER, those activities are educational in character. Second, arts-based research is defined by the presences of certain aesthetic qualities or design elements that infuse the inquiry process and the research “text.” Although these elements are, to some degree, evident in all research activity, the more pronounced they are, the more the research may be characterized as arts-based. (Barone & Eisner, 2006) (Green et al., 2006, p. 95).

Arts-based educational research (ABER)—is that an oxymoron? Perhaps part of my non-conformist spirit did not die in my middle school principal’s office after all. This non-traditional dissertation is informed by the work of Barone and Eisner (2011) in arts-based educational research. They quoted an 1890 lecture by William Jennings Bryan who argued we needed to “allow space in our mental life for the ambiguous” (p. 2). This dissertation is not meant to find the 100% truth, that is devoid of all predictable biases; rather, it is to meant to serve as an arts-based study that promotes others to empathize, a necessary condition for others to gain a deeper understanding of human lives. Arts-based research makes emphatic participation possible by creating a form that is provocative and compelling (Barone, & Eisner, 2011).

To use a metaphor, while the cliff is close, and at times it may feel as though I will take the dissertation off of the ledge with me, I still believe there are several high-quality branches (criteria), such as *AERA Guidelines*, Tracy’s 8 “*Big Tent*” *Quality of Qualitative Research*, and Barone and Eisner’s ABER to grab as I fall, keeping the study from going into the deep end and being dismissed by those in need of structure. The experience is part of me, and I am a part of the experience. To separate the two eradicates coherency. According to Denzin (2008), “We cannot

afford to fight with one another (qualitative and quantitative), we need to find new strategic and tactical ways to work with one another. We must expand the size of our tent, indeed we need a bigger tent” (p. 321). Denzin is not just trying to bridge the divide between quantitative and qualitative but also bridge the major divisions within qualitative research.

While critics view autoethnography as being messy, I invite them to understand that nothing in the world of education, especially the daily life of a principal and teacher, is clean! Autoethnography, provided me with a guiding lens of criteria that permitted creative research by allowing personal and experiential voice through narratives about daily challenges I grappled with during my socialization to the principalship.

Background Information

Why commit an exuberant amount of time uncovering, investigating, and exploring one high school principal’s first-year experience during the design phase a new school? Why situate this specific study of education research in autoethnography? The goal of this study was to inform novice administrators how the principalship influences personal wellness when applying *guru-based* leadership practices (as opposed to empirically informed) during salient critical incidents inherent when designing a new school. Moreover, the study provides a narrative that demonstrates how a new principal transitions through Villani’s Five Stages of Socialization (2006). This inquiry is to help encourage other novice principals to understand, investigate, and explore a contextually rich experience with hopes that they can avoid mistakes the author made and benefit from the practices that proved successful. More importantly, this study provides a space for principals to relate to other principals and reflect on how to improve their personal wellness by realizing that they are experiencing similar critical incidents as their colleagues.

When examining national trends in data regarding school administrators, even the quantitative researcher must recognize the need to dig deeper and explore what is going on with principals across the country. According to a study published by the School Leaders Network, approximately 25,000 principals (one quarter of those in America) quit their current positions each year, leaving millions of children's lives adversely affected. Fifty percent of new principals quit the profession during their third year in the role (Neale, 2014). When former principals were asked why they quit, a common trend in the responses indicated that the job is "simply too complex, too poorly constructed, and too isolating; many novice principals felt they lacked the ongoing support and development required to maintain and foster sustained commitment" (Neale, 2014, p. 1). While quantitative researchers identify problems, qualitative researchers, specifically, autoethnographers, help uncover the context of the problem in a deep, exploratory way and interrogate the narratives for possible recommendations or solutions.

Overall, more and more principals are feeling overwhelmed by increased pressures of accountability, yet they have diminished power and authority to cover their responsibilities. This is likely a partial reason for the massive exodus from the profession (Neal, 2014). Research in the area of personal wellness suggest a strong link between job retention and occupational wellness (Dorn, 1992,; Fuller & Young, 2009; Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2009). Moreover, stress caused by the educational administrator's role is linked adversely to productivity, job satisfaction, and performance (Gmelch, Koch, Swent, & Tung, 1982). Most new principals are excited to earn the title but then the reality of the office's heavy mantle sets in, causing feelings of being overwhelmed, confused, and lonely (Daresh, 2006; Normore, 2004).

While an entire discipline of study exists concerning the health and wellness of students, little attention focuses on the health of school employees (Directors of Health Promotion and

Education, 2004). The issue of personal wellness and retaining principals in Kansas schools is so evident that the Kansas State Board of Education adopted a specific goal that made a direct connection to the issue by stating the responsibility of the state to “recruit, prepare, support and retain a competent, caring and qualified teacher for every classroom and a leader for every school” (Kansas State Board of Education, 2001, para 1). Kansas is not alone; school districts across the nation are struggling to retain highly qualified principals for their schools (DeVita, Colvin, Darling-Hammond, & Haycock, 2007).

Over the years, the duties of principals have changed considerably. In the past, the principal was viewed more as a manager of resources, but now the role also includes being an instructional leader (Hurley, 2001). The school improvement model of building principals requires them to do more by involving stakeholders in the improvement process (Hoerr, 1996). Site-based management doctrines, combined with lower budgets, require the already overloaded principal to include a greater number of people in the decision-making process when allocating finite dollars (Shortt, 1994). Ripley (1997) addressed this concern:

Principals today are pulled in different directions and some are breaking under the stress. They are pressured to do this by one group, to do that by another; they find the needs of some students conflicting with the needs of others; they must deal with parents who want one thing while the staff wants another. Principals must deal with tension every day. (p. 55)

Perhaps the hardest part of the job is not resolving right versus wrong issues, but rather, as Kidder (1995) articulates, right versus right issues. In the past, the principal was the principal; today, the principalship remains embedded within an eye of a massive storm of competing factions. When a principal’s answer is not liked by one faction, the answer is often appealed to a

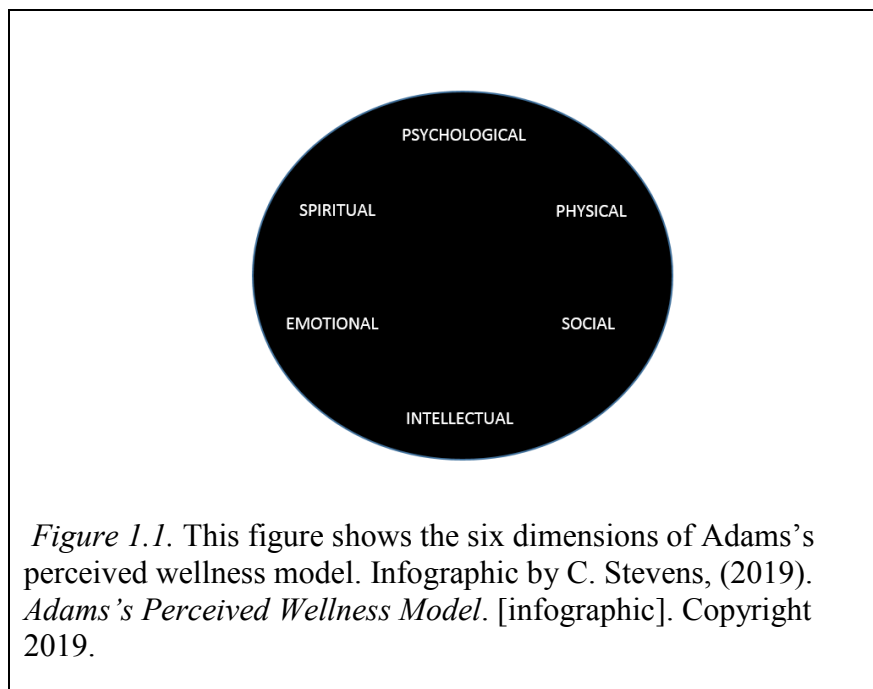
higher level. This results in the principal's authority becoming diminished, which adds to the disillusionment of building leaders.

Beyond management and instructional leadership, another area of added stress for principals is the escalation of violence among students in school. Tragic incidents such as Columbine and numerous others cause both students and educators to be concerned about schools being a safe place to learn and work (Covino, 2003; Lickel, Schmader, & Hamilton, 2003). Since the incident at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Connecticut, there has been a gun fired at a school somewhere in the United States at least once each week (Krishnakumar & Degroot, 2015). While keeping students safe has always been a priority of school administrators, this escalation of violence across American schools increases the stress level of administrators and takes a toll on their personal wellness (Covino, 2003; Lickel et. al., 2003).

Personal wellness has numerous dimensions. The World Health Organization defines personal wellness as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (The World Health Organization, 2017, para 1). Wellness can further be broken down into the following dimensions: physical wellness (e.g., blood pressure, coronary heart disease, exercise, and sleep) (Powers, 1994); spiritual wellness (philosophy of life, morality, values, ethics, and religion) (Powers, 1994); psychological wellness (perception one has of the outcomes to the events and circumstances that make up one's life) (Ardell, 1986); social wellness (support from family and friends in time of need) (Adams et al., 1997); emotional wellness (ability to cope, accept, and adjust to change) (Powers, 1994); and intellectual wellness (ability to use one's mind for active participation in scholastic, cultural, and other learning activities for the purpose of expanding knowledge and improvement of skills) (Powers, 1994).

In this autoethnography, my personal wellness as the principal will include the following dimensions (physical, spiritual, psychological, emotional, social, emotional, and intellectual) noted in Adams, Bezner, and Steinhardt's (1997) work, in which they discussed the power of perceptions in wellness and concluded that the study of wellness perceptions interfaced well with an overall model of health. Individual perceptions were important to the discussion of holistic wellness because one's personal perceptions often preceded actual illness as well as wellness. Adams's Perceived Wellness Survey (Adams et al., 1997) introduced a multidimensional measure of perceived wellness perceptions as they related to physical, spiritual, psychological, social, emotional, and intellectual dimensions of holistic wellness (see Figure 1.1). Interestingly, researchers found that when one dimension was exercised, the changes would also affect the other five dimension; consequently, health professionals were to keep in mind the whole person rather than focusing only on individual aspects of health (Eberst, 1984).

Figure 1.1 Adams's Perceived Wellness Model.



Robbins et al. (1999) viewed wellness as an on-going process that involves making choices through self-responsibility. Decisions people made had a direct impact on their quality of life (Powers, 1994). Dierksen (2005) argues that people need to manage an equal balance among all dimensions of their lives in order to achieve wellness. A strong linkage exists between balance and wellness. When a person's perceptions of wellness are out of balance, the person self-describes themselves as ill, isolated, depressed, less tolerant of other people, easy to anger, or unable to focus (Clark-Reynolds, 2002). Robbins et al.'s findings suggest the importance of a person being alert and making corresponding life adjustments to achieve balance and ultimately a high level of personal wellness. Wellness involves a person becoming the best he or she can be in all dimensions of life (Dierksen, 2005).

Each dimension of wellness can negatively or positively affect a principal's performance (see Table 1.1). The table demonstrates a tight connection between the wellness critical attributes and best practices noted in the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards (Appendix A-1). The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards were developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers in collaboration with the National Policy Board on Educational Administration (NPBEA) to help strengthen preparation programs in school leadership (Van Meter & Murphy, 1997). Waters and Grubb (2004) noted that by 2004, policymakers in at least 40 states had incorporated the ISLLC standards into principal licensure policies. These standards have played a significant role in improving the quality and consistency of administration preparation and licensure policies and practices (Katz, 2009).

Table 1.1 Clark-Reynolds Wellness Dimensions' Impact on Principal

| Wellness Dimensions | Healthy Impact On Principal's Performance | Unhealthy Impact On Principal's Performance |
|----------------------------|--|---|
| Physical | Decreased job frustration, improved creativity, better tolerance of students (Plowman, 1985) | Increased job frustration, decreased creativity, decreased tolerance of students (Plowman, 1985) |
| Social | Accepts differences, gets along with others, and shows concern and fairness for all humans and the environment (Powers, 1994) | Rejects differences, does not get along with others, fails to show concern and fairness for all humans and the environment (Powers, 1994) |
| Psychological | Aware of the restrictions and problems posed by their respective communities and finds opportunities to solve them (Dwyer, 1984) | Aware of the restrictions and problems posed by their respective communities, but could not resolve them (Dwyer, 1984) |
| Intellectual | Fosters a school culture focused on the pursuit of new knowledge and applying such information in critical thinking formats (Ardell & Tager, 1982) | Fosters a school culture that fails to pursue new knowledge (Ardell & Tager, 1982) |
| Emotional | Exhibits the ability to motivate others to change or improve and the ability to gain commitment of others to organizational goals (Duttweiler, 1986) | Lacks the ability to motivate others to change or improve and fails to gain commitment of others to organizational goals (Duttweiler, 1986) |
| Spiritual | More likely to help with the inner well-being of those they encountered (Dwyer, 1984) | Less likely to help with the inner well-being of those they encountered (Dwyer, 1984) |

Table 1.1. Clark-Reynolds wellness dimensions' impact on principal.

Thus, when a principal's perceptions of wellness were out of balance, the person described himself or herself as ill, isolated, depressed, less tolerant of other people, easy to anger, or unable to focus (Clark-Reynolds, 2002). Robbins et al. (1999) findings indicated the importance of a person being alert and making corresponding life adjustments to achieve balance and ultimately a high level of personal wellness. Wellness involves a person becoming the best he or she can be in all dimensions of life (Dierksen, 2005). So what happens when all of these dimensions start

breaking down? According to Clark-Reynolds (2002), when the life of a principal is out of balance, this is called chaos. For a principal, chaos can lead to disillusionment and leaving the profession.

The only thing worse than having a disillusioned principal leave the profession would be having a disillusioned principal with low self-efficacy remain in the profession and pull the school and everyone into chaos. Leithwood and Steinbach (1995) suggested that what principals do is a direct consequence of what and how they think. Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2004) also contended that self-efficacy beliefs are excellent predictors of individual behavior. Lyons and Murphy (1994) revealed that high-efficacy principals do not interpret their inability to immediately solve problems as failure. Instead, they regulate their personal expectation to correspond to conditions, typically remaining confident and calm and keeping their sense of humor, even in difficult situations (Katz, 2009). Conversely, low-efficacy principals perceive that they are unable to control the environment and tend to be less likely to identify appropriate strategies or modify unsuccessful ones (Katz, 2009). Such low-efficacy principals continue to be dogmatic in their thinking, blame others, and are unable to see opportunities, develop support, or worse yet, adapt (Osterman & Sullivan, 1996).

Neale (2014) describes the non-stop arrival and departure of principals as “the Churn”. Why should one care about the churn of principals? As it turns out, a clear harm caused by the churn results in students achieving less in both math and reading during the first year after leader turnover; schools that experience principal churn year after year realize serious cumulative negative effects on students— a condition that is exacerbated for schools serving underprivileged students (Neale, 2014). When principals in Neale’s study were asked what they need in order to remain in the profession and improve their schools, the overwhelming response was the need for

ongoing support with peers. Principals prefer learning in context relevant, collaborative settings, where they have the ability to influence the learning agenda (Daresh & Playko, 1992). The phrase “it is lonely at the top” is a common cliché; nevertheless, most principals would argue that it is even lonelier in the realm of mid-management known as the principalship, especially as research continues to indicate how crucial the man or woman in the principal’s office is to improving a school.

Robert Marzano’s *Leadership Matters*, is a meta-analysis that further validates Neale’s (2014) work regarding the negative effects of the churn; in it, he argues that the principal is one of the most important factors in improving a school, second only to instruction (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Fullan (2004) contends that the principal is absolutely key when it comes to developing the “school capacity” to manage change (p.15). Gray, Frey, Bottoms, and O’Neil (2007) further validate Fullan’s argument:

Successful schools are complex, collaborative institutions requiring a high level of performance from every professional. School success critically begins with the school principal who...has the prime responsibility for ensuring that all students meet challenging grade-level, college and career readiness standards. More often than not, the principal’s leadership skills determine whether a school becomes a dynamic learning organization or a failed enterprise. (p. 5)

Ironically, the more that researchers have recognized the vital importance of the principal, the more school districts have overloaded the principalship across the nation (Fullan, 2004). As additional demands and expectations make the job more complex and poorly structured, feelings of being overwhelmed and isolated push principals to either seek refuge higher up the ladder as a superintendent, where they have much more centralized authority and insubordinates to whom

they can delegate their duties, or out the door, causing the principal to leave the profession all together. The remaining children and their academic achievement become learning casualties resulting from the churn of principals.

As if being a first-year principal were not complex enough during a normal school year, another entire set of challenges emerges during a major construction project, making an autoethnography of this nature a rich context for others to gain insights. The principal and staff play a critical role of the facility design team. The principal must understand his or her relationships with architects, engineers, teachers, students, and community members. The principal must know how to work with colleagues as well as with architectural, engineering, and construction specialists concerned with providing a functional facility for learners (Davis, 1973). All of this may seem to be a linear and clean process—but it is not. Constructing a large high school no longer follows the linear “design, bid, and build” format, especially in a district where there are two high schools and eight elementary schools vying for the same pot of money. The process on the surface seems technically simple, but below the surface it is a socially complex neogitation.

Most principals will experience a major construction project once in his or her career; consequently, many of the same mistakes are repeated from one administrator to the next since research in this area lacks highly personalized accounts that draw upon the rich experience of other principals going through such an experience (Tanner, 2000). So what? What is the harm in administrators repeating some of the same mistakes as others when designing a school? According to Tanner (2000), “bad school houses are silent killers of teaching and student learning” (p. 312). Tanner’s (2000) research takes into consideration how the physical environment influences behavior and productivity.

Tanner (2008) argues that “educational facilities should be viewed as a collection of environments that influence learning; the physical environment influences student attitudes and behavior; where students learn is as important as what students learn” (p. 446). A principal who knows and understands the design process remains just as critical as a principal who knows and understands instruction and curriculum—especially when designing a new school.

When one looks at schools built in the past and compares them to new ones being built today, a general pattern emerges. Schools built in the past largely resemble prisons, whereas contemporary schools feel and look more like shopping malls or airports. One school designer and architect suggest that kids want to hang out at shopping malls and airports (Nair, Fielding, & Lackney, 2014). Garden City High School in Garden City, Kansas, saw a 10% increase in attendance rate by 10% through the construction of a new school building (J. Mireles, personal communication, September 19, 2014). Knowledge about school design is critical for any principal—novice or veteran—especially as a major effort is underway for new construction and renovation of America’s crumbling classrooms.

Why is school construction important? How much money could possibly be spent on school construction? Abramson (2016) noted that

school districts throughout the United States put \$12.9 billion worth of construction in place during 2015; of that amount, \$6.1 billion went for entirely new buildings, \$3.7 billion was used to add to existing buildings and \$3.1 billion went into maintenance of existing buildings ranging from new roofs to asbestos removal, paint jobs, and window replacement. When ongoing projects, those that are started but not yet completed, are added in, the economic impact of education construction jumps to almost \$75 billion making it a major factor in the economic structure of the United States. (p. 18)

These numbers are frightening when one considers how little is known and how little has been studied about the primary role of the principal in this process from a first person perspective. Again, according to Tanner (2008), “bad school houses are silent killers of teaching and student learning” (p. 312). The design of the school’s structure has a tremendous impact on student achievement. Thus, the time is ripe for more autoethnographies to investigate, uncover, and explore the principal’s involvement and personal wellness in the design process of a new building, regardless of his or her status as a novice or veteran.

Rationale/Background for Study

Transitioning to the principalship is a constant renegotiation of the role in relationship to other roles within and outside the school. This socialization process is challenging for a novice leader who has to discern how to navigate an unknown terrain. As Hickey (2006) suggested, the transition period during which novice principals begin their tenure is a crucial time because they are simultaneously figuring out how to lead a change process while learning a new role in a new environment. They are tackling being both a learner and a leader of a school environment (Jentz, 1982). O’mahony and Matthews (2003) argued that principals are casted into positions where they must learn quickly while expected to be experts in everything. The first 90 days set the tone and can largely determine whether or not the principal achieves success (Watkins, 2003). New principals must quickly become respected, trusted leaders because the entire school community is impacted by their decisions and actions (Katz, 2009). Daresh’s (2001) research with novice principals found three distinct areas of concern: problems with role clarification, limitations on technical expertise, and difficulty with socialization into the profession and system. Villani (2006) suggested that the induction of new principals address the needs of principals as they progress through the following five social stages:

Stage 1: Survival. The novice principal may encounter individual experiences that cause professional insecurity and situations where personal concerns are high.

Stage 2: Control. During this stage, primary concern rests with setting priorities and performing management-related tasks.

Stage 3: Stability. During this stage, frustrations become routinized, difficulties are primarily with facilitating change, and the principal has achieved veteran status.

Stage 4: Educational leadership. During this stage, primary focus is on curriculum and instruction.

Stage 5: Professional actualization. During this stage, which is characterized by empowerment, growth, and authenticity, the focus is on attaining personal vision (p. 64).

One could argue that these stages may not be experienced in a linear fashion, and one might move through the stages in non-linear iterative ways. The reality of *socialization*, or the interactive process by which an individual selectively acquires the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and behaviors needed to participate as a member of a profession, is that such a process is extremely messy and chaotic (Bennis, 1985; Hart, 1993; Kaye, 1995; Merton, 1963; Normore, 2004).

Germaine and Quinn (2005) contrasted a novice principal to an expert principal during problem-solving situations:

Novice principals actually perceived situations differently than did their expert counterparts. When novice principals thought about their strategies in a metacognitive format, they did so after a disruptive incident rather than before or during the incident. Expert principals often chose to wait to address problems rather than confront and resolve them. When novice principals did think about incidents as they transpired, they lost their

perspective and reacted emotionally. Once they faced a problem, novice principals spent substantial time in anxious deliberation about possible solutions. (p. 81)

Germaine and Quinn (2005) provide an excellent example of why novice principals need more contextually rich autoethnographic works to read during the first year—to assist them with the socialization process, which is all too often covert. As Fullan (2006) posited, it is critical to make the work of successful principals more overt.

We need to unpack the way in which successful principals go about obtaining success.

We need to get inside the black box and understand how principals make a difference.

What do they do and how do they do it? What are the pathways to success? (p. 2)

Therefore it is necessary to make the *covert* nature of the principalship more *overt* and accessible to aspiring school leaders, but also novice leaders thrown into the fire—especially if we intend to recruit future principals and retain novice leaders. Looking deep into specific experiences of individual principals help both pre-service and novice principals gain insights into both effective and ineffective practices.

Although leadership *gurus*² like Richard and Rebecca DuFour and Anthony Muhammad have caused a sea of change in education among teachers regarding the need to collaborate in professional learning communities, or PLCs, school leaders have traditionally been excluded from opportunities to nurture collaborative, collegial relationships. Whereas new teachers frequently have a cadre or cohort that meets routinely and as required by numerous district staff

² I use the term *gurus* to denote a separation from those who are published in refereed journals and academic texts versus those who write popular texts. Leadership *gurus* are those who write popular texts, that are often disseminated within the K-12 environment, due to their accessibility, but often they lack depth, or could be gimmicky, or might only superficially ground their claims to research. But because of the popularity of the texts, the authors might be seen as *gurus* and privileged as worthy of reading and distribution in K-12 culture.

development programs, beginning principals often operate in isolation and experience loneliness and changes in peer relationships (Robbins & Alvy, 2004; Villani, 2006). Some novice principals frequently feel vulnerable, at risk, clueless, or innocent during their first year as principal. Gray et al. (2007) asserted that highly skilled school leaders are not born and do not emerge fully prepared to lead from traditional graduate programs in school administration. Instead, effective new principals are rigorously prepared and deliberately mentored in well-designed programs that immerse them in real-world leadership experiences where they are challenged to excel (Katz, 2009).

Few autoethnographical studies of principals and other educational leaders exist, despite the method being a natural space to engage in critical personal reflection. There is value in such studies for principals wishing to connect relevancy to their specific context, but several limitations prevent principals from sharing about the critical incidents they encounter through their experience. Time is often a major barrier to conducting or writing such a study due to hectic work schedules of administrators. As I sit here and type this very paragraph, my heart fills with guilt for spending time away from family and not accomplishing the unlimited tasks that need to be done to get ready for the school year. Educational administration is not easy, and the more stress that comes with the job, the harder it is to be productive, satisfied, and able to perform at a high level (Kennedy, 2002). When leaders do have time to conduct academic research, the pressures of the job cause many administrators to be unwilling to share for fear of feeling vulnerable or being viewed as incompetent, insane, unable to control emotions, or all three. Villani (2006) noted that among educational leaders, there is a taboo against disclosing problems to others and giving sincere assistance. Ironically, these same principals frequently deliver staff development to teachers that propagate the need for educators to take risks to foster what Dweck

(2006) calls a growth mindset, or a mindset that embraces error for personal improvement. Finally, a primary reason so few autoethnographies exist is that the shelf life of principals, as reported by the School Leaders Network, is short; many leave the profession before seeking to conduct such a study (Neal, 2014).

The transition period for a novice principal is a critical time (Hickey, 2000) since principals are cast into positions and forced to learn quickly. During such socialization to the profession they encounter multiple stages as described by Villani (2006). Novice principals must learn and lead simultaneously. Such a rapid and dynamic socialization influences a novice's ability to know how and when to successfully utilize metacognitive structures as suggested by Germaine and Quinn (2005). Rapid and dynamic socialization also influences the principal's personal wellness, which in turn, influences the principal's ability to lead. Unpacking the covert nature of a principal's experiences is critical to learning what makes one successful and unsuccessful.

Few autoethnographies of a first year principal during a major redesign of a school building exist. Those that do exist, limit vulnerability (Villani, 2006). Moreover, few autoethnographies exist due to a high rate of turnover, the limited time of principals to write due to the added pressures to the already overloaded and poorly structured job Neal (2014). This study is situated at the intersection of the need for first person narratives to reveal the anatomy of negotiations during a novice principal's transition and associated socialization processes. An autoethnographic narrative adds context to why there is a high turnover, the cost to principals in navigating the responsibilities of their position, and ways in which one might prepare him/herself in such roles.

Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this study was to explore the personal wellness of a first-year principal during the design phase of a new building. The study was exploratory in nature, and personal reflection data were used to answer the major questions posed.

The central questions were:

1. How is a principal's personal wellness (physical, social, psychological/emotional, intellectual, spiritual), impacted during his transition and first year as a principal?
2. How is a principal's personal wellness influenced as he applies research based practices to critical incidents inherent in his first year of the principalship and during a design phase of a construction project?
3. What patterns of critical incidents does a leader encounter when transitioning from an assistant principal into a head principal during the design phase of a construction project?

Researcher's Role

In April of 2014, the voters of Salina, Kansas passed a \$110 million bond issue. \$45 million dollars was allocated to rebuild approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of Salina High School South one of two high schools in USD 305 school district. In June of 2014, I was appointed Principal of Salina High School South granting me access to a unique set of cultures within administration, architecture, engineering, external and internal factions within a school community, and the liminality between novice and expert leadership exhibited to resolve critical incidents. During my novice year as principal, all of the designing and planning of construction took place.

As an autoethnographer with access to the previously mentioned cultures, I grant the reader special access to feel my dilemmas, think with and about my story, and think through my decision points (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Autoethnography allows me to create a space for a

turn, a change, a reconsideration of how I think, how I do research and relationships, and how I live. Finally, as an autoethnographer, I can use a research method that engages the individual in cultural analysis and interpretation (Chang, 2008). Through my narratives, the reader is able to gain an entry point that is otherwise covert—due to worries of vulnerability, or nonexistent—due to the time demands most overworked principals encounter during to the changing landscape of administrative work. An autoethnography of my experience embedded within the culture of administration, architecture, engineering, and the liminality of novice and expert leadership may offer guidance in being responsive to the diverse landscape of teaching, learning, and leadership.

Significance

An autoethnography of my novice year as principal is valuable for other pre-service and practicing principals going through a major design or construction project by getting an inside look at the process of socialization during a \$45 million redesign project, and how such socialization impacted my personal wellness (physical, social, psychological/emotional, intellectual, and spiritual).

By investigating, uncovering, and exploring one principal's experience during his first year amidst a major design and construction project—other practitioners in the field, as well as educational leadership programs, can be apprised of how another administrator navigated treacherous critical incidents that transpire— sometimes with success and more often with failure. In either case, a deep, contextually rich study of one person's experience can enlighten others who are considering entering or deciding whether or not to leave the profession. I wish I could have read such a study prior to jumping into the deep end because I may have been better situated to resolve many of the challenges in a more efficient and effective manner. Most principals start out as assistant principals, yet such a position does not always best prepare

principals. Assistant principals are usually delegated more management-type activities, such as scheduling, discipline, campus supervision, and safety (Weller & Weller, 2002). Golanda (1991) stressed that assistant principals cannot experience leadership by watching; they must be allowed to perform leadership through experiential learning, whereby one learns by doing.

Beyond serving as a contextually rich example for other administrators and educational leadership programs, this study may also assist school district-level administrators who supervise principals, as well as architects and engineers who work side-by-side with the principal, during the design and construction of a new school. By providing a clearer understanding of a principal's challenges during a major construction project, district-level administrators, architects, and engineers may be able to improve communication, minimize problems, and decrease the likelihood of unnecessary costs that are all too common during a major project.

This autoethnography may also help open space for more autoethnographies that interrogate opportunities afforded to people in positions of privilege, and at the same time, offer a dialogue about what is also absent when the landscape exceeds the expertise of privileged leaders.

Operational Definitions

The following terms and operational definitions are used throughout this study.

1. *Critical incident*: “Any observable human activity that is sufficiently complete in itself to permit inferences and predictions to be made about the person performing the act. To be critical, an incident must occur in a situation where the purpose or intent of the act seems fairly clear to the observer, and where its consequences are sufficiently definite to leave little doubt concerning its effects” (Flanagan, 1954, p. 327). A critical incident need not be a dramatic event; usually it is an incident that had some significance for the person

doing the research. It is often an event that made you stop and think, or one that raised questions for you. It may have made the researcher question an aspect of his/her beliefs, values, attitude, or behavior. It is an incident that, in some way, has had a significant impact on your personal and professional learning (Fook & Cooper, 2003).

2. *Novice principal*: A first-time, first-year principal.
3. *Personal wellness*: “A state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (The World Health Organization, 2017).
4. *Socialization*: “A process through which an individual learns or acquires the necessary knowledge, skills, and values needed to perform a social role in an organization (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979).

Summary

This study sought to understand the socialization of an assistant principal transitioning to the principalship during a \$45 million dollar design project using a qualitative study. As most previous work focuses broadly on socialization, personal wellness, the need for balance, and the lack of retention of principals, this study focuses on grounding each of those constructs into one experience through narratives in the form of an autoethnography-- with hopes to offer insights into better understanding the socialization process and how a principal's personal wellness is influenced. The results of this study may serve multiple stakeholders such as pre-service principals, novice principals experiencing socialization, both novice and expert principals design ing a new school, district administrators helping support novice principals with socialization, professionals who develop higher education curriculum for principal preparation

programs, and architectural and engineering firms working with principals designing a new building(s).

Six more chapters follow. Chapter two discusses the study's design and specific details of how data were utilized to create narratives in the form of an autoethnography. Chapter three consists of narratives that present the transition from assistant principal to principal. Chapter four, five, and six unpack my experience with the socialization process and personal wellness through narratives about doing the job during a major design project. Finally, Chapter seven discusses the results, limitations, recommendations, and conclusion.

Chapter 2: An Arch Wherethrough: Circular and Rhizomatic Constructivism

Researchers view both experience and reflection as critical when training effective leaders (Dewey, 1938; Calderhead, 1989; Gilliss, 1988). John Dewey's classic 1938 book *Experience and Education* challenged the status quo of pedagogy and asserted that education is about learning by doing Dewey (1938). Germaine and Quinn (2005) used a phenomenological, qualitative approach whereby novice principals were compared with expert principals as both went about their daily tasks of school leadership. The study contributed to the research on effective leadership and offers implications for leadership training models. Results suggested that "training models for school leadership should place less emphasis on experience alone and focus more on examining and reflecting on the experience itself" (Quinn, 2005, p. 81). Reeves (2006) noted that "reflection is so important for leaders because of the gulf between the theoretical abstractions of academic leadership development programs and the daily lives of leaders" (p. 50). Moreover, according to McGregor and Salisbury (2005), holistic and reflective approaches to thinking and responding to educational challenges allow practitioners to delve more deeply into the complexities of the change process. Therefore, these educational leadership scholars suggest that both experience and reflection play a critical role for learning effective leadership.

Barth (2003) provided the term *craft knowledge* to describe those experiences that one acquires on the job and upon which one reflects: "Reflection is nothing less than an internal dialogue with oneself. It is a process of bringing past experiences to a conscious level, analyzing them, and determining better ways to think and behave in the future" (pp. xxi-xxii). Reflection is an integral part of constructivism. Figure 2.1 explains how the epistemology of constructivism guides the research purpose, questions, and methodology of an autoethnography.

Figure 2.1 Epistemology and Research Methodology

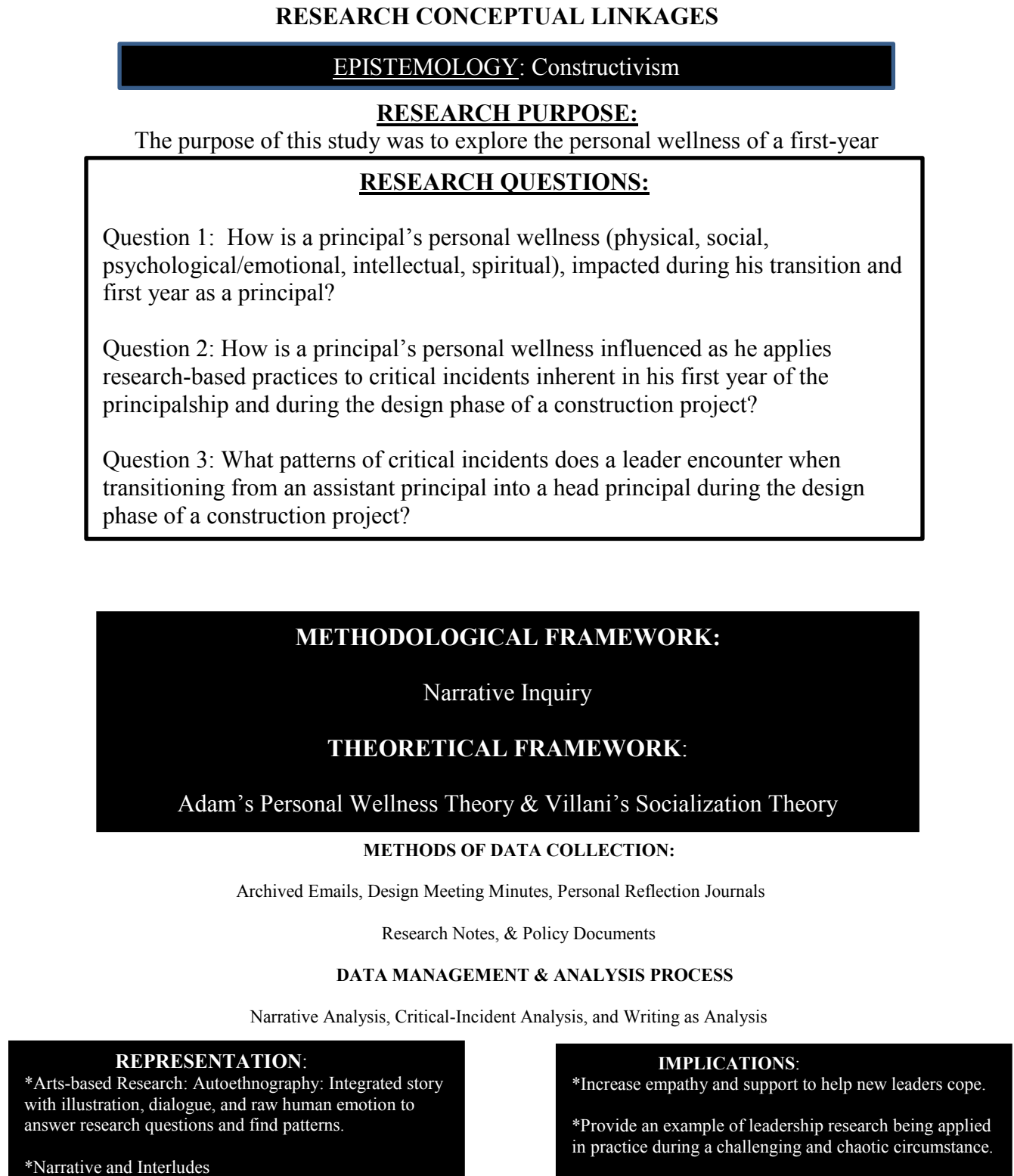


Figure 2.1. Epistemology and research methodology. [infographic]. Copyright 2019.

Autoethnography is a methodology that applies both experience and reflection studied within a culture. Since this methodology allows practicing principals to reflect on his or her experiences embedded within a culture, the methodology is well suited to help leaders grown professionally. A principal seeking to improve professionally must do more than simply recall experiences and reflect on such experiences embedded within a culture. It is crucial to have a framework to use to determine which experiences are worthy of reflecting on to improve professional practice. Critical incident analysis (C.I.A) can easily meld with personal stories and how such stories can be used as tools for understanding systems, structures, and processes: “In a sense, they are artifacts, which provide a vehicle for exploring personal and professional understanding about both the generic and particular nature of organizations and leadership” (Johnson, Aiken, & Steggerda, 2005, p. 237). Critical incident analysis provides principals with a vehicle for exploring personal and professional understanding the culture of an organization and educational leadership.

Critical Incident Analysis

Critical-incident-analysis can be traced back to Flanagan (1954) who unknowingly pioneered and advanced critical incident analysis as a future qualitative method, despite having strong positivist leanings. Flanagan attempted to solve social science problems with objective data that was more descriptive and thereby interpretive in nature than using finite numbers. For example, in 1941, when one of the first studies involving critical-incident-technique was used to determine the reasons why 1,000 pilot candidates who were eliminated from flight school could not learn to fly (Flanagan, 1954). The “Flanagan Study,” as it came to be known, resulted

in a set of descriptive categories called the “critical requirements of combat leadership” (Flanagan, 1954, p. 328) and spawned important changes in Air Force selection and training procedures. Flanagan (1954) defined a critical incident as

any observable human activity that is sufficiently complete in itself to permit inferences and predictions to be made about the person performing the act. To be critical, an incident must occur in a situation where the purpose or intent of the act seems fairly clear to the observer and where its consequences are sufficiently definite to leave little doubt concerning its effects. (p. 327)

While Flanagan argued that the classification of critical incidents should seem clear, he acknowledged that, “in the absence of an adequate theory of human behavior, this step is usually an inductive one and is relatively subjective” (p. 335). Flanagan noted that finite numbers have limitations when it comes to studying of human behavior. Despite there not being a way to use finite numbers to predict human behavior, critical incident analysis can be used to permit inferences and predictions of human behavior.

Flanagan’s observation was reiterated almost 70 years later when Sacks (2013), a neurologist, made the following argument: “There is no evidence of a mechanism in the human brain that ensures truth of one’s recollections. The events of the world are experienced and constructed in a highly subjective way . . .and differently reinterpreted or re-experienced” (p. 11). Since subjectivity is often incongruent with positivists’ stance, Flanagan reassured the 1950s research community that “once a classification system has been developed for any given type of critical incidents, a fairly satisfactory degree of objectivity can be achieved in placing the incidents in the defined categories” (p. 335). Even with what Flanagan argued was objective, such assurance does not take into account the following issues: who develops the classification

system; the socio cultural interpretation of the developer(s); assigning critical incidents to an established classification system is also interpretive and contingent on the researcher's background and experiences. The Flanagan Study was done in the 1940s and released in the 1950s, a time when qualitative research as a concept had yet to be coined by Barney Glaser and Anslem Strauss in their 1967 publication *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*.

Flanagan's (1954) critical incident technique demonstrated that just because it is called a technique does not mean it must consist of a single rigid set of rules governing data collection. Flanagan noted, "Critical incident technique should be thought of as a flexible set of principles which must be modified and adapted to meet the specific situation at hand" (p. 335). Such thinking recognized that theories involving humans cannot always be measured by finite numbers. Such an observation is like a crack in the firm positivist foundation, allowing a proverbial light to shed on methodological frameworks such as narrative inquiry, a research approach that allows investigators to understand experience as "lived and told stories" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 1). Beyond qualitative methodology, educational leadership qualitative research benefitted from the Flanagan's Study because it provided an opening for methodologies such as narrative inquiry to focus on the power of reflecting on experiences of leaders grappling with serious conflict, dilemma, or critical incidents in their leadership practice.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is the storytelling methodology that inquires into the narratives and stories of people's life experiences (Kim, 2016). It is important to distinguish narratives from stories. Stories are a higher category than narrative (Kim, 2016). Learning about leadership is

enhanced by inquiring into stories about leadership. As stated by Quong, Walker, and Bodycott (1999) stories help develop professional understanding:

Stories are seen as tools for understanding systems, structures, and processes. In a sense, they are artifacts, which provide a vehicle for exploring personal and professional understanding about both the generic and particular nature of organizations and leadership. Leadership stories board knowledge, influence, and understanding developed throughout an individual's personal and professional life. (pp. 442-443)

To know a person, system, structure, process, or organization is to understand its story.

The word *narrative* comes from the Latin root *narrat-* (“related,” “told”) or *narrare* (“to tell”), or possibly the Late Latin *narrativus* (“telling a story”), all of which are akin to the Latin *gnārus* (“knowing”), which was derived from the ancient Sanskrit *gnâ* (“to know”) (Kim, 2016). Thus, a narrative is a form of knowledge that catches the two sides of narrative, telling as well as knowing (McQuillan, 2000). Bruner (1986) argued that human beings utilize two modes of thought or two ways of knowing in understanding truth and reality: *paradigmatic mode* (establishes formal and empirical proof by creating well-formed arguments) and *narrative mode* (establishes verisimilitude by creating good stories that are lifelike). At first glance, one might dismiss the narrative mode or consider it less important than the paradigmatic mode; however, the goal of the work must be considered, as the work or nature of the task determines which tool a worker should use. Narrative mode is concerned with particularities, analogies, and metaphors that go beyond the facts and rules and that provide open invitations to different reactions, feelings and interpretations for the reader (Spence, 1986). According to Kim (2016), “the establishment of the narrative mode of knowing as parallel with and complementary to the paradigmatic scientific mode has legitimized and justified the use of stories in research, hence

narrative inquiry as a research methodology” (p. 11). Narrative inquiry’s acceptance as a methodology is further evidenced by its application to areas outside of education, such as law, medicine, and psychology (Kim, 2016).

Although narrative inquiry is frequently painted as a new area of research, Dunne (2005), a contemporary educational researcher, emphasizes the importance of stories in educational research, and notes that his work draws upon Aristotle and notes that stories can instruct and move us because they reveal universal themes in their depiction of particular cases and characters. Kim (2008) utilizes Dewey, a pioneer in educational philosophy from the early 1900s, in suggesting that we practice narrative inquiry as an aesthetic inquiry whose purpose is to produce aesthetic experience as a mode of knowledge through lived experience of participants in their stories. More specifically, education researchers need to be good storytellers and listeners to make sense of what goes on in schools (Kim, 2016). Kim (2016) stated “when we let imagination come to us without a predetermined set of purposes, we allow aesthetic experience to tell its own tale” (p. 71). Narrative inquiry, a new area of research, allows researchers the ability to produce an aesthetic experience allowing others to learn through such stories.

Storytelling need not always have a happy-ending, especially storytelling that proves fruitful for learning. According to Maslin-Ostrowski and Ackerman (1999), without contextually rich and often embarrassing, emotionally painful, and vulnerable examples of leadership in practice, novice leaders struggle with knowing how to implement and manage change. Johnson, Aiken, and Steggerda (2005) acknowledge the power of novice principals learning through the narratives of experienced leaders:

Narratives from leaders who have experienced a serious conflict, dilemma, or critical incident in their leadership practice reveal that it can have a profound way of affecting or

“wounding” them. Their study resulted in what they term the “wounded storyteller” and points to the fact that these voices of pain have rarely been heard and have been left out of the professional dialogue. Yet, the emotional displays participants reported that they experienced during the time of the critical incident were often manifested in private, apart from colleagues and organizational employees, and took various forms such as negative self-talk, tears, sleeplessness, and angry critical descriptions of others when with safe friends, colleagues, and family members (pp. 240-241).

Stories from wounded leaders who are at risk of vulnerability frequently prevent more novice leaders from learning from their mistakes. Few wounded storytellers exist in the literature (Villani, 2006). Showing one’s vulnerability as an educational leader may jeopardize future professional opportunities. Being vulnerable is risky. Ironically, leadership research without vividly personal and often painful critical incident examples is like a car with a powerful engine but no transmission—it does not take a person anywhere. Emotions can become leadership resources or tools for enacting a more effective leadership practice (Johnson, Aiken, & Steggerda, 2005). Novice educational leaders can benefit by learning from more experienced principals by using critical-incident-analysis of the more experienced principals’ successes and failures during the socialization process of becoming a principal (Sciarappa, 2004; Villani, 2006; Weindling, 2004).

Johnson, Aiken, and Steggerda (2005) described the following techniques that some school administrators use to decrease stress:

In our interviews, we heard respondents refer to a number of techniques, such as “Getting alone and quiet.” “Writing poetry, journaling.” or “Processing with a respected colleague

or friend.” and how these strategies allowed them to arrive at a place with the necessary energy and skills to work through the critical event. (p. 244)

This quote illustrates the irony of being a principal because although one can be isolated as leader, hence, the cliché “it’s lonely at the top,” it is difficult to have time to be alone, experience a quiet moment, or have the opportunity to confide in another trusted colleague. Such practices, according to Johnson et al. benefit educational leaders. Katz (2009) noted that personal reflection, although intensely personal and private, can have a profound impact on a novice principal’s actions, decision-making. Reeves (2006) suggested asking questions such as the following: What did I learn today? Whom did I nurture today? What difficult issue did I confront today? What is my biggest challenge right now? What did I do today to make progress on my most important challenge?

My practice of journaling and processing with a respected colleague proved to be calming and beneficial when reflecting on past practice. While I am more than certain that my reflections will not be revered years later or preserved in the National Archives, it is comforting to know that the practice of revisiting my experiences allows me to reflect on past critical incidents. Through reflection and journaling, I feel as though I am growing professionally as a leader. More importantly, if I can help others avoid the same mistakes I have made, then the implications of my research far outweighs the risks I take making myself vulnerable through the publication of personal thoughts and errors. Perhaps my willingness to take a risk by publishing this dissertation about my past errors will help other practitioners to embrace a *growth mindset* by embracing error and reflection rather than trying to suppress and hide from mistakes (Dweck, 2006), or worse, quit the profession all together. No one leads an error free life anywhere, in any profession.

School administration, on the surface, may seem extremely boring to the layperson; but to the trained and experienced professional, one recognizes the complex relational dynamics that influence leadership behavior, the turbulent issues that evoke raw emotion in self and others one works with, the array of ethical dilemmas that have a profound impact on the lives of many, the inordinate amount of time required to serve as a principal, and the physical and emotional stress that takes a toll on a person—all of which commonly exists in a typical administrator's work day (Fusarelli & Militello, 2012). Although one principal's experience, story, and voice is small, ignoring the small voices in academic research can impugn the authenticity and relevance of research in the eyes of existing principals. Principals learn best from other practicing principals' experiences, primarily because such experiences are contextually relevant (Liang & Augustine-Shaw, 2016).

While principals like to learn from other principals, critical reflection of one's own practice can be just as fruitful. Linsky and Heifetz (2002) explored the importance of "listening to oneself as data" (p. 271). Few personally rich contextual descriptions of principals and their thoughts are available. Beyond critical reflection, autoethnographic space for principals in the field of qualitative research is needed so others can learn from other "wounded storytellers" (Johnson et al., 2005, p. 240-241).

Personal Experiences and Autoethnography

Personal experiences is data to an autoethnographer, who is an observer of self, juxtaposed against the culture within which the self is situated. Autoethnographers use their personal experiences as primary material (data) for social investigation. They draw from autobiographic data such as memories, memorabilia, documents about themselves, official records, photos, interviews with others, and on-going self-reflective and self-observational

memos. Autoethnographers are uniquely qualified to access personal data that may be frowned upon by other researchers with more positivist and postpositivist leaning. DeVries (2012) expressed the easy access that autoethnographers have to their personal data: “You are the central character in the research so access is not problematic. You can revisit and rethink the data you collect about yourself in an ongoing way” (p. 362). Accessing and utilizing personal data enables autoethnographers to make distinctive contributions to the understanding of human experiences within sociocultural contexts. While some autoethnographers pay attention to the analytical-interpretive process of research, other autoethnographers emphasize the importance of writing as a comprehensive way of thinking, processing, and producing autoethnography without delineating data collection, analysis, and interpretation as distinctive stages of the autoethnographic process (Ellis, 2004; Goodall, 2000, 2008; Muncey, 2010). It is critical for scholars to not equalize personal experience with autoethnography. Personal experience is a part of information that an autoethnographer will gather as a researcher. The obligation to juxtapose experiences as an ethnographer against a sociocultural landscape is critical in autoethnography.

Education administration scholarship is in need of more diverse autoethnographic work. Although this autoethnography provides a white male’s perspective, it does so with two goals for further research: The first goal is to unpack the “privilege” and “whiteness” of my experience. The second goal is to leverage white privilege by reflecting on the frequent isolating experiences and critical incidents encountered by being a white leader in an attempt to contrast my experience from other leaders who are minoritized by a hierarchical system. For example, no isolation that I feel as a leader could be the same as those minoritized by the system, because most leaders look like me even if we have political differences in our perspectives. In a state where conservative politics are more the norm, my liberal orientation has not prevented my

upward mobility, yet I do not see a diverse group of people represented in various leadership roles in terms of race, religion, sexuality, ability, etc. This makes me committed to unpack how whiteness and dominant structures play a role in selecting and retaining educational leaders and how such moves can be detrimental to the enterprise of education as well as harmful to the leaders who do not benefit from having access to a diversity of perspectives.

Autoethnographies provide a space and encourage practitioners from different ethnicities, genders, religions, and orientations to share the critical incidents in leadership they have encountered to become wounded storytellers. According to Maslin-Ostrowski and Ackerman (1999), narratives from leaders who have experienced a serious conflict, dilemma, or critical incident in their leadership practice reveal that it can have a profound way of affecting or “wounding” (p. 216) them resulting in negative self-talk, tears, sleeplessness, and angry, critical descriptions of others when the safe friends, colleagues, and family members. By such space—and more specifically, autoethnographies are desperately needed to overcome the problem of isolation among leaders, as well as leaders who are minoritized.

Autoethnographies of educational leaders who are minoritized, both men and women, are rare for two major reasons. First, systemic discrimination and attempts to correct discrimination have restricted the number of diverse education leaders. In the decade following *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education*, 90% of African American Principals across 11 states lost their jobs (Tillman, 2004). Often access to positions in educational leadership is through tokenizing someone who is minoritized and does not possess the threat of disrupting status quo. Second, in order to be hired as a diverse leader, the actor frequently panders to a script representative of the white culture. Unpacking such an experience makes the diverse leader extremely vulnerable for

existing and future employment. Such vulnerability is nothing new for minoritized educational leaders in the United States.

During the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, minoritized school leaders experienced vulnerability as a direct result of desegregating schools. Prior to 1960, no statistics were kept on the actual number of educational administrators in the United States for any race other than white. Tyack and Hansot argued data of school administrators in the United States based on sex (and race) have been largely unavailable due to lack of data. According to the 1992 U.S. Bureau of the Census, by 1986 only 8% of all school administrators and 13% of elementary and secondary principals and assistant principals were African American. No other information was present about any other ethnic groups other than African American. Shakeshaft (1999) suggested that “a historical account of the ebb and flow of women in administration either details the experiences of white women only or obfuscates the lives of women of color by subsuming them within statistics and reports of women in general” (p. 21). Thus, while the Black men administrator has often been ignored in literature, Black women’s stories have been neglected to an even greater extent (Doughty, 1980). Other minoritized groups have encountered neglect in educational leadership literature as well, “Asian American women have made contributions to their schools, communities, and the society. But seldom are their stories and contributions acknowledged” (Liang, 2014). Opening space in autoethnography in educational leadership, opens dialogue to support existing Asian American educational leaders and help attract more to the field.

Overall, more research—specifically, autoethnographies—of education leaders, both men and women of diverse backgrounds, is needed not only to increase the number of future

minoritized principals, but also to stymie the principalship churn by keeping existing leaders from leaving the profession due to their feeling isolated, disillusioned, and overwhelmed.

Data Sources and Data Management in Autoethnography

This section details all data sources used in this autoethnography, its relevance specifically in this study and broadly in educational leadership, and details about each source are provided, including a collective account of raw data pages generated from the sources informing this autoethnography.

Beginning in May 2014, I started to gather information related to my new duties as principal of Salina High School South. As the design and construction process moved forward, I quickly realized that I would need a better way to keep track of the volumes of information; consequently, I created Table 2.1 to help organize all of the data sources. While I value the data I collected, Glass-Coffin (1998) best described my sentiments regarding data:

To live is to experience ... You should save your tapes. They are expensive and you will learn very little from them. What you write won't come from what you record but from what you live-from what you experience. Reality isn't observed or recorded, it is lived!
(p. xi)

Without vivid narratives of the life I experienced during my socialization in becoming a principal, I would not be able to create an evocative autoethnography of my experience embedded with the culture of educational leadership and school design.

Table 2.1 Data Inventory from Study

| Source of data | Estimated number of pages | Page count total |
|---|--|--|
| Personal reflection journals May 1, 2014 - Feb. 15, 2016 | 45 pp. | 1 x 45 = 45 pp. |
| Design meeting minutes Nov. 1, 2014 – Nov. 30, 2015 | 140 pp. | 1 x 140 = 140 pp. |
| Archived Emails to Design Team Members Aug. 10, 2014 - Nov. 30, 2015 | 1 page per email message | 1 x 45 = 45 pp. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction documents • Closeout documents 208 pp. • Drawings 133 pp. • Requests for information (RFI's) 69 pp. • Schedule 56 pp. • Subcontractors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Accounting forms 9 pp. --Insurance requirements 3 pp. • Punch-list 36 pp. • Geotechnical reports 91 pp. • Special inspections and testing 508 pp. • Environmental surveys 209 pp. | 1322 pp. | 1 x 1322 = 1322 pp. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Power-Point slides • Methods & methodology research 124 pp. • Educational leadership research 37 pp. • School design & construction 243 pp. | 10 research Power-Point slides 40 weeks (January 2016 - October 2016) | 10 x 40 + 3 = 403 403 Power Point slides (6 slides = 1 page) 403 / 6 = 67 pp. |
| USD 305 policy documents May 1, 2014 – Nov. 30, 2015 | ~ 100 pp. per researcher | 1 x 100 = 100 100 pp. |
| Total Pages | | 1718 |

Table 2.1. Data was collected through reflection journals from May 1, 2014 through February 15, 2016. Other forms of data were gathered through a combination of technical reports, research notes, and policy documents.

In addition to the data inventory table, I also created a meeting and personal reflection data table that contains specific dates, meetings, objectives, and personal reflections noted in my

journal. Creating this table of meeting and personal reflection data helped me condense approximately 45 pages of notes from my reflective journals. Table 2.2 represents a few of the total 45 pages of notes, and is provided as only an example of my total notes. The following is a short sampling of the longer Table located in the appendi (see appendix A2).

Table 2.2 Meeting and Personal Reflection Data

| Meeting | | |
|-----------|---|--|
| Date | Objective of Meeting | Personal Reflections |
| 8/20/2014 | Community Design Collaboration | Heavy on the team work, we used sticker dots to vote on very generic items for visioning, broke up into groups, for lunch we made each other's sandwiches—not sure why. Very expensive room: The heavyweights of McCownGordon Inc. and DLR Architecture Firm, City of Salina, USD 305; total of 61 participants. |
| 2/24/15 | USD 305 Board of Education Workshop Meeting | The USD 305 Board of Education approved the Proposed Salina High School South Schematic Design with a 7 to 0 vote. |

Table 2.2. Example of meeting and personal reflection data.

Through the use of field notes to record dates, meeting names, and personal reflections, I was able to identify critical incidents throughout the first year of my socialization to the principalship. Once I identified the salient critical incidents, I created a data analysis chart to help me frame narratives of my personal experience embedded within the culture of school leadership and school design. In the next section, I describe how I took the raw data and discerned their meaning to engage in data analysis and finally identify salient critical incidents.

Data Analysis

During my 938 Qualitative Methods class with Dr. Bhattacharya in the spring of 2016, I learned about Flannagan's (1954) and Fook and Cooper's (2003) definitions of critical incidents.

These researchers provide criteria to use when identifying critical incidents to analyze. While it is true that there is no hard, fast, steady rule for selecting critical incidents, some stories stand out more than others, and the reason for such saliency could be worthy of exploration. Due to the obtuse nature of what can constitute a critical incident I feel it is necessary to devote some ink to this topic. According to Fook and Cooper (2003), critical incidents may relate to issues of communication, knowledge, treatment, culture, relationships, emotions, or beliefs:

A critical incident need not be a dramatic event: usually it is an incident that has significance for the person doing the research. Often an event that makes one stop and think, or one raised questions. It may make a leader question an aspect of one's beliefs, values, attitude or behavior. It is an incident which in some way has had a significant impact on a leader's personal and professional learning (Fook and Cooper, 2003, para. 15).

In the leadership role, a critical incident might include any of these examples:

- an aspect of one's work that went particularly well;
- an aspect of one's work that proved difficult;
- an incident involving conflict, hostility, aggression, or criticism;
- an event that increased a leader's awareness, or challenged a leader's understanding, of social justice issues; or
- an incident that made the leader think differently or caused a leader to question his/her assumptions or beliefs (Fook & Cooper, 2003, and retrieved from <http://www.monash.edu.au/lls/llonline/writing/medicine/reflective/2.xml>).

Medical students and doctors will often call a critical incident one in which the conversation starts off with "Do you remember when you observed patient John Doe?" This

question is usually followed with a reprimand or the threat of a possible lawsuit for failing to accurately diagnose or appropriately treat a patient. As a building school administrator, a critical incident can be something as basic as a supervisor from the district office calling or coming to one's office to visit about an upset parent or complaint. For the purposes of this research, I focused on incidents that made my work as an administrator challenging, causing me to stop and think because a situation proved to be either an important teachable moment in my process of socialization to the principalship, or proved to be a major turning point during the design of the new building.

As a part of my course work, I reviewed my personal reflective journal entries and selected several key events to investigate, uncover, and explore. In the summer of 2016, I took Differentiated Research class with Dr. Bhattacharya and learned how to create a data table that explained the purpose, theory, methodology, key insights, and the *so what* of each critical incident that challenged my beliefs, values, and attitudes during the course of my first year of being principal. Again, such critical incidents in educational leadership frequently involve conflict, hostility, aggression, and criticism; thus, the events are ripe for investigating, uncovering, and exploring. I believe the information I learned during this course was a turning point in helping find my voice. I also feel this course was essential in helping me create the following data chart so that I could begin the process of organizing and unpacking the critical incidents I used to construct a narrative as shown in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2 Flow Chart of Data Iterative Process

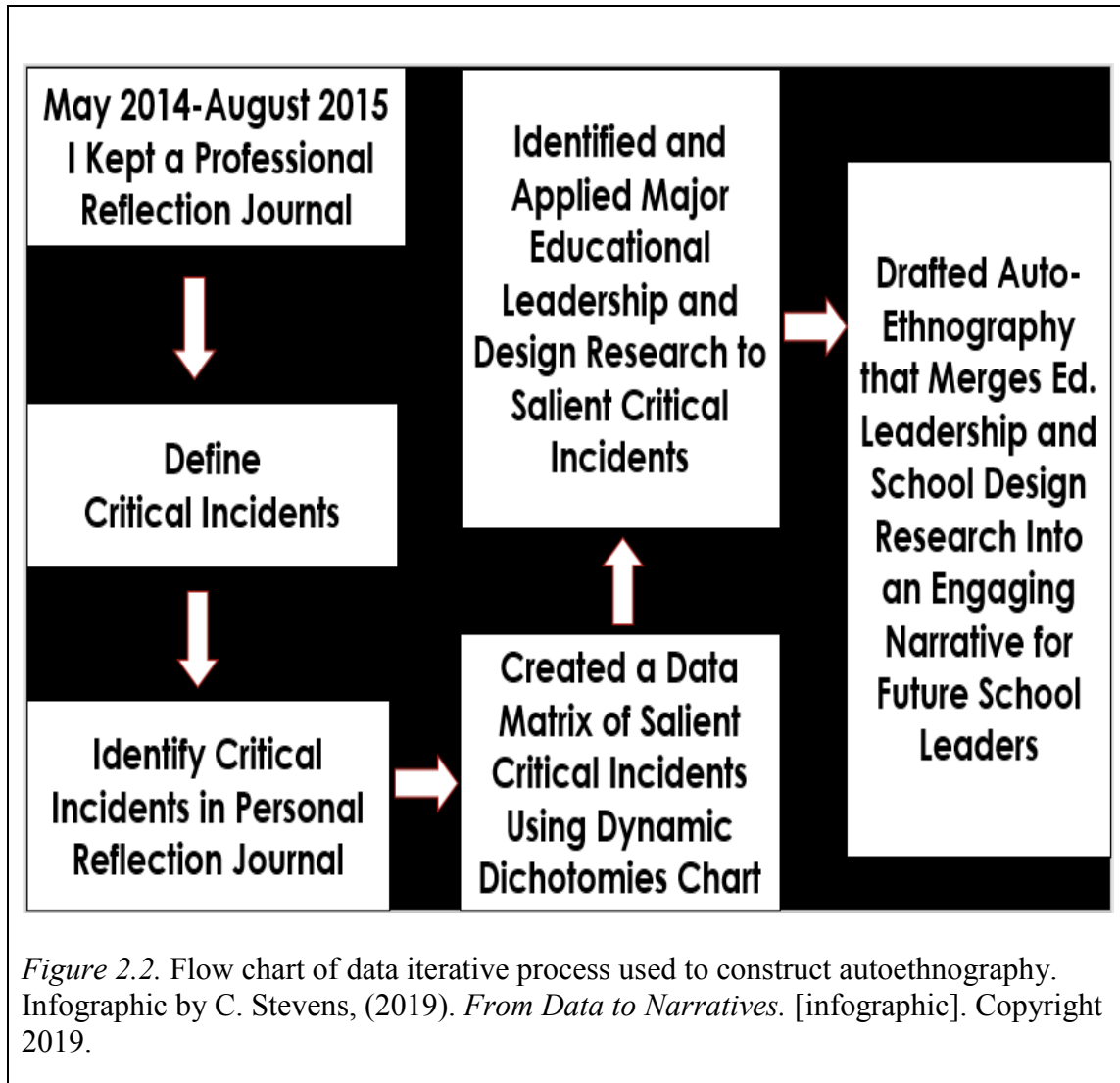


Table 2.3 Data Table of Salient Critical Incidents Identified from Reflective Journal

| Reflection Journal Critical Incident Data Analysis | | | | | |
|--|------------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| Critical Incident | Purpose | Theory | Methodology | Key Insights | So What? |
| Superwoman's Exodus | Practice and Self-Reflection | Villani's 5 Stages of Socialization(2006) | Flanagan's Critical Incident Analysis (1954) | Villani's 5 Stages of Socialization (2006), Suggested that the induction of new principals address the needs of a novice principal as he/she progresses through five social stages: | I had to convince myself I could do the job before I could pursue the job. |
| Covering the Credentials | | | Kim's Narrative Inquiry (2016) | | |
| A Colleague, A Cup of Coffee, A Crucial Credential | | | | 1. Survival 2. Control 3. Stability 4. Educational Leadership 5. Professional Actualization | |
| Interview Day | | | | | |
| Game On | | | | | |

Once I created a data matrix of salient critical incidents identified from my data, I started to recognize examples of how I applied ideas I had learned from my pre-service educational leadership programs at both Emporia State University and Kansas State University to resolve conflicts inherent with being a principal. I found this process reaffirming, as it reminded me of a plethora of concepts I had learned in coursework and professional practice over the past years. Although I have always strived to make good decisions during my professional practice, the chart helped me realize just how much I have learned and grown professionally over time and how little I knew when I was a novice principal. Reflecting on my growth, I began to realize how much existing knowledge I took for granted. Kilty's 1982 study and Burnard's 1983 study (as cited in Parker et al., 1995) distinguished between learning *through* experience and learning *from* experience. Learning *from* experience involves reflecting upon personal experiences as a means of discovering solutions to current problems, based on the knowledge that experience itself does not necessarily lead to learning (Katz, 2009). Learning through experience is letting your circumstance teach you through immediate consequences. This data table was crucial in helping me organize a narrative in the form of an auto-ethnography.

As I began writing my narrative inquiry informed autoethnography using the critical incident technique, I realized that I was analyzing the data because writing is a form of analysis. It is my intention to enlighten and provide a unique look into an area that frequently has too few works, the high school principalship. While explaining the value of an autoethnographic approach, Anzaldúa (2015) wrote:

Using a multidisciplinary approach and a 'storytelling' format, I theorize my own and other's struggles for representation, identity, self-inscription, and creative expressions.

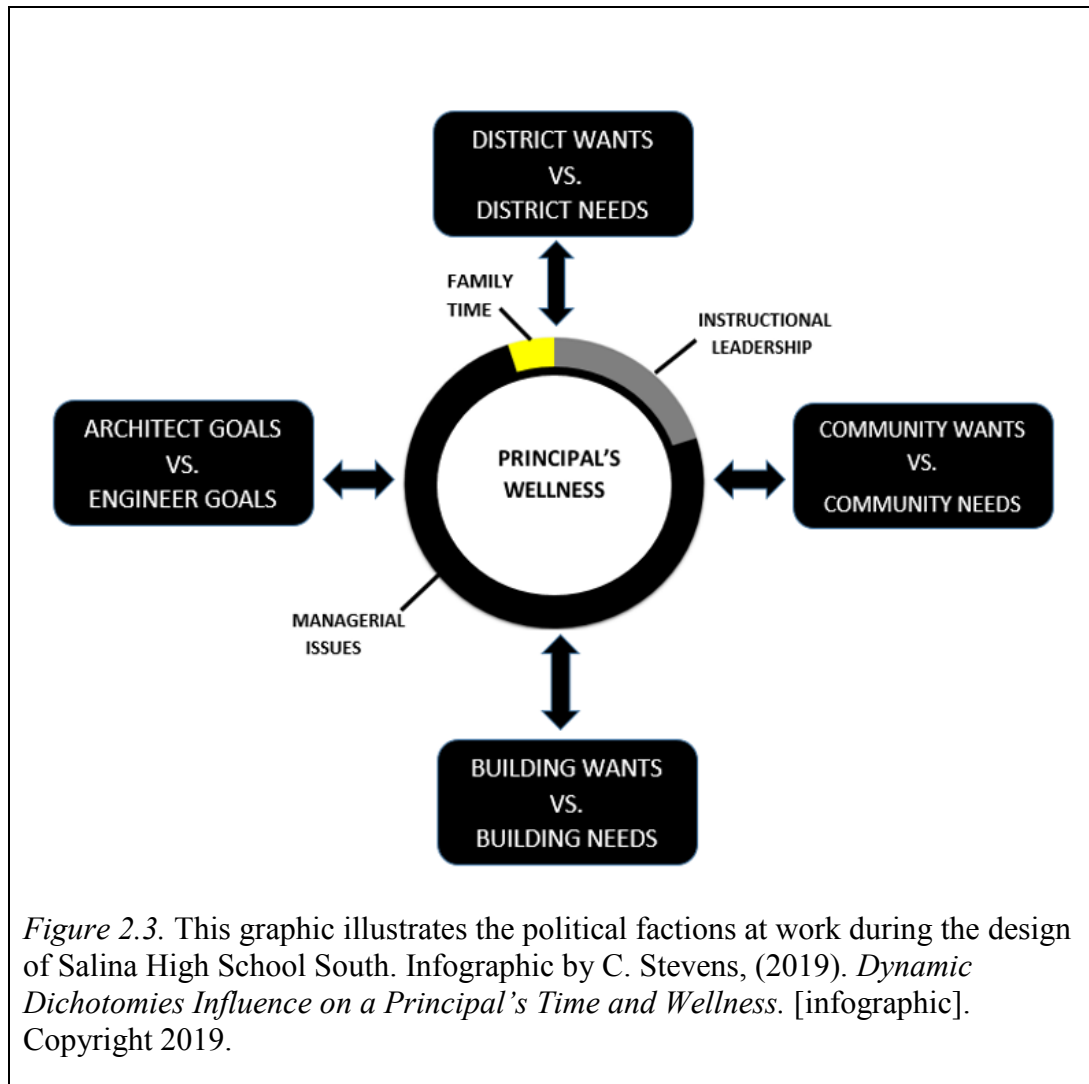
When I ‘speak’ myself in creative and theoretical writings, I constantly shift positions – which means taking into account ideological remolions (whirlwinds), cultural dissonance, and the convergence of competing worlds. (p. 3)

By utilizing a multi-disciplinary approach, my autoethnographic project was influenced heavily by Anzaldúa (2015) in that I am able to generate narratives about past critical incidents I have experienced. Such experiences help readers see a novice leader transitioning through the socialization process of me becoming a principal and how my socialization can negatively affect my personal wellness. Further, I also align my autoethnographic goals with Anzaldúa (2015) who noted, “I am the one who writes and who is being written” (p.3). by answering my research questions and seeking to advance educational research by writing narratives about my socialization and personal wellness, and my transition—consequently, such stories cannot be removed from the whole, the I, the me. Such “self-excavation” as described by Bhattacharya (2016), allows others access to my inner thoughts during a chaotic yet influential time of socialization through my self-excavation of narratives about critical incidents as a novice school administrator. Ellis et al. (2010) explains how researchers use “tenets of autobiography and ethnography to do and write autoethnography. Thus, as a method, *autoethnography is both process and product*” (p. 273). Once such narratives are written, narrative inquiry provides a manner to investigate, uncover, and explore my narratives, thus providing yet even more analytical insights of the socialization process and its influence of my personal wellness.

In doing so, I slowly uncovered a pattern in the data from my personal reflection journal, data table, and narrative. Figure 4 reflects an overview of such patterns of the critical incidents I experienced from August of 2014 through November of 2015 or during my first year, and a during a \$45 million construction project.

Figure 2.3 shows the competing factions that surround and pressure the principal during the design process of a new school, adding to other stressors that influence a principal's personal wellness. The principal must negotiate, balance, and pressure various factions to hopefully achieve a product that reflects the core principles of doing what is best for student learning.

Figure 2.3 Dynamic Dichotomies Influence on a Principal's Time and Wellness



To address the third central question of this study, an analysis of critical leadership incidents gained from my reflective journal entries were identified using the work of Flanagan (1954), Johnson, Aiken, and Steggerd (2005). These critical incidents were through the lens of leadership

writers such as James Barber (1972), Stephen Covey (2004), Thomas Cronin (1998), Michael Fullan (2004), G.E. Hall (2011), Ronald Heifetz (2002), Jia “Grace” Liang (2016), Anthony Muhammad (2009), and J.D. Weast (2001). Each of these writers has a specific framework that guided me as a new principal when encountering the challenges and dynamic dichotomies inherent with being a leader. I applied each author’s contributions to specific critical attributes a leader faces during their first year when encountering transition and change. For example, using Stephen Covey’s (2004) famous Sphere of Influence when sizing up critical incidents like asbestos removal, supporting our design team on what items to focus on during the second rounds of charrettes during the school design process.

In addition to educational leadership research, a new principal embarking on a school design process must also become familiar with major names associated with school design research. This study will explore movers and shakers involved in school design throughout history. Starting as early as 1848 with Henry Barnard, as well as more contemporary school design researchers such as Malcom Seaborne (1971), Christopher Alexander (1975), C. K. Tanner (2009), and Prakash Nair (2005) the reader will be able to piece together how school design has changed over time.

Summary

Chapter Two: An Arch Wherethrough: Circular and Rhizomatic Constructivism introduced constructivism, how reflection and experience connect to one another, and the role of both in this study as it relates to the research purpose, questions, and methodological framework. Next, the chapter offers an unpacking of critical incident analysis, narrative inquiry, and writing as a process and how all were used to identify and create salient narratives that form an

autoethnography of a leader within a school leadership culture. The chapter also provided justification for the need for more autoethnographical studies in educational leadership to help open space for more diverse leaders both as researchers and as practicing principals. This chapter provided an explanation for how this study's data was collected, inventoried, analyzed, and applied to construct narratives for an autoethnography. Finally, the chapter offered an example of how the autoethnography uncovered a pattern from my personal journal, data table, and narrative of critical incidents experienced during the designing of the school from August of 2014 through November of 2015.

Chapter three will present narratives that illustrate my transition from the assistant principalship to the principalship or *Part One: Getting the Job*. Chapter three narratives illustrate examples of how my socialization and personal wellness were influenced during my first-year.

Chapter 3: Entering the Centrifugal Force of Theory and Practice: Getting the Job

Superwoman's Exodus

With the knock on my office door, I knew something was up; Ms. Linn Exline, Salina High School South Principal, rarely stopped by my office. Usually I was the one to interrupt her with a drop-in, either soliciting advice on a student disciplinary issue or offering an unsolicited suggestion to her about a policy related to improving the operation of the school. Something about her seemed different. With a serious look on her face she said, “Curtis, the school district (United School District 305, Salina Public Schools) has offered me a district-level position as the Executive Director of School Improvement and I have decided to take it.” Ms. Exline’s message knocked the breath out of me, and I immediately began to process the potential transitional fallout from her looming Exodus.

It was early May 2014 and I was almost finished with my first year as an assistant principal at Salina High School South, which had—followed a six-year tenure at Salina South Middle School. I was now faced with a critical and uncertain situation. I immediately congratulated her and knew deep within my heart that she would be a wonderful Executive Director of School Improvement; simultaneously, I experienced a sharp pain in the pit of my stomach.

Ms. Exline, someone I always thought of as Superwoman, stood less than five feet one inch, even with standard stock pumps. Her confidence, poise, and professionalism almost always left others feeling as though they could be better. For six years, Ms. Exline moved Salina High School South forward on major initiatives: Literacy First, a building-wide instructional model for reading; Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports, a method by which a school can conduct

instructional triage to provide support to all, some, and a few students based on the level of their need; and Positive Behavior Systems of Support, a program in which students are provided explicit instruction on behavior expectations and routinely receive positive recognition for following such expectations. Linn Exline was the well-known school improvement Superwoman. She helped lead the envisioning, planning, and execution of a successful \$110 million bond referendum. Her critical leadership would most certainly be needed at the district-level, especially in the wake of passing a bond issue—but who would lead South High?

Ms. Exline said the announcement would be made public on the 14th of May, since the board formally grants final approval of all appointments. For an entire week, I told no one, although I knew the faculty and staff of South High were just as perceptive as I was. From that date forward, one thing changed substantially in my life. I no longer experienced dreamless sleep that was worry-free. It was as if a major weight shifted from her shoulders and was placed in front of me as a challenge. Moments after she told me the announcement date, she indicated that she would announce the news to the faculty at a meeting a few hours prior to the school district's press release.

Some assistant principals would be giddy that their boss was leaving, clearing the way for their ascension as the next principal—but not me. My reluctance to move quickly from assistant principal to principal was mainly due to the young age of my daughters and my own lack of confidence about being a principal. Specifically, I did not want to become an absentee parent. Emmalina and Olivia, my daughters, were still toddlers, and I desperately wanted to spend time with them before they started school. Beyond having young children, I always viewed my leadership niche as the person in second command, the man behind the curtain. For six years I loved being the steadfast support of Ms. Beth Morrison, the long-time principal at Salina South

Middle School. The primary reason for leaving the middle school was my fear that Ms. Morrison's retirement was imminent and that I would be facing the situation I now faced at South High. I figured that working with Ms. Exline, far from retirement age, would provide an excellent opportunity to grow professionally while serving as her assistant. When I took the assistant principal position at South High it was with the intention of being Ms. Exline's *support*, not *replacement*. After all, if I wanted to be a principal, I would have remained at South Middle and waited until Ms. Morrison's retirement. Reflecting on what could have been was of no use; I was at South High and Ms. Exline would soon be gone. The anxiety of the unknown pressed my mind into a perpetual race. Who would be the next person in the principal's office in the wake of Superwoman's Exodus.

The Recurrent Nightmare

A loud, rapid, repetitive popping sound rang out from the distance, and a horrifying echo of students screaming could be heard. The school secretary's familiar voice crackled through the speaker of my black Motorola radio: "Code 1 to the commons!" After hearing those words, my heart rate spiked. I immediately halted a classroom observation and sprinted to the sound of gunfire in the central portion of Salina High School South High.

Upon rounding the corner from the 200 pod into the commons, I saw more than 100 students lying in isolated pools of blood, giving the appearance of a scarlet and white mosaic spanning the length of the multi-colored tiled floor. Several students lay motionless, while others tried to plea for help, despite choking on their own blood and gasping desperately for air. Aghast from the carnage, my adrenaline kicked in as I heard more gunshots continue from afar. Out of the corner of my eye, I observed the gunman. He was one of our own students, wielding an automatic assault rifle and chasing a group of terrified kids scrambling from the commons

toward the 400 pod. The shooter was familiar—his teacher expressed concerns to me just yesterday about the dark nature of his writing. I recalled scheduling a meeting with him and a counselor just that morning.

Irrational thinking commenced as the panicked group sought refuge in the 400 pod rather than running to safety through the exterior door just to the left of the pod entrance. Something common in chaos, as panic frequently suspends logic. As the deranged shooter pursued his horrified classmates, I desperately attempted to locate our school resource officer. A sickening feeling set in as I spotted the lifeless body of our school resource officer near the front door. After running over to her corpse, I wanted to break down and cry when I saw that her gun holster was empty.

The next best strategy I could think of was to hurtle over to open the 400 pod door located on the opposite side of the commons in hopes of helping the students escape the gunman's rampage. Attempting to pull the door open, I remembered that this door was locked by teachers as part of our new crisis procedures. Last week, we trained teachers to not open the door during our intruder drills. Gunfire grew in volume and frequency in the distance. The students wailed in horror, "Open the door! Open the door!" The phrase haunted me as I frantically attempted to unlock the door with my key. The sound of screams grew louder as I heard students being gunned down on the other side of the jammed door. My body and mind numbed as shock set in; the key weighed 100 pounds. I gasped for air through a tight chest. Despite the experience of severe shock, I kept trying to open the door, but the frame was bent from hundreds of students pushing against the door on the other side as they attempted to escape the gunfire. The sound of choking, trampled, and wounded students grew louder as I worked unsuccessfully to unlock the door. I screamed on my radio "Help! Help!"

The scene went dark and the gunfire fell silent. I awoke abruptly, safe in my bedroom but yelling, “Help!” Thank God it was just a nightmare. It was 2:30 a.m. on May 4, 2014. My chest tightened; after all it housed my throbbing heart, which was racing at the same speed as the thoughts in my head.

“Are you okay? Are you having a heart attack?” Theresa, my wife, asked in a frightened voice.

My extreme reaction to the nightmare became so disruptive that she was awakened from a deep sleep as well. I could not respond to her question because I was still grasping for the recognition that I was back in reality. While I suffer from sleep apnea, I rarely experienced nightmares when wakened by a hypopnea event—this was a new ordeal.

Once I caught my bearings, I responded, “No . . . I am just having a nightmare.” I then tried to go back to sleep and redeem what existed of the night. After closing my eyes, it dawned on me that the last nightmare I had was at the age of ten. Little did I know that this experience was the first of many sleepless nights, replete with nightmares and racing thoughts. The nightmares became so common that Theresa eventually stopped asking about my heart because she knew what was happening.

From the day Ms. Exline informed me that she would be leaving Salina High School South, I started experiencing nightmares. Almost all of the night terrors took on a commonality in that they were recurrent. Sleep dream researcher Michelle Carr, of the Swansea University Sleep Laboratory, stated that, “recurrent dreams are experienced frequently and repetitively in one individual’s life, whereas typical dream themes refer to the universal or inter-individual commonness of dream themes. . . The circumstances may change, but the same feelings of stress, and the desire to perform well, can trigger the relevant recurrent dream” (2014, p.1). Where was

all of this coming from? I never once experienced nightmares while working as a middle school administrator. Perhaps I had grown too accustomed to leaning on the boss down the hall.

As I reflect back, several attributes stand out to me. I was still in a relatively new position at the high school. There was a need to meet my new boss's high expectations. Being a high school administrator was a higher profile position than serving as a middle school administrator; this is to say that there is far more political pressure at the high school when working through student discipline or other problems. This new stress started impacting my personal wellness. The recurring nightmares were like a feature film playing out my worst fears and anxieties.

The “It” Conversation

The next day, Theresa and I sat outside in the backyard on a faded wooden bench swing watching our 3 and 5-year old daughters, Olivia and Emmalina, enjoy the new play-set we received from a friend of our family. It was Saturday evening, May 10, 2014, the day before every high school administrator's most stressful day—Graduation Day. Kansas typically experiences about six perfect weather days in a year, and this was one of them. A relaxing gentle breeze cooled off the girls' sweating foreheads as they scampered around playing on a perfect 70-degree day.

Theresa broke the conversation by asking, “So, do you want to talk about it?” The fact that Theresa referred to the potential new job as “it” demonstrated the level of disruption the recurrent nightmare caused.

“Talk about what?” I said with a grin. Before she could respond, I realized she was being serious, so I interjected, “I am concerned about whether or not I have the ability to do the job, but I am even more concerned about whether or not a person who is hired this late *can* and *will* do the job the way it needs to be done.”

As Theresa started to respond, Olivia, my younger daughter, ran up and said, “I want to swing too!” and wedged herself in between us on the swing. Emmalina, our older daughter, noticed that Olivia was on the swing, so she also decided to scurry up to the deck and sit with us.

We did not speak about “it” until later that night after the kids had gone to bed. The memory stands out in my mind because it was almost as if the girls were symbolically advocating for me to not apply for the position of head principal so that they could spend more time with me. Unfortunately, this moment was one of the last times I could put “it” second to the girls.

After watching the girls play outside for several hours, we decided to grab some Chinese take-out for dinner. I volunteered to pick up the food since it was just down the street. Imperial Garden, a Chinese restaurant, was located near our home in what used to be a McDonalds. The restaurant’s close proximity to our house constantly tested my will power. As I drove the six short blocks to get our dinner, the low fuel warning on the dashboard of my Ford Ranger Edge pickup lit up. Not wanting to run out of fuel, I decided to stop at a Coastal Mart first and fill up. After making the short walk from the pump to the store to pay for fuel, an addiction from the past resurfaced and dominated my thinking. The familiar yet irregular red and white shaped Marlboro logo displayed above the cashier’s head quickly captured my attention—it was almost as if the logo said to me, “Go ahead Stevens . . . you have earned the right to smoke this week.” The haggard-looking, gray haired, haggard-looking, 60-something, male cashier further assisted my former addiction when he said, “Do you need anything else?”

I responded, “I will take a pack of Marlboro and a lighter.” I would not have asked for cigarettes or a lighter had there been any other customers in the store or if I had known the cashier. I suffered defeat for being weak enough to make such a request after 10 years of being

tobacco-free. The cashier rang up the order, and I hurriedly grabbed both the lighter and pack of cigarettes so I could conceal them, fearful that someone would see me as a “smoker.”

After picking up the Chinese take-out food, I hurried home to provide my hungry girls with supper. The dynamic duo had both worked up a voracious appetite from playing outside. In a quiet voice, so the girls could not hear me, I told Theresa, “I purchased a pack of cigarettes.”

She looked at me with a face that suggested “What the hell are you doing?”

I told her, “It is just to calm me down over the next few weeks. I only purchased one pack”.

Theresa responded in a sarcastic voice saying, “Riiiiiggghhhht!”

Following supper, I decided to go outside in the backyard as our exhausted kids watched a newly released DVD of *Frozen*. I convinced myself that if I heard the *Frozen* song “*Let It Go*” one more time I would go crazy—okay, perhaps—crazier. As I stepped outside on the back porch with a full stomach and a lit cigarette in my right hand, an old familiar feeling of nicotine-induced anticipation set in. The hair on the back of my neck stood up as I pressed the lit cigarette up to my lips and took my first drag since quitting 10 years earlier. The nicotine hit my system hard and I coughed. A brace formed around my brain, melding my racing thoughts and fatigued. That moment was the first time in a long time I could control this new type of stress. Granted, smoking to control stress was stupid—but at that point, I did not care.

After taking a long-awaited hit off of my first cigarette, I scrolled through the contacts in my cell phone. I decided to call a person I had known my entire life, my mother. Before placing the call, I pondered what she would think if she saw me smoking. There were two reasons I did not want to smoke in front of the girls: I did not want them to know their dad smoked, and I certainly did not want them telling grandma—or worse yet, great-grandma Turley. Great-

grandma Turley, then in her 90s, remained passionate about her grandkids not smoking. My kids would surely inform her if they knew what I was smoking. After pressing the word “mom” in my contact list, I listened as the ringing was soon interrupted with my mother’s familiar voice saying, “Hello.”

“Hi mom, it’s me.”

We spoke for what seemed about 10 minutes of just catching up before I finally talked to her about “it.” My mother was a former house-wife who transitioned quickly from living a life similar to that of Donna Reed³ in the 1970s to one as a single working mother who held several jobs just to make ends meet. She almost always proved to be a steadfast source of good advice. She knew me better than I knew myself. After I walked her through all of the issues, concerns, and options she said, “Just apply for it. You will get the job and do great.” I knew she would say something like this; after all, a mother is supposed to be motivational.

I hung up the phone and was ready to talk with Theresa some more. Almost an hour had passed while I had talked to my mother, and the girls finally succumbed to exhaustion brought on by a full stomach of broccoli beef tips submerged in soy sauce and a warm afternoon playing in the backyard. The fact that Emmalina and Olivia could not stay awake to watch *Frozen* spoke volumes about the expenditure of their energy. Theresa and I each took a kid and put them to bed, and we then returned to the backyard deck. The weather had changed considerably from earlier in the evening. A cool front had moved in and the distant clouds started to light up as faint sounds of thunder could be heard in the distance. Theresa bluntly questioned, “So is this job going to drive you back to smoking even before you get it?”

³ Donna Reed is probably most widely known for her work in television, notably as Donna Stone, a middle-class American mother and housewife in the sitcom *The Donna Reed Show* (1958–1966).

“What should I do? Damn it! I thought by going to South High I could help support Ms. Exline enough that she would want to stay. Why did I leave South Middle?” Theresa has always been a good listener. She did not say anything until I finished my rant—a common practice I engaged in to defuse my emotions as I thought aloud.

“Curtis, I will not be the one to tell you to take the job. I will support whatever you decide.” After sitting for what seemed like several minutes in silence, hearing nothing but the zapping noise one hears when bugs meet the Almighty by flying into the blue bug zapper, Theresa broke the stifling silence when she started to chuckle.

Just as I asked Theresa what the joke was, a violent wind emerged and large droplets of rain drenched my glasses. I am always amazed at how quickly Kansas weather can change from a beautiful day to a stormy night. The sky looked as though Armageddon was about to commence. The few droplets of moisture were so large that one could immediately detect the sweet smell of cold rain connecting with hot prairie grass.

A brief detour from our serious conversation was welcome. Theresa attempted to lighten the mood by saying, “The girls must have been tired because they almost always perk up and attempt to belt out words they do not even understand when Elsa starts singing “Let It Go.”

I immediately saw the humor. I agreed, starting to laugh: “They had zero energy if they slept through that part.”

Perhaps it was time for me to follow the Disney character Elsa’s advice. I needed to “Let it go!” There was a demand for leadership and the timing was now. I had no idea whether I would get the job or fall on my face in failure, but at least I knew that I would do it with the support of those who cared about me. As we walked into the house, a severe thunderstorm broke out. It was almost as if I was living a metaphor at that moment. I told Theresa that I was about

95% sure that I was going to apply for the job. I told her, using a play on words and circumstance, “Perhaps this is the calm before the storm.”

Covering the Credentials

Despite months of planning and getting the other hundred details that go into graduation covered, about an hour before the ceremony started, I was informed by Principal Exline that the diploma covers were not at the Bi-Centennial Center for the graduation ceremony, rather, the six boxes of diplomas sat in a storage cabinet over four miles away back at South High. Without the diploma covers being at the Bi-centennial Center, the graduation ceremony would be an exercise in futility. A sickening feeling hit my stomach. In my quest to be so leaf conscious, I allowed myself to become forest dumb. Fortunately, I had enough time to race across town to South High, locate the diplomas in the custodian’s storage area, and speed back to the Bi-centennial Center with the covers right before the ceremony started. If there was something that could go wrong that day, it did—despite my best efforts to plan and execute my first successful high school graduation as the assistant principal in charge of the ceremony.

After the conclusion of a stressful graduation on May 21, 2014, at approximately 7:00 p.m., I walked up to Ms. Exline, who was standing at the back of the student seating section, and said, “Linn, I have decided to apply for the principal position.” I waited for her response. After a brief pause, she looked at me and grinned, suggesting that she was pleased with my decision. “Would you be willing to write a letter of recommendation for me?” I asked, knowing she could have easily declined due to the diploma cover mishap and a dozen other shortcomings she witnessed during my maiden year at the high school.

“Absolutely,” Linn replied.

The day following graduation is a Monday I look forward to throughout the entire school year. The daily pressure of preparing for the ceremony stops. The relentless and annoying senior pranks end. Furthermore, the building contains 300 fewer students, since the seniors get out a week before the other students. The beginning of the end of the school year is typically synonymous with the Monday following Graduation Day—except for 2014. My ongoing thoughts, doubts, worries, and anxiety about what would happen to my family, marriage, career, and Salina High School South during the next several years of dramatic change with the transition of a new principal—whomever that would be—as well as the \$45 million construction project needed to transform the school building from an open-concept school to a more traditional building eradicated any feelings of peace.

A Colleague, a Cup of Coffee, a Crucial Credential

Making the transition from “I think I can do the job” to “I know I can do the job” still did not mean I actually *had* the job. After being in the district for approximately 12 years, ruffling the feathers of a few parents, teachers, and colleagues—both at the building and district level—I found myself asking if I really thought I had a shot at this. Most administrators of a school with more than 1,000 plus students begin in smaller school districts and transition through the strategic stepping stone positions. Is it truly possible to move into a head principal position with only seven years of middle school and high school assistant principal experience? The questions continued, one after another. With so many questions running through my head, I decided to call upon my former supervisor and one of my most trusted administrative colleagues, Beth Morrison, the lady who gave me my first chance at being an administrator.

Despite having an extremely busy schedule, Ms. Morrison was able to make time to meet me for coffee at Mokas, one of my favorite coffee shops in Salina, Kansas. Around 3:00 p.m. on

May 24th, Beth and I sat at a mahogany table in the back of Mokas, away from other customers, each enjoying our favorite beverage of choice—anything with caffeine. Over the past few years I had acquired a particular taste for Highlander Grog, a golden blend of coffee that consists of a non-alcoholic flavor of rum coalesced with butterscotch, caramel, and vanilla flavors. The vice is expensive and addicting, yet it is effective at calming me down. There should be a warning on this type of coffee similar to what exists on a pack of cigarettes; moreover, the dim, calm ambience Mokas provided could be just as addicting. I called the coffee shop a Bohemian sanctuary; it exhibited earth-tone colors, soft jazz music, and a fresh baked pastry aroma. Mokas is Salina, Kansas's version of New Orleans Cafe Du Monde.

Beth Morrison was a 60-year-old veteran educator, mother of two sons who are about my age, a once-divorced and now-remarried wife of a cattleman, and a woman who worked her way from custodian to principal between the mid-1980s and the present—and she is one of the best administrators I have ever worked for. She has an uncanny ability to cut to the chase—without coming off as arrogant or rude. In a way, she is the closest thing I have as an administrator mentor who is the same age and possesses the same generational wisdom of my mother. I opened our crucial conversation with the following question: “Beth, what are the barriers I need to overcome with the board office to secure the principal’s position at South High?”

With any other administrator, I would have to preface the conversation with, “I need you to be blunt with me and not sugar-coat anything.” Not with Beth Morrison. She was, is, and always will be a straight-shooter. Beth bluntly lamented, “You need to make sure they understand that you can take a firm stand and make a decision.” Her words caught me off guard. I figured the board office was worried about my inexperience, my young age, and the fact that I worked previously at the school as a teacher, but certainly not my inability to take a firm stand

and make a difficult decision. Remembering that I asked for her steadfast opinion and attempting to not sound defensive, I followed up with another question: “Why do you think the board office feels I am not able to take a firm stand and make a decision?”

Beth informed me of something to which I had developed a blind spot: “During many of our administrative meetings over the past six years, some of the district administrators have perceived you to be too analytical.” Upon hearing her words, I was offended, stunned, and flattered, simultaneously. I have never heard someone refer to me as being too analytical. The more I thought about her comment, the more convinced I was that perhaps I asked too many questions and played devil’s advocate too often in open sessions. Organizations seem to have their own manner of rewarding success, and perhaps some of the district executive directors expected all insubordinates to follow like the grunts in Lord Alfred Tennyson’s poem “The Charge of the Light Brigade” or Aaron Sorkin’s fictitious character Col. Nathan R. Jessup in the movie *A Few Good Men*—where “we follow orders or people die . . .it is as simple as that” (Scheinman & Reiner, 1992). Okay the more my mind thought through examples attempting to internally defend my actions and paint the district brass as the leaders of the dark side, the more I wondered if it were possible that they are right? Perhaps I am too analytical. There is no worse feeling than coming to the realization that it might actually be possible that you are wrong! If I had a video of this moment, I imagine my face turned beet red.

I followed up with another question; “What do you advise I do to overcome that perception?”

Beth paused for a while. She has always been one to ponder a question and think about what she is going to say prior to saying it. She replied, “Curtis, they need to know that you can

make an unpopular decision and not waiver when the heat gets to be too much. You need to prove to them that you can handle the pressures of the job.”

After listening to what Beth had to say, I reassured her: “I can certainly do that; in all honesty, I am shocked they think I cannot make a decision and stand by it. Have they failed to see over the past eight years that I have been willing to confront mediocre teachers, reprimand and non-renew educators who are not good for kids, suspend a student for long-term who jeopardizes the safety of others? Where have they been for the last eight years?” I questioned myself to the point of seeming too analytical and defensive. Truth be told, I doubted what I said to Beth immediately after I said it. I have no clue whether or not I can handle the pressures of the job. Who really knows for sure if they can do something, at least until they try to do it?

Beth calmly said, “In this job, it is easy to not see all of the deeds one does from the outside looking in.”

She always had a way of getting me to refocus. After talking with Beth, I was relaxed. It was helpful to know that the concerns I thought the board office had regarding me becoming principal were not really on the table— or if they were, they— did not appear as barriers to trusted confidants.

“Beth, I notified Linn of my interest in pursuing this position. Outside of my family, you are the only other person that now knows. Would you be willing to write a letter of recommendation for me?” I asked.

Beth replied in a supporting voice: “Certainly. I will frame the letter truthfully and from the perspective that you can make unpopular decisions and stand by them. As I know with certainty that you have the ability to do this.” Relieved at her answer, I knew that her

recommendation would be just as critical as Linn Exline's letter when convincing the district brass and the board of education to hire me.

The Elder of 305

If there ever was an elder statesmen of USD 305, that person would be Dr. George Troutfetter. He stood over six feet and seven inches tall, and sported a full head of gray hair that shined as if it had been dyed with wisdom and experience. A gentle giant, yet slightly uncoordinated, he exhibited an uncanny ability to remain calm and solution-oriented even during the most hostile situations. Some students described him as fatherly—a perfect mix of Ward Cleaver and Mr. Rogers, for multiple generations of youth in Salina. He mastered the perfect balance of being able to fit into any crowd despite towering above everyone else. It was common to see him leaning down to talk to an emotionally escalated student or gesturing his hands in a waving manner, making a circle, as he mentored a student. He created hope and emphasized effort with almost every conversation. Over the years, I spent countless hours seeking his advice when he served as my supervisor and mentor. Ultimately, after we stopped working together, we became friends.

Despite having the credentials to serve as a lead principal, superintendent, and college professor, he spent his entire career working as an assistant principal at Salina High School South. He most likely served as a disciplinarian/mentor for 50% of Salina, KS, over the past 30 years. Dr. Troutfetter was also the man who, 15 years earlier, hired me right out of college as a first-year teacher. I had the daunting task of attempting to replace him as the assistant principal just one year earlier in 2013. Beyond being the elder of 305, he was also the workhorse of 305—the man did quite a bit over the years.

In addition to working as a supervisor and mentor, following his retirement, Dr. Troutfetter also became a friend of my family. On numerous occasions, he invited my family out to his farmhouse just south-east of Salina. His 15 acres were replete with livestock, mainly horses and donkeys. Being at his farm reminded me of my childhood and grandparent's ranch. The one major aspect I missed about home was our desolate family farm where I spent my adolescent summers in the arid wind of western Kansas. City living was a compromise I made to remain married, so any chance I could get to reconnect with countryside was always pursued and enjoyed.

Perhaps another perk of having Dr. Troutfetter as a mentor and friend was going sailing with him on his co-owned sailboat out at Lake Milford. On multiple occasions, our families took quick trips over to the Thunderbird Marina and breezed across the lake drinking cold long-necks as we solved the problems of education—or so we thought. My favorite Dr. Troutfetter advice for being an administrator was when he would say “Curtis, you have to see everything, ignore a lot, and fix a few but important things.” He had a realistic view on what education reform could and could not achieve. I knew I had to pay him a visit to secure my third and final crucial reference.

The dust rolled behind my grey 2004 Ford Ranger pickup as I barreled down the dirt road drive that led to Dr. Troutfetter's house. Two large Labrador retrievers barked as my pickup pulled to a stop just outside the newly painted gray house with white trim. A tall lanky figure wearing a straw hat and faded blue denim overalls, carried a white five-gallon bucket from the barn toward the half-assembled deck.

I climbed out of my truck and walked over to the construction site, where it appeared Dr. Troutfetter had toiled the last few days. “Hello! It looks as though you have been keeping busy,” I observed as I approached Dr. Troutfetter.

“Just a little bit.” He sighed with a smile as he sat down what used to be a Blue Bunny ice cream bucket that he was now using to hold brown deck stain. He then pulled off his work gloves and reached out to shake my hand. The two large black Labrador dogs that diligently chased my pickup must have resigned themselves to the fact that I was not an intruder, so they scampered off to pursue some squirrels in the distance. I could tell by the puzzled reaction of Dr. Troutfetter’s face that he was wondering why I was there without advanced notice, as he knew drop-ins were uncustomary for me.

After he explained the details of the deck construction and reflected on how he seems busier now than he was when working, he asked, “What brings you out here at this time of day?” He knew all too well that it was not a common ritual for a school administrator to leave the office before 3:00 p.m.

Just as I started to respond, his cell phone rang and he said, “Oh, hang on a second, this is Marcia.” Marcia, his wife of 40-plus years, was a physical education teacher at Salina South Middle School. She and I worked together for six years prior to my departure at the middle school. As he spoke to his wife on the phone about the items he needed her to bring home, I gazed out across the countryside, wondering whether or not I would feel less stress living on a farm with all of the chores, mowing, and ...

“Curtis, what are you staring at?” Dr. Troutfetter asked.

“Oh, nothing, I was just taking in your beautiful estate!” I responded. “Well, Dr. Troutfetter, I do not mean to take up all of your time—I just wanted to let you know that I am

applying to be the next principal of Salina High School South, and I am here to see if you would be willing to write a letter of recommendation for me.”

“So, you are going to do it!” he responded in an excited manner. “Of course. Of course I will write you a letter.”

Relieved, I said “Thank you for your help and all that you have done for me over the years.” Dr. Troutfetter’s letter of reference would be essential to getting to the interview. He possessed an enormous amount of credibility with the district brass, as well as various members of the board of education—mainly the retired teacher board members who, at one time or another, had worked under his supervision at Salina High School South

Not wanting to waste any more of his time, I let Dr. Troutfetter, the Elder of USD 305, get back to work and made my way to the school. A tremendous amount of paper-work lay on my desk, and I needed to get the end of the year reports submitted to the board office as soon as possible. I also needed to get my online application and resume submitted.

Getting the Job

USD 305 Executive Director of Human Resources Dr. Kiltz’s voice echoed on my old flip cellphone on June 2, 2014, around 2:00 p.m. when she called to schedule an interview for the South High principalship. I responded to Dr. Kiltz with a brief statement: “I will be there.” The conversation ended, and thus began yet another marathon necessitating preparation. On Friday, June 6, 2014, I would interview at 1:00 p.m. for the principalship of Salina High School South.

Immediately after ending the call—I walked over to my cramped closet and assessed my Wal-mart fashion wardrobe. After several seconds of looking up and down the closet, it dawned on me that every suit I owned was purchased either for a funeral or a job interview. I possessed three formal suits: two charcoal-colored ones and a brown one. I thought to myself that perhaps

it was time to go shopping for yet another suit. As stupid as it sounds, I actually scoured the internet to see if there is a preferred color of suit when it comes to getting hired. *Business Insider*, an Internet business site, touted that the best color was blue because it “exudes trust and confidence” (Giang, 2013, p. 1). I needed every advantage I could find.

A few hours later, I was browsing the men’s apparel section at Kohl’s, desperately trying to find a suit that did not require me to adjust the escrow on my house. I was completely baffled when I examined J.C. Penny’s selection. I could either look like one of the Village People ⁴ or a mortician—those were my options. I started feeling much more relieved as I examined prices within the \$100-\$200 range. Hoping to keep it conservative, I settled on a suit that exhibited the colors of gray and blue.

Handling the technical aspects prior to the interview was the easy part; anyone can apply, schedule the interview, find a suit and tie that works—but the real challenge was navigating the interview successfully. What would the interview panel ask me? I had no idea. I pored over former interview questions I had recorded in my journal after interviewing for the assistant principal position at Salina South Middle School back in 2007. I brushed up my answers, but made certain to stick to who I fundamentally was as a person, knowing all too well that a zebra cannot change its stripes. Several areas I would be green on included creating a master schedule, designing a new building, and handling a building budget that was more than \$130,000 per year. Over the next few days, I focused my preparation efforts on these topics. I also spent some time drafting out a vision for where I wanted Salina High School South to be in five years. Preparing for an interview is a bit like preparing for the unknown.

⁴ The Village People is an American disco group known for their on-stage costumes depicting American masculine cultural stereotypes as well as their catchy tunes and suggestive lyrics.

Interview Day: Game On

I am always amazed at the stillness and silence of a school district office. The familiar aroma of industrial-strength citrus cleaner dominates the ambience of a shiny, polished floor that mimics an upscale museum where children are to be seen but not heard. It was 12:45 p.m. on June 6, 2014, and I waited patiently in the L-section lobby of the Salina Public Schools district office. My racing thoughts commenced as I tried to focus my mind on anything other than the interview. The UPS delivery man interrupted the monotony when he dropped off what appeared to be books for the upcoming school year's staff development sessions. He immediately gained my respect and admiration. Since working as a hired farm-hand at a feedlot in Western Kansas during my teenage years, I had admired people who work in a job that requires physical dexterity. I especially envied how they got to go home at the end of the day knowing that their job was done. Perhaps I entered the wrong line of work.

Chris, the front receptionist, asked, "Curtis, can I get you something to drink?" I am not one hundred percent certain, but I would guess that Chris handed out more beverages to guests than any other employee in the district. She was exactly the type of person you wanted greeting visitors in a building that can be frequently stereotyped as cold and formal. She always exhibited a professional decorum and a smile. No one really knew for sure how tall she was because she was always sitting behind the front reception counter. Moreover, I am not sure I have ever seen her without a phone headset on.

"No, thank you," I responded.

"They will be ready for you in just a few short minutes," Chris informed me. She could tell I was nervous. I appreciated her willingness to attempt to set me at ease. She had the perfect

balance of being friendly while still remaining productive in her assigned duties despite constant interruptions throughout her day.

As I sat there with my legs crossed reviewing my prepared notes, a sudden streak of panic set in as I examined my right foot. I noticed that the shoes I wore did not match my suit. My pulse skyrocketed as I a hot flash of red splashed across my face. After taking a closer look, I discovered that not only did my shoes not match my suit, but my right shoe did not match my left shoe! How in the world did that happen? I planned everything so carefully and was meticulous about my selection of attire. A flashback in my mind recalled grabbing the shoes from the dark closet. One was black and one was brown. Holy Toledo! One of the crosses I bear is being colorblind. I could distinctly tell that these two shoes were not the same color because the external decorative patterns contrasted with one another.

The receptionist's phone buzzed. She answered it and said, "Curtis, they are ready for you." At that moment, a scene from *Shawshank Redemption* popped into my head almost as a calming effect. Why? I have no idea. The specific scene that flashed in my mind consisted of actor Morgan Freeman, cast as Red, narrating about Tim Robbins character Andy Dufresne, when he returned to his cell wearing the warden's shoes, "I mean seriously, how often do you really look at a man's shoes?" (Marvin & Darabont, 1994). I thought to myself, "If they are so focused that they see my shoes, then I never had a chance at getting the job anyway." I stood up praying that my blushed face would subside, and then I walked toward the corner conference room.

The building interview team consisted of South High faculty members Jason Hooper, Kurt Wolf, Gary Seibel, Ericka Cain, Julie Falcon, and Gary White, and they conducted the first part of the interview process. I knew all of these professionals from being a teacher and assistant

principal at Salina High School South. Perhaps my familiarity with them and their knowledge of me made this portion of the interview process the most nerve-racking. The interview consisted of approximately 25 questions; some were philosophical in nature, while others dealt with scenarios related to typical managerial and instructional challenges a principal commonly faces. Perhaps the funniest moment in the interview came when a worst-case scenario situation was asked: A fight breaks out in the commons area, an angry parent is in the lobby waiting to speak to you about his son's grade, the superintendent is on line two and is demanding to talk to you immediately, and a classroom across the building is unattended because the teacher forgot to call in sick; what do you do? I started off my answer with the line, "Other than that Mrs. Lincoln, how did you like the play?" The room erupted with laughter. I quickly followed the one-liner with a serious response. Since I like to answer with metaphors, the other running joke in the interview was that I would be limited to no more than four metaphors. Although the interview started out nerve-racking, it concluded with a mixture of seriousness and lightheartedness. To this day, I have no idea where I ranked in their deliberations. As I left the room, Kurt Wolf, the veteran SHSS art instructor, handed me his name placard as a souvenir from the interview.

Following the interview, Chris, the kindhearted receptionist, escorted me down the hall and around the corner to return back to the L-shaped lobby. She inquired as to whether or not I needed a drink, to which I once again replied, "No thank you." As I sat there waiting and looking at my mismatched shoes, I wondered whether anyone else had noticed. With my nerves still on edge, I started fidgeting with Mr. Wolf's placard and noticed that he left a message on it.

Opening the placard to read the message, I heard the squeaky door leading into the Harold Schmidt Conference Room unlatch. A tall white male dressed in a blue suit walked out of the door and went down the hall with the superintendent's secretary, Deborah Howard. She told

him to stand next to the oak style paneled wall at the end of the corridor so she could take his picture. My eyes were drawn to the stranger. He certainly looked the part. I wondered to myself whether a decision had already been made. Are they taking his picture as the next presumptuous principal of Salina High School South? Perhaps someone on the interview committee did see my mismatched shoes and had already decided to go with the other candidate, thinking that if I cannot match my shoes, then how could I be expected to manage a building? He must have read the same *Business Insider* magazine regarding the color of blue.

The gentleman walked towards me as I continued to review my notes while checking to see if his shoes matched. As he walked by, I looked up and said, "Hello." Although my voice was loud enough for him to hear, he ignored me and continued out the door. "Hmm," I thought to myself, "this could be interesting," especially if he becomes my next boss. I watched as he walked out the front doors toward his vehicle and drove off. Most likely, he was heading to a tour of Salina High School South, hosted by SHSS Athletic Director Ken Stonebraker. A few more minutes passed and my mind started to race yet again. I recalled Mr. Wolf's placard and quickly pulled it out one more time to read what Kurt Wolf had written. All of the excitement of seeing the competition pulled me away from the task that had previously piqued my interest. It is amazing what a soul will do in its quest to seek preliminary feedback from an interview team.

Once again, I opened the placard and started to read, when I heard Chris say, "Curtis, they are now ready for you." Despite my desire to read the note, business pulled me away from the message. I would have to wait for the words of wisdom penned by Kurt Wolf until after the second portion of the interview. Standing up to walk into the meeting, I was reminded of the third cup of coffee I had consumed an hour ago as my bladder ached with pressure seeking relief. Why I failed to use the restroom in between interviews, I will never know. It was far too late

now. As calmly as I could, and despite having a full bladder and mismatched shoes, I walked into the room to face a panel of individuals who, in the next few hours, would determine the direction of my career and life.

The Harold Schmidt Executive Conference Room exhibited an uncanny ambience. Seven years earlier, I interviewed in the same room for the assistant principal position at Salina South Middle School. Horror stories about the room being the site of teacher termination meetings persisted through teacher lounge lore. This conference room housed board-level executive sessions and the superintendent's weekly cabinet meetings. The expenditure of money, the implementation and cessation of "revolutionary" programs, hiring and firing of employees—all such critical decisions haunted the walls of the room. I sensed the spirit of predecessors who were educational movers and shakers, specifically, Harold Schmidt and Dr. Marilyn Green, as I took the seat at the end of the mahogany table surrounded by Superintendent Bill Hall, Human Resource Director Dr. Kiltz, newly appointed School Improvement Director and former supervisor Linn Exline, Central High School Principal Shanna Rector, and two board members Mary Ann Trickle and Nedra Elbl.

The temperature of the room was equivalent to that of a meat locker. It was cute that they offered me a bottle of water. What I really needed was a restroom pass with no questions asked. Over the next hour and a half, I was peppered with questions about my philosophy of education, pet peeves, managerial skills, instruction, vision for South High, and past experiences. I paced my answers so that I did not spend too long on each question, provided equal lines of vision to my interviewers, and sat up straight as an arrow. The final question asked was, "Why should we hire you over all of the other candidates?"

I responded: “I care about the students at South High. This was where I started my teaching career as an educator. South High will be the school my daughters will attend. It will hopefully be the school I retire from. I know the students, parents, and teachers. Such knowledge will be crucial during the tumultuous change that will transpire in the next several years.”

The event was over. I stood up and thanked everyone for allowing me the opportunity to interview. After numerous handshakes, I exited the freezing conference room. While walking down the hallway leading to the front lobby, William Hall, USD 305 superintendent, stopped me and talked briefly about the dramatic change that would be taking place in the next few months: “Curtis, it is going to get extremely busy in the next few months.” He never looked at me as he said this, nor did he say I had the job; rather, he gazed out the windows overlooking the adjacent and desolate Indian Rock Park. That particular afternoon was a sweltering 107 degrees. The park was void of visitors due to those last holdouts seeking refuge in a much cooler venue. “Thank you for interviewing, Curtis,” Mr. Hall said as I walked into heat so stifling that it caused my glasses to fog up.

“Thank you for the opportunity and consideration,” I said. Mr. Hall quickly turned around and vanished back down the corridor leading to the room of deliberation determining my fate. I walked out to my 2004 Ford Ranger Edge and wondered whether or not I would get a third-degree burn upon touching the handle to open the door. I quickly removed my tie, pondered how much sweat could be rinsed out of my collar, and then laid the drenched tie on the passenger seat of my pickup truck. I decided to drive over to Lakewood Park, which possessed a primitive restroom that I so desperately needed. After stepping outside what could only be loosely defined as a restroom, I located a secluded shady place where I knew I could devour one of the remaining Marlboros from the “last” pack I purchased a few short days earlier.

Everything more than a thousand feet away appeared as a fuzzy mirage as I sat in a shady spot at Lakewood Park on a green metallic bench that was badly in need of another coat of paint. The dog days of summer swept the park clean of visitors. Not a soul was willing to challenge the spiked mercury and sultry air, so the coast was clear. I quickly lit up one of the remaining cigarettes of the pack that I promised my wife would be my last. Once the nicotine hit my system, my chest became tight and my brain relaxed. The feeling reminded me how much I missed smoking. I longed for the breaking news report that the researchers had gotten it wrong and that smoking does not cause cancer—until then. My ears burned not only from the exhausting heat, but also because I knew a group of individuals at that very moment was scrutinizing my answers, debating my experience, and wondering whether or not I could handle the job. I think my first lit cigarette took only two drags. While swatting a fly from my face, I noticed the remaining lit portion was extremely close to the filter. I wondered why flies were so useless; if only I could be a fly on the wall of the Harold Schmidt Conference Room. I knew the wait was going to kill me. What did they think about me? Who would be the new principal? How would their decision ultimately change my life?

Not wanting to endure another second of heat, I crushed out my spent cigarette and tossed it away in the rusty metal trash can. Upon climbing into my pickup, I remembered Mr. Wolf's gift—the note I tried to read prior to being interrupted two previous times. What did it say? As giddy as a kid on Christmas morning, I reached over to retrieve the placard and read its contents. After all, this was the only preliminary feedback I had access to. As I opened the placard, my cell phone rang. Had they reached a decision already? I quickly grabbed my cell phone from its holster and answered it: "Hello, this is Tim Huleskamp and I am calling to let you know that

there will be an important town-hall meeting tonight on Smoky Hills Television ...[click].”

Frustrated by receiving an automated call from a politician, I quickly returned to business.

Before anyone else could interrupt me, I opened the placard and finally read what Mr. Wolf wrote. I smiled. It was 4:30 p.m. and I was exhausted; it was time to go home.

My wife had left me a note on the kitchen table that simply said, “I know you did great! I will see you later tonight. We are at baton [twirling] practice.” Starting to feel the legacy of skipping lunch due to being too nervous to eat, I opened the refrigerator and noticed we were long overdue for a trip to the grocery store. Persistent in my quest for food, I started scavenging the pantry to see if I could locate something simple and quick to cook and divert my mind from the “waiting game.” Earlier, when I left the board office, I started a timer using an app on my cell phone. The timer read 45 minutes flat. What if they offered the position to another candidate and the other candidate needed time to think about the offer. Being Friday, I would have to wait until next week to learn who accepted the job? Ugh, I hate this game of waiting. The pantry was not much more promising than the refrigerator. Lord only knows how old the Great Value beef and macaroni can that jumped the railing of the shelf and lay like a forgotten culinary casualty in a disorganized pantry could actually be. As I wondered whether or not to even attempt to decipher the expiration date, written in a text that would rival Sanscrit, my phone rang. Frantically, I grabbed the device and hit the answer icon. “Hello!”

“Hello, how have you been?” said the unfamiliar voice.

“Fine, how are you?” I asked, still unclear as to who had called me.

“You know who this is right?” the voice asked with a laugh. Immediately, I knew it was Michael.”

“Well of course I know who this is.” I lied in a quest to protect his feelings. Michael and I became friends over the past few years through our wives. His wife was Brenda and she worked at the Salina United Way. My wife, Theresa, organized the Back to School Fair, an event sponsored by United Way where backpacks and school supplies were distributed to children in need. His name did not register immediately because we only interacted about four times a year. My mind tried to create a nexus between Michael and the district’s Human Resource Office, and it was not sinking in.

“Hey Michael, how are you doing?” I always wondered why people ask this question. Do they really care, or is it just a lame way to break the ice? Michael did not choose to make small talk; in fact, he got right down to business—one of his attributes that I had always appreciated.

“Brenda and I thought we would see if you all wanted to go to Pizza Hut tonight.” Michael had some type of fascination with Pizza Hut. I, too, liked Pizza Hut growing up, but as an adult, I found that my taste-buds had become much more sophisticated, causing me to reject processed cheese and sodium-infested foods.

Not wanting to engage in small talk due to my hunger, I said, “Theresa and the girls are not able to go, but I can. When do you want to meet?”

“Let’s go now,” Michael said.

“I’ll see you at the Pizza Hut on Ohio St. in 10 minutes,” I responded.

“Sounds good—we will see you there!” Michael stated as he hung up. He only recently purchased a new cell phone that had texting capabilities. If there were a *Guinness Book* record for the person with the oldest cell phone, I am more than certain that Michael would have won. He truly did have an old cell phone—a Nokia from the 90s. The plan only cost him \$8 a month. Michael worked as a graphic designer and was the person my wife replaced at the *Salina Journal*

when he left to pursue his own business. He owned a small estate on Country Club Drive east of Salina in a plush area of small horse barns and golf cart trails that spanned across the rolling hills of green prairie grass. Old technology was his specialty. Michael still used one of the Macintosh computers which was, like his phone, also from the late 90s.

Walking across the living room toward the front door, I remembered that I was still wearing those mismatched shoes. Not wanting to look like I just left a job interview, and feeling extremely uncomfortable in my clothes, I quickly changed into my cargo shorts and a polo shirt. I laughed to myself as I placed my mismatched shoes next to their partners. My feet were sweating, so I decided to wear my Gucci imitation sandals that I purchased a year earlier at Payless.

The time was 5:00 p.m. and I was attempting to navigate one of the most treacherous traffic bottlenecks in Salina, Kansas—the dreaded Ohio and Crawford St. intersection. One could see cars five blocks away from the infamous traffic trap. Unfortunately, circumventing the complex network of cul-de-sac and median strips that run adjacent to the critical juncture point of Ohio and Crawford was impossible. The only quick way through the traffic conundrum was to walk. Sitting in traffic frequently is a trigger causing me to lose my temper, especially when you have some gracious yet misguided soul sitting in the car in front of you allowing all of the other assertive drivers to turn off of side-streets onto Ohio! “Go!” I yelled, knowing full well no one else could hear me and attempting to be tactful by resisting the urge to honk my horn.

Upon arriving at the Pizza Hut some twenty minutes later (despite it typically only being a five-minute trip), I made my way over to the table cloaked with the trademark checkered red and white cloth. I exchanged courtesies with Michael and Brenda and then we ordered. Our

conversation covered everything but the one topic that was weighing heavily on my mind. Little did they know that just one hour and thirty minutes prior to this meeting, I finished an interview that might heavily impact my life. On second thought, perhaps the two of them did know and that was why they asked me to dinner.

Right out of the gate, Brenda asked, “Well Curtis, what is going to happen at South High now that Ms. Exline is leaving?” Despite her best efforts to appear nonchalant, her inquiry seemed as though she were indirectly asking me whether or not I applied for the job.

With a blunt tone, Michael asked, “Yeah Curtis...are you going to be the next head honcho?”

I hate moments like this. Tell the curious ones that I applied, and then look like a loser when I do not get the job—or tell them I did not apply, and then I am a liar if I end up getting the job. Why didn’t I just stay at home and eat the expired Great Value beef and macaroni? Donning the best poker face I could muster, I honestly replied, “I am not sure what is going to happen.” Wishing to change the subject fast, I stated, “But I do know one thing—I am starving!” I then asked Michael if he was staying busy with clients.

Nothing diverts one’s attention more than shifting the focus of a conversation onto the other person and his or her personal success. Just as Michael was informing me of his latest projects, my phone rang: “Sorry guys. I need to take this.” I looked down at the phone and the Caller-ID said Salina Public Schools. I thought to myself, “Well, this is it.” I retreated away from the table so I could hear and be able to talk discretely. It was 6:00 p.m., exactly two hours since I finished my interview. “Hello” I answered.

“Hello, Curtis. This is Dr. Kiltz and I am calling to offer you the position as the next principal of Salina High School South. Are you willing to accept the offer?” At that point in

time, something in me took over, and without hesitation I accepted the offer. The conversation was over just as quickly as it started.

I returned to the table and continued dinner with Brenda and Michael. It was at that moment that guilt set in and I realized something—nobody from my family was around me, yet I just made a decision that would have a major impact on them. After I sat back down at the table, Michael's face exhibited a curious smile and he joked, "Well, it sounds as though the administrator had an important phone call."

I laughed it off, saying "Someone from work had a question that I needed to answer. Sorry for the interruption." After I ate a few bites of pizza, the food did not seem as attractive as I thought it was when I was starving back at the house. My stomach ached. The room began to spin a little. Looking at the food on the table made me feel nauseated. I excused myself to use the restroom while wondering what in the world was going on with me. Had I already gotten food poisoning? I have never experienced a situation where I became ill to my stomach so quickly. After locking the restroom door, I pulled a paper towel from the dispenser and dampened it with cold water. I placed the cool, wet paper towel on my forehead for about 15 seconds. Looking in the mirror, I saw how dark the bags were under my eyes and thought to myself that—this is only the beginning.

Feeling my stomach settle down, I decided to go back out and finish dinner with the best composure I could muscle up. Fortunately for me, Michael and Brenda were fast eaters. I asked the waitress for my bill and a box for the barely touched pizza. After 10 minutes of making small talk, I left the restaurant and drove home.

By now, the number of cars at Crawford and Ohio St. had subsided to the normal trickle of post-rush hour traffic. Sitting at the stop-light, I recalled the words Kurt Wolf had written on the placard. A brief smile broke across my face as I thought back to his note: “Curtis, you did a good job!” Thinking about what he wrote and the small anxiety attack that happened back at the restaurant, I thought to myself “Now don’t screw up!” Perhaps it was the roller coaster of mixed emotions, but when the driver in front of me again allowed not one but three, side street cars to pull out of Braum’s drive-through causing me to sit through yet another red light, I screamed “Dammit, go!”

At 8:30 p.m. I awoke from a catnap to the noise of our car door closing, signaling to me that my wife and two daughters had returned home from baton practice. I sat in the recliner chair with my feet propped up, a cold rag laying across my forehead and an old Sears’s box fan blowing air on me. As the door popped open, Emmalina was the first to say, “Daddy! How was your day?”

Olivia, my youngest, inquired, “Why do you have a rag on your head?”

Theresa followed behind the girls carrying the usual staple items retrieved from a quick visit to the grocery store: milk, bread, and a few pounds of hamburger. “How was the interview?” she inquired as she sat down the items from the store and closed the front door. The heat caused the kids’ faces to look as wet as the side of a Hillard Dairy milk jar just pulled from the fridge.

“Oh, the interview went fine!” I said as I pulled the rag off of my forehead and turned off the box fan.

“Are you feeling okay?” Theresa asked, as she approached the chair I was sitting in.

“Yes, I am okay.” I reassured her. By now, the girls had wondered off into their bedrooms to put their shoes and batons away. The television blared since the fan was no longer on, so I turned it down with the remote.

“You look sick!” Theresa said as she checked my forehead with the confidence that she could predict whether or not I had a fever.

“I am just hot from being outside,” I replied, knowing that she would easily relate after just being outside as well. Wishing to change the subject I told her well I have some bad news.

Immediately, Theresa asked in a sympathetic voice, “Did they call you already?”

“Yes. I received a call about an hour ago. While I was at Pizza Hut. I have some bad news.”

Bracing for the worst Theresa asked, “What is the bad news?”

“I lost my current job.” I said in a solemn voice. At this point Theresa’s face looked confused. If there had been a dialogue bubble above her face, it would have asked, “How can you lose your existing job by applying for another one?”

“Wait a minute, how could you lose your job just by applying for...oh, wait a minute. You got it, didn’t you?” Theresa’s face started turning from possible disappointment to confusion—then to a smile.

“Yes. I got the job! Now we are both in big trouble!” We both started to laugh as she called me an inappropriate name for misleading her into thinking I was unemployed. Twenty-two years after the dreadful day in November of 1991, I was once again facing serious trouble by landing back in the principal’s office.

Part One: Getting the Job Interlude

This dissertation is presented in the format of narratives, analysis of narratives, integration of scholarly sources (substantive, theoretical, and methodological), and reflexivity. The narratives are multilayered and thus in requirement of deep analysis and discussion. The interlude sections serve as liminal spaces between narratives that provide a pause in the narrative flow, to focus on something else – which in this case – are the analytic insights the narratives provide.

The preceding narratives demonstrate how dramatic changes affected my role as a principal in terms of doing the job well in addition to my role as a husband and a father. These narratives speak to issues of personal wellness, as indicated by sickness, anxiety, and need for seeking reassurance. Additionally, the narratives highlight socialization issues as I negotiated the decision of transitioning from assistant principal to principal, and tried to learn a new job with added responsibilities of designing a building.

Upon learning that Superwoman was leaving, I catapulted from two extremes, a situation of stability to one of uncertainty. Such dramatic changes affected my ability to do my current job well. *Superwoman's Exodus* exhibited a classic example of Villani's (2006) *Stage One of Five Stages of Socialization: Survival*: "The novice principal may encounter individual experiences that cause professional insecurity and situations where personal concerns are high" (p. 64). My anxiety of the unknown threw me into survival mode, a cognitive tailspin of extremes. In the narrative *Covering the Credentials*, I demonstrate how anxiety can lead to emotional extremes. One minute I was incompetent in my duties, yet, just one hour later, I experienced a rush of confidence. For example, I forgot to bring the diplomas to graduation, clearly an incompetent act on my part. Yet one hour later, after watching Superwoman facilitate the graduation ceremony, I

was confident I could do the job—so much so, that I was willing to ask Superwoman for a letter of recommendation.

Another example of extremes in the narrative *Covering the Credenitals* was the growing uncertainty of who would lead Salina High School South during a chaotic time of construction and how I justified this time of change as an excuse for me to start smoking again after a ten year period of cessation. As I encountered *Villani First Stage of Socialization* (2006), specifically, *Survival*—I found myself edging into *Stage 2* or *Control*. The anxiety of survival forced me to agonize between deciding on whether or not to become a head principal or continue having time to spend with my daughters. Educational leadership literature, especially in Western societies, demonstrates that potential principals think carefully before assuming the daunting role (Gronn, 2003; Pounder and Young, 1996), mostly because of the unknown forces with which they have to contend daily and improvise.

The narratives of *Part One: Getting the Job* also speak to issues of personal wellness, as defined by Adam's Perceived Wellness Model (1997), which consist of physical, social, psychological, intellectual, emotional, spiritual dimensions. In the above-mentioned narrative, my sickness, anxiety, and need for seeking reassurance maps on to the psychological and emotional constructs of the model. Specifically psychological construct focuses on the perception that one has to the outcomes of the circumstances in one's life and emotional construct refers to the person's ability to cope, accept, and adjust to change. An imbalance in psychological and emotional construct reflects various challenges one might face when dealing with life-altering changes. Thus, in the *Part One: Getting the job* narrative, I was shocked, completely unprepared, and unsure of my ability to execute a job of a much larger magnitude than what I had experienced professionally prior to that point. I predicted that I would eventually

cope and overcome the new position, but it was only after moving through the socialization process have I become aware of why I moved through the survival stage as quickly as I did. I now know that it was because I found the survival stage so undesirable that I forced myself to stage 2 control (Villani, 2006).

Adding to the Adam's (1997) Perceived Wellness Model, Clark-Reynolds, 2002 applied Adam's (1997) perceived wellness framework specifically to principals when he layered educational leadership scholarship over the wellness dimensions and described how a healthy and unhealthy principal perform their duties. For example, a principal with physical health encounters decreased job frustration, improved creativity, and has better tolerance of students (Plowman, 1985) while a principal who is not healthy physically, experiences the increased job frustration, decreased creativity, decreased tolerance of students (Plowman, 1985).

Due to being unhealthy physically, I experienced an increase in job frustration. Such frustration led me to feel out of balance. I was not sleeping and this contributed to being unhealthy physically which contributed even more to job frustration.

My job frustration started to manifest itself into my sleep. I experienced work nightmares once Superwoman announced that she was leaving. *The Recurrent Nightmare* narrative illustrated the grim reality that the threat of school shootings heightens stress and anxiety for principals (Covino, 2003; Lickel et. al., 2003). Since the incident at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Connecticut, there has been a gun fired at a school somewhere in the United States at least once each week (Krishnakumar & Degroot, 2015). The ongoing reports of such violence illustrate how this narrative exhibits the seriousness and weight of being a high school principal today. While keeping students safe has always been a priority of school administrators, this escalation of violence across American schools increases the stress level of administrators and

takes a toll on their personal wellness (Covino, 2003; Lickel et. al., 2003). As noted by sleep dream researcher Michelle Carr states that, “feelings of stress, and the desire to perform well, can trigger the relevant recurrent dream” (2014, p.1). The nightmare was just the first of many work related dreams that started influencing my personal wellness as I grappled with *Stage 1, Survival*.

In the narrative *Getting the Job*, I briefly became sick—vomiting in the Pizza Hut’s restroom after taking the phone call and accepting the district’s offer to become principal. Most new principals are excited to earn the title, but then the reality of the office’s heavy mantle sets in, causing feelings of being overwhelmed, confused, and lonely (Daresh, 2006; Normore, 2004). At the time I accepted the position, I was not with my family. Upon reflection, the *Getting the Job* narrative described my sickness.

I am uncertain whether such sickness resulted from accepting the position right away—or knowing I just chose a job over being available to my family. Did I accept the job to grow professionally? Did I accept the job in my effort to vacate *Stage 1, Survival* in favor of *Stage 2, Control*? Did I accept the job to bury myself into work to withdraw socially in my need for controlling the destabilization happening around me in my career? Each of these questions are not easily answered, and call for more interrogation from others in similar circumstances.

Beginning the process of socialization negatively affected my physical health causing me to have an increase in job frustration which then impacted my sleep which also increased my work frustration even more. Clark-Reynolds (2002), noted that when the life of a principal is out of balance, this is called chaos. For a principal, chaos can lead to disillusionment and leaving the profession. An antidote to such unbalance can be a socialization process that allows pre-service and in-service principles to understand the possible anatomy of transition with its potentials and problems. For example, in this case, I could have quit the principalship as many before me have

done so (Neale, 2014), because of the unbalance in the psychological and emotional constructs and unhealthy (Clarke Reynolds dimensions are). However, had I known in advance some of the transitional challenges, with possible solutions for navigation, I would have handled the tasks ahead of me with more balance and less damage to my personal wellness. This is not to say that having an earlier roadmap is a solution for all the challenges a principal might face. Indeed there still would be multiple incitements for improvisations required of a principal, regularly, sometimes almost minute-by-minute. However, in retrospect, any prior socialization would have allowed me to have a sense of efficacy with which I could have navigated my self-doubts, impostor syndrome issues, with more equanimity than how I performed in the preceding narrative. Often stress can be mitigated with a calm inner disposition which could have been contingent on prior socialization process.

Further, in educational leadership preparation programs, principals can be trained with these forms of socialization so that the sudden onslaught of responsibilities and challenges are normalized and remain manageable instead of appearing to be mammoth-sized avalanches, that cause unbalance in one's personal and professional lives.

Upon reflecting on *Part One: Getting the Job* narrative, one can begin to understand that I loathed *Stage 1, Survival*, so much so that within the narratives I began shifting toward *Stage 2, Control*, if for no reason to stabilize my life, career, and South High. The narrative describes how I called my mother to talk to her about the life-changing situation. My wife and I also discussed whether this job was right for us. Furthermore, after asking Superwoman for a letter of recommendation, I sought reassurance from former mentors and supervisors as articulated in *A Colleague, A Cup of Coffee, A Crucial Credential* as well as the narrative *The Elder of 305*. With each conversation, I slowly built confidence, even if the advice from my mentors was blunt.

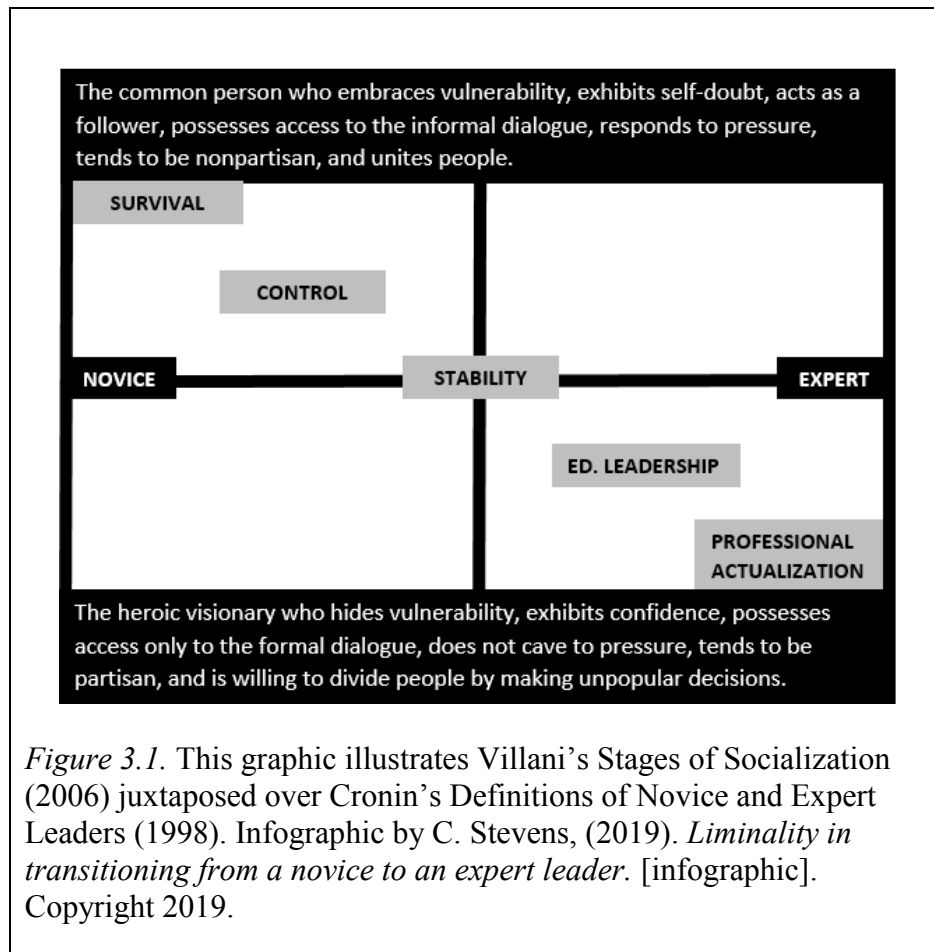
When one's perceptions of wellness are out of balance, the person self-describes themselves as ill, isolated, depressed, less tolerant of other people, easy to anger, or unable to focus (Clark-Reynolds, 2002). While I started to become much more isolated from my family and peers—my friendships with former mentors grew stronger as I transitioned to *Stage 2, Control*.

The narrative *Superwoman's Exodus* also highlights socialization issues as I negotiated the decision of transitioning from assistant principal to principal, and tried to learn a new job with added responsibilities of a building design. If taking on a high school principalship were not challenging enough, the looming \$45 million design and construction project proved to be another factor causing anxiety in both not pursuing the job—and pursuing the job. By taking on the job, I would inherit the monumental task of overseeing the designing of a building that will be in existence long after I am gone. By not taking the job, I would be expected to follow another principal—who may come in and not listen to others across the school and community. Once I decided to pursue the position and accepted the job, the community began to weigh in on my appointment. In the narrative *Thrown Into Denzin and Lincoln's Swamplands*, I noted one of the comments posted on the internet, “One year of high school administration experience? This has failure written all over it.” Retrieved from *Salina Post*, Blog, (June 10, 2014), (<http://salinapost.com/2014/06/10/salina-usd-305-announces-new-principal-at-south-high-school/>). The comment replayed in my head, contributing to even more sleepless nights.

Collectively, the narratives demonstrate how dramatic changes affected my role as a principal and my wellness. The narratives about my transition from being an assistant principal to pursuing and obtaining the principalship exposed my journey of navigating self-doubt and vulnerability. Writing about my self-doubt forced me to explore the covert liminality where one stage ends and the other stage begins between each of the *Five Stages of Socialization* (Villani,

2006) but also the space between being a novice and expert leader (Cronin, 1998). I define such liminality as the gray space between two dichotomous quadrants of novice and expert as shown in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1 Liminality in Transitioning from a Novice to an Expert Leader



Through narratives of *Part One: Getting the Job*, I illuminated my career transition, providing the reader with a front row seat in how I cognitively navigated the space of liminality or the threshold of crossing over space to another stage—but one has not yet crossed completely over. I emphasize such vulnerability not to sound heroic, but rather, to enlighten others to one person's evocative experience.

I balance my quest to share knowledge of my experience with the recognition that I may very well diminish future opportunities as a leader. Each letter and word may serve as a metaphoric brick, either serving as a foundation for professional growth or as a wall imprisoning me from future professional endeavors. Perhaps Kevin Kline said it best in the movie *Queen to Play*, (Besnehard, D. (Producer), Bottaro, C. (Director) (2009), “If you risk, you may lose. But if you don’t risk, you will lose.” (2009). Shunning authentic narratives that expose vulnerability may equally cause the loss of future understanding and knowledge of leadership. Without risk, we all lose.

Based on data from the School Leadership Network schools are losing principals, “50% of new principals quit during their third year in the role” (Neale, 2014, p. 1). Too often principals are thrown into the thick of the job without adequate support (Neale, 2014). More narratives in the form of autoethnography are needed to support principals through the socialization process.

By engaging in a contemplative, arts-based, and narrative inquiry project centered on the theme of self-doubt while being a novice, I sought to leverage an opportunity for others to peek into the black box of leadership liminality. Bochner and Ellis (2016) illustrated how they both embrace vulnerability in the work of evocative autoethnography:

This is how an author’s face is shown to readers in the constrained medium of academic writing. How can I, as a reader, answer the call to respond to an author’s otherness, as one beating heart to another, if I am denied access to what makes the author distinctively other? (p. 81)

Bochner and Ellis argue for the need to gain access to the author’s otherness. By opening using the black box of leadership liminality & space in between novice & expert quadrants (Cronin, 1998) through the narration of my transitionary experience, I attempt to aid the reader by

articulating my otherness. Such a vivid account provides context for distinction. My positionality as a white male, and as a person who benefits from privilege, can still serve as a context through which others without privileges may contrast their experiences to mine. Through such access, and through such contrast, others may leverage a deeper understanding of leadership.

Through the process of narrative construction, I blur the boundaries between the *Five Stages of Socialization*, as well as the dichotomous quadrants of novice and expertise, all while examining my personal wellness. Moreover, I interrogate the distance between who I was prior to the transition and, who I am now following the experience. Couser (1997) describe the important role of interrogating such space in an autoethnography:

Often, an autoethnographer's story is a tale of two selves, a journey from who I was (before my epiphany) to who I am now, after living through these events. The story bears witness to what it can mean to live with shame, abuse, addiction, stigma, discrimination, or bodily dysfunction, and to gain agency through testimony. (p. 91)

As Couser (1997) suggests, the journey of two selves is important for achieving a deeper understanding in an autoethnography.

Only after working as a principal for several years could I explore the distance between *myself then* versus *myself now*. Liminality provides space that embraces multiple interpretations, but such interpretations easily change over time. The *Now Curtis* wants to scream at the *Then Curtis* and say, "Don't be a fool—graduation is far from the scariest part of being a principal!" What makes the liminal spaces of leadership seem seductively simple is that one feels as though they are moving through the stages and quadrants in a linear fashion. Only in retrospect, and with the gift of hindsight, can I discern which stage I was at during which moment. This is similar to determining when a jar of sand switches from being half-full to more than half-full. Which

proverbial grain of sand makes the transition apparent? Perspective sharpens with time.

Bhattacharya (2017) noted that exploring fragmented narratives helps readers engage:

This non-traditional methodological approach invites readers to engage with the content in unconventional ways. I attempt to present my travel between fragmented narratives and multiple worldviews and my existence in contested liminal spaces. But readers must piece together these offerings in ways that align with their sensibilities. (p. 5)

Much like the narratives prior to the job interview, albeit fragmented, all of the narratives collectively helped me create coherency when pieced together with the narrative of the interview. In Stage 2, Survival, I sought control by preparing for the interview. Why did I feel it necessary to obsess about the little things such as the color of my interview suit? In hindsight, the suit was something technical that could be managed through planning—thus was controllable. It would be a mistake to underestimate the power of those in the *Stage 1, Survival* as they reach for items within their control. An administrative colleague once told me that all of his dresser drawers are perfectly organized—because it was the only place he felt he had total control.

Overall, *Part One: Getting the Job*, exposed my journey of socialization to the principalship. By utilizing a contemplative, arts-based, and narrative inquiry project spoke to issues of personal wellness, as indicated by sickness, anxiety, and need for seeking reassurance. Additionally, the narratives highlighted socialization issues as I negotiated the decision of transitioning from assistant principal to principal, and tried to learn a new job with added responsibilities of building design. In leveraging an opportunity for others to peek into the black box of leadership liminality. Through the process of narrative construction, I blurred the boundaries between the *Five Stages of Socialization* (Villani, 2006), as well as the dichotomous quadrants of novice and expert leaders (Cronin, 1998). The narratives, albeit fragmented, create

coherency when pieced together giving insights into how dramatic changes affected my role as a principal in terms of doing the job well in addition to my role as a husband and a father.

Summary

Chapter three introduced the reader to the first group of narratives of *Part One: Getting the Job*. First opening with Superwoman—Linn Exline notifying me that she is leaving Salina High School South and taking a position as the Executive Director of School Improvement. From the moment she informed that she was leaving, my socialization process started as my professional and personal life transitioned to survival mode hindering my performance in my duties as an assistant principal and eventually principal. *The Recurrent Nightmare* narrative illustrated my first experience with the looming weight of holding the mantle of the principalship. The following three narratives: *Covering the Credentials*, *A Colleague a Cup of Coffee*, *a Crucial Credential* exhibited my need to seek reassurance but also find my way out of survival mode into stage two control. The narrative *Getting the Job*, illuminated my cognition while going through the process of interviewing and waiting to find out if I would get the position. Finally, the *Part One: Getting the Job* Interlude served as a liminal spaces between narratives that provide a pause in the narrative flow, to focus on something else – which in this case – are the analytic insights the narratives provide.

In Chapter four, the reader will see me take on the professional duties of being a principal during a flurry of activity, as I navigated not only the socialization process and the beginning stages of school design, but also my personal roles as a father and husband, as my family moves into a new home.

Chapter 4: Thrown Into Denzin & Lincoln's Swamplands: Doing the Job

The district announced my appointment on June 10, 2014. I was intrigued to see what all of the comments would say on SalinaJournal.com, KSAL, and The Salina Post. After spending seven years serving as a school disciplinarian, I was bound to pull up some wonderful comments of endearment. I scrolled through the message links and found the first comment from a brave soul who went by the pseudonym Whoopie:

One year of high school administration experience? This has failure written all over it. Did knowbody [sic] outside of the district show any interest? This should really bother parents. Oh, and now they have to make an 11th hour hire for his replacement, which may be another crappy hire. Retrieved from <http://salinapost.com/2014/06/10/salina-usd-305-announces-new-principal-at-south-high-school/>

Not too bad for a committed internet crony who does his best work at 10:58 p.m. when weighing-in on the community news. Intrigued, I kept reading after all, this was the first time I had ever been able to receive such widespread feedback from Joe Public. I am not sure who Whoopie was, but I must have really angered him at some point along the way because the following day he posted the last best argument he could muster:

Assistant principal is where you start with zero to no high school experience, not at a 5A school undergoing major changes from all sides. This is Salina, so golf claps will abound, but in the business world this hire would be called a reach. Retrieved from <http://salinapost.com/2014/06/10/salina-usd-305-announces-new-principal-at-south-high-school/>

Although I chuckled as I read the comment posting, I wondered whether this person's observation would end up being correct.

Anxiety Riddled Dreams

As I fumbled with the keys to unlock my door for the first day on the job, I noticed the lights in my office were on and the door cracked open. A group of individuals stood around the oval-shaped, stained conference table in my office and appeared as if they had seen a ghost. South High Athletic Director Ken Stonebraker, Assistant Principal Gary White, and what looked to be an agitated parent simultaneously turned and looked at me as I walked in.

Wondering why they were all in my office, I inquired, "Can I help you?"

The parent looked beyond irate; his face appeared darkened by a flash of red, his jaw appeared clenched, and his knuckles were a bright white as his right hand pointed his index finger directly at me, "Are you the fucking reason my daughter is not able to participate in her last state swimming meet, causing her to lose her scholarship?" The words came out with a forceful volume suggesting that if he were armed, little hesitation would exist for him to shoot me.

"I am sorry . . . I am not sure what you are talking about," I refuted in a shocked voice.

No longer than I had finished my comment, the disgruntled father flipped over a chair and began yelling a long list of obscenities as he exited my office and made his way out of the building. As soon as he left, I turned to my other colleagues and asked in an exasperated voice, "What was that all about?"

Ken Stonebraker started first by saying that the issue was his fault because he left the form with me and forgot to get it back with my signature.

"Stop right there! It was not your fault! I should have taken care of this but got busy and forgot." I frantically tried to figure out how I could be so careless. How did my system of paper management break down?

Ken then said, “Regardless, since the required entry form did not get submitted to the state athletic association in time, our entire swim team officially forfeited our ability to participate.” Upon hearing those words, my heart sank. We actually had a strong chance of being state champions this year.

Gary White, the assistant principal, weighed in and said, “Boss, this guy was just one of ten parents who left angry voicemails on the school’s message system about how they planned to attend and comment at tonight’s school board meeting’s public forum. My guess is that there are bound to be more.” Gary’s forehead was sweating and his voice sounded on the verge of anger—an emotion Gary rarely exhibited.

“Well, is there anything I can do to get the state to reconsider?” I asked, hopeful that the executive director at the state level would let me have a new principal mulligan for this innocent mistake.

“Perhaps, if you can find the original form,” Ken answered, looking around my office to see nothing but pile after pile of state reports, school improvement data sheets, teacher observations, and accreditation rubrics.

“Then let’s start looking!” I boomed.

A loud swishing sound of air awoke me, and I realized it was air from the floor vent in our bedroom. I realized that I was crawling on the bedroom floor looking for the state athletic association form. “I cannot find it, but I know it’s here!” I yelled.

Alarmed, Theresa woke up and said “Curtis, what are you doing?”

“It’s around here somewhere, and we need to find the form!” I responded, irritated and dumbfounded that she did not see the urgency. At this point, I had crawled from the bed around the corner to the dresser looking for the swim meet form.

Theresa was now laughing. “You are having a dream.”

I stood up and turned to her, adamant that she did not understand the situation. “Don’t laugh at me! I need to find the damn form!” Theresa stopped laughing and recognized that I was still not awake. I am not sure what caused me to wake up at that point, but I did.

“Curtis?” Theresa asked.

Finally coming to my bearings, I said, “I’m going to bed.” I yawned as I made my way back to the other side of our bed and went back to sleep.

The Morning After

It should go without saying that I was embarrassed the following morning. Theresa chuckled because she could not get over how real the situation was to me at that moment. I would love to say that such a dream only occurred once, but the reality was that it occurred hundreds of times throughout the course of my first year as principal. The specific situation was never the same, but all of the dreams shared some common themes: (1) Some big issue emerged out of a small task that was not handled appropriately or by a prescribed deadline. (2) The mistake led to major public outcry. (3) The error caused permanent damage to another party. (4) The dream always seemed real, and it took me about three minutes after waking up to realize that it was just a dream.

July 1, 2014 was like any other day. Superwoman’s office was now officially empty, and I was in the process of moving in. Mrs. Palmgren, one of the beloved science teachers at South High, walked into the empty office and reflected, “I just want to look at this place before you move in. I just cannot believe Linn is no longer going to be here.”

As she looked around, I thought to myself, “Yeah, I cannot believe it either.” As Mrs. Palmgren left, I told her that we would get through it and make the best of it that we could. A pile of paperwork set on the desk, and I could tell that Principal Exline was busy leaving last-minute notes about what needed to be done. I could not help but notice her gift—the bulletin board affixed to my desk showcased thumbtacks that spelled “Curtis.” As I set there, I said a little prayer to myself: “Please, Lord, don’t let me screw up!” After checking to make sure there was no state athletic association swim entry form to fill out, I chuckled to myself and embarked on a decision-making marathon.

After turning on my computer, I was alarmed to see 150 emails in my inbox. About 25% of the messages were from concerned vendors who had not heard from me since the last solicitation email they had sent a month earlier, and 30% of them revolved around cc:, bcc:, or FYI emails to “keep me in the loop.” Approximately 25% were the short emails that say “Thank you” or “okay.” Only about 25% of the emails were critical. One such message was from William Hall, Salina Public School Superintendent:

Good morning! Curtis, please send me a list of your design team members. You cannot have more than seven on the initial visits. I need these names before tomorrow so we can send out the invites to the community collaborative session. Please make sure the participants are aware that they will likely miss class multiple times due to their participation. (W. Hall, email communication, August 1, 2014)

After reading his message, my mind started to race. I now need to think about who will serve on the committee, ask them, confirm their participation, and communicate this back to the boss. At first glance, I thought to myself, that this should be easy. The more I thought about the task, however, the more I understood that selecting a committee would be technically simple but

politically complex. Before I made any decision, I should have checked with The Oracle on how to approach this issue.

The Oracle

A chamber of thought exists in every leader's head— at least I pray that it does. In *my* head, it consists of a panel of the most trusted experts that I can think of— no pun intended. The panel grows every time I read or gain insight into a situation. I call this panel of professionals The Oracle. The Oracle originated from a metaphysical dimension I first learned about from Gloria E. Anzaldúa, (1999), whereby her personality could transcend the norm-based lines relating to a certain group in her sanctuary of Mundo Zurdo. *El Mundo Zurdo* was a theory that focused on the marginalized people and the need for unity amongst them. I crafted the idea of the Oracle when I thought about how a new leader sometimes needs a space to think that is not always available in reality—just like Anzaldúa needed to create a space through her power of writing that the real world does not offer (Anzaldúa, 1999).

The space I created, was a fictitious room in which The Oracle exists, serving as my collective thoughts, measures approximately 80 by 90 feet and has a 44 foot ceiling. The chamber's 24 columns are old convent quarry siena marble from Liguria, Italy; its walls and friezes are of ivory vein marble from Alicante, Spain; and its floor borders are Italian and African marble. The room also contains a raised bench, behind which The Oracle sits during my thinking sessions. The bench itself is wing shaped to provide sight and sound advantages to the panel when conversing with me through the meta cognitive medium. While most of the experts sit around all day in a retreat -like setting drinking coffee, reading, writing, or playing cards, they know instantly that when I walk in and call upon their expertise, business comes first, as I have little time to waste given most circumstances.

The Oracle is no place for weak thinkers. If someone's research or expertise is not critical or becomes obsolete, they understand that I will sentence them to death by sending them to my short-term memory. The heavy-weights that make it to the Oracle and remain there full-time are the best and brightest. For now, the panel consists of the following: Thomasenia Lott Owens, James Barber, Margarita Espino Calderon, Stephen Richard Covey, Thomas Cronin, Luis Cruz, Rebecca and Richard DuFour, Michael Fullan, G.E. Hall, Ronald Heifetz, Sharrocky Hollie, Rushworth M. Kidder, Jia "Grace" Liang, Marty Linsky, Robert J. Marzano, Anthony Muhammad, Regina Stephens Owens, and J. D. Weast. Each of these authors has a specific framework that guided me as a new principal, especially when encountering the challenges and dynamic dichotomies inherent with being a school leader. They can be ruthlessly blunt; nevertheless, their advice has proven to be spot-on, so I continue to allow them a place in my cognition. However, please note, not all of the names listed above were part of my early consciousness of who the experts are. So, if the list of experts and my conversation with them appears to lack in diverse perspectives, it is a reflection of what I had access to both in my educational training and professional development. Therefore, at first, the Oracle Chamber was filled with people who were introduced to me in my profession and education. It was not until I began to document my experiences autoethnographically, that I had reconfigured who got to be in The Oracle Chamber, as represented in who I cite in my interludes. This was because my initial introduction to leading voices, were people that were considered either privileged white men, or people who have acquired some "guru" status within education.

I metaphorically visit The Oracle when I encounter salient critical incidents in school leadership. While the descriptions of my visits to The Oracle may suggest that I am in the chamber of thought for 30 minutes to an hour, make no mistake, the visits are usually only a few

seconds in real time. Most individuals I work with never know that my cognitive mind is visiting The Oracle, but that is usually how it works. Then again, they may be aware that this is what happens because of the interference that emerges when I have to ask them to repeat what they just said. I am plagued with having a rapid processor that jumps about four steps down the road of conversation, making it difficult to recall what was and was not communicated. The panel is conversing with me while I am receiving new information.

The First Visit

The slamming of the door broke up what was likely a non-stop five-hour argument. Immediately, they all made their way to the bench and started to listen as though a bailiff called our session to order— despite nobody being in the gallery.

“Well, you all know what the issue is! Suggestions, I need suggestions!” I boomed to The Oracle. For some reason, a smoky haze filled the room. I provide them a lush room that mimics the U.S. Supreme Court chambers, yet the panelists never take the hint that they probably should not smoke inside. After all, the smoke clouds my judgement.

“Dr. Fullan! I want to start with you. Who should I pick?” I bluntly questioned, as I pulled out my pen, signaling that I was ready for action. Fullan (2007) stated,

I think it is critical for you to pay careful attention to small number of key details during the change process because it can result in the experience of success, new commitments, and the excitement and energizing satisfaction of accomplishing something important. (p. 8)

His words resonated with me, although I was certain to not let him know it. Pandering to The Oracle’s ego was dangerous and counterproductive to keeping the panelists on their toes. I knew instantly that I was right to think slowly through the selection of the design team. I really wished

I could have had one person from every department represented, but that was not possible given the superintendent's restrictions. Immediately, I could see how the various factions across the building would feel snubbed, by not having a representative on the building design team.

"Cronin, what do you think about the selection process?" I asked, as I went down the line of the trusted Oracle. Cronin (1998) responded: "Despite your desire to unify diverse people and interests you do realize you will have to take firm stands, make unpopular or controversial decisions that necessarily upset and divide (p. 218)."

As I was about to engage in a rant on how his recent comments have been ineffective, an idea popped into my head. Wait a minute—perhaps Cronin's advice exhibited more substance than on first glance. Perhaps I can unify diverse people and interests—I only needed a representative from similar departments of the building. English, social studies, and other direct lecture-style classes do not need individual representatives. I would need representatives from departments with intensive needs for utilities and resources, such as family and consumer science, industrial arts, art, and special education.

Barber always wanted to go third in the lineup, much to my annoyance. Doing so made little sense because he also insisted on sitting in the fourth chair. As I looked at him, my patience wearing thin, he cleared his throat and hit a button causing the projector screen to slowly lower. The descending screen served as vivid cue to the bailiff, causing him to pop up quickly and pull a cord blocking external light from the room—even though no exterior light existed. The screen contained the diagram shown in **Figure 4.1**.

Figure 4.1 Personality Traits of Leaders

| | Positive | Negative |
|----------------|--|---|
| Active | ADAPTIVE: self-confident; flexible; creates opportunities for action; enjoys the exercise of power; does not take himself/herself too seriously; optimistic; emphasizes the “rational mastery” of his environment; power used as a means to achieve beneficial results. Thomas Jefferson Franklin Roosevelt Harry Truman John Kennedy | COMPULSIVE: power as a means to self-realization; expends great energy on tasks but derives little joy; preoccupied with whether he is failing or succeeding; low self-esteem; inclined to rigidity and pessimism; highly driven; problem managing aggression. John Adams Abraham Lincoln Richard Nixon Lyndon Johnson |
| Passive | COMPLIANT: seeks to be loved; easily manipulated; low self-esteem is overcome by ingratiating personality; reacts rather than initiates; superficially optimistic. James Madison William Taft Ronald Reagan Bill Clinton | WITHDRAWN: responds to a sense of duty; avoids power; low self-esteem; compensated by service to others; avoids conflict and uncertainty; emphasizes principles and procedures and an aversion to politicking. George Washington James Buchanan Calvin Coolidge Dwight Eisenhower |

Figure 4.1. This figure shows the various personality traits of U.S. Presidents as defined by Barber (1972). Infographic by C. Stevens, (2019). *Personality Traits of Leaders*. [infographic]. Copyright 2019.

Barber started in, “You need a healthy mix of individuals who have personalities that fall in these four quadrants. You definitely want more individuals on the team who do not align with the principal’s personality type—[sarcastically] which I think will be a challenge given your

eclectic personality. I have even provided you with a list of past U.S. Presidents who fit each of the qualities.”

A small smile emerged on my face. Barber knew that I was a former government and history teacher, and I respected him for making connections to areas of my former academic discipline. This was especially helpful when seeking to make coherency out of my new duties as principal. Perhaps I was being too hard on him for his picky proclivity in wanting to go third but wishing to still remain in the fourth chair. Yes, he was one of the few that could be sarcastic with me, even if I suffered an insult. As I examined the screen, I quickly began to align each of the design team members with his or her respective quadrants.

“Thank you, Barber! I now have an idea about how I will designate my design team.” Recognizing I was running out of time, I almost hesitated before asking for the opinions of Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky, both of whom insisted on sitting near one another. It was almost as if the two had a language that only two identical twins would share.

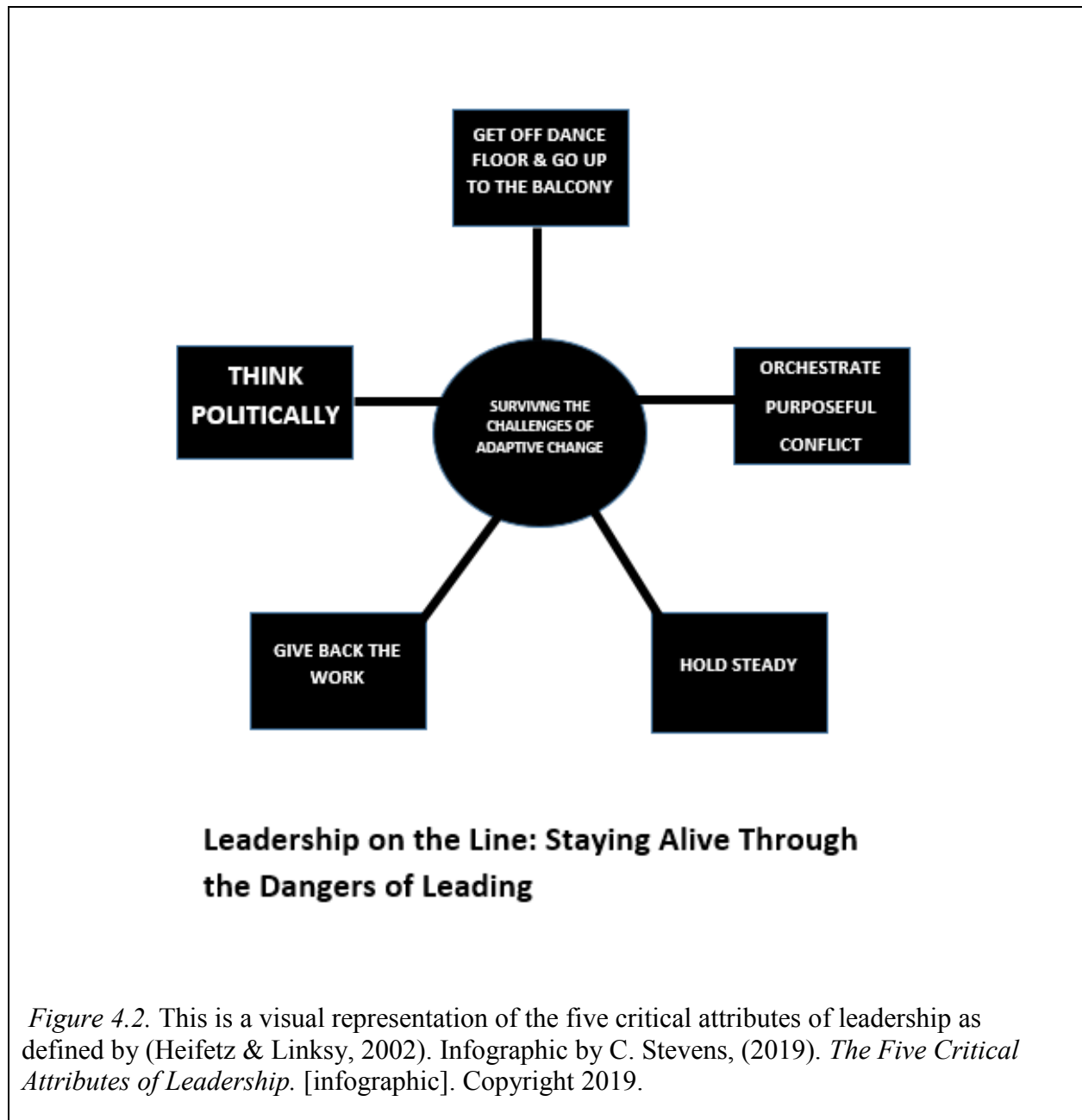
As the blinds opened and the projection screen started scrolling up, Heifetz was the first to reach for the microphone: “Barber, we too would like to use the projection—”

“—screen,” Linsky interjected. The two could get irritating fast. It did not help that they dressed identically on a daily basis.

Heifetz stated, “So, we put together an overview of a battle plan we would like for you to keep in mind as you embark on forming your design—”

“—team,” Linsky interjected with a smile. I continued to listen, but was I starting to feel annoyed with Linsky’s interruptions as the two explained in **Figure 4.2**.

Figure 4.2 The Five Critical Attributes of Leadership



Marty said, “As you can see from the diagram, there are essentially five things you need to be mindful of as you start selecting your design team and when handling the various issues of managing a high school.”

“The good news is that you have already started the process by thinking politically and getting off of the dance floor and onto the balcony. The fact that you have an oracle in mind is indicative of you getting off the proverbial dance floor. Of course no pun was intended when I referenced an oracle in mind.” Linsky said as he chuckled to himself despite no one else finding the humor.

“None taken!” I interjected.

Linsky continued: “This is typically the hardest thing for new principals to do. Moreover, you did right by examining the need to have different personalities on board—as Barber stressed with his personality chart. By picking various individuals for your design team you will have an intuitively orchestrated purposeful conflict. The last piece of advice that I will offer is applicable is to hold steady. You will soon experience push back from those not selected.”

My stomach started to ache. “I figured,” I thought to myself.

“This is one of the negative aspects that comes with leadership,” Heiftz stated.

As I left The Oracle, I thought about what all of the members said during our power session. I was the accidental principal who would literally be charged with the political task of getting the school designed and built in time for someone else to come in and inherit a new building from a principal who was damaged political goods. I also left the meeting thinking about how the other individuals had so little to say—their silence always left them with an uneasy feeling. They knew it was just a matter of time before they could be rendered insignificant and meet that tomb of short-term memory that knows no sound.

Back to the Reality of Pushback

After returning from The Oracle, I quickly drafted emails to all of the design team members. I notified them of all of the responsibilities, the deadlines, and the frustration they

would likely encounter from colleagues if they choose a design others did not like. Not one person turned me down. Our design team consisted of one administrator, two students, and seven teachers. Two teachers represented special education, while the areas of art, family and consumer science, industrial arts, math/social studies/English, and science each had one teacher representative. The design kick-off was set for August. I emailed the superintendent my list. We were off to the races—or so I thought!

It did not take long for word to spread that Principal Stevens was looking for design team members. Almost instantly, I received phone calls, emails, and drop-by visits from people informing me of their interest in participating on the committee. My response was the same—that we would have more opportunities for participation following the conclusion of schematic design (the main footprint of the building). I reassured and reasoned with those whose shoulders dropped upon hearing that the committee was already picked, explaining that we could not have too many people when we start the design process or we would never get done. Most understood the idea that too many cooks may spoil the broth, but they simply asked to be included as we started designing their specific classrooms. I assured them that I would do my best to make this happen.

One of the things I lost when I became principal was access to informal dialogue (Muhammad, 2009). I characterize informal dialogue as the conversation that happens through vague Facebook rants or subtweets⁵ on Twitter, over beer or whiskey at the Friday bar lounge book club, or out in the trusty parking lot during a quick venting session with a colleague prior to driving home. Obviously, I never hear the actual person upset—it just leaks out to me through

⁵ (On Twitter) a post that refers to a particular user without directly mentioning them, typically as a form of furtive mockery or criticism.

off-hand comments by faculty members who profusely proclaim, “I don’t want to be the one to tell you this, but . . .” Such conversations emerged—proving Oracle Cornin and Oracle Muhammad correct, that despite a leader’s desire to unify diverse people and interests, one will have to take firm stands and make unpopular or controversial decisions that necessarily upset and divide. Moreover, Oracles Heifitz and Linksy proved to be right on the money—one must think politically, get up on the balcony, orchestrate purposeful conflict, and above all, be willing to hold steady (Heifitz & Linksy, 2002).

Immediately, I thought back to the take-aways from the first day on the job, especially when it came to picking a design team: first, a principal designing a school needs people who think differently and have diverse expertise; second, picking the team will flatter some and anger others; and finally, I could sense from the beginning that designing a school would be technically simple but socially and politically complex! What happens if our staff’s wants exceed our budget? How do I balance what the internal stakeholders (teachers) as opposed to the external stakeholders (Salina Aquatics)? How can I be for certain that teachers like their classroom’s design, even if they had limited input in the process? A budget is an articulation of a principal’s priorities, and unfortunately, I had champagne expectations but only a beer budget.

Drinking From the Fire Hydrant of School Design

As fate would have it, EDLEA 830 Educational Facilities Planning happened to be offered during the summer of 2014, my first year as a principal. The instructor was a man who was no stranger to understanding the semantics of school finance and design—Dr. David Thompson, Chair of the Kansas State University Educational Leadership Department. During the months of June and July, in addition to starting a new job, I immersed myself in a litany of class reads, including *Saving America’s School Infrastructure* and *Building Minds, Minding Buildings*:

School Infrastructure Funding Need: A State-By-State Assessment. Both books provided a firm foundation for understanding the salient issues related to facility management and financial planning.

In addition to course work, I participated in a two-day workshop at the Webster Conference Center, located on the north side of Salina. The USD 305 Board of Education hired Kris Upson as a bond coordinator. Kris managed the dizzying list of 18 construction projects, which included one pre-k facility, one day school for students with mental illness, eight elementary schools, two middle schools, and two high schools. Kris was also tasked with organizing the Webster Center Workshop. This workshop consisted of community leaders across a wide span of business and agencies in Salina, all building and district school administrators in USD 305, each building's respective design team, and architects and engineers from DLR Architecture Inc. and McCown Gordon Construction, the two companies who won contracts for our recently passed bond issue. Sixty individuals participated in one of the largest community cross-section meetings in which I have ever participated. The pace of knowledge presented amounted to drinking from a fire hydrant. Architects and engineers from both DLR and McCown Gordon presented information regarding the visioning and design process.

The conference engaged everyone in the design process through the use of team-building activities, visioning, opportunities to provide general input on what our community goals were, and numerous dot-voting activities⁶. Three group configurations existed at the conference: (1) the Whole Group, which formed a major circle in the room; (2) Home Group, which consisted of our building's design team; and (3) Away Group, which was composed of integrated patrons of

⁶ A process by which members of a group go around and vote with round stickers to show what critical attributes they support.

both internal and external groups. We spent the lion's share of the conference learning the design, bid, and build process from start to end. For two days, this group of sixty people participated in activities that educated us on school design 101. One of the take-aways from this process was learning the stages we would participate in from start to finish: program development; site massing; schematic design; finishes; construction document development; and construction. Each integrated group moved from room to room to learn about each phase of the process as shown in **Figure 4.3**.

Figure 4.3 Community Design Collaboration



*Figure 4.3. Community design collaboration, Webster Conference Center, Aug. 20-21, 2014. Photo by J. Bradford (2014).
Community Design Collaboration. [photograph]. Copyright 2014.*

Initially, I sensed this conference was held largely for helping maintain positive public relations; while that may be true, I have since learned that the workshop developed guiding principles of a major cross-section of our community. The community-wide, two-day meeting helped internal

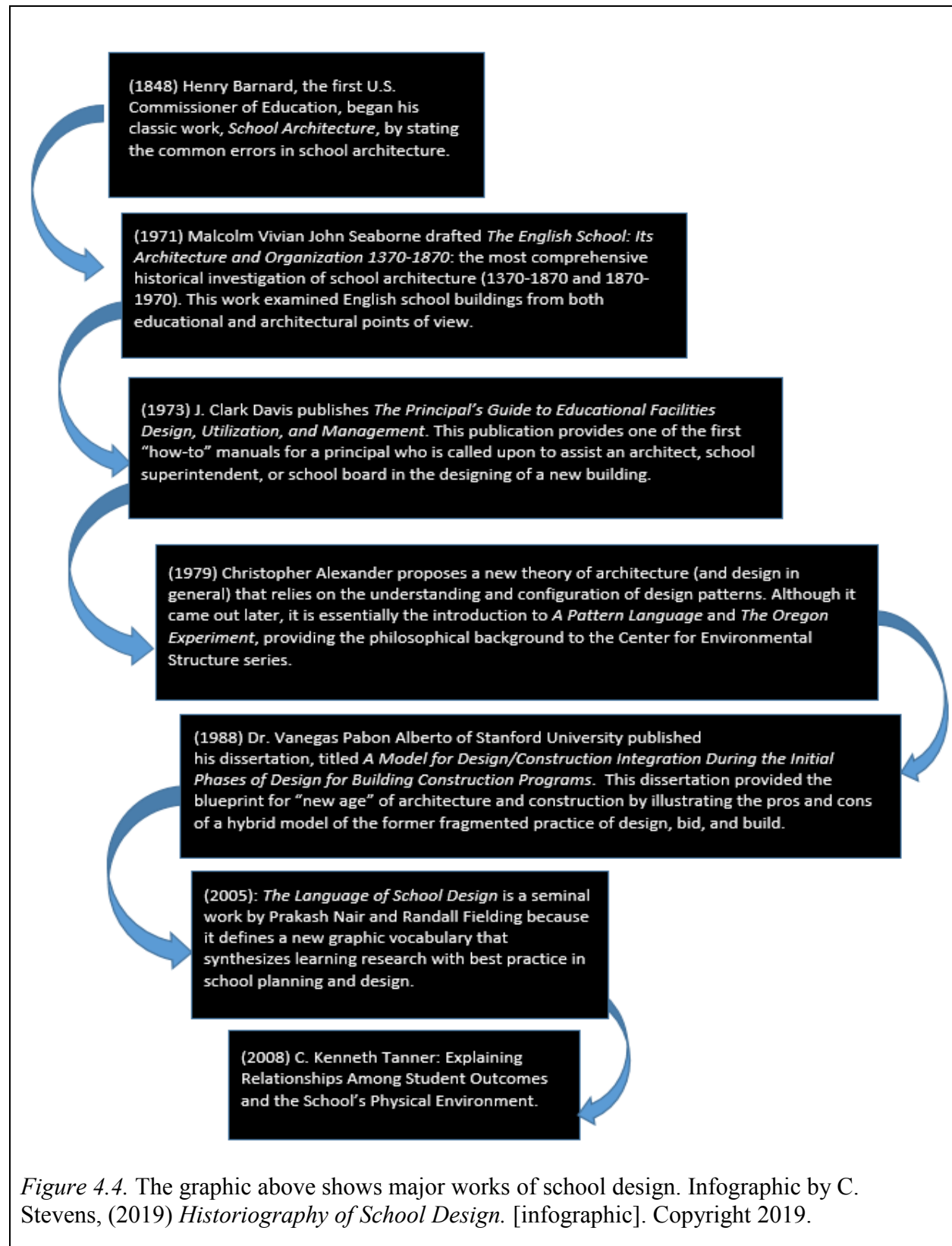
and external stakeholders (citizens, school officials, engineers, architects, and interior designers) get to know one another, as well develop a shared understanding and overview of the process. Perhaps the biggest accomplishment of this meeting was to develop the guiding principles of the entire \$110 million bond project. At the conclusion of the workshop, we ended up with the following guiding principles for future design and construction: schools that are safe and secure; durable facilities; schools that promote equality of opportunity; indoor and outdoor learning spaces that are flexible, engaging, promote creativity, and spark student passion; and promote sense of school pride and ownership.

Following these two days of visioning, planning, learning, and providing detailed input on the issues and themes we learned relating to school design, I was exhausted from drinking from a fire hydrant of design knowledge; ironically, I was thirsty for more information. I still had questions after leaving this meeting. What programs would remain, be removed, or be added? To which buildings would such programs be assigned? What type of design would be needed to accommodate such programs? How would the footprint of the new building change the existing building? What type of phasing would we decide to utilize during the construction project? How would the cost of building a new edifice at Salina High School South compare with renovating an older structure like Central High School that was built in the early 1950s? Would Salina High School South have to be moved due to the sinking of the existing structure that was taking place? How much say would students, parents, community members, teachers, building administrators, and district administrators ultimately have on the final design of the building? The questions pressed my weary mind to the brink. The unknown was eating me alive. Being a new administrator was not helping either, especially when teachers would ask me questions regarding the process that I was still trying to comprehend.

I immediately recognized the need to gain more information. I worried that the existing Oracle was far from being competent on addressing these new questions. Frantically, I started looking for as many additional sources as I could find to pack the panel with new wisdom. Being a current doctoral student at K-State, I had access to a treasure chest of information via the online databases provided by the college. Being the trained historian that I am, I wanted to find the earliest work of scholarship on the topic of school architecture and then work forward chronologically. To help keep track of all of the major design gurus, I researched and constructed Figure 4.4 to keep everything straight.

Doing a historiography of school design as shown in **Figure 4.4** was just the starting place. I read everything I could get my hands on. I am certain that I annoyed fellow cohort doctoral students who were from recently constructed or renovated schools. Dr. Kent Stuart, former KSU Professor, was not immune from my curiosity. I met him at a conference and peppered him with questions in my thirst for more information about the process.

Figure 4.4 Historiography of School Design



I am also certain that Kris Upson, USD 305 Bond Coordinator, rubbed his forehead every time he saw a missed phone call or email from me. I had little time to develop expertise.

We Make Schools Feel Like Malls and Airports

Fortunately for me, the district recognized the need to examine other school buildings designed by DLR Architects. From September 18 through October 20, 2014, I missed about five days at South High due to touring multiple high schools both inside and outside of Kansas. We toured Garden City High School (Garden City, Kansas) on September 18, 2014; Manhattan High School (Manhattan, Kansas) on September 24; the Center for Advanced Professional Studies (Overland Park, Kansas) on September 26th; and Joplin High School, (Joplin, Missouri) on September 30. Touring another school is a powerful form of staff development for not only principals, but also for teachers, secretaries, and custodians. Figures 4.5-4.10 illustrate some big ideas of what our design team observed:

Figure 4.5 DLR School Design Tour Collage



Figure 4.5. The graphic above shows all of the high schools we toured during the school design tours. *DLR* [collage of photographs]. Copyright 2014.

Figure 4.6 Garden City High School Student Lounge Area

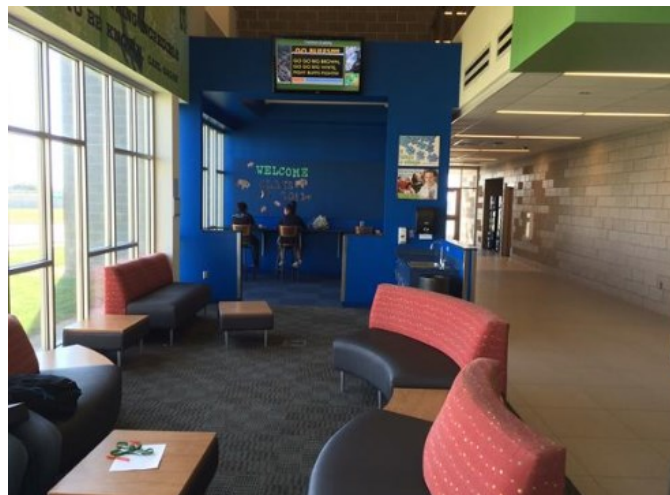


Figure 4.6. Garden City High School student lounge area. Photo by C. Stevens, (2014). *Trendy Furniture*. [photograph]. Copyright 2014.

Figure 4.7 Garden City High School Landscape



Figure 4.7. Garden City High School landscaping. Photograph by C. Stevens, (2014). Modern Landscape. [photograph]. Copyright 2014.

Figure 4.8 Exterior of Joplin High School, Joplin, Missouri



Figure 4.8. Exterior of Joplin High School, Joplin, Missouri. Photograph by C. Stevens, (2014). Postmodern Exteriors. [photograph]. Copyright 2014.

Figure 4.9 Open Collaborative Area of Joplin High School



Figure 4.9. Collaborative area of Joplin High School, Joplin, Missouri. Photograph by C. Stevens, (2014). Collaborative Areas. [photograph]. Copyright 2014.

Figure 4.10 Center for Advanced Professional Studies, Overland Park, Kansas.



Figure 4.10. Center for Professional Studies, Overland Park, Kansas. Photograph by C. Stevens, (2014). Blue Valley's CAPS Interior. [photograph]. Copyright 2014.

I consumed as much literature: Barnard (1848), Seaborne (1971), Alexander (1975), Tanner (2009), and Nair (2005), related to school design from June 2014 through the start of our schematic design meetings that following October. Barnard (1848) and Seaborne (1971) provided me historical insight on school design and architecture Barnard in the U.S. during the 1840s) and Seaborne provided insights into English school design from 1370 through 1870. Alexander's book *Patterns of Design* (1979) was a seminal work in contemporary school design—offer insights into open spaces for collaboration and natural light. Tanner (2009) offer insights in how school design impacts student academic achievement. He offers multiple studies that suggest poor school design is a silent killer to learning. Nair (2005) provided me with the need to have schools look trendy and mimic professional work places. I kept screenshots as

figures on what worked and what did not work, as I toured the previously mentioned schools, talked with students, parents, teachers, and other principals.

Jim French, an employee of DLR Architects who has designed more than \$1.5 billion worth of educational facilities, argues that schools built in the past largely resemble prisons and that schools being built today feel and look more like shopping malls, airports, or other places that research shows kids want to hang out. Schools like Garden City High School in Garden City, Kansas. My key take-away from touring all of these other schools was that kids want to be in schools that feel like airports and malls. I am still unsure whether such a preference is productive or problematic, or a little bit of both.

A New Home Rash

Despite starting a new job and visiting various schools in both Kansas and Missouri, another major transition in my personal life was about to take place. Home was no longer home. Due to limited space in our 1955 ranch style, two-bedroom house and because my oldest daughter Emmalina was about to start kindergarten, we decided to purchase a home on the south side of Salina. The closing dates for both our old and new houses, fell on the same day I was scheduled travel to Garden City, Kansas, to tour their new school. The other party's realtor left no wiggle room. The best I could negotiate was to gain access to the garage of the new home to start staging some of the move prior to our closing date.

"Curtis, you mean to tell me you are going to be gone the day we are moving?" Theresa fumed. There in our small house were cardboard boxes, all lined up and down the hall, almost reaching the ceiling, possibly ready to topple over, much like Theresa's stress and frustration about my absence. Sweat beamed on Theresa's forehead as she stopped packing to hear my news.

I replied, “Yes, I am not sure what you expect me to do! I need to attend everything I possibly can to see what is out there.” I knew she was not going to like my response, but I was feeling just as frustrated as she was. Failing to tour Garden City was not an option. Feeling torn into two parts—family or new job, right or wrong—I felt obligated to choose the job. Perhaps Theresa thought family was less important to me, or that she was less important to me. Or maybe I was taking her for granted in pursuit of my career. But, after all, without the job, we would have no house. In a way, I was starting to find it easier to justify picking the job over being able to help the family. I ended the moment with a line I now recognized I should not have used: “This is what we both signed up for!” The darn words rolled so easily out of my mouth, but make no mistake, my back paid a heavy price night as I slept on the couch.

Looking back, I am not sure that statement was fair. After all, she did not sign up to be a principal. In fact, she did not even sign up to be married to a principal. She married a fun, care-free, first-year teacher living in a mobile home purchased on credit. I can vividly recall 2003—the year I financed a mobile home, drove a car that limped along due to a warped head and a faulty water pump, and purchased an engagement ring that cost more than our mobile home and car combined. Life was a lot less complicated when I was first starting out, even though we were dead broke—although I often feel as broke now as I did then. Now, with kids, a new job, moving, Theresa’s business, and about a million other things our previous young lives did not have, we were suddenly feeling trapped within the pressures of what was supposed to be progress and upward mobility. Fortunately, for the both of us, we had reinforcements coming in. Theresa’s sister, her sister’s fiancé, and a colleague of mine showed up to save the day. But it was questionable whether the damage caused due to multiple stressors in our lives could be

repaired soon or well. Looking back, it was naïve to think that this was the only setback we would experience upon purchasing a new home, when the road ahead contained more bumps.

On October 1, 2014, at approximately 5:00 p.m., Theresa, was toiling in the backyard of our new home with hopes of cleaning up some of the shrubs left unattended by the previous owner. After talking a little while with the neighbor, Theresa noticed what appeared to be several mosquito bites on both of her arms. The itch was insidious. She could not help but to scratch her arms as she was cleaning off the green stains caused by the shrubs and weeds she spent the past few hours cleaning out.

At around 11:30 p.m. that night, Theresa woke me up and, with an agonizing voice, said, “Curtis, something is wrong!”

I reached over to turn on the light and saw Theresa, her eyes filled with tears, showing signs of enduring agonizing pain. She extended her arms out and cried, “I think it’s poison ivy, but I’m not sure. It just hurts so bad!”

“Do you think your arm still has some of the oil on it?” I asked, as I turned her hand over to see if the rash was developing on the other side.

“I have washed my arms and hands with soap multiple times!” she said in an impatient, yet desperate and cracking, voice. I knew the pain was bad—Theresa has always been a strong woman, adapting to multiple challenging situations with grace, and barely ever complained if she was experiencing personal discomfort due to health-related matters.

Recognizing the seriousness of the situation, I went into the bathroom and retrieved some calamine lotion from the cabinet. Theresa applied the lotion on what then appeared to be small white welts. I asked, “Do you need to go to the hospital?”

“No!” she boomed.

For the remainder of the night, I heard her breathe deeply, sigh, and gasp in pain. Second only to childbirth, I believe this was the most painful thing Theresa ever experienced; in both cases, I experienced complete helplessness. The following morning, I woke up and was astonished at what I saw. Theresa’s face appeared swollen on the right side, and her arms had a full outbreak of welts. She appeared defeated.

“Theresa, you need to go to the doctor!” I said in a shocked manner. “What can I do to help?”

She replied, “I will go to the doctor today. I do not need you to stay at home!”

“Are you sure?” I asked again. I could not believe how different her face looked swollen.

“Yes, Curtis, I am sure!” she said with an annoyed tone. With that, I knew to quit asking. I did call her mother and let her know about the poison ivy. Was Theresa’s recent tone her way of punishing me with guilt for picking work over helping with the move—and now this? I wondered if she was implying, “Go to work. Don’t worry about us around here. We know we take second place.” One of my favorite lines from the movie *Parenthood* is when Steve Martin’s character is asked by his wife if he really had to go to coach the little league game, and he responds, “My whole life is have to!” (Grazer & Howard, 1989). The line never really resonated with me until Theresa and the kids started to ask, “Do you really have to...?” on a more frequent basis than ever before. Although things were still a mess due to the recent move, and Theresa was afflicted with a violent poison ivy rash, right or wrong, I made my way out the door to tend to my other marriage partner—Salina High School South. I am not mentioning this to be viewed

as heroic—in fact, leaving her that day soon proved to me to be one of the biggest mistakes I had ever made.

Later that morning, Theresa drove Emmalina, our oldest daughter, to Stewart Elementary School. Although Emmalina did not realize it, she broke Theresa’s heart in two when she said, “Mom, you can stop back here at the crosswalk and drop me off. You do not have to walk me into school since you are not feeling [sic] good. I will be okay on my own.”

Theresa cried all the way home, but she didn’t tell me about the incident until a few years later. I guess she did not want to bother me with the story given that I somehow conveyed family to be secondary to my work.

Digging Out of My Microsoft Outlook Inbox

The typical high school office is an exciting and dynamic place. The whimsical sounds of phones ringing, the constancy of doors opening and closing, and the rhythmic clicking of keyboards and calculators all in a crisp harmony—combine to create what could one day be a top-selling school scapesound music CD. Perhaps Hollywood best captured this scene in a movie known as *Office Space*, a piece of cinema that, while snubbed by the Oscars and critics, is respectfully praised by the beaten-down Generation X⁷ middle class (Rappaport, Rotenberg, & Shadyac, 1999). If Glade ever were to create an air-freshener scent called school office, I am almost certain it would smell like the cheapest Great Value blend of coffee with hints of copier toner. I was finally back in the office—my second home—to catch up from the days of being gone due to touring schools across the region.

⁷ Gen X is the demographic cohort following the baby boomers. There are no precise dates for when this cohort starts or ends; demographers and researchers typically use starting birth years ranging from the early-to-mid 1960s and ending birth years ranging from the late 1970s to early 1980s.

It was mid-October of 2014, and we were ready to start designing Salina High School South 2.0. Scrolling through an infinite list of emails, I could not help but think of the situation that Jim Carrey's character Bruce Nolan encountered in the movie *Bruce Almighty*, when charged with the task of handling God's prayer requests via email (Shadyac, Carrey, & Brudbaker, & Shadyac, 2003). There is no end to a principal's email inbox. Hidden deep in what seemed to be an endless list of messages, I spotted a request from DLR Architects asking me to review a document called the Classroom Capacity Model. Intrigued, I opened up the file, completely unaware of the political landmine hidden in this relatively harmless looking document. At first glance, I did not see what needed to be reviewed. Knowing that DLR wanted this back with my stamp of approval, I sought more information from The Oracle.

The Second Visit

The chamber of thought was much fuller this time, with several new experts in attendance. I walked to the podium centered before the panel and recognized that although one of the members was missing, several other experts crowded the gallery. Walking up to the bench, I asked Dr. Fullan, "Where is Dr. Ben Levin, and who are all of these people?"

Dr. Fullan pressed his hand over the microphone, leaned in, exhaled some strong coffee breath, and replied, "Come on, Stevens! Don't you read the papers?"

"Does it look like I have time to read the papers? That's why I am in here to begin with!" I fumed.

"Let's just say that he is no longer with us professionally." Dr. Fullan answered, hoping to change the subject.

"Okay, if you will not tell me where Dr. Levin is, then perhaps you can enlighten me as to why our gallery is loaded with spectators," I suggested.

Dr. Fullan stretched his back and gazed across the gallery. He then said, “Those people are all of the new experts you have added to your repertoire of knowledge these last few months.”

I knew at that moment that we would likely have to break the room up for future Oracle visits. Washing my hands of Dr. Fullan for the moment, and not wanting to waste any more time, I called upon the gallery to be quiet as I made my way from the bench to the podium. “Does anyone in here have advanced experience or expertise in the field of architecture or engineering?” I inquired as I scanned the large room.

One individual raised his hand and said, “I have expertise but not in that field.”

“Then why did you raise your hand?” I questioned in a snarky manner.

“While I do not have expertise in the field of architecture or engineering, I do believe you will appreciate my knowledge of poison ivy,” said Dr. Florian Winau, an Assistant Professor of Microbiology and Immunobiology of Kyoto University.

(Aside: Keep in mind that the Oracle consists of everything I have read. Somehow this expert snuck in. His work, while intriguing, was limited in scope.)

“You will recall that my work has identified an antibody that interrupted the inflammatory response and could be used as an injectable drug,” Dr. Winau stated.

“Hold on! I heard the words “could be,” not “is.” So this is not even on the market? I asked, showing my frustration by throwing my hands up in the air.

“That is cor—”

“Security! Get this guy out!” I commanded. “Again, I ask, does anyone here have expertise in architecture and engineering?”

“Sir, I do!” exclaimed a new face that appeared to be some college doctoral student standing in the darkened back area of the chamber.

“Who are you and what expertise do you bring?” I asked impatiently, as I squinted my eyes in an attempt to see the stranger seated near the back of the chamber.

He quickly answered: “My name is J. Pabón. I am a doctoral graduate out of Stanford University. My dissertation examined the advantages of using an integrated design model by including both architects and engineers in the schematic design process.”

“Your voir dire is now complete. Please have a seat at the bench where Dr. Levin used to sit,” I responded.

Running out of time, I got down to business.

“Dr. Pabón, it would appear to me that the architects and engineers are trying to decrease the size of our school in hopes of scoring political points with future clients or school boards. If their portfolio shows how they found ‘efficiency’ then it looks good for their company. Do not get me wrong. I want an efficient school, but I am also in charge of handling the scheduling of the school that will most likely grow larger over the next 30 years. Am I out of bounds to argue with the architectural and engineering firm on this topic? After all, I am just a principal. Please help me understand why they are adamant about teachers sharing rooms and traveling,” I requested, as I displayed **Figure 4.11** for everyone in the chamber to examine.

Figure 4.11 Classroom Utilization Ratios of Original Salina High School South

| Department | No. Teaching Stations | Number Sections @ 100% Utilization | Total Actual Sections | Total Planning Periods | Actual Utilization Percentage | Classrooms | Projected Utilization % | Total Planning Periods | Total Actual Sections | Number Sections @ 100% Utilization | No. Teaching Stations Needed @ 85% | No. Rooms Needed |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|--|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|
| Core Classrooms | | | | | | | 7 | | | | | |
| Language Arts | 11 | 77 | 56 | 21 | 72.7% | 206, 207, 208, 209, 213, 307, 308, 309, | 85.0% | | 56 | 67 | 9.41 | 9.5 |
| Math | 10 | 70 | 51 | 19 | 72.9% | 210, 211, 212, 305, 306, 307, 405, 408, | 85.0% | | 51 | 60 | 8.57 | 8.5 |
| Social Studies | 8 | 56 | 35 | 14 | 62.5% | 202, 203, 302, 303, 304, 403, 404, 411, 412 | 85.0% | | 35 | 42 | 5.88 | 6 |
| Science | 10 | 70 | 51 | 19 | 72.9% | 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 507B, 508, 509 | 85.0% | | 51 | 60 | 8.57 | 8.5 |
| Foreign Language | 3 | 21 | 19 | 6 | 90.5% | 204, 205, 411 | 85.0% | | 19 | 21 | 3.19 | 3 |
| Arts/Career/Tech/PE | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| FACS/CTE | 2 | 14 | 10 | 4 | 71.4% | 502, 506 | 85.0% | | 10 | 11 | 1.68 | 1.5 |
| CADD | 1 | 7 | 5 | 2 | 71.4% | 507 | 85.0% | | 5 | 7 | 0.84 | 1 |
| Wood Shop | 1 | 7 | 3 | 0 | 42.9% | 510 | 85.0% | | 3 | 7 | 0.50 | 1 |
| Art | 2 | 14 | 14 | 4 | 100.0% | 503, 504 | 85.0% | | 14 | 18 | 2.35 | 2.5 |
| Music | 2 | 14 | 9 | 4 | 64.3% | 601, 604 | 85.0% | | 9 | 11 | 1.51 | 1.5 |
| Drama | 1 | 7 | 6 | 2 | 85.7% | 603? | 85.0% | | 6 | 7 | 1.01 | 1 |
| Business | 4 | 28 | 25 | 10 | 89.3% | 414, 414B, 416, 417 | 85.0% | | 25 | 28 | 4.20 | 4 |
| Physical Education | 5 | 35 | 20 | 10 | 57.1% | 512 (Wrestling), 513 (Conditioning), Upper Gym, Lower Gym, Aux Gym Space Y | 85.0% | | 20 | 25 | 3.36 | 3.5 |
| SPED | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| SPED Classroom | 11 | 77 | 53 | 16 | 68.8% | 200, 201, 300, 301, 310, 311, 312, 313, 400, 401, 402 | 85.0% | | 53 | 63 | 8.91 | 9 |
| Gifted or SPED | | | | | | Gifted classes meeting in the 700 series rooms | | | | | | |
| Total | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | | | | | | | 84.3% | 0 | 357 | 424 | 60.00 | 61 |

Figure 4.11. Classroom utilization ratios of the original Salina High School South as provided by DLR. Copyright 2019.

The others on the panel looked irritated that I invited Pabón to the bench, but as I started asking questions and displaying data, they soon realized that they lacked the expertise to field such questions. Pabón (1988) offered the following response:

Both disciplines (architects and contractors) are subordinate to the owner's goals and needs. Converting an idea to the reality of a building is a dynamic process that brings together different disciplines represented by people who are motivated by different objectives, at different moments in time. (p. 4)

“So conflict is going to happen as a result of the dynamic process at play, even with the professionals we are paying?” I catechized.

Pabón (1988) affirmed my previous statement, “The ‘components’ of the construction industry, from consumers of the product to contractors, from designers to labor organizations, are highly fragmented, divisive, and potentially confrontational” (pp. 4-5).

After processing his response, I knew the next few months would be even more difficult. I better get tight on priorities—and do so quickly. This process was exhausting. One thing I quickly became aware of was that—the architects and engineer worked for the board of education and the district, as did I. The board and district may wish to see the “wow” factor in impressing the community, perhaps more than the principal is willing to sacrifice in the name of functionality. After all, the board will be held accountable politically if the voters are not impressed. I, on the other hand, would be held accountable by the board if we ended up with a building that did not fit our program needs. The final design would be driven by power, power would be derived from influence, and—in USD 305 Salina Public Schools—influence was earned by using King Data.

As of right now, I was losing the battle of functionality versus efficiency in the war of data-driven design.

“What is the best argument I can make with the district brass when trying to convince them that the principal, faculty, and staff should also be considered an essential voice at the table of design?” I asked.

Pabón (1988) offered the following advice:

A successfully integrated project team does not result from a haphazardous throwing together of design and construction personnel during the design phase, but is the product of a plan that creates an adequate administrative climate and a contractual approach that support integration. (p. 58)

Perhaps the best argument I will be able to use is that administration, faculty members, and students understand the functional needs of the building and will be living with the final outcome; thus, they must play a significant role in not only the design but also the programming.

“Dr. Pabón walk me through how programming influences the overall project...please” I was a bit desperate.

Pabón (1988) attempted to explain.

Programming answers four basic questions: 1) **What** does the client want to achieve; 2) **How** much money, space and quality are required; 3) **What** is the project all about; 4) **How** does the client want to achieve the goals. These questions fall into the categories of goals, needs, facts, and concepts and their answers are organized and classified into a matrix by four categories: function, form, economy, and time. All elements of a project fit within one of these four categories. The last stage of programming synthesizes all the

previous information into a clear problem statement: **What are the significant parameters that will guide all design efforts?** (p. 70)

A picture immediately started forming in my head about the various factions that existed across the district—even without the architects and engineers at the table. Two rival high schools will receive the lion’s share of the budget will and most likely be at odds but there are also substantial projects at the two middle schools and the eight elementary buildings. Salina High School South is tentatively on the schedule to finish last. How will the other project’s change orders (or overages) impact our final project? How will the political factions within Salina influence which programs are assigned to each high school? The questions kept coming.

Then bench and crowd sat stone silent. The only movement I detected came from Dr. Fullan, who cleared his throat and started to act as though he needed to say something. “Yes, Dr. Fullan?” I asked.

Fullan (2007) contributed perfectly to what Pabòn had mentioned, “Solutions must come through the development of shared meaning. Large-scale reforms in the 1960s failed because they focused on development of innovations, not the culture of schools in which the innovations would reside” (p. 9). Let me offer a metaphor to see if I have this right. In other words, top-down design doesn’t work because it fails to garner ownership, commitment, or even clarity about the nature of the final design. Bottom-up input, similar to a gardener waiting for a thousand flowers to bloom on their own, does not produce success on any scale either. A thousand flowers do not bloom on their own, and those that do are not perennial. Both are needed, as Pabòn said, to ensure that the design process leads to the successful conclusion or a building everyone values.

Fullan (2007) nodded and responded: “Change is as much gardening as it is engineering” (p. 220). Several in the room nodded in affirmation. Perhaps I should work the angle that the

efficiency data need not be attacked, but rather placed in perspective for what they really are—cold heartless numbers lacking context of potential changes to teaching loads in the future. Until one constructs a master schedule for 1,000 and more students, it is difficult for engineers to understand classroom utilization ratios within context.

You Are Building a School That Existed in the 1940s!

After returning from my brief visit to The Oracle, the ringing of the phone startled me. Picking up the receiver I accidentally dropped it on the desk. Frantically trying to regain control of the receiver, and praying the caller was not a parent, I was relieved to hear the familiar voice of Deborah Howard, the administrative assistant to the superintendent. After apologizing to her for the loud sound of the receiver hitting my desk, I asked “How can I help you?”

She was by far the nicest person who ever worked in USD 305. Deborah said, “Mr. Stevens, good afternoon. Mr. Hall (USD 305 superintendent) wants you to meet at the board office tomorrow so you can conference with the District Executive Team, DLR architects, and those who traveled on our design team trips.”

Fortunately, the meeting was after school, meaning the teachers on our design team would not have more work to do in planning for a substitute at the last minute. A friendly piece of advice I would offer architects and contractors who work with schools is to—capitalize on meeting times that fall outside of the school day. Planning for subs is a nightmare for teachers, and scheduling substitutes is a nightmare for administrators.

I ended the conversation in my normal way: “I will make it happen. See you tomorrow.” As I hung up the phone, I had already created an email calendar invite to send to the building design team members. With less than 24 hours to go before probably one of the most important meetings of the design process, I was feeling overwhelmed and way behind.

Using the information gained from The Oracle, I set out to draft the best arguments I could think of to make a solid case for the need for classrooms. Perhaps the most frustrating thing was that I could see the district's future in a crystal ball. The negotiated agreement between the school board and teachers of USD 305 would likely require a master schedule that consisted of teachers teaching six out of seven classes rather than five of seven—meaning we would need one classroom for almost every teacher. Just as I drafted one of my last best arguments, the phone rang yet again.

If Linn Exline, my former principal, was Superwoman, then Shanna Rector was the equivalent of Batman's Robin. Shanna Rector, Salina Central High School Principal, started the conversation with, "We are going to have to fight for classrooms!"

"I know. That's what I'm working on," I responded. I am not sure where the time in the day had gone. It was already 9:30 p.m. and I realized I had missed dinner. I reviewed the arguments I would use tomorrow at the meeting and then hung up the phone and made my way out the door to see if anyone at home was still awake. It was comforting to know that the other principal was on the same page as I was, especially as it pertained to guarding instructional square footage. Time would tell whether or not our concern, our arguments could carry the measure in the face of incredible pressure to produce the "Wow Factor". Speaking of time—it was late and time to leave for home.

When I walked into the house, it was a little after 10:00 p.m. The kitchen light was on and the rest of the house resembled a silent sanctuary. As I climbed the master staircase in our living room, I heard the cracking of my knees with each of the twelve challenging steps toward the girls' bedrooms. I always tried to see Olivia and Emmalina daily, even if it meant they were

sleeping—something that was becoming more common and more common. I vividly recall going almost an entire week and never seeing them awake. If I did see them awake, it was usually because they came to an evening school event like a football or basketball game. Emmalina was a deep sleeper, and she did not wake up when the floorboard cracked as I walked in and sat in the wooden rocking chair near her bed. Sitting in silence, yet listening to the faint sound of my firstborn breathe, I recalled a depressing statistic: there are only 936 Saturdays from the time a child is born until they turn 18. I had already burnt about 40% of those days spending time working in a school. Every time I did see them awake, it was if I were watching them grow up in pictures. I could see them changing before my eyes. I stood up and walked out and over to Olivia's room. Unlike Emmalina, Olivia was a light sleeper. She sat up when I walked in the room.

“Why didn't you come home earlier?” Olivia asked with a disgruntled look on her face.

“Shhh, you'll wake up your sister,” I whispered. “I had to stay at work and get some stuff done for tomorrow. I'm sorry I'm late getting home. I love you!” I responded, with one of the most silent voices I could produce.

“You need to come home earlier!” Olivia said as she pointed her finger at me. She then rolled over and laid her head on the Lalaloopsy pillow her grandmother had given her for Christmas and fell back to sleep.

After leaving Olivia's bedroom, I made my way downstairs to check in and see how Theresa was coping with the horrible poison ivy outbreak. It was too bad that Dr. Florian Winau, the assistant professor of microbiology and immunobiology at Kyoto University, really had not yet developed the medicine needed to combat poison ivy—I may have been too harsh on him during The Oracle's session. Perhaps he could have provided me with a tip on how to mitigate a

full outbreak, which Theresa was most certainly experiencing. I quietly opened the door and saw her sleeping. Good, I thought to myself, she needs to just try to sleep through this miserable condition.

Needing to unwind, I sat down in the living room and turned on the television—only to see a Subaru commercial titled *Baby Driver* where a father sees his toddler daughter in the driver's seat of the car turning into a teenager right before his eyes (Hughes & Scott, 2010). Wiping several tears from my eyes, I immediately turned off the television and cursed the marketer that created such a depressing commercial. Television was out, so I headed to the backyard porch and sat in a white wooden rocking chair that we had purchased at a Cracker Barrel during better times, a vacation in Branson, Missouri, the previous summer. In an attempt to untangle my weary mind, a familiar feeling of tobacco addiction crossed my thoughts; however, such an addiction was short lived—after all, I promised Theresa that I would not smoke anymore. To my credit, I kept that promise; June 30 was the last time I smoked a cigarette. Despite my promise, if there had been a pack of cigarettes on my porch that night, I would have smoked every damn one of them. Fortunately, for my health, there was not.

Since smoking was no longer an option, I became fonder of food and used it to serve as medication for stress. Nothing caused endorphins to flow quite like carbohydrates. On a typical school day, I would go full speed until the evening, and then I would breakdown and binge on carbs. Despite repetitive warnings from my doctor, I could never seem to break the cycle. He went so far as to tell me that if I would eat what I eat at night during the morning, I would lose 20 pounds within six weeks. At the start of every school year, I entered into the diet with full intentions of being successful, but then life and reality would set in, causing me to fall victim to

past habits. I made a large ham and cheese sandwich, drank a glass of milk, and then went to bed. Tomorrow was going to be a long day.

The SEC Room of the USD 305 Board Office used to be an elementary multipurpose room back in the 1980s. At one point in time, the entire board office used to be in a single suite in the Saline County Building. Over time, as federal and state government became more involved in education, the need for office space grew. The consolidation of the smaller elementary schools in Salina caused—some of the buildings to be repurposed. Hageman Elementary turned into the administrative offices for the Central Kansas Cooperative in Education Center, and the Board of Education converted Glennifer Hill Elementary into the district office. Folklore has it that one of the kindergarten teachers told the story of how former Salina Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Andy Tompkins looked out of her then-classroom window at the Indian Rock Park across the street and said, “This would make an excellent view for a superintendent’s office.” Soon thereafter, the school closed during the consolidation movement, and that specific classroom became the new superintendent’s office.

Today, representatives from both DLR Architects and McCown Gordon Construction Firm packed the SEC room. Consisting of teachers and students, the design teams of both high schools, Central and South sat at staggered tables. All of the district administrators sat at various tables throughout the room. Mr. Hall, Salina Public Schools Superintendent, stood at the front of the room and reviewed the goals of the meeting. Before the design charrettes at each high school commenced, Mr. Hall wanted everyone who attended the school tours to pull together and discuss what they observed.

It did not take long for controversy to rear its ugly head. Not surprisingly, representatives from DLR and McCown Gordon aggressively argued about the need to scale back on the number of classrooms so that more square footage could be devoted to open collaboration areas. One of the lead architects argued that if more teachers shared classrooms and had a common planning area as their office, more square footage for collaboration areas could exist and the district would save on energy costs. Several teachers weighed in, and I decided to sit back and listen. Over time, I have learned that the first voices in a large group discussion are often the ones that people do not listen to because they are either processing the question presented or because the people in the group are trying to think about what they are going to say.

One of the women, a teacher on the design team offered her input: “It is wrong for us to not have a classroom to call our own. For the past two years, we have been trained to create instructional walls, post rules and learning objectives, and design more engaging lessons that require activities to be set up prior to students’ arrival. How does this work when we are always having to move from room to room?”

An architect responded: “As an architect, we are required to meet in collaborative settings all the time. Learning does not only happen in a classroom.”

After taking in all of the comments, I decided to respond: “I do not disagree with the need to be more efficient and to maximize classroom utilization, but requiring a teacher to travel from one classroom to the next does have a negative impact on the teacher’s ability to establish a structured learning environment. Consequently, doing so is far from effective and efficient when guarding instructional time. As a former first-year teacher who traveled between six different classroom locations, I can attest that it was not ideal. While I believe whole-heartedly that the architects and other professionals have collaborative working environments, I guarantee they

also have a private office to land when they need to be alone to concentrate. While touring DLR's offices in Overland Park, I not only saw, a few collaborative working areas, but also offices with professionals working on their own."

The bantering went back and forth for about another fifteen minutes. Shanna Rector talked about the need for like-subject teachers to be near one another and work in a departmentalized fashion using Richard DuFour's research on Professional Learning Community practices. Numerous other teachers mentioned insights on how the lack of rooms will lead to more classroom management issues.

The group decided to take a short break from the meeting with hopes of reducing some tension. After stopping at the back table to refill my favorite coffee cup with day-old stagnant Great Value coffee and bulk up on some standard district-issued, non-frosted staff development animal crackers, I left the large meeting room. As I walked down a hallway and came across Central High School Principal, Shanna Rector, and my predecessor, Linn Exline, who now served as the Director of School Improvement. Linn was rarely afraid to confront people that she was in disagreement with—an attribute I came to respect. "You both [Shanna and I] are talking like you are building a high school in the 1940s!" Linn boomed as she placed one hand on her left hip and pointed her right finger at the two of us.

The fight or flight mechanism is really an odd thing, and over time I have learned to realize that I am a fighter. I shot back, "Linn, if we can build a high school that wins a world war and puts a man on the moon, I will take that 1940s high school any day. Don't forget that the school is first and foremost for student learning not just for eye-popping trendy spaces that were largely under-utilized by the schools we toured!"

“Departments—you want a school that is departmentalized?” Linn asked with a disgusted look. One of the advantages to the circular pods at South High was that the pods had mixed departments, which were thought to help eradicate entrenched organizational thinking.

“I want a school that places teachers within close proximity of other teachers who teach similar subjects with the goal of fostering natural Professional Learning Communities, not an environment where the teachers go back behind their doors and close the world out,” I responded.

To the outside party, Linn and Curtis conversations were extremely uncomfortable. Shanna probably thought we were ready to have a fight. After working with Linn for a year as her assistant principal and as a fellow administrative colleague in USD 305 for the past ten years, an outsider’s observation could not be further from the truth. This was how we improved the school, district, and one another—through intense but productive argumentation. On numerous occasions, during the heat of our discussions, we would both realize, more often than not, that we were saying the same thing. We both always laughed when revisiting a Robert McCloskey quote to defuse tension during our conversations: “I know that you believe you understand what you think I said, but I am not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant.” Our other famous line was “We are not going to talk about this right now!”

Shanna, looking for a place to jump into the conversation, said, “Linn, we need classrooms. Teachers need a place to plan and to have their materials where they can set them up before students arrive. That is not only convenient for teachers, but also best for students, especially when it comes to instruction and learning.”

Just as our conversation and break ended, I noticed Deborah Howard, the chief administrative assistant for the district, started walking toward me in a quick manner. “Curtis,

there is an emergency phone call you need to take!” she said in a voice that sounded riddled with panic.

“Okay,” I said, caught off guard, as I frantically started following her for another room with a phone. Immediately, a similar feeling of panic to the one I experienced on April 10, 2003, at 5:10 p.m. That date and time will forever be seared into my long-term memory.

Each steps were as if I carried heavy weights on my feet. The short distance from the SEC room to the private office took what seemed like an eternity to walk. As I entered the small conference room, Deborah quickly pulled the door behind me. The sound of the door closing triggered a flashback to April 10, 2003, at 5:10 p.m.

April 10, 2003, 5:10 p.m.

“Mr. Stevens, you have a phone call,” said the president of the college. I was teaching an evening class at a local college in Salina, Kansas, and I was a little irritated that someone was calling—especially during the first fifteen minutes of my class. I wondered if it was a student saying they could not be at class, as such calls were common.

“Can you take a message?” I asked with a frustrated tone, as I worked on getting the final teaching props prepared for class.

Her face exhibited a stressed look, one of almost sorrow, as she said, “Curtis, you really need to take this call.”

With that, I knew something was not right. I followed her down the long gray tiled hallway that led to a private office with a simple desk, a phone, and a small window. Once I entered the room she pulled the blinds closed, stepped outside, and closed the door. The shiny black phone exhibited a bright red flashing light that blinked as fast as my heart pounded. I took

just a second to breathe before picking up the phone, almost as if I were saying to myself, everyone I know and love is still alive right now.

After picking up the receiver, I said “hello” in a broken voice.

“Son, this is your dad. Chayston is dead.” In the background, I heard the loud cries of my grandmother and mother. Chayston was my closest brother. Being that we were only 14 months apart in age, and after sharing a room from the time I was born until my oldest brothers went off to college, there was no other human being that knew me better. The moment was as if an identical twin saw his other half lying in a casket.

At first, nothing registered. All I could muster up were the words, “Oh God, no!”

Dad’s voice hardly registered with my brain in part because we had not talked for quite a while.

“What happened?” I asked, starting to feel the shock reverberate throughout my body.

“We don’t know, but we think it was related to his heart,” Dad replied.

Overcome with shock, grief, and nausea, relieved only by eventually vomiting, the floor fell from under me. It was the first time I ever lost someone so close. My family’s life changed; future get-togethers lacked the same level of joy. The last part of my youth ended during that conversation. My life would now have two parts: before and after Chayston’s death.

The Call

Eleven years after Chayston’s death, I felt the same panic set in as I picked up the receiver and waited for the worst. “Hello!” The sound of crying transmitted from the receiver. “Curtis, I’m having trouble breathing,” Theresa said in desperation. Immediately, my mind started racing—what does she mean she can’t breathe! Recognizing the gravity of the situation, I said, “I am calling 9-11 right now!”

“No, just come home!” Theresa responded with as much protest she could muster.

“I’m heading home right now! Are you sure you don’t need an ambulance?”

“Yes, but I need to go to the E.R. and I need you to take me.” One minute, I am thinking about classroom utilization ratios and arguing with colleagues; the next minute, my entire life is turned upside down. Before hanging up the phone, I told her that I would call her on my cell and that she should stay on the line until she hears the call beep in.

I took all the backroads on the way to our house, speeding at different points along the way. The whole time, Theresa remained on the cellphone. I could tell that her breathing was shallow. I kept asking if I should call an ambulance, but she insisted on me not doing this. She did not want to scare Emmalina and Olivia.

The drive home seemed like an eternity. If there was anything that could slow me down, it did. The leisurely driver, the poor soul who cannot seem to understand that modern brakes can slow you down within 150 feet of a stop sign, and the long line of pre-5:30 p.m. traffic that routinely plagues Ohio Street. Pulling into the driveway, I saw my oldest daughter Emmalina standing outside the house with tears streaming down her face.

“What’s wrong, honey?” I asked, knowing full well what the problem was.

“Mom is hurt!” Emma responded, pointing toward the house. This moment proved to me the unwavering bond between a mother and her daughter. Although Theresa did not tell Emma about her condition, Emma knew something was not right.

“Don’t worry, Emma. Dad is here and everything is okay,” I lied, in hopes that my calmness would sooth her as I picked her up and carried her into the front door of the house.

As I walked through the front door, I saw Theresa sitting on the couch. She appeared to have been crying for several hours. She was exhausted and in agonizing pain. Her face was the

pasty white color medical patients have immediately before death. “We need to go now—or I need to call an ambulance!”

Theresa shook her head, saying between sobs, “I don’t want the girls to see me go in an ambulance! I just hurt so bad!” Her arms had large welts up and down them where the poison ivy oils had spread from her scratching her arms immediately after pulling weeds from the flowerbed in the backyard.

Olivia, my youngest daughter, sat on the floor coloring as if she were oblivious to what was going on. “Olivia, let’s go!” I fumed in frustration. As the girls scampered to the car in the garage, I contemplated whether or not, Theresa’s mother, Esther, would be home, or if I would have to cart the kids into the emergency room. Theresa looked as though she was going to get sick. “Do you need a bucket?” I asked.

“No, just drive,” She snapped.

---[Aside: Although I was not present, based on the meeting minutes and various conversations with colleagues, I was able to piece together the following narrative.]

Across town in the SEC Room at the board office, the conversation regarding classroom utilization started to heat up. Following my exodus, the group started to divide along professional lines: teachers versus architects/engineers and building-level employees versus district administrators. The bottom line was that the fewer classrooms there were, the more eye-popping features could be designed and built.

Shanna Rector spoke up:

Teachers must have a place to plan that is their own, and—their classroom is the most logical place to do it. Furthermore, we are asking teachers to utilize their classroom walls

for word walls and for posting rules and expectations. Asking them to pick up and leave and travel to another classroom inhibits their ability to manage the classroom effectively.

DLR. representatives fired back:

Adding more classrooms lowers efficiency over the span of the building's life and costs the taxpayers far more money in the long run. We can design an office space where teachers can collaborate together and save dollars by limiting the number of classrooms. Planning does not only have to happen in classrooms.

The teachers were extremely frustrated for having to defend their desire for instructional spaces. They were especially frustrated that this had to happen with professionals who did not work in the school and who were supposed to be the professionals who worked for them.

Across town, I was heading straight for my mother-in-law's house. Thank goodness, she was there to take the girls. As we left for Salina Regional Hospital, Emma and Olivia both stood outside Esther's house crying. I did not have time to reassure them that everything was going to be okay, and I honestly did not know if that would be the case. As I drove to the hospital, a sudden sense of guilt gave me a heavy heart. It was wrong to snap at Oliva the way I did before leaving the house.

Upon arriving at Salina Regional, the doctor diagnosed Theresa with a severe allergic reaction to medication initially prescribed to her. Although poison ivy is not something that is pleasant, the allergic reaction worsened the situation. Thank God she called, I thought to myself.

Following her admission, Theresa received a shot and fell asleep. I called Emmalina and Oliva and let them know that everything was okay. I told my mother-in-law that I would be over to pick the girls up in the morning. While sitting in the quiet hospital room, I had a few minutes

to reflect on the past several hours. Guilt is a funny thing—I absolutely hated that the girls had been at home alone with Theresa while she was so sick. Emmalina must have been terrified. Olivia was just too young to understand what was going on. I didn't even want to think about how frightening seeing their mother passed out or non-responsive could have been. I vowed to myself that I would never again put my family in a situation where they felt as though they were second. I am unable to articulate how bad this poison ivy outbreak was using words. I would include a picture in this dissertation to give the reader a true grasp of how serious this medical issue was—but then my wife would kill me. Some individuals may read this monograph and state that I am trying to make myself sound like a hero for putting the needs of work ahead of family—I can attest that it would be a misreading to do so. Not being at home when Theresa was afflicted with poison ivy is one of the least heroic things I have ever done, and for that, I am and will always be embarrassed. This was one of those moments that I paused to think about the juxtaposition of my role as a husband, father, and an educational leader, with familial and professional responsibilities, and how my lack of a sense of wellness and work life balance, put everything into chaos and unbalance.

Building an Airplane in the Air: Determining Programs While Designing Buildings

Following our short visit to the hospital, and after a slight adjustment to the medication, Theresa was finally on the mend. It took 31 days before the symptoms of the poison ivy receded. The only positive aspect I could find in the entire situation was that it happened early in my career and reminded me of the need to take care of my family first. There would always be work—but without a family, what is the point of work? It did not take long for me to find fellow colleagues who were workaholics to the point that they lost their marriages, families, and, eventually, their health. There is much more to life than a job; nevertheless, there was one hell of

a job still waiting. While my family is the most important thing to me, my family is also the primary reason I work. Like millions of other laborers across the nation, I discovered that balance is a journey, not a destination. I just got slapped across the face (figuratively, thank goodness) as a reminder of what my priorities should be.

The political fallout from missing the second half of the classroom ratio meeting proved to be minor—thanks in part to the strong leadership of our district’s teachers and Shanna Rector. The constituency present at the meetings held firm and left the architects, engineers, and district administrators with little doubt about the need to have enough classrooms so that teachers did not have to travel. Our design team cleared the first hurdle of the design process, classroom utilization ratios.

The second challenge loomed on the horizon; unlike the first challenging involving classroom utilization ratios, this challenge would not have cross-town allies. Dr. Andy Tompkins, former USD 305 Superintendent and Kansas Commissioner of Education, once said, “You can have anything in a budget, but you cannot have everything.” As the projected price tags for new Career and Technical Education programs were displayed in front of Shanna Rector and me, it became evident that some programs would be split between the two rival high schools in town (Salina Central and Salina South). This second challenge lacked the strong coalition between both high schools because it was evident that there would be clear winners and losers.

On October 20, 2014, at 11:00 a.m., Superintendent Bill Hall summoned the two high school principals to the notorious Harold Schmidt Conference Room at the board office for an emergency meeting. The agenda focused on the future programming of both high schools. Superintendent Hall presented a proposal of the high school Career and Technical Education (C.T.E.) programs as shown in **Figure 4.12**.

Figure 4.12 Career and Technical Education (C.T.E.) programs.

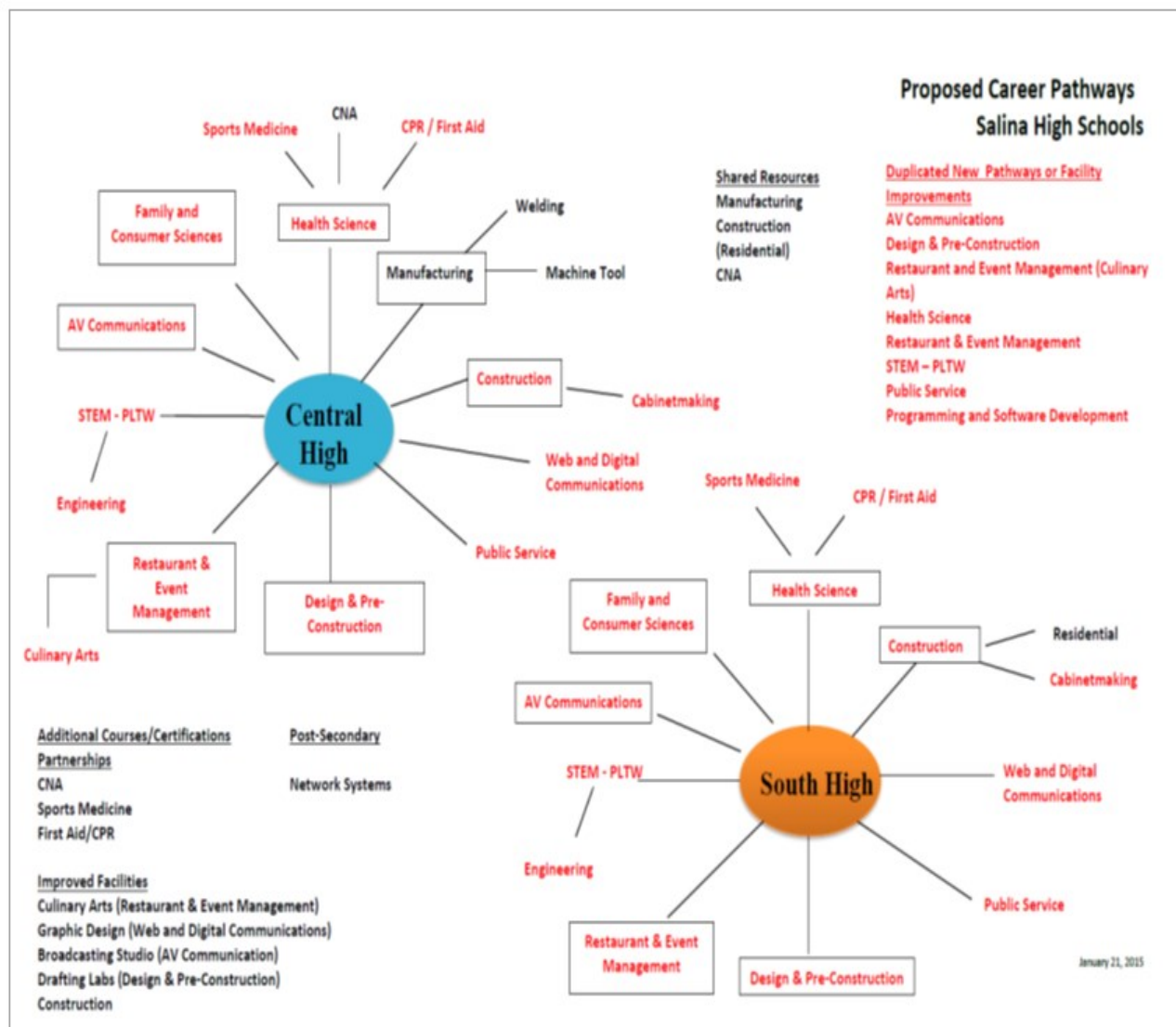


Figure 4.12. Career and Technical Education (C.T.E.) programs as originally assigned by USD 305 District Office in 2015. Infographic by W. Hall, (2015). Proposed USD 305 Career and Technical Education Programs. [infographic]. Copyright 2015.

Given budget restrictions, there was no possibility of having dual programs; certified nursing assistant (C.N.A.), construction science, automotive, machine metal, and welding were extremely expensive and could not exist at both schools. I proposed the idea of offering dual

programs at both schools, while removing automotive and machine metal, the two programs that were extremely expensive. That would allow us to focus on specific curriculum like broadcasting, construction science, culinary arts, graphic design, and welding. One disadvantage of this plan would be that it would limit (C.T.E.) programming, although it would be justified based on high demand areas and preliminary data our students provided about their interests. The advantage would be that both schools would offer high demand C.T.E. curriculum and not require shuttle bussing between both buildings—something that would incur major long-term expense over the course of the next 40 years.

The decision making process increased with complexity due to our not knowing exactly how much the programming—or the construction would cost. This proved to be a chicken and the egg situation. If bids for the brick and mortar aspect of the programs came in at a certain price, we may be able to afford the programs. On the other hand, if we eliminated programs from the proposal, we could afford more bricks and mortar for fewer but more in demand programs: eliminating an expensive machine metal program in order to gain two robust culinary programs or two welding programs so that each high school has one in the district.

The meeting ended with the following decisions. Central High would receive the certified nursing assistance, machine and metal, and welding programs. South High would receive the construction science and culinary program. The expensive automotive program would be removed from the proposed list and offered through Salina Area Technical College. Both high schools would have broadcasting and graphic design programs. My blood boiled. South High lost out on programs; after all, C.N.A. and welding were the most popular programs at the school. Compounding my frustration was the notion that machine metal was a viable program. Do not get me wrong—we need metal fabricators; however, Salina Area Technical College

already offered the program more efficiently than the district could— especially since the machines use to deliver the curriculum cost close to \$250,000. A preliminary survey showed that only five to ten students noted interest in the program. Trying to find a certified instructor was already difficult for the technical colleges, so—how would a high school compete? Moreover, the ongoing cost of supplies for this curriculum was astronomical. Machine metal programming in USD 305 Salina Public Schools is a prime example of the “wow factor” surpassing the economic realities of the situation. Just because five students want to learn how to drive a combine does not mean we go out and purchase a combine. When it came to the machine metal program, we almost ended up doing so. Later on, logic prevailed and the powers that be stopped pursuing this impractical program.

Following the meeting, I asked to speak with Central High School Principal Shanna Rector: “Shanna, perhaps I am wrong, but it seems as though this meeting just put the most in-demand, popular, and expensive programs at Central.”

In an almost dismissive yet equally defensive way, Shanna countered, “Curtis, Salina High School South will be known as the new high school in town! We (Central) need to have something that competes with that.”

“What good is a nice-looking school if it lacks essential programming?” I asked in an exasperated manner. Her use of the pronoun “we” suggested that any alliance between building administrators had ended.

“Salina Central High School needs this programming to equal the playing field in perception of relevance and newness!”

“I disagree. Central High will always have the branding of being the original high school of the two. In education, longevity garners prestige, not newness. We should both be shooting for equality in programming, not trying to shore up differences caused by the looks of bricks and mortar! Don’t forget that more programs being offered in one school will cause a shift of students wishing to forgo the boundary line to avoid losing instruction time in travel. Also, over time, ‘we’— meaning the district—will lose due to the long-term costs in bussing.”

It had been a long day, and I was exhausted. Our conversation was going nowhere. It appeared to me that the district office made the decision to split the programs long before the meeting. The meeting was an ambush. Time would tell whether the right decision was made, but at that moment, I experienced a loss not only in the short-run, but also in the long-run. On October 20, 2014, at 3:00 p.m. the district administration sided with Central High School when it came to placement of popular curriculum, programs, and resources. A lasting legacy of specializing programs in schools was that it locked USD 305 high schools into a block schedule format indefinitely. If a South High student wanted to take the Certified Nurse Assistant program they would have to travel. Fifty-minute classes proved too short to permit students the ability to travel over to the other school;,, hence, block scheduling (78- to 90-minute classes) was here to stay.

Charrette or Charade

The word *charrette* is French for “cart” or “chariot.” In the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris in the 19th century, it was not unusual for student architects to continue furiously working in teams at the end of the allotted term. Most worked up til a deadline, when a charrette would be wheeled among the students to pick up their scale models and other work for review. As the cart was wheeled around the students worked furiously to apply the finishing-touches. The students

were said to be working *en charrette*, or “in the cart” (Bonda, 2007, p. 29). The term evolved into the current design-related usage in conjunction with working right up until a deadline.

On November 3, 2014, at 9:00 a.m., the following entities filed into the stuffy, open area, upstairs conference room in what used to be the main office of Salina High School South. The meeting marked the first charrette of the design process of Salina High School South 2.0. Participants and visitors filled the room to watch the process. Salina High School South had the first charrette of the two high schools; consequently, it garnered quite a bit of interest from my cross-town colleague, Shanna Rector. It just so happened that on this particular day, she had Michael Strand, a respected local journalist, shadowing her for an upcoming story in the newspaper about “a day in the life” of a high school principal. Not only was my cross-town colleague present, but so was the Superintendent of Salina Public Schools Bill Hall and the Executive Director of School Improvement—and my former boss, a.k.a. Superwoman—Linn Exline. Brad Anderson, Director of the Salina Public Arts Commission, also was present. Architects from DLR of Overland Park; Jones, Gilliam, and Renz of Salina; and engineers from McCownGordon of Manhattan, Kansas, all shuffled into the crowded room as well (almost 25 people in total). Also present were the building design team members: Ericka Cain from special education, Nikki Chamberlain from science, Linda Edson from family and consumer science, Jessica Harris from art, Kevin Poland from social studies, Gary Seibel from construction science, and Salina High School South students Alondra Moreno, Bailey Waters, and Andres Mata.

Excitement filled the air. Many wondered what would become of the new school’s design. For years, Salina High School South exhibited a unique design due to its circular spaceship-like shape. Would the building look the same, or would it look like a more traditional school, robbing the institution of its novelty?

I began the meeting with a brief statement: “Welcome to Salina High School South. This is one of the most exciting ventures I have ever been a part of in my career. This moment is historic. Now, let’s design a new high school.”

Following my brief statement, considerable confusion set in when the architects asked everyone to vote with dots on various design concepts shown in **Figure 4.13**. These concepts or abstract pictures were taped to the walls. All of the concepts on the walls reflected items we observed on our tour of high schools in Garden City, Manhattan, and Joplin: collaboration areas; small, restaurant-style tables in lieu of institutional school cafeteria tables; windows that provided natural light; and an array of all kinds of random odd objects that only someone with the uncanny ability of world-renowned architectural designer Christopher Alexander, author of *A Pattern Language* (1977) could understand.

Figure 4.13 Collage of Contemporary School Designs

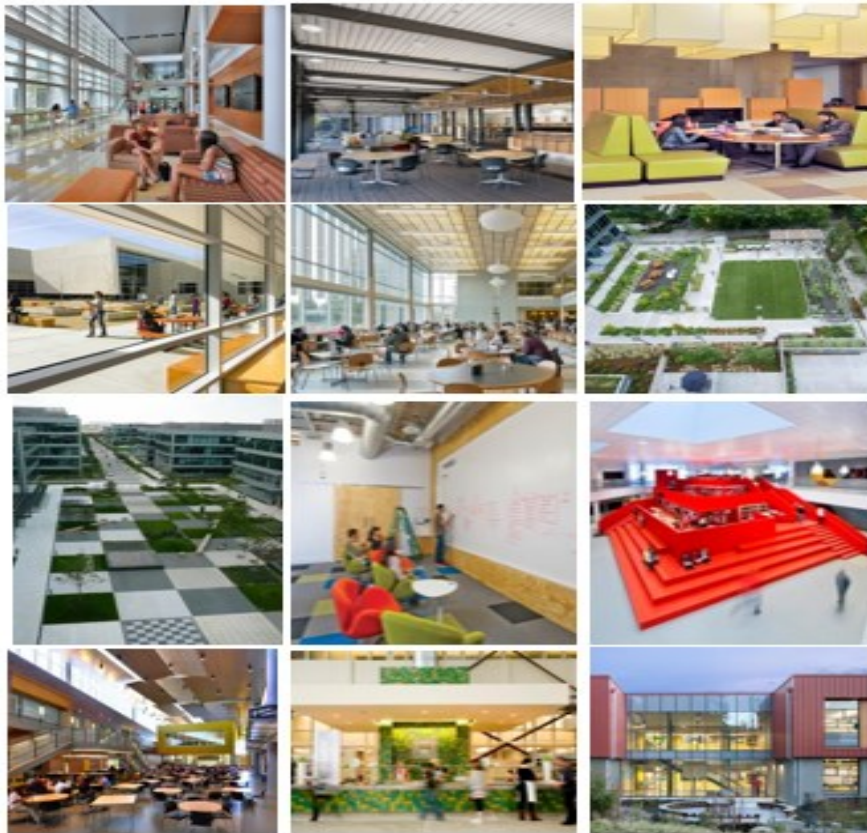


Figure 4.13. Collage of contemporary school designs DLR utilized to solicit student, faculty, and community member input in the design process. Collage of Design. [photograph]. Copyright 2015.

As a novice to the design process, I was not in a position to help the others understand the overall design process. Nevertheless, our building design team members participated without hesitation and began voting, despite their lack of understanding as shown in **Figure 4.14**.

Figure 4.14 SHSS Design Team Members Voting with Dots



Figure 4.14. SHSS design team members Kevin Poland, Deb Kohn, and Gary Seibel vote on design concepts using sticker dots. Photograph by C. Stevens, (2019). *Collage Dot Voting*. [photograph]. Copyright 2014.

Looking back on the meeting, I now realize the designers sought to solicit some general ideas of what patrons wanted in a school by using non-example or abstract ideas. Following our dot-voting marathon, we broke up into five smaller groups of three to four people each. Three groups went downstairs to the library. Each of the three groups worked with a different architect. Jim French, of DLR Architects, who has designed more than \$1.5 billion worth of educational facilities, led my group.

While I cannot speak to the experiences of other charrette participants, I found that watching Jim French draw our group's ideas was fascinating. Several weeks earlier, I had drafted a concept of what I thought the new building would look like as shown in **Figure 4.15** and **Figure 4.16**. It was eerie how similar to my drawings the renditions ended up being.

Figure 4.15 My Amateur Attempt at Architecture

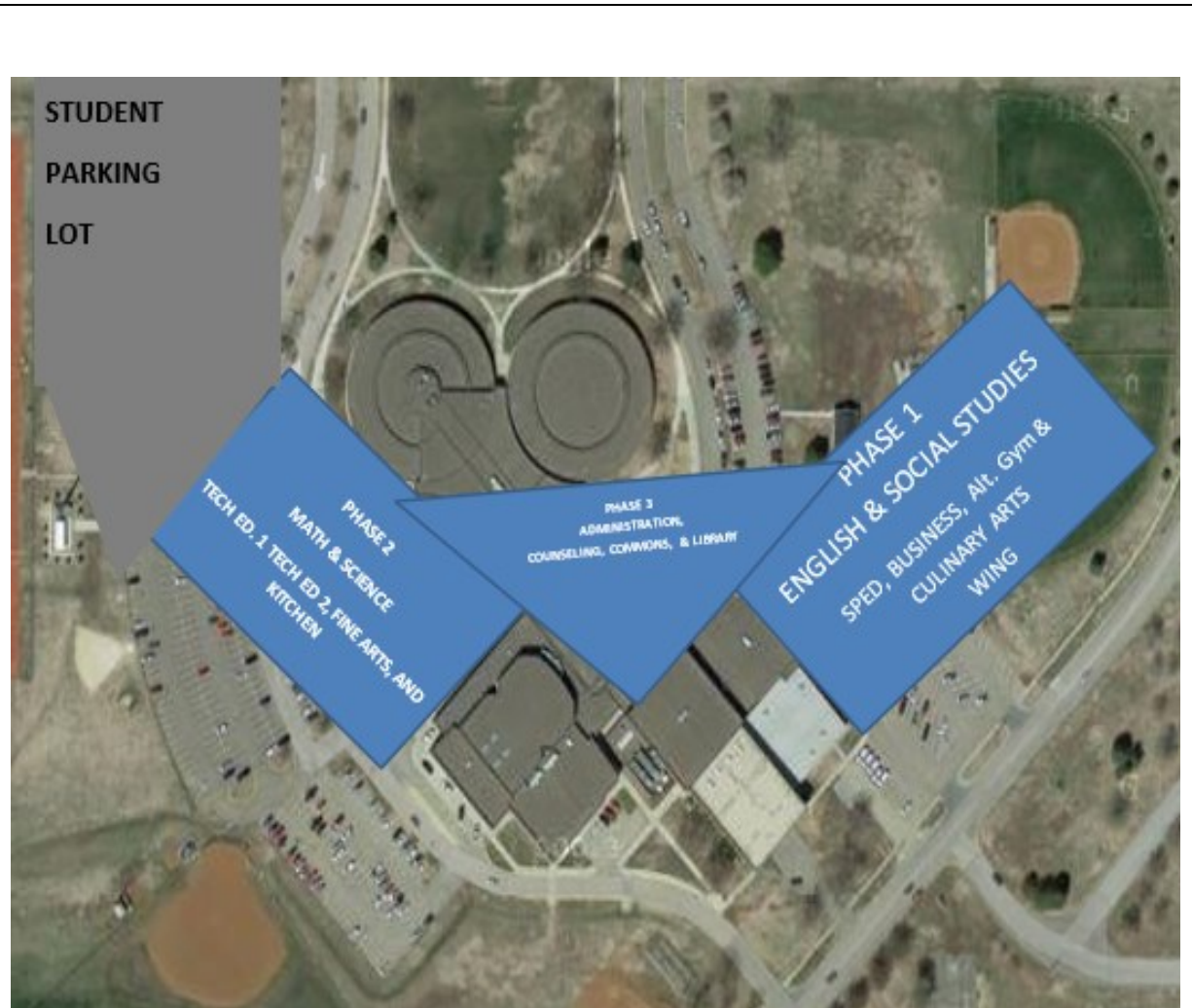


Figure 4.15. This photo is an example of me trying to envision what the new design would look like prior to the unveiling of Salina High School South 2.0. I layered Microsoft Shapes over a satellite photograph in November of 2014 prior to the conclusion of the schematic design. Infographic by C. Stevens, (2014). *My Amateur Attempt At Architecture*. [infographic]. Copyright 2014.

Figure 4.16 My Idea of Where Specific Classrooms Would Be Located

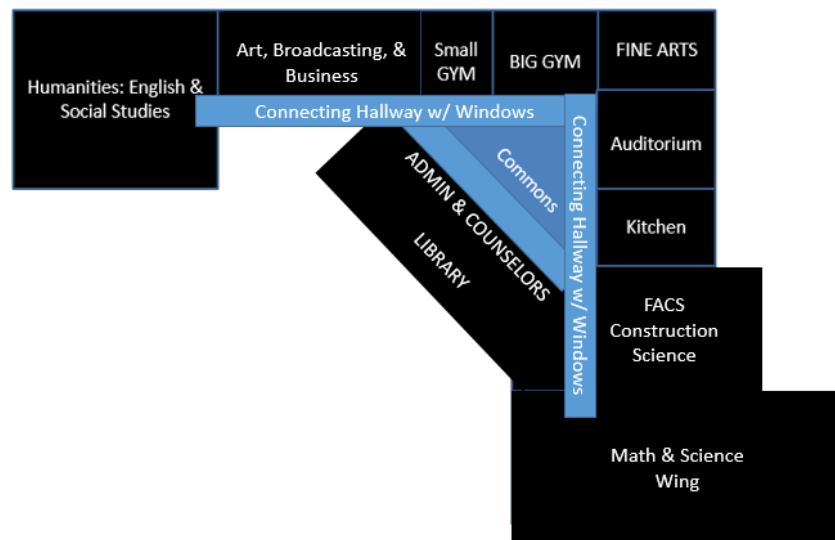


Figure 4.16. This photo is an example of me trying to envision what the new design would look like prior to the unveiling of Salina High School South 2.0. Infographic by C. Stevens, (2014). *My Idea of Classroom Placement.* [infographic]. Copyright 2014.

“Mr. French, can you make the building so that the commons area is located near the existing gym and auditorium?” I asked.

Without hesitation or comment, Mr. French, armed with a standard #2 drafting pencil in his right hand, drew the building I described on patty paper. As he moved the pencil across the waxy paper, graphite flaked from the utensil like micro-shrapnel, falling just to the side of the lines. Right before our eyes, the lines framed a new future for Salina High School South—and our community. Downstairs, participants moved laminated shapes over the top of an enlarged campus map as shown in **Figure 4.17**.

Figure 4.17 SHSS Stealth Bomber Design Group One



Figure 4.17. SHSS design team members Ericka Cain, Jessica Harris, and Nikki Chamberlain and a DLR architect create a design configuration called SHSS Stealth Bomber One. Photograph by J. BradfordVernon, (2014). Group One Design. [photograph]. Copyright 2014.

Following an hour of small group deliberation, all five groups shuffled back into the cramped conference room to present their drafts. The design cohorts each utilized large posters of patty paper, which they affixed to the wall using the standard blue 3-M painter's tape—as required by district guidelines, so as to not damage the crumbling walls. Immediately, three major design configurations started to take shape. I characterized these design configurations with names like 7:00 (since it looked like the big and small hands of a clock with that time), Stealth Bomber, Boomerang, and Crooked Texas as shown in Figures 4.18 – Figure 4.21.

Figure 4.18 SHSS Boomerang Design Group Two



Figure 4.18. SHS senior Alondra Moreno and DLR architects during design charrette (Boomerang). Photograph by C. Stevens, (2014). Boomerang Design Group. [photograph]. Copyright 2014

Figure 4.19 SHSS 7:00 Design Group Three



Figure 4.19. SHS senior Bailey Waters and DLR architects during design charrette 7:00. Photograph by C. Stevens, (2019). 7:00 Design Group. [photograph]. Copyright 2014.

Figure 4.20 SHSS Stealth Bomber Two Design Group Four

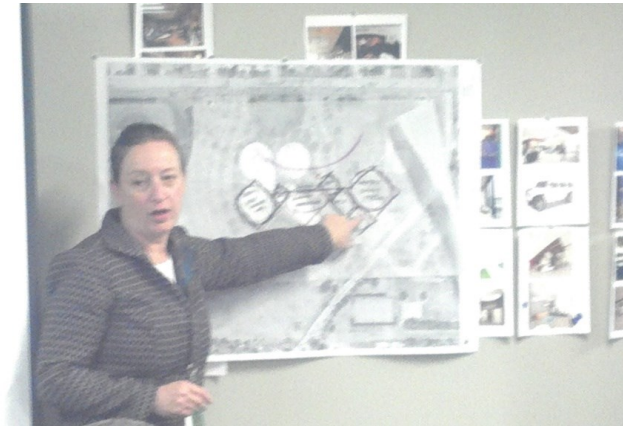


Figure 4.20. SHSS FACS teacher Linda Edson explains her group's design SHSS stealth bomber two. Photograph by C. Stevens, (2014). Stealth Bomber Two Design Group. [photograph]. Copyright 2014.

Figure 4.21 SHSS Crooked Texas Design Group Five

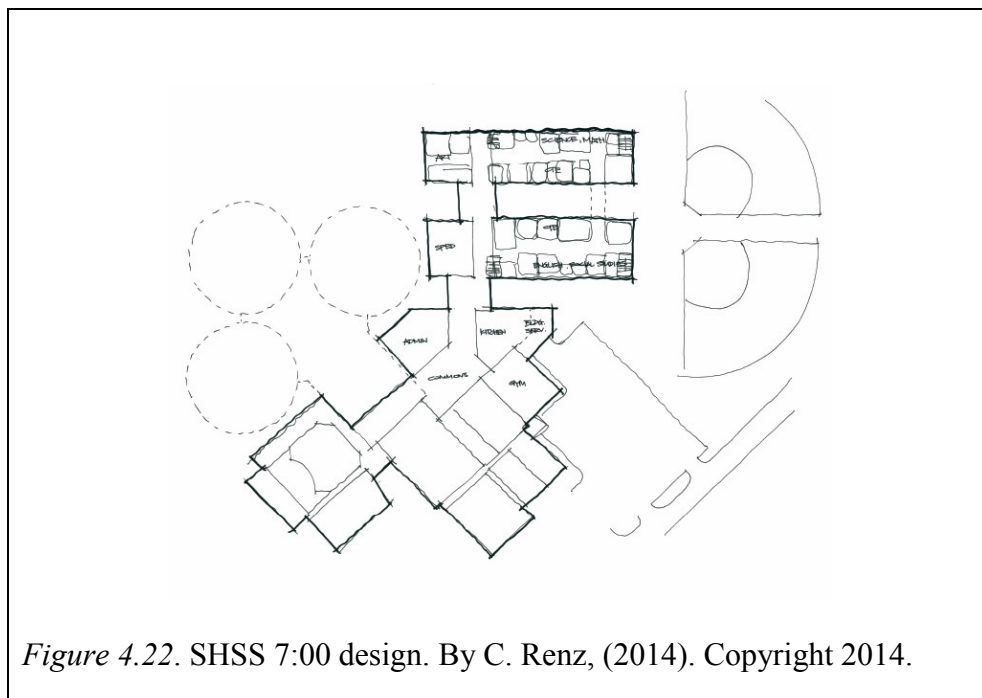


Figure 4.21. SHSS School to career coordinator Deb Kohn and SHSS social studies teacher Kevin Poland present their group's design Crooked Texas. Photograph by C. Stevens, (2014). Crooked Texas Design Group. [photograph]. Copyright (2014).

At the time, I believed the charrette guided the process from the ground up. Each group presented its layout and weighed in on the perceived advantages and disadvantages. Again, three preliminary schematic designs emerged: 7:00, Stealth Bomber, and Boomerang Courtyard. Over time however, I learned that this was not the case. About a month after the charrette, I toured Salina High School South with an engineer to discuss our building's phasing options. I asked to look at one of the engineer's blueprints of the new building and was shocked to see a stamped date on the blueprint June 2014,—almost five months before our charrette was scheduled. From that moment on, the charrette quickly became known as a charade.

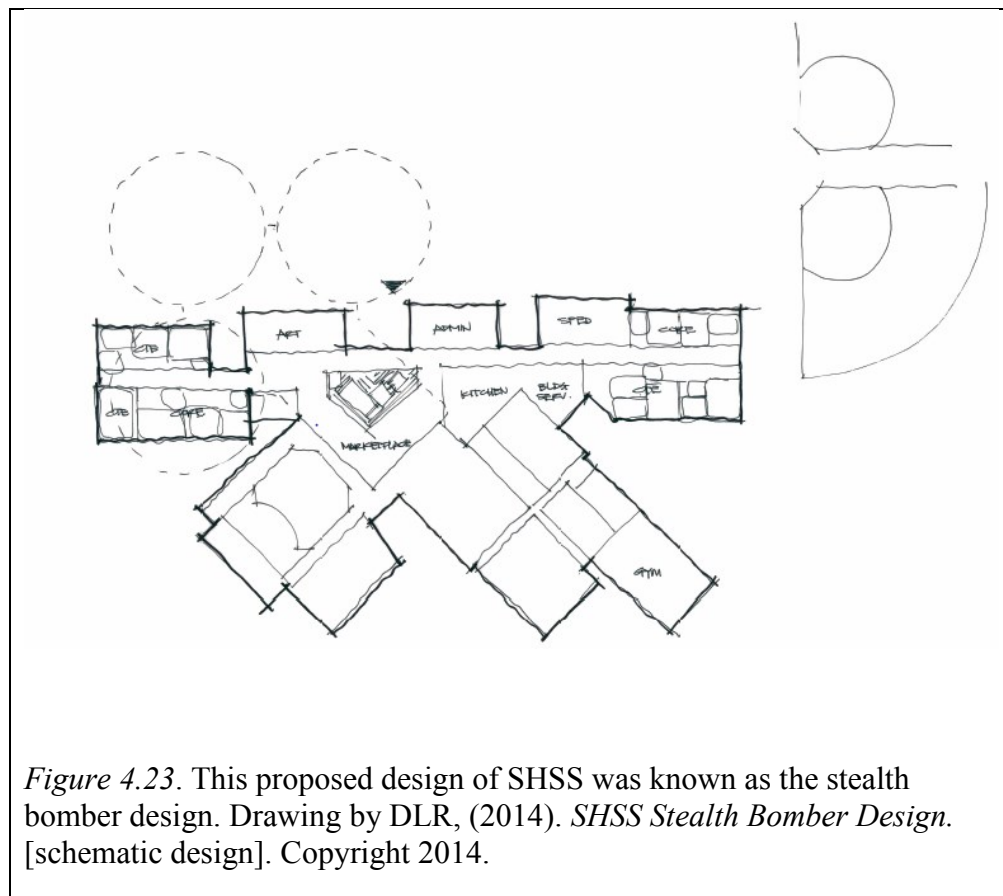
The most non-traditional design of the groups was the 7:00 layout. Charles Renz, principal architect of Jones, Gilliam, and Renz Architecture, drafted this unique design. The design showed a building that looked like 7:00 on an analog clock. It had a long wing that connected the existing building to two parallel hallways that ran west to east and would be built toward the north end of the school property as shown in **Figure 4.22** and.

Figure 4.22 SHSS 7:00 Design



As I examined the 7:00 design, I recognized the brilliance of Charles Renz. His initial design possessed incredible phasing advantages. Such a design would allow us to continue school with minimal disruption to instruction. The design also prevented us from having to spend our limited dollars on renting modular classrooms due to zero phasing construction (meaning the new building could be constructed while the original building is used). The disadvantage was that the building would lose presence on Magnolia St. **Figure 4.23**, shown below, would require multiple phase construction (tearing down the original structure for new construction).

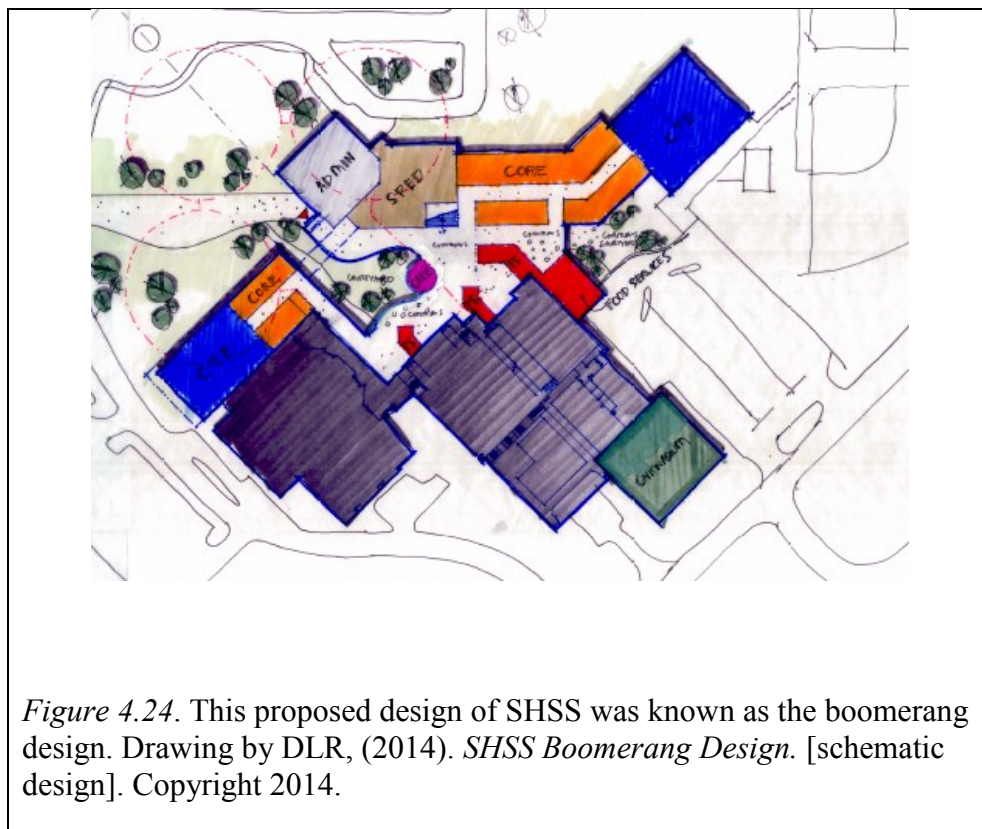
Figure 4.23 SHSS Stealth Bomber Design



The second proposal made the school look like a stealth fighter. At first glance, I thought to myself that this building is going to look and feel like our sister school, Salina Central. How

would we phase the construction if the new edifice runs right through the old 400 pod and 500 area? The concept definitely exhibited a presence on Magnolia St., but in an odd way—perhaps *too much* presence on Magnolia St. I especially disliked how the Career and Technical Education classes seemed recessed to the back of the building, practically out of sight and mind. My passion for our C.T.E. classes was no secret. I favored their placement in a prominent location, so that students could come in closer contact to future occupations on their way to core classes such as English, History, Math, and Science. Such was also the case in the Boomerang design pictured in **Figure 4.24**.

Figure 4.24 SHSS Boomerang Design



Following the Stealth design, Boomerang with a courtyard took center stage. This design was initially drafted by Jim French, the K-12 DLR education guru. When it first emerged on the screen, it looked more like a crooked Texas. At first glance, the design appealed to me; however,

I saw red when I discovered that the C.T.E. classes were located on the outer periphery of the building. I decided that now was not the time to voice my frustration, but I kept thinking to myself that students must walk through C.T.E. classes on their way to core classes! I was also not a huge fan of the courtyard. I guess I could live with it, but I secretly wondered about the functionality of the design, especially since patrons use our existing commons area every day. Would we lose functional square footage? Essentially, the building took the shape of a boomerang, similar to the sketch I had drafted as a novice, but obviously containing far more detail at the pen of a professional. An advantage of this design concept was that we could build one wing first and then add the other without having to spend money on modular classrooms. Modular classrooms cost approximately \$65,000 each. We would need a minimum of fifteen modular classrooms, thus causing us to lose another \$1,000,000 from our already tight construction budget.

Jim French explained how the positives of the design as it related to aesthetics and cost: “This design obviously has some advantages: a more pronounced presence on Magnolia St. being one of them, furthermore, there is a clear entrance to the building that visitors can find. Phasing this design during construction would also prove advantageous in that there will not be a need for as many modular classrooms due to only having three phases.”

At the conclusion of our first design charrette, the group started to refine where big pieces of the puzzle would go, gaining a coherent picture of site massing. While the site massing remained preliminary, the foundation of the design started to take shape. With each piece of the puzzle, uncertainty started to diminish as we investigated, explored, and uncovered what the future Salina High School South would look like. Armed with three general schematic ideas, the architects and engineers would go back, and proceed to cuss and fuss at the three concepts. More

information and discussion would be necessary before a final decision could be reached. DLR (architects) and McCown Gordon (engineers and construction firm) informed our design committee that they would be back in three weeks with general quotes and cost information for each design. Until then, I directed the design committee members to caucus with other faculty members in their respective departments to collect feedback on the current proposals.

Courtyard or No Courtyard

Following our first charrette, I was interested to hear what the students thought about the proposed designs.

“I like the courtyard design,” said a student participant.

“What do you like about the design?” I asked.

“There are windows, lots and lots of windows,” the female student replied.

“Will the courtyard actually be used? There are only about four mild weather months in Kansas when the weather would be conducive to being outside during the school day,” I said to the entire group.

“I can tell you that Central High School’s courtyard is rarely used,” Principal Rector responded.

Reflecting on my notes from the site visit the previous month, I weigh in: “I also recall that the courtyard at both Manhattan and Junction City high schools were rarely used, according to their administrators and students.” “I also worry about keeping all of those windows clean. How much is budgeted in the maintenance for keeping the windows clean?”

“Keeping windows clean was noted by several administrators at Joplin High School,” answered Gary Seibel, SHS Construction Science Instructor. Following the courtyard presentation, I wondered what direction the faculty would want to take. Would it be premature to

request a plebiscite on the issue? Would the faculty crave windows so much that it would forgo functionality in place of “wow”? How would the contractors phase the construction work? Would we lose money on having to bring in modular classrooms? These and other questions inundated my tired mind.

I pulled our design committee together at the conclusion of the design charrette. Out of earshot of DLR, McCown Gordon, the Central High School staff, the *Salina Journal* reporter, and district officials, I quickly informed everyone that we needed to go back to our areas and get general feedback, then meet again within a week’s time with just our building committee to see where we think we should go. I set the meeting date for November 11, 2014, at 7:00 a.m. in the SHS office conference room. Prior to the meeting, I also used a Google form to poll the faculty on whether they would like the new building to have a courtyard. I loved being able to gather information on opinions in a quick and easy manner. It did not mean that I would always follow what the faculty wanted, but I always liked being able to take the pulse of their collective wisdom.

Disability and Design

On November 11, 2014, at 6:50 a.m., while working feverishly on getting the Internal Design Committee meeting agenda and data organized, my office phone rang and I noticed that it said Stewart Elementary School. Limited on time, but curious as to why I would receive a call so early, I picked up the phone and said, “Hello.”

“Curtis Stevens, this is Ms. Doe, the Stewart Elementary school psychologist. Do you have a minute?” she asked.

“Yes, I have about three minutes. I have a meeting at 7:00,” I responded, as I wondered if this was about a current student in my building.

“I wanted to talk with you about your daughter. I would like to test your child for special education,” said Ms. Doe.

Immediately, my heart rate shot up as a tightness in my chest set in and I became short of breath. “Why do you feel we need to test?” I inquired, frantically spilling my coffee and trying to sop up the liquid with standard school-issued Fort Howard paper towels that absorb basically nothing.

Ms. Doe answered, “I feel we need to meet to discuss this topic further, but in the interim, I hoped you would be okay with me proceeding with testing so that we can set down at the table following the initial testing and discuss our options.”

“May I ask why you think my daughter is in need of special education testing?” I inquired.

“Curtis, your daughter is struggling with decoding when reading. We feel testing is needed to determine what is going on. I figured I would start with you because you know the process better and could help explain this to your wife, as I believe she will need to be convinced for the need,” replied Ms. Doe.

After a slight delay, I said, “Okay, go ahead and proceed with testing. I will talk with my wife.” With that, our conversation ended, and yet another journey in the world of parenthood and continuous worry commenced. Thousands of thoughts raced through the overtaxed neurons of my mind. My God, I thought to myself, my own child is struggling with learning. The phone call threw me off kilter, triggering a flashback to an event that took place five years earlier.

Five Years Earlier: September 14, 2009, 9:00 a.m., Salina Regional Hospital delivery ward

“The medication is working. It won’t be long!” exclaimed the nurse. Theresa wanted to be induced since she was well past her due date. We were blessed to have a nurse who personally knew Theresa. In fact, as faith would have it, Nurse Lisa was Theresa’s childhood neighbor from Garden City, Kansas.

I watched all of the monitors tracking Theresa’s and the baby’s vitals. The machine indicated a slow steady drip, evident from the periodic clicking and beeping noises. All systems were still a go; so far, our birth plan rolled right on track. Exhausted from being up the night before with a cold, I stood up in search of some coffee down the hallway at the nursing station. Consuming coffee started becoming less of a luxury and more of a necessity. While filling my favorite green 12 oz. coffee cup, I heard an alarm sound and a flurry of nurses jumping into action. Still foggy in the head, I finished filling my cup and then slowly walked toward the nurse station only to hear Lisa on the phone saying, “Get the doctor here as soon as possible. The baby’s heart monitor indicates possible distress.”

Returning to Theresa in the delivery room, I noticed that two nurses now held paddle-like items on her stomach and watched the heart monitor closely. Trying not to look panicked, I connected the dots. Every time Theresa experienced a contraction, the baby’s heart monitor alarm sounded. The doctor burst through the door, and she started to update us that there may be a change of plans. Doc said, “I need to check the baby to see if it is in distress.” Doc threw on some gloves, inspected Theresa, “Oh shit!” as she hit the master alarm button above the bed and climbed up on the stretcher with her. “The baby’s cord is prolapsed! I need to hold it so the baby has oxygen.”

Five other nurses ran into the room. Four stayed with the doctor and Theresa, and one nurse grabbed my arm and said, “Come with me!”

We rushed down the hall, and the nurse threw blue scrubs at me: “Put this on and do it fast! They are taking your wife into emergency surgery!” I scurried into the changing room and dressed into the scrubs like Superman in a telephone booth. I stepped out in record time, and then nurse and I ran over to the operating room. Doc said, “Curtis, the baby is already out.” There must have been fifteen people working together as a team to save our baby. I surveyed the room, and from a distance, I saw a lifeless blue baby. We had both decided that we did not want to know the gender of the baby until it was born. Due to the emergency, we both still had no idea what our baby’s gender was. The doctors did not appear to have time to tell us as they worked frantically to save the baby’s life.

One of the nurses said, “Curtis, go ahead and sit on this stool by Theresa.” Theresa, with bloodshot, teared-filled eyes, looked at me with fright. A mask covered her mouth, preventing her from talking.

“Theresa, everything is all right,” I started to say to reassure her, only to be interrupted by her heart monitor alarm going off. The word “helplessness” lacks the appropriate depth in describing that moment and time. I thought I would lose everything.

I never imagined I would crave to hear the sound of a baby screaming its head off, but after what seemed like an eternity, the screeching cry of my child cracked me emotionally. “Is she alive?” I asked, as I finally broke down and began to cry. The nurse from across the room gave me a thumbs up. Momentarily, after I heard the baby scream, the doctor said to me,— “Curtis, Theresa is fine. The monitor is messed up, but she does need to keep the oxygen mask on. Now that everyone is stabilized, we will have you wait back down the hall.”

I stood up, left the operating room, and walked out into the hallway. I wondered how long the baby was without oxygen. I wondered what the future held in store for my child. It is safe to say that that day took several years off of my life.

Cutting back to the current moment, I realized that the clock said 7:02. “Curtis!” Mrs. Heyde, the school secretary, shouted.

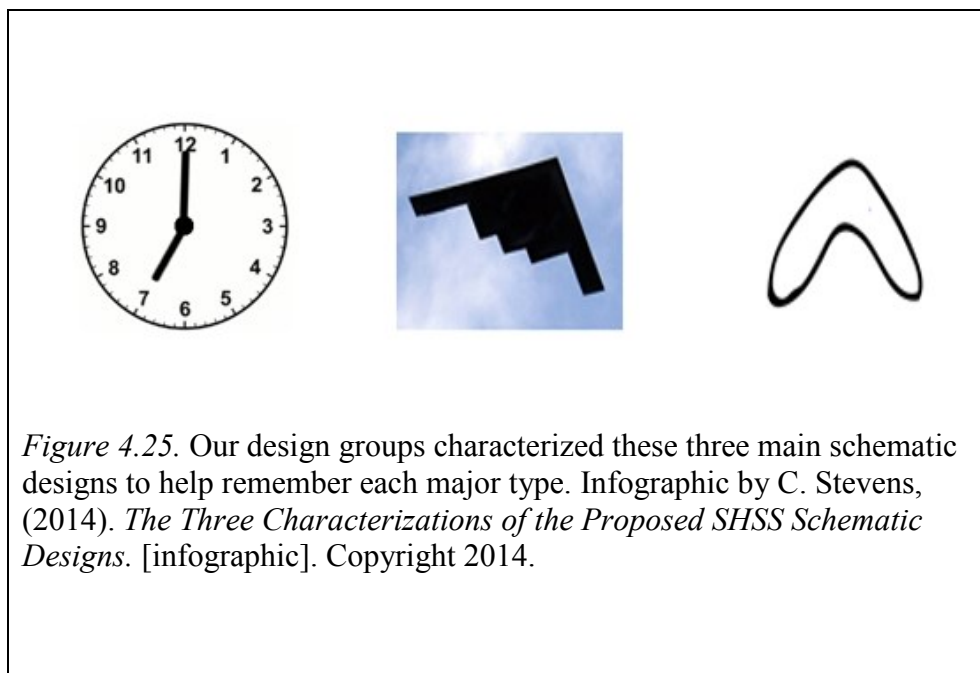
“Yes.” I replied.

“Are you okay? I’ve been calling on the radio and phone. The design team is ready for you in the conference room,” Mrs. Heyde reported.

“Yeah . . . of course . . . tell them I am heading that way,” I answered.

Any person who had not attended the charrette and looked at the meeting agenda might be inclined to ask, “What the—?” A picture of three objects near the top of the document suggested that there is more to the story. Under the item regarding design sat a picture of a clock with the time set at 7:00, a stealth fighter, and a boomerang as shown in **Figure 4.25**.

Figure 4.25 The Characterizations of the Schematic Designs.



The first item on the agenda consisted of us all going around the room and discussing the topics that emerged in our divided groups. Although each group ended up with different schematic designs, much of the conversation centered around similar topics. As a group, we arrived at consensus on the following critical attributes of the schematic design:

1. The new building needs to exhibit a stronger entrance by having the front face Magnolia Street so people know where to enter.
2. Salina High School South should not adopt an academy model program similar to that of Garden City High School (whereby all kids had to declare one of three academies to join and then remain largely confined to that area of the building) similar to Garden City. The design committee members believed that students should not be restricted to one area of the building; therefore, an arts/humanities wing and a science, technology, engineering, and math or (S.T.E.M.) wing should exist to force students to experience all areas equally.
3. Career and Technical classes, such as art, broadcasting, construction science, culinary arts, and graphic digital design, should be visible to students as they transition to core courses such as English, math, science, and social studies.
4. The culinary arts classes should be adjacent to the commons area to allow authentic hospitality learning opportunities and to help promote the culinary arts to students while they dine.
5. The commons area should be adjacent to the auditorium and gyms so that our patrons would have a place to sit and eat during events.
6. Our special education area should have a FEMA storm shelter nearby.

7. Of the three major designs, the boomerang configuration appealed to the committee the most.

“Well, what are you hearing from people in your departments so far?” I inquired.

“In general, people are more concerned about their own classroom needs—like light switches being located near the door, the location of dry erase boards, and whether or not there will be light switches—since they have not been involved in the big picture discussions,” said one of the design members.

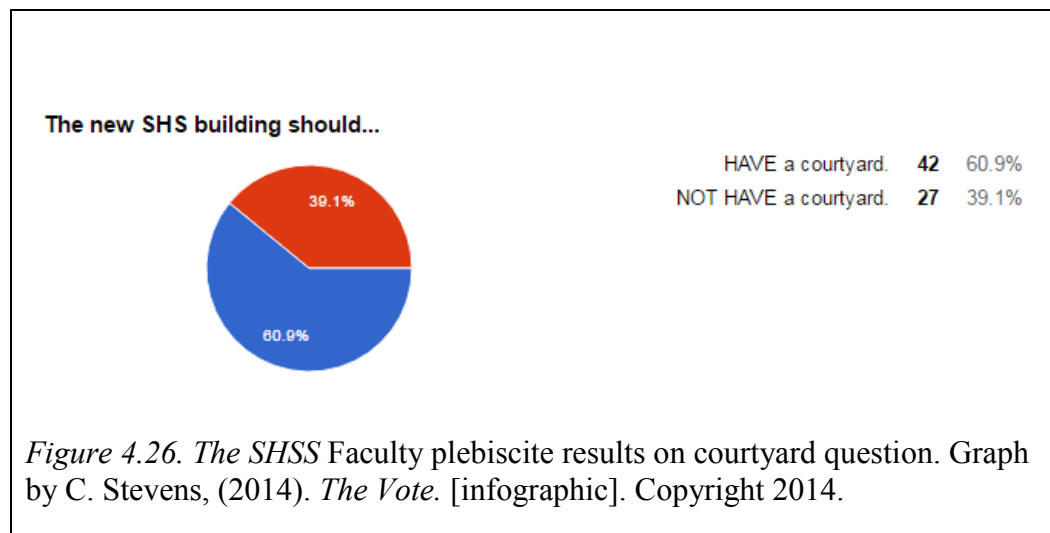
“Would the rest of you say that is an accurate assessment?” I asked the whole committee.

Almost in perfect unison, the group answered “Yes” and nodded their heads in agreement.

“Well then, I guess the old saying that all politics is local still holds true, even in school design,” I commented.

Moving on to the second agenda item, I remarked, “The elephant in the room regarding the most popular schematic design, boomerang, is whether or not we should have a courtyard. While it may have been premature to poll the faculty on the issue, I decided to get some input to help guide our committee. Keep in mind we still have to see what the total costs of this design will be. In short, this discussion could be moot. In any case, it appears to be popular with the faculty, with 60% approving a courtyard.” As shown in **Figure 4.26** a courtyard had strong support.

Figure 4.26 SHSS Faculty Plebiscite Results on Courtyard Question.



“As a committee, where do we stand on the courtyard question? Raise your hand if you are in favor,” I instructed.

All of the committee members raised their hands in favor. Although I did not vote, this was the first time I was at odds with the design committee. My intuition suggested to me that I could not let the design process proceed with a courtyard, but I knew I needed more information. I needed to check in with The Oracle.

The Third Visit

I knocked on the door leading to my chamber of thought with hopes that it would provide enough warning the intellectuals that frequently spent more time smoking and playing cards. I never cared to know exactly what went on in The Oracle when I was gone. It would probably just anger me more. The warning did not work. As the door creaked open, I could see them all jumping to their feet, crushing out cigars, throwing down beer stained poker cards, and shuffling

through the columns and walls of old convent quarry siena marble. With my patience wearing thin, all 11 finally reached the raised bench I expected them to be already be sitting at.

“We have a problem!” I boomed. “I have a committee of teachers and a faculty of teachers who all think a courtyard is an excellent idea!”

“What is within your control Curtis,” asked Dr. Covey⁸. Then he yelled, “Screen!” As the mechanical device lowered, so too did the lights. A diagram as shown in **Figure 4.27** showed the famous Sphere of Influence/Control Circle that Dr. Covey made millions off of while propagating it across the country in his renowned seminars, earning himself a guru status.

Figure 4.27 Dr. Stephen Covey’s Sphere of Influence & Control

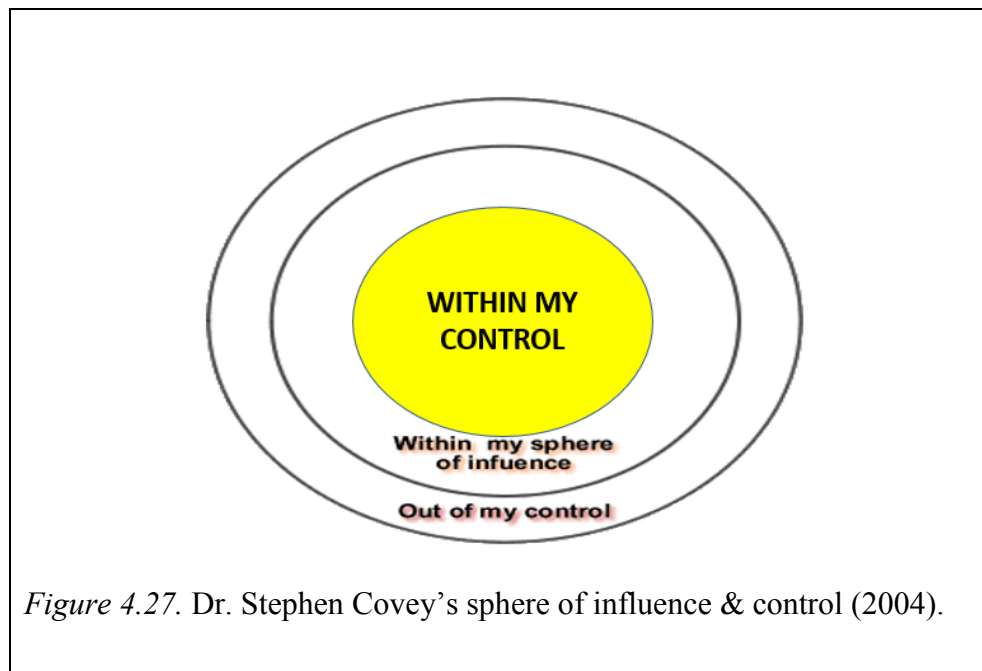


Figure 4.27. Dr. Stephen Covey’s sphere of influence & control (2004).

⁸ Please note that I realize that Covey is not necessarily an academically rigorous source. But I insert him here to denote the access we have as practitioners within the K-12 culture. Very few of us are presented with research from non-dominant perspectives, or research at all. We are often presented with information from popular “gurus.” Yet, this problem is not situated in K-12 only. In higher education, there is a privileging of white scholars in educational leadership as the experts. Therefore, the sources I cite are representative of the exposure, while I critique the exposure in this dissertation in favor of diverse perspectives, as the landscape of education is diverse.

“Curtis, you need to evaluate the problem using my sphere of influence and control. First thing’s first, some of the challenges you are noting fall outside of your control. Teachers voted a different direction than what you wanted, both as a whole and on the committee—this is outside of your control. Stop worrying about that. Quite frankly, I think you are getting worried about issues that may end up resolving themselves,” Dr. Covey stated.

“I do not see it that way. Some of the students, teachers, and external patrons are caught up in the glitter of a new courtyard. They are forgetting just how important the commons area is when weighing functionality,” I argued. “We use that space darn near every day!” I implored.

“Well, you can certainly paint the picture as to why a courtyard is not ideal when it takes square footage away and hindering programs required to be inside during the winter, but keep in mind that they probably thought about this and are being wooed away from functionality due to their desperation for windows,” Dr. Covey advised.

“Hold on, you said just a minute ago that I was getting worried about issues that may end up resolving themselves. What did you mean by this?” I asked.

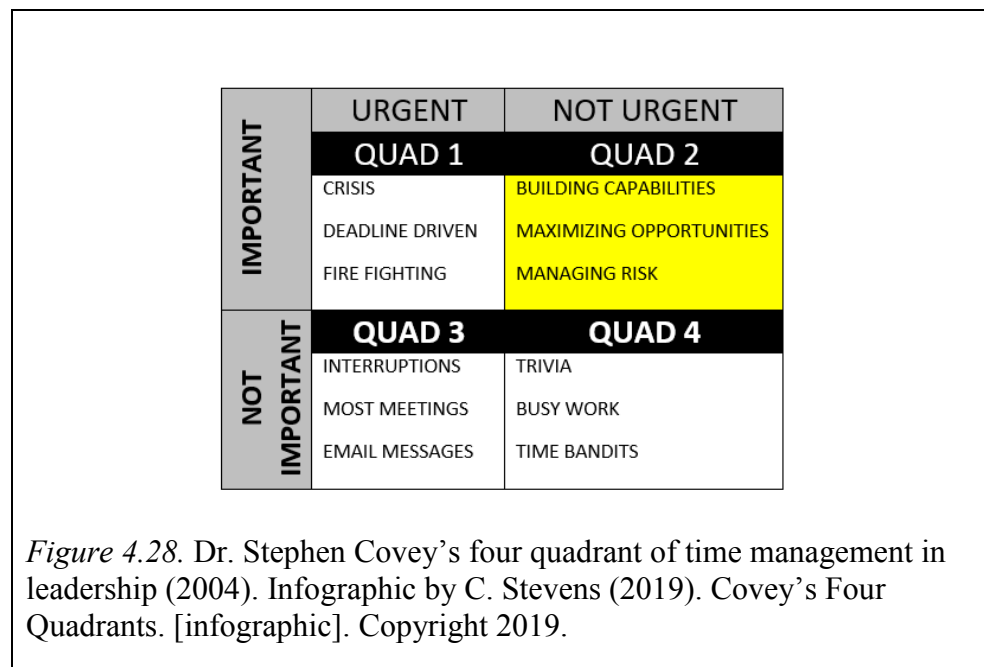
Dr. Covey responded, “One item that is within the sphere of influence is the budget. Since you do not know how much the courtyard will cost—you might find that although the popular opinion is against you on this issue—the budget may eradicate the issue completely due to the prohibitive cost. Thus, no one really needs to know their leader opposes the courtyard. Why anger people if the ultimate outcome shows the cost being too great? Perhaps you should wait it out,” Dr. Covey suggested as he shrugged his shoulder.

Dr. Fullan, who appeared to be twitching due to his desire weigh in on the issue, grabbed the microphone and began, “Curtis, one thing that is within your control is knowing that teachers

view many situations with the fog of the classroom press— immediacy and correctness, multidimensionality and simultaneity, adapting to ever-changing conditions or unpredictability, and personal involvement with students affects teachers in a number of different ways: It draws their focus to day-to-day effects or a short-term perspective; it isolates them from other adults, especially meaningful interaction with colleagues; the fog of the classroom press can also exhaust their energy and limit their opportunities for sustained reflection (Fullan, 2007, p. 24-25). As the principal of the school, you must counteract this by articulating a long-term vision for the organization when managing change.”

Not to be out done, Dr. Covey changed the slide from the sphere of influence circle to the time management quadrant chart—yet another leadership tool he cashed in on over the years during his successful leadership seminar campaign as shown in **Figure 4.28**.

Figure 4.28 Dr. Stephen Covey’s Four Quadrant of Time Management in Leadership



“To add to what Dr. Fullan just said, leaders must spend time on what I call Quadrant 2 Leadership, or spending time building capabilities, maximizing opportunities, and managing risk. This work is tricky because although it is not *urgent*, it is *important*. If you fail to spend time in quadrant 2, you will often fall victim to the quadrants 1, 3, and 4, thus living in the world of being reactive rather than proactive,” Dr. Covey explained.

“Not to beat a dead horse, Mr. Stevens, but the way I see it,—you made a serious blunder conducting that plebiscite. I am not sure what you were thinking by doing that?” Dr. Fullan remarked, shaking his head and putting a finger on his chin.

“What’s wrong with exhibiting a little bit of democratic leadership?” I asked. “Even Dr. Cronin told me during our last session that communities expect school leaders to lead, to follow, and to exercise “democratic leadership.”

“Make sure you are hearing me, Mr. Stevens. I do not think you made an error because you asked for input. I feel you screwed up by not understanding that the solution to motivating people is to establish the right blend of tightness and looseness— or more accurately, to build both into the interactive culture of the organization (Fullan, 2007). Before you ask for an opinion, especially building-wide, make darn certain that you are willing to go along with all possibilities; otherwise, avoid this mess by not asking at all!” Dr. Fullan gesticulated as he explained and exhibited a grimace on his face.

There is no worse feeling than gradually coming to the realization that I was wrong and that the person telling me that I was wrong happens to be 100% right. While I have always known there is generally wisdom in a crowd, history routinely shows that the crowd’s majority can be wrong. Although the crowd is not wrong much,—when it *is* wrong, it really screws up. This was certainly a blunder on my part. I painted myself into a corner by not being clear on

what my motives for the plebiscite were before conducting one. In retrospect, I should have let the engineers and architects come back with advantages and disadvantages before polling the school's faculty. Dr. Fullan was right—the more that teachers or others have had negative experiences with weighing in on issues only to have their input ignored, the more cynical or apathetic they will be about the next change presented, regardless of the merit of the new idea or program. (Fullan, 2007)

“Mr. Stevens, don't beat yourself up too much. After all, you were thinking politically and trying to get up on the balcony to see what was all going on, and that should be commended,” explained both Heifetz and Linsky (2002), each chiming in. While I appreciated Heifetz and Linsky's efforts to make me feel competent, I should have known better than to poll the faculty. At that moment, upon reflecting on the incident, I was an amateur, not the professional I wanted to be.

“Dr. Fullan, how am I supposed to know what should be defined as tight and what should be defined as loose?” I asked.

“In order to define what should be tight and loose, you need to keep in mind that educational change is technically simple and socially complex (Fullan, 2007). Recognize that wisdom is the ability to act with knowledge while doubting what one knows (Fullan, 2007). Stop being seduced into looking for the silver bullet. There is no complete answer “out there” (Fullan, 2007).” Fullan continued, “You will have far more success by recognizing that your enemy is not those who do not agree with you, but rather the incoherency that exists within the souls who frequently resist progressive change. Attack incoherency by working to create coherency. This can be done by (a) setting directions (shared vision and group goals), (b) developing people, and

(c) redesigning the organization (collaborative cultures and structures, building productive relations with parents and the community) (Fullan, 2007, p. 166).”

“I absolutely hate how you answer in riddles, yet how smooth you make all of this sound!” I sighed, as I rubbed my wrinkled forehead.

“Mr. Stevens, effective implementation is the process of clarification. Smooth implementation is a sign that not much is really changing” (Fullan, 2007, p. 123).

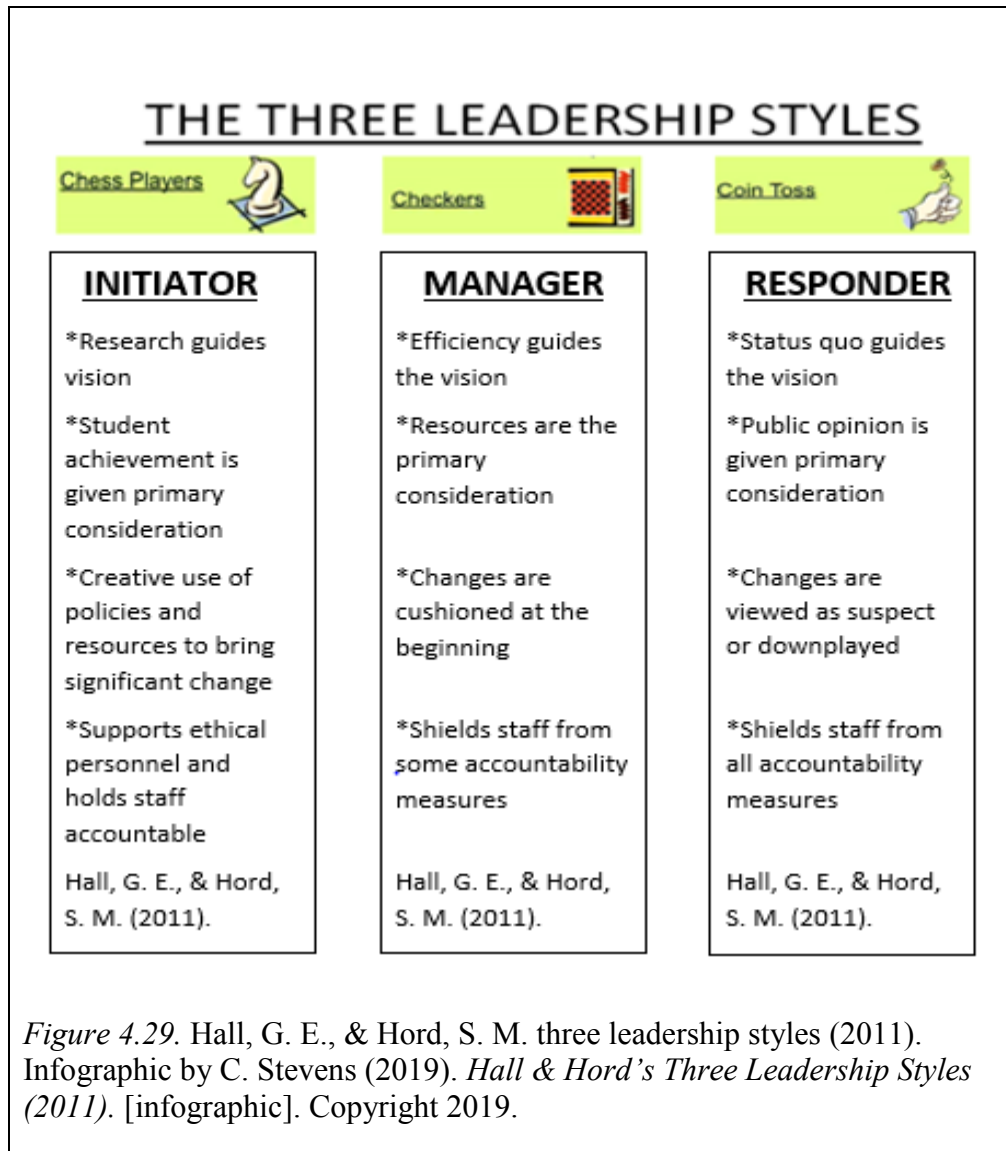
The room grew silent. I wondered how much more thinking and analysis my brain could take. As I was about to close my binder and leave Dr. Gene E. Hall, who speaks less than U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, actually spoke up: “Mr. Stevens, one idea that might assist you as you navigate the stormy waters of leadership is to know the three leadership styles that everyone must switch between. Knowing these styles provides you with a strong framework.”

“Well, I am listening. What are the three leadership styles?” I asked

“To use a metaphor, the three styles are: chess player, checker player, and coin flipper. Dr. Covey, I would like to use the screen now,” Dr. Hall said, as he hit a button displaying

Figure 4.29 a graphic organizer that demonstrates his metaphor of leadership styles.

Figure 4.29 The Three Leadership Styles

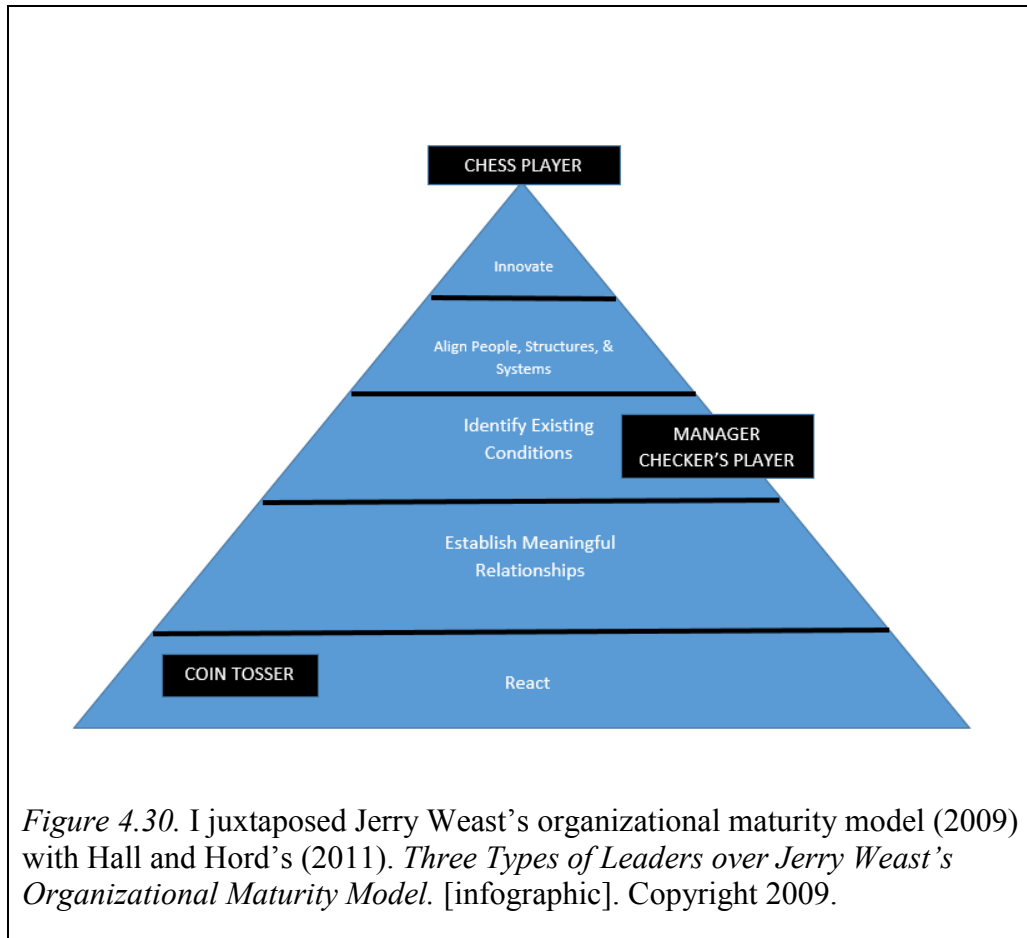


Dr. Hall flies low on the radar. He is not nationally renowned, but his advice at that moment was solid. As I examined the displayed slide, I started sinking even lower than I thought possible. No one was short for words today. Dr. Jerry Weast also asked for the floor and to control the projector. My visit to The Oracle was quickly becoming death by Power Point.

“Mr. Stevens, may I add to the information that Dr. Hall just presented? When any organization is initiating change or attempting to find improvement, there are important stages or

levels of maturity that it must go through. Such levels are impacted by one's leadership style. I have taken what Dr. Hall mentioned earlier and layered his information on to my information regarding systems," Dr. Weast said as he hit a button near his microphone to change the slide and display **Figure 4.30**.

Figure 4.30 Stages of Change and Organizational Model



I was a responder or a coin flipper on the issue of whether or not to have a courtyard! Smiles started forming on the faces of The Oracle. "I don't need you to tell me. I already know!" I closed my binder and made my way for the door, not even looking to see if anyone else was ready to share. Leaving The Oracle angry and frustrated was a certainty, but I never left without being wiser.

Unveiling Salina High School South 2.0

The room buzzed with anticipation. January 27, 2015, had finally arrived. After more than a month since our initial charrette or design meeting,—today would be the day the design team would get a first glimpse of what the engineers and architects planned for our school.

Andrew Van Leeuwen, DLR’s lead architect for Salina High School South, pulled the first slide up showing **Figure 4.31**, Salina High School South’s final schematic design.

Figure 4.31 Salina High School South’s Final Schematic Design Unveiling



Figure 4.31. Salina High School South’s final schematic design unveiling. DLR provided us with this mockup photograph of the future Salina High School South (2014). [mockup photograph]. Copyright 2014.

“Wow! That is awesome!” I exclaimed. My sentiments were shared equally by the other members of the design committee. We all joked about how beautiful the building was compared to the current edifice.

Mr. Van Leeuwen showed the team the details of the building. Everything looked fabulous! We examined the type of brick material, exterior panels, and interior flooring. We also even looked at pictures of portions of the building, such as the library media center, the humanities wing, and the S.T.E.M. wing. The presentation was extremely professional and appealing to all participants.

The last slide we examined was the overall construction budget. Up to that moment, I was on Cloud 9— but my heart suddenly sank when I saw that the construction project was \$2 million dollars over budget! “Ugh!” I thought to myself. The architects and engineers stated that more alternative cuts would still need to happen later this year; however, \$2 million is still better than \$6 million, which is— where the deficit started. The consensus of district administration was that the amount was workable for final board approval, which was scheduled for February 24 during the board’s upcoming workshop. After tweaking a few elements of the schematic design, the proposal moved forward. At 6:20 p.m. on February 24, 2015, the USD 305 Board of Education approved the final schematic design of Salina High School South— despite the budget being approximately \$2 million over.

Five Classrooms Short

The cloudless sky over Salina, KS, was dark blue, and the weather could not have been nicer for a ribbon-cutting day. Typically, August in Kansas would normally be a hot and sultry season. “Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you Salina High School South 2.0” I said as I cut the ribbon and welcomed patrons into our newly constructed and now completed school building.

Everyone who was someone walked in through the main entrance looking in wonder and awe at the edifice before them that encompassed \$45 million dollars of taxpayer bounty. “As you can see, the building profiles all of the Career and Technical Education programs for students to

give consideration as they walk to and from their core curriculum classes.” informed the Student Council President, as she led the group through the corridors that led to the Arts and Humanities wing. The sound of *Salina Journal* Photographer Tom Dorsey snapping photos could be heard as he captured the historic moment of students, staff, and parents laying their eyes on the completed building for the first time.

Construction is finally done I thought to myself. What a relief! Following the community tours, I sat down in my office and stared at the computer screen pondering what life would be like now that the chaos subsided. The past four years of my life have been a whirlwind of stress-invoked anxiety and late nights reviewing hundreds of blueprints, and planning documents. Soon the silence of my meditation was broken by a ringing phone. I reached across the newly installed oak stained desk and picked up the receiver, “Hello!” I said, wondering what could possibly be the reason Mr. Hall, our school district’s superintendent, would call following our Sunday ribbon cutting reception.

“Hey Curtis, this is Bill. We have a huge problem. I just received word from our contractor that the blueprint used on the building was not accurate. Five classrooms are missing from the final design.” Bill informed me. I could feel the pounding of my heart. I could calculate my pulse just by seeing the flashes of migraine rings in my eyes.

“What do you mean we are missing five classrooms? That is impossible! I have checked the blueprints and have spent the last two years conducting weekly walk-throughs on my days-off. How in the hell are we missing five classrooms!” At this point, I was almost screaming into the receiver in frustration forgetting that the person I was talking to was my boss.

“Well Curtis, quite honestly that is why I am calling you!” How does one manage to be this incompetent?” Bill questioned. “I guess I am the one who messed up by thinking that you

could actually do your job! The guy on KSAL was correct, selecting you as the principal has proven to be a major blunder, doing so had disaster written all over it from the start. You are fired!”

Hearing those words was the worst feeling I have ever felt. The only thing that made me feel better was waking up from yet another nightmare. “Curtis, are you okay? Did you have another work dream?” Theresa asked. Embarrassed, I got up and acted as though I did not hear her as I left our bedroom and walked over to the kitchen. 2:00 a.m. was developing into a new routine as I found myself looking for my primary source of medication, food. Since starting as the principal of South High my weight soared 25 lbs., my blood pressure reached new heights despite being on medication, and sleep was becoming more and more rare. At one point in my life—not that long ago, I woke up at 5:00 a.m. went to go to the gym to run 3 miles and lift weights. Now the thought of exercising seemed impossible due to living in a perpetual state of exhaustion. Lack of sleep eventually translated into major mood swings and crankiness that left colleagues and family members perplexed and wondering what was going on with me.

“Curtis, you need to see a doctor!” Theresa said as I stood at the island in our kitchen eating the second of two-packaged strawberry pop tarts and drinking a glass of chocolate milk.

“I have an appointment coming up. I am fine.” I grumbled, barely audible from having food in my mouth.

“You are not fine! You are waking up at all hours of the night. You are gaining weight and are on track for stroke or heart attack! You need to take care of yourself!” Theresa fumed.

“Shh..you are going to wake up the kids!” I responded as I put the chocolate milk back in the refrigerator. “I am fine, I have an appointment next week. I will tell him I am struggling with sleeping and figure out a way to get more exercise.”

You are Scaring Me

After the State of Kansas released its new accreditation model to the school districts—Linn Exline, USD 305 Executive Director of School Improvement asked the secondary principals to meet to go over the process. 4:00 p.m. Tuesday meetings are probably not the best time for principals to sit down and talk school improvement—primarily because the participants have all been working 8 hours or more, and this is the only time a high school principal has a chance to possibly see his or her family awake before jetting off to watch a volleyball match/soccer game/orchestra concert. Nevertheless, the calendar, as usual, was full—so Tuesday at 4:00 it was. I was hoping that the meeting would be quick. Earlier that afternoon, I started seeing bright circles around my eyes, indicating to me that a migraine was about to commence. Fortunately, the headache did not emerge, but I could tell the tension was still present.

Our “quick” meeting was held in the USD 305 Board of Education’s SEC room. At one time, it was a multi-purpose room for an elementary school. Glennifer Hills Elementary School eventually became our central district office. The school became one of the casualties to the district’s elementary consolidation movement following the 1998 bond project. Although the engineers installed acoustic panels in the large beige room with a high ceiling and fluorescent lights, a person’s voice would easily echo for several seconds after initially speaking. On one side of the meeting room, carpenters installed a raised floor, where the board sat at a row of 1980s-styled desks pushed together making a u-shape that faced the audience. Each board member had a Dell computer monitor as well as a microphone on their individual desks. Our meeting required less technology. We sat on metal chairs around a grey plastic banquet table stocked with a small tray of unfrosted animal crackers.

Linn Exline, dressed in a navy blue blazer with a bright string of pearls and always exemplifying a professional aura, put her right elbow on top of her left arm and then tapped her lips two times with her index finger. She definitely was pondering some type of scheme in her head. “I felt we needed to sit down and discuss what the state is asking us to do regarding Student Growth Measures (SGMs).” Linn said, getting straight down to brass tacks. SGM referred to Student Growth Measures, one of the main indicators of a school’s performance. An example of a school’s SGM could be the organization’s graduation rate or assessment scores. “First, we need to agree on what we’ll actually be measuring to show student growth.”

“We could always tie them to testing,” suggested Jeff.

“Ugh, not another test? Denise complained. “I’m sick of testing these kids, and I know they’re sick of taking them, too.”

“Well Denise, if not assessments, what other ideas did you have in mind,” countered, Jeff.

Denise took a sip of her Diet Coke, and then back-pedaled, “I am not completely against assessments, but surely there are other ways to measure student learning.”

Starting to feel frustrated, I looked at my watch and then asked “Are we putting the cart before the horse, do we even know for sure that the SGMs are going to be around in another year?”

Linn fired back, “The State mandated them as part of the new accreditation guidelines. At this point, it appears that KSDE is expecting us to attach them to our teacher evaluations.” Linn added, “However we do it, it’s a great way to develop common district benchmark assessments across the curriculum.”

Linn continued to explain the rationale, and so on. Her words were funneling back into my head despite a pounding headache that magnified every time the letters SGM were said. Buzz...my cell phone vibrated on the table, as I picked it up I saw an email from an outraged mother regarding a truancy notification she received from the school with my name at the bottom of the letter. Looking at my email inbox, the message count soared by 23 since I left the building 20 short minutes ago, a new record totaling 311 for the day. I will be at the school until 10 tonight at this rate. For some reason, I am just not able to think clearly. Typically, coffee does wonders for me, but right now, not even Juan Valdez and his mule offering me a fresh cup of joe would stop this splitting headache. Staring at what now appears to be cold coffee, and my eyes beginning to have spasm to the same rhythm of the flicking florescent light in need of a new ballast, I started wondering whether or not Juan Valdez and his horse, I mean mule, could possibly even make it through the building without being stopped by our front desk receptionist. Nothing got past her. My head continued to throb—as our committee worked to fix the problems in education. I was not sure I would even have an appetite for dinner tonight. Who am I kidding, of course I would have an appetite, after all lasagna leftovers are still in the fridge. Who could pass up leftover lasagna? Everyone knows that day old lasagna in the fridge is better than fresh lasagna. As the bantering continued, I started seeing stars and halos around the outer periphery of my eyes.

“Well, Curtis, what do you think? Asked Linn.

All eyes turned in my direction, and I realized I had no idea what was just being said. My skull was pounding, and I was so exhausted all I wanted to do was rest my head on my forearms and take a nap.

“I don’t know.” I admitted, while doing my best to save face for clearly zoning out. “It’s complicated.”

“What do you mean you don’t know?” Linn asked starting to show a little bit of frustration.

“I don’t know why we’re doing some of the things we’re doing.” I snapped back. “It seems we’re always being asked to do things that aren’t even around a year or so later. The state legislature just throws a bunch of arbitrary goals at us that don’t mean a damned thing. It’s a total waste of time! Why not wait and focus on quality common assessments that actually matter? After all, the law gives a two-year window don’t they?”

“Curtis, that’s not even what we’re talking about.” Linn said with a puzzled look on her face. “We’re not debating whether to start SGMs. It’s not up for discussion. We’re asking what should be the principal’s SGM?” Linn poked her index finger at the table, and cast a stern look my way.

It probably would have been best for me to just get up and walk out until I cooled off, but something about her tone, my respect for her, and our history of working together prevented me from doing so. To say the least, I was not thinking clearly. The longer I sat there, the more frustrated I became. I was having an out-of-body experience. I observed myself suddenly getting short with my words and gesticulating with my hands. My face flushed red, my breath became short, my chest tightened, I could feel the volcano of my temper surfacing. Somewhere, maybe floating three feet above and behind myself, there was the rational part seeing all of this and thinking, ‘No, no, don’t’ do that. That’s not right,’ but being powerless to stop what was going on. Meanwhile, my physical-self continued to rage.

“What measurement doesn’t fall on the principal?” I stated with a raised and annoyed tone. “Almost everything falls on the principal most of which I have zero authority yet a 100% responsibility!” I knew the minute I said it, I should not have. There was a second of silent pause while my words soaked into the atmosphere and echoed in the large room. I looked around the room at the dozen faces all looking back at me with a mixture of shock and smirking bemusement at my loss of composure.

“Curtis! You’re are beginning to scare me because you think everything is outside of your control!” Linn reprimanded. Whatever one might say about her, Linn was not an easily intimidated woman. She stared straight at me and said, “Listen, I think it’s best if we adjourn for now, and we can come back to this later when you’re of a cooler mind.”

I took a deep breath as others packed their belongings. I could sense their judgement. Hushed whispers and weary glances fitted all around my head like restless moths. In pairs or threes, they left the meeting room, until only I remained seated at the table, my head in my hands, staring into the faux wood grain finish as if I could discern in the future of my career. It was time to admit there was something wrong with me, and I didn’t have it all under control.

Life and Death

My patience was wearing thin. It was a quarter past three in the afternoon. Fifteen minutes into my scheduled doctor’s appointment, and all I’d done is sit in the waiting room. As I watched seconds tick away on a wall clock, all I could think of were the millions of things I needed to get done before tomorrow, none of which were being addressed, because I was stuck waiting for a doctor who couldn’t be bothered to keep a schedule. I reflected that if I had kept a parent or administrator waiting this long, there would be hell to pay, but for some reason, doctors seemed to get a pass for running late.

“Curtis?” called a nurse, stirring me from my darkening ruminations.

“Yeah,” I acknowledged. “That’s me.”

“Come on back,” she acknowledged, holding open the door to the maze of hallways and offices behind it. Just inside the door, there was a scale. “Just go ahead and step up there,” the nurse instructed.

I sighed impatiently but followed her directions. Yes, I needed to lose weight; yes, I needed to get more sleep; yes, I needed to exercise. Did I really need to pay \$100 to have someone tell me what I already knew?

The nurse’s hand went to the counter weight and moved it from the 150 mark to the 200 mark. Well, that’s a first—I thought to myself. The nurse made a few more adjustments, and then made some notes on the clipboard nestled in the crook of her elbow.

“Hmm...looks like you have added a little weight since our last visit,” she said.

“Yeah, I’m going for a personal high score,” I joked, trying to cover my disappointment with my inflating body. The nurse didn’t even do me the favor of reacting with more than a raised eyebrow, and gesturing me towards the nearby office.

“The doctor will be into see you here in a few minutes,” she said.

Again, I wait, and waste more time analyzing anatomical diagrams hanging on the walls while dwelling on how all this waiting is lengthening what was already going to be another late night working. Finally, with two abrupt knocks on the examination room door, the doctor walked in.

“Hey Mr. Stevens...how’s it going?” the doctor inquired casually, oblivious to the amount of work he had delayed me from completing.

“Well, I guess good...” I started. “Other than the normal ailments...you know, eat right, and get more exercise.” I said, attempting to pre-empt his usual lecture about my bad habits. My doctor was a health and fitness nut. I went to him thinking that maybe his physical health would somehow motivate me to take better care of myself, though I suspected that it would be easier to find a doctor that was overweight and unhealthy as me.

“So, what brings you in?” the doctor asked, examining his clipboard. I imagined it contained all the essential data pointing to a short life.

“To be honest, I’m struggling,” I admitted. “I’m constantly exhausted, cranky, and I can’t concentrate. It’s worse than I’ve ever been in my life.”

“This doesn’t surprise me. You’ve put on quite a bit of weight.” There was no sugarcoating it. “There are a lot of issues associated with weight gain, including sleep apnea, which would explain the exhaustion, the lack of concentration, and the mood swings. Basically tissue at the back of your throat becomes loose and flabby, and when you relax, they prevent you from breathing correctly, which causes you to wake up frequently through the night since your body isn’t getting enough oxygen. Of course, you’ll need to do a sleep study to confirm it, but the symptoms are pretty text-book.”

“So, if I get a sleep study, then what?” I asked.

“You’ve heard of CPAP or APAP machines?” I shook my head and he continued, “APAP stands for auto-titrating positive airway pressure. Basically, it’s about the size of a shoebox, and has a mask that you wear while you’re sleeping, and it blows air through your air passages to keep them open while you sleep.”

“That doesn’t sound very comfortable.”

“Not sleeping right doesn’t really feel great either, does it? The doctor countered.

“No I guess you’ve got a point.”

“From what I’ve seen, most people seem to adjust to the mask pretty quickly, and the APAP manufacturers have been designing them to be more convenient, too, so I wouldn’t worry too much about it. Anyway, the first thing is to get tested. I’m going to write out the order now.”

He scribbled at the note pad on his clipboard.

“So, is that it?” I asked.

“Not yet,” he answered, setting the clipboard aside. “Can I get you to lift up your shirt and then lay down on the examination table?”

“Okay,” I said, as I lifted up my shirt and laid back on the table.

The doctor started to push and pry around my torso, asking whether it was uncomfortable. Suddenly he hit a spot that made me shout, “Oh my God that hurts!”

“Right here?” he asked, poking the same spot again.

“Yes, dammit! Ow! That hurts like hell!”

He continued to prod some other areas, then told me to sit up.

“Have you experienced that type of pain before?”

“No. Not until you pushed on it,” I answered. “Is there something wrong?”

“I’ll be right back.” The doctor said. Without looking at me, he left the room.

‘Right back’ ended up lasting another 25 minutes. My mind returned like a magnet to the pile of work I needed to do. And now on top of it all there was the sleep study, and getting used to a breathing machine, and whatever this sore spot was. I tried finding it again with my own fingers, and winced as the pain shot through me. Whatever it was, I was certain that it wasn’t going to make my life any easier. ‘Just what I need,’ I thought bitterly to myself while I waited for the doctor to return and give me his diagnosis.

Across town, there was a banging at the door of one of the Hillcrest Apartments located near the municipal golf course. Jerome, a tall African American twenty-year old man, rose slowly from the sofa where he'd been chilling with his best bro, Kevin, a local high school dropout, and smoking weed and watching cartoons. Both were members of the Sur 13, one of several local gangs that competed for control of Salina's drug trade. He cursed whoever was making all the goddam noise for killing his buzz, as he pulled open the door.

"We gotta go man," said Stephen, pushing past Jerome and bursting into the dark and cramped apartment that reeked of pot and day-old take-out Chinese food. "We gotta get those fuckers," Stephen said as he turned down the stereo blaring "Move that dope" (Casino, Williams & PushaT, 2014).

"Who? What? Jerome asked, his head clouded with smoke.

"Yo, Stevie, chill the fuck out, man," Kevin, sporting a stained Cheech and Chong t-shirt, called from the couch.

"Yeah, man." Jerome agreed. "Just calm down a minute. You wanna hit this?"

Stephen, with a black eye and broken glasses, shook his head and declined the proffered joint.

"No, man, we gotta find Chad and kill him," Stephen pressed. "Him and his friend Anthony."

"Kill him?" Kevin laughed. "What you talking about?" Kid's outta his goddam mind talking about killing."

"Why you wanna kill Chad and Anthony?" Jerome asked.

“You see this? Stephen asked, turning his head and pointing to a large swollen and purple mark below his left eye. “Those fuckers jumped me.”

“Oh shit, dude!” Jerome swore.

“Serves you right for messing with Chad’s sister,” Kevin said.

“I don’t fuck with her no more, but crazy bitch be talkin’ all kinds of shit about me to him, saying I hit her and all sorts of bullshit.”

“Did you?” Kevin asked.

“No man!” Stephen denied emphatically. The two men stared at him. “I mean, it was just once. You know, bitch was running her mouth. I told her more than once to shut it the fuck up. She kept going, so I shut her up. She was disrespecting me and I ain’t having that.”

“Shit Stevie, Jerome said. “I told you not to fuck with her.”

“Whatever, man,” Stephen dismissed the older gang member. “That’s not the point.”

“What’s the point, then, little Stevie?” Kevin asked, knowing how much the younger boy hated the nickname.

“We can’t let this shit stand, man.”

“What do you mean?” Jerome asked.

“Chad and Anthony know I’m connected to you guys.” Stephen explained, “You let them get away with this shit, people start talking, saying Sur 13 are little bitches, just let other gangs walk all over them, and do whatever they want.”

“Yo, man,” Kevin said to Jerome, “Stevie’s got a point.”

“You know damn well I got a point!” Stephen exclaimed.

“Dude we don’t even know where they are or what they’re driving,” Jerome argued.

“Bullshit,” Stephen protested. Chad’s got a Dodge pickup, dark blue. He was driving it when those motherfuckers jumped me.”

“Knowing what he drives doesn’t mean we can find him,” Jerome observed.

“Come on, man. I dated his girlfriend’s little sister,” Stephen shot back, his voice rising in frustration. “I know where he lives—over on Russell St. All we gotta do is park a block away, and wait until the motherfucker shows. But the longer we wait to get payback, the weaker we look. We gotta hit him now!”

“Fine! But this is your mess, so you’re on trigger.” Jerome said, then turned to his friend. “And we’re taking your ride, Kev.”

“Why you wanna fuck with my shit?” Kevin asked.

“For encouraging Stevie to lose his shit.” Jerome replied. “Come on, let’s go”

The two men and the teenager filed out of the apartment, leaving a re-run of Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles playing on the television.

“What exactly did he do to you again?” asked one of the gang members, as almost as if he were trying to stall the entire operation.

After 15 minutes of waiting, the doctor returned to the room.

“What’s going on?” I asked in frustration.

“As I was examining you today, I didn’t expect to find an enlarged spleen.”

“What does that mean?” I asked as my heart started pounding.

“Well it might not mean anything, but I need to run some additional tests.” The doctor checked his watch. “It’s almost 4:00 p.m. I hated making you wait, but I needed to see if I could set up an appointment over at Comcare Imaging so that you don’t have to wait another day.”

“Wait for what? Why do I need to have imaging done?” I asked. My level of concern climbed exponentially by the minute.

“To put it bluntly Curtis, I’m concerned you may have cancer,” he said in an even keeled manner.

Suddenly, everything stopped. I played the words back in my head, weighing each one and reviewing every word and para-verbal gesture. My stomach dropped. “I don’t have time to be sick!” I responded in a faint voice.

“I know it’s scary, but you need to know one way or another. I promise you I’ll get your results as quick as I can. In the meantime, I need you to get over to the Comcare Imaging Center before they close, so we can get a better understanding of what’s going on.”

The doctor handed me a form and provided me with the address of the imaging center over on Elm St. and said gently, “You better get going if you want to know today.”

Just great! Another thing added to my plate, I thought sarcastically to myself. I retrieved my cell phone, keys, wallet, and all of the items I had abandoned in a plastic tray in my quest to reduce a few extra ounces prior to stepping on the scale, and made my way to the imaging center across town. As I walked out of the lobby, a strong feeling of nauseousness swept over me and sent me rushing to the nearest restroom. The next few minutes consisted of me trying to silence my sickness in a stall. As the contents of my lunch splashed into the porcelain toilet bowl, and the smell of disinfectant mixed with sour digestive fluids filled my nostrils, my mind kept ticking away the remaining minutes of the day, and going over my helplessly expanding to-do list.

“You’re running out of time,” I whispered to the swirling mess. “Get it together.” Once my stomach finally settled, I flushed the toilet, stood, and washed off my face at the sink. I gazed at myself in the mirror. My hairline almost non-existent. Purple half-moon shape bags drooped

below my sunken eyes. A whole lot of Decembers could be traced in the wrinkles of my pale face. Was this this look of having cancer or just the look of being exhausted? An older man in the mirror stared back at me, evident that a once youthful boy was now lost to the ages.

It was a ten minute drive from the Hillcrest Apartments in east Salina to Macio Palacio's house on the west side of town. Macio, a person who befriended Kevin and Jerome several years earlier—when joining Sur 13, was a troubled student who moved to Salina to attend St. John's Military Academy a few years earlier. Even the military school could not curve his criminal tendencies and substance use problem. During the drive over, Kevin texted Macio with a heads up to find his .45 caliber Glock 30 “for business”.

It did not take Macio long to locate his gun; he almost always kept the weapon handy near his night stand; that is when he was not carrying it on him—something he learned from his past by being affiliated with a Kansas City gang.

As Jerome's car pulled into the rock driveway outside of Macio's dilapidated house, he already had his gun in his light KC Chief jacket and was heading to unlock the large oak door.

“Jerome, what the hell is this “business” all about anyway?” Macio inquired looking annoyed that he was being asked to help on short notice.

“It's Stevie...you know the drama he always seems to...”

“Dammit man! Why he be messing with that girl! He knows she's bat-shit crazy!” Macio said shaking his head.

“Let's go, we will explain the situation in the car.” Jerome directed.

As Macio opened the front door of the silver Honda, he saw Stevie's bruised face laminated by the dome light. It became evident to Macio what “the business” entailed. “Thank

you for your help Macio, do you have the gun?” Stephen asked. Macio showed Stevie the Glock but did not say a word. The car pulled out of the driveway and headed toward Stevie’s ex-girlfriend’s new residence on Russell St.

The short drive across Salina took only a few minutes. The small Honda pulled up to the curb outside the new residence of Stephen’s ex-girlfriend. She shared the apartment with her new boyfriend Anthony. The group of men got out of the car and walked up to the dark and what appeared to be empty house. Realizing that nobody was home, the five guys walked back to the car. As they climbed into the Honda Civic, Stevie saw what appeared to be his ex-girlfriend’s pickup. While it was getting dark out, he was certain it was his ex and the guy who broke his glasses. “There they are...shoot Macio...shoot them!” Stephen screamed.

Macio stepped into the street, pulled his gun, and fired six shots at the vehicle.

I followed yet another nurse back to another exam room. She introduced me to the technician who then instructed me to remove my shirt and lay down on the exam table. The temperature of the room could not have been over 60 degrees. Just when I thought I could not have gotten any colder, the technician put some type of gel on my chest, which nearly took my breath away.

“So, has anyone in your family ever had cancer?” asked the technician.

“Not that I am aware of,” I responded.

She moved the scanner around my chest with her right hand and clicked various keys on the keyboard using her left hand. With each keystroke, pause, and twist of the scanning device I wondered if she had just find something? The whole examination took less than twenty minutes. When the technician was finished, a medical assistant escorted me to yet another waiting room—

this one completely empty. It was, after all, very late in the evening. My stomach was in knots and there were lumps in my throat. I sat alone wondering what was in store for me.

The door to the lonely waiting room opened with a loud creak. “Curtis, I have your results”, said the nurse. She sat down in the chair close by.

My stomach ached, and my heart was thudding in my chest. The next few sentences the nurse would utter could alter the course of my own existence. When the nurse sat down, my eyes started to tear up—why else would she sit down beside me with a serious look on her face. “This doesn’t seem good.” I said, trying to keep my voice from cracking.

“The results were negative.” The nurse responded.

“Negative?”

“You don’t have cancer.”

A weight came off of my shoulders. All of the visions of going to expensive trips for specialized treatment at cancer centers a long way from home evaporated. In the course of an afternoon, my life’s plan hit a valley and a peak just four short hours apart.

“Thank you God!” I cried aloud. I vowed I would never smoke again.

The shots echoed across what’s considered a quiet neighborhood as Macio jammed his smoking gun into his jacket and took off running with the others. The bullets shattered the back window of the blue pickup, causing the driver to swerve and jump the south curve with the vehicle ending up on the lawn of a nearby home.

Tragically, one of the six bullets fired by Macio hit a woman, a passenger of the pickup. Unbeknownst to Macio and Stephen—the passenger was not his ex-girlfriend, nor her friend, rather, it was a 17-year-old girl, a Junior at Salina High School South. In a tragic case of

mistaken identity, one of our students lost her life. Salina High School South was the only high school in Kansas to have a student murdered in 2015. This senseless act of violence resulted in the loss of a precious life and profoundly changed me as a person.

It was just short of 6:00 a.m. when I pulled into the Salina High School South east parking lot. It was a hazy, balmy spring morning, characteristic of the Smoky Hills region. I was in a hurry that morning, I needed to get the school credit card, vehicle keys, and an extra-large coffee before departing for Grand Junction, Nebraska, where I was scheduled to tour yet another school that profiled career and technical education programs. As I walked from my truck toward the school I saw Jane Bradbury, our 9th Grade Earth and Space instructor. She turned turn asked me something that I could not quite hear, but the concerned look on her face made me anxious.

“What was that?” I asked.

“Did she make it?” She asked.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about.” I said.

“You don’t know?”

“No, what happened?”

“Allie Saum was shot last night.” Jane informed me.

“Oh my God, I didn’t know! I said, feeling my pulse rise. “What happened?”

“I’m not sure of all the details—just that Allie was shot and last I heard was in critical condition.”

“Oh God, this is just making me sick. Do we know if any other students were hurt?”

“Not at this point. I felt I should ask because as you know there will be a lot of kids and staff talking about this and possibly grieving.” Jane said.

“Thank you for letting me know.” I said as I picked up my phone and started trying to reach district officials and mobilize our crisis plan.

My first call was to Stan Vaughn, USD 305 Student Support Service Director. He was the liaison closely with the Salina Police Department.

“Hello.” Stan answered.

“Stan, this is Curtis...”

“Curtis?” Stan asked.

“Curtis Stevens,” I clarified. “Listen, I just learned about the shooting. What’s the latest?”

“Allie died at the hospital early this morning.” Stan responded in a somber voice.

“Shit,” I said as tears started to form in my eyes and my stomach started to feel sick.

“Curtis, I am sorry. Losing a student is one of the hardest things to go through. We’re going to send some additional counselors down to South today. I know your school will be hurting as the kids and staff work through their grief.”

“What details do we have right now? Do I need to be worried about the safety of the school?” I asked.

“The police are about to give a briefing to the media, but it appears as though this was a case of mistaken identity. Allie was in the wrong place at the wrong time,” Stan explained.

“It is going to be a tough day Curtis, Let me know if you need anything.” Stan said shortly before hanging up.

Tressa, my administrative assistant, was already at her desk when I walked into the office.

“Mr. Stevens, you heard?” She asked, her eyes beginning to water.

“Yeah, just a few minutes ago. I answered. Seeing the emotion in the face of others, I decided today was a time to stay strong. A surprisingly calm came over me. I needed to stay focused. As Stan said himself, today was going to be a tough day. The decision to stay at South High and not go to Grand Island was the easiest one I made that day.

“Tressa.” I called.

“Yes boss.” She said wiping her nose and eyes as she walked into my office.

“Today is going to be horrible for our students and staff. You and I need to grieve later. For now, I need your help in getting all of the crisis team members into the office conference room first thing this morning. We will need to meet briefly, and then call a faculty meeting.”

“Absolutely, I am sorry for crying boss. This is just so overwhelming. I saw Allie in the office yesterday dropping off a form.”

“You don’t need to apologize. This is horrible. We will get through this.” I said.

“I’ll assemble the crisis team boss.”

After Tressa left, I picked up the phone and called the attendance clerk. “Christy, this is Curtis, I am not sure if you have heard, but Allie Saum was killed last night.”

“Her father has already called in to report it.” Christy said “Awful isn’t it?”

“Okay, please make sure to deactivate her name.” I instructed, not wanting to bother the family with progress reports for their dead child.

Within about 20 minutes, Tressa popped in, “Boss the members of the crisis team are in the conference room now.”

“Thank you for your quick work. I will be in there in just a second.” I said as I grabbed a legal pad and pen and attempted to get my thoughts collected before I walked into a group that would be heartbroken.

As I walked into the conference room, the group was silent and clearly in a state of shock.

“How can we help?” asked our Substance Abuse Counselor.

“Out of respect to the family, I want to make sure that the family members have been informed before we talk to our students. So I’ll have one of the administrators call home.” We’ll also need to draft a quick statement for the teachers to read to their first block class.”

“We’ll start on it right now,” One of the counselor’s offered.

“Keep it focused and brief,” I directed. “Stress that we will have extra counselors on duty to assist students who are struggling.” I directed.

“What else do we need to do?” asked Julie Falcon, the assistant principal.

“Call South Middle School and see if they can send over their counselors,” I said.

The Head Counselor said, “I’ll do that.”

“We’ll meet with the faculty in 15 minutes,” I said. “So I need all of this done before then. Tressa, please send an email saying that there’s an emergency faculty meeting in the library media center at 7:30 a.m. It’s important for everyone to remain calm. We’ve got to be strong for our students. If you need to take a moment, let’s do it now.”

Most everyone in the room either had tears or were stone silent.

I just cannot believe she is gone.” One of the teachers said in a broken voice.

Several other teachers embraced the counselor and the group sat silently for a few minutes. Breaking the silence I said, “I plan to go and see the family later this afternoon. If anyone would like to go with me—please let me know.”

“I’ll go,” said one of the assistant principals.

The lead counselor added, “Yes, I’ll also go.

At 7:30 a.m., the faculty of Salina High School South met in the library media center for an emergency meeting.

The School Resource Officer Dani Lemon opened by saying:

“At approximately 9:31 p.m. last night, Officers from the Salina Police Department were sent to the 800 block of Russel St. to respond to a female suffering from a gunshot wound. Upon their arrival, they found Allie Saum, a 17 year-old Salina resident, with a gunshot wound to the head. Saum was immediately transported to the Salina Regional Medical Center by medics. She was later pronounced deceased in the early morning hours of May 7th, today. During the police department’s investigation, it was discovered that a Vince Johnson, an 18 year-old Salina resident, was driving a blue Dodge truck eastbound in the 500 block of Russel St. Saum was a passenger of the pickup truck. As he was driving, several shots were fired from the rear at the truck with one round traveling through the rear window striking Saum in the head. Two of the shots struck the tailgate of the vehicle and a parked vehicle on the street. Witnesses report that a silver Honda passenger car fled the area shortly after the shooting. As a result of this investigation, which is ongoing, Salina P.D. arrested five individuals for their involvement in this shooting. The individuals were in the area seeking revenge for a fight that occurred earlier in the evening. As Vince Johnson, Allie’s boyfriend, was driving by, the group of men mistakenly identified him as a participant from the earlier disturbance. Macio Palacio was carrying a .45 calibre Glock handgun and fired at the truck driving past him. Palacio fired several rounds at the truck with his handgun striking Saum in the head. This

certainly appears to be a text-book case of mistaken identity. The truck had nothing to do with the earlier fight. Miss Saum was merely in the truck at the time it drove by.”

The room was silent but one could hear people weeping.

“Thank you Office lemon for the update. Folks this is every parent’s worst nightmare.

Please keep the Saum Family in your thoughts and prayers. They are going to need a lot of support in the next few days and weeks. Our students will also need support through this. I would like for all teachers to read the following statement to your students at the start of 1st block today. ‘We are sad to report that Alley Saum, a South High 11th grader, passed away. We have additional counselors available for students or staff in need of support. We ask that everyone keep Alley’s family in your thoughts.’ Obviously, students will have questions about the event. Our goal will be to help them have as normal of a day as possible given the tragic circumstances. I also want everyone to know that if you need a substitute for a block or need to talk with a counselor—we have additional counselors for all of you as well. Today will be a tough day. Thank you in advance for all of the hard work you will do today in helping our students with their grief.”

The staff took a moment of silence for Allie, and then headed to their classrooms. After adjourning the meeting, several teachers remained. Mr. Massey and Mrs. Stueve had Allie in class and the news hit them hard.

“Do you both need a substitute for today?” I asked.

“No. we both feel we need to be here for our students,” responded Mrs. Stueve.

Shortly after the morning bell rang, students were informed of the tragic news. Most already knew because of Facebook, Twitter, Snap Chat, Instagram, and about a hundred other social media sites. Despite the noise on social media—there is something that is different upon

learning about tragic news when one hears it from a colleague at school. I vividly recall hearing about the Challenger Explosion in Mrs. Synder's 1st grade classroom in 1986 and the Oklahoma City Bombing in 3rd block English in 1995. Shortly after the news, numerous struggling students made their way down to the counseling center in a steady stream.

Once the news was announced, a steady stream of students made their way to the counseling center. The counselors were already overwhelmed, and I hoped that the back-up from the middle school would arrive shortly. As I passed the line of students waiting to talk, a pair of girls stopped me.

"Mr. Stevens?" asked the shorter one. "Can we hold a moment of silence in the commons during ELO (extended learning opportunity or seminar)?"

"Yes, I can support that," I responded.

At the conclusion of first block, over a thousand students stood silent in the commons area while a charismatic and well-spoken student delivered a powerful message that mimicked a professional sermon.

As I was getting ready to walk out of my office, one of the counselors approached me in anger. "Curtis, this moment of silence goes against everything I've been trained on as a counselor! How could you approve this?"

"If you haven't noticed, their classmate was murdered. The kids care about their murdered classmate!" I responded.

"There's practically a funeral going on here," the counselor complained. "The students aren't moving to their ELO! Someone in the office told the secretary to turn off the bells so now all kids feel obligated to attend the moment of silence."

While I was upset that the bells were turned off. That was outside of my control at the moment. Cut to the current moment, I was thinking to myself how wonderful it would have been to have a counselor during a time of crisis that could come up with solutions rather than admiring the problem! I walked out of the office to assess the situation unfolding in the commons area.

As I walked out, the P.A. came over instructing student to move on to their ELO. As soon as the page ended, “students started to groan and in a collective mutiny—stopped in their tracks.”

Now the entire office, counseling department, and faculty members stood in the commons area and looked to me as almost as if to say, “Now what are you going to do Mr. Stevens to get this stopped?”

There are defining moments in every leader’s career and the crazy thing is that one never knows for sure when that is going to be. I was being thrown in over my head and out of my league of expertise—this type of situation is the very definition of leadership: *doing what you don’t know how to do during a time you didn’t know you were going to be called to do it*. I clearly did not know what the hell I was doing—but I knew something needed to be done.

Over a hundred teachers and staff members stood and watched as I slowly walked through the commons as students sat and listened to Pierce Carey, the young charismatic speaker. As I walked through the sea of students, I could hear sobbing and see tears. I sensed the students sorrow and sympathy for Allie and her family. The students moved and inspired me by coming together during a challenging time. As I approached the stage, many thought I was going to have a showdown with the student body, others wondered what exactly I would do to bring an end to this “funeral,” which runs counter to “counseling research.” I too wondered what I would say too—right up to the moment Pierce handed me the microphone. All I knew was that the moment called for calmness. Adults and students needed things to slow down.

The Salina High School South commons area was silent. The students sat politely, listening to the student led sermon/prayer. I waited for the prayer to end and then ascended the steps to the stage as shown in **Figure 4.32**.

Figure 4.32 Salina High School South Students Mourn the Loss of Allie Saum



Figure 4.32. Salina High School South students mourning the loss of Allie Saum on May 7, 2015. A School In Crisis Coming Together. [Photograph]. Copyright 2015.

My heart rate must have been teetering toward cardiac arrest. The student speaking looked over at me and respectfully yielded the microphone and stage.

“Thanks, Pierce,” I said as he left the stage. The students gave a gentle applause for their peer. “Today is a very difficult day. We’ve lost a member of our Cougar family. I want to thank

Pierce for those wonderful words, and I want to thank all of you for your leadership and compassion during this difficult time. You, are all— so wonderful. Thank you for reaching out and helping one another during this tough time. Together, we'll overcome this tragedy.” The students gave applause and then returned to class with a low murmur. I left the commons area, went back to my office, locked the door, pulled down the blinds, and then broke down as I thought about what Allie’s parents must be feeling. I could not get past how her father called the school to tell us she would not be here. Feelings of former students I lost over the years started resurfacing: Adam Bruna—who drowned in the Smoky Hill River during my second year of teaching. Reed Ash, a former student killed in a traffic accident. Death always brought back memories of losing Chayston and how his life was cut short. The next few days, I spent time meeting Allie’s parents and family, attending the funeral, and enduring the wrenching experience watching the entire student body grieve—the dark days of May 2015 continue to weigh heavy on my mind. A day has not gone by when I have not thought about Allie, her mother, her father, and just how senseless her loss of life was.

The Great Awakening

Two weeks later, I was standing outside the Comcare office. I was holding my special neck pillow and a bag with a change of clothes—all ready for my sleep study. It was 9:30 p.m., and pitch dark in the parking lot due to the light being turned off. I yawned, and pushed a button beside the door, and the intercom sounded. A woman’s coarse voice crackled through the speaker, “The door is now unlocked, take the elevator down to the basement.”

Shortly after checking in, my body was hooked up to a full bank of monitors, each displaying some vital sign or other.

“Just let me know if you have to get up and use the restroom,” the technician said. “I’ll come help you get out of bed so you do not unhook any of the wires or anything. I may also come in some time during the middle of the night and wake you up so you can put on a A-PAP mask.”

It did not take long, and I feel asleep. As promised, the technician woke me up and placed a mask over my face. I woke up and panicked when my nose and mouth was covered by a mask.

“I don’t think this is going to work,” I told her. “I’m a little claustrophobic!”

Undeterred, she brought in a different mask that only covered my nose.

“You’ll need to keep your mouth closed,” the technician warned. “Otherwise, I’ll have to bring back the other mask.

She hit a button and a sudden rush of air filled my nose and lungs. In seconds, I was asleep again.

I woke only three and a half hours later, but felt as though I’d slept for an entire day. Initially, my body was numb, but feeling came rushing back quickly along with a sense of energy I had not possessed that level of energy since I was in high school. I reported all of this to the technician, who smiled and made notes.

“Fantastic, Mr. Stevens,” she said. “That’s exactly what we want to hear. Now, maybe you’ll do something useful with all of this newfound energy...like exercise!”

I laughed. I could have run a marathon if there had been one in Salina at that moment. Nevertheless, now that I could finally achieve a deep and restful sleep, I committed to increasing the physical activity in my life. And for the first time in my career, I had a clear, rested mind more than ready to tackle the stresses of school design.

Part Two: Doing the Job and Thrown Into the Swamplands Interlude

During a recent trip back home to visit family, I traveled through my homeland, the high plains of western Kansas, a space that Truman Capote described as “out there” in his opening line of *In Cold Blood* (1966). As I drove south of Oakley, Kansas, on Highway 83, I was certain to point out all of the highlights to my daughters, who sat in the back of the car bored from the desolateness of the arid region. No thorough tour of southeastern Logan County would be suffice without pointing out that the Smoky Hill River winds tightly around short yellow prairie grass covered hills, like the curves of a rattlesnake’s coil. My daughters chuckled as we drove over the Smoky Hill River Bridge and they saw a sign that alerted them to the presence of a river.

“Dad, there’s no river out here.” Olivia said as she rolled her eyes when I pointed out the geographic feature with the confidence of a national park ranger.

“Olivia, if there is not a river, why is there an instrument that measures water.” I countered as I pointed to the apparatus as we neared the end of the bridge.

“That thing probably doesn’t even work Dad.” Olivia said in a dismissive tone. “How do they use it to measure water if there isn’t any?”

Like my daughters, I once believed that the tall bridge was unnecessary. Along our tour, I also pointed out to the girls that their great-great-grandparents operated a gas station in Elkader, Kansas, which sat along the shady south bank of the river near the end of the long bridge. Elkader, like the river, dried up many years ago, leaving only a ghostly trace of itself on the prairie landscape.

When reflecting on the narratives I wrote for *Part Two: Doing the Job*, I am reminded of the Smoky Hill River in western Kansas. The dry riverbed looks harmless, especially within the context of a ten-year drought, and from the confines of a car safely propped up on a steel girder

reinforced concrete bridge. However, its very existence suggested the threat of potential flash floods, and there were at least four generations worth of folklore describing cattle and wandering children lost to secret pits of quicksand. Of course, those travelers speeding along Highway 83, heading anywhere else would never know about these things. Such knowledge only comes from stopping and spending some time living in a place, and learning the local culture—very similar to an administrator going through the process of socialization.

A scene from my youth emerges when Grandpa Turley, on a clam sultry Saturday morning, at the family farm, wrapped a sturdy piece of bailing wire around an antique metal implement that weighed 200 lbs. connecting it to an old grain bin. As he used his pair of Old Forge A.L.C. pliers to tighten the rusted yet sturdy wire no doubt saved in the event of another depression, I asked him, “Grandad, why are you tying this big chunk of metal to the grain bin?”

He stopped twisting the wire, pointed his finger off to the distance and said, “Do you see that big terrace over there yonder by the fence line?”

“You mean over on the neighbor’s property next to that old plow?”

“Yeah, right next to the old plow. I once watched the Beaver Creek roll over that terrace like Niagara Falls.” He said with a serious face. “The water came all the way up here to the grain bin, and nearly washed it away.”

“All the way up here,” I asked as I pointed to the land we were standing.

“Yes,” grandpa affirmed. “This is why I not only wire the grain bin to a post, but also everything around it.”

On my way back home to Scott City, I stopped by the family farm to help show my daughters that even in a land of drought—evidence of flash floods from the past still exist. I pointed out the old implement to Emmalina and Olivia. “See, it still sits in the

same place—along with the study wire, still clinging to the old grain bin. The grain bin is also still wired to a tall aged wooden post tamped securely into the ground as shown in **Figure 4.33**. Just like your great-granddad left it.” I said smiling.

Figure 4.33 A Picture of Grandpa Turley’s Implement and Grain Bin



Figure 4.33. A picture of implement and grain bin wired down to a post. Photograph taken by J. King, 2019. Wired. [photograph]. Copyright 2019.

The heavy implement (a civil war era horse drawn corral cleaner) being tied to the old grain bin is a striking metaphor to a young person or new administrator preparing for the worst without really knowing what the worst will consist of. Such a proposition is challenging, especially if one

cannot foresee the need to tie everything down ahead of time. It is hard to talk flood prevention during a drought, just as it is hard to convince others to conserve water during a flood.

Becoming a novice administrator and grabbing the reigns of school leadership for the first time brought on a similar feeling. On the surface, everything seemed calm and unremarkable. But in time, I became familiar with all the little intrigues, mysteries, and yes dangerous pitfalls of being a principal.

Perhaps ignorance can have its own benefits. Again, like the dry Smoky Hill River in western Kansas, everything looks as though no challenges could be ahead. Even cruise ship passengers could care less who is steering a ship during calm waters. A captain of a ship can become relaxed or worse yet, over confident, when waters are calm. My favorite quote in the movie *Titanic* is when one of the officers warns the captain, “The calm waters will make it difficult to see the icebergs.”

The collective narratives of *Part Two: Doing the Job* demonstrate how dramatic changes affected my role as a principal, husband, and father. As Denzin and Lincoln (2011) once wrote about qualitative research, “being in qualitative research field is like “walking swampy lowlands” (p. 12). One is able to get a look into the weeds of leadership. These narratives highlight socialization issues as I negotiated the new duties of being a principal, and tried to learn a new job with added responsibilities of a building design. Understanding the socialization of a principal may provide an understanding of and support for novice principals’ socialization (Crow, 2006). My vivid narratives paint a picture of socialization. In this interlude, I unpack and offer analytic insights of the narratives presented in the previous section.

As I started doing the job of principal, I became very aware that novice principals are “immediately responsible for the full gamut of principal duties” (Sackney & Walker, 2006, p.

312). The first narrative of *Anxiety Riddle Dreams*, illustrates the weight of the principalship, as well as an example of my socialization in *Stage 1, Survival* (Villani, 2006). A dream about a state swimming entry form threw me into yet another recurrent dream that Michelle Carr writes is from “feelings of stress, and the desire to perform well” (2014, p.1). Somewhere within this narrative, a bundle of realities are masked for the reader to gain access to the small issues that can flare up and become a huge problem for an administrator. As noted by Fullan (2007), “in order to achieve greater meaning, we must come to understand both the small and the big” (p. 8). Although this narrative is about a dream, the dream did manifest from the daily stressors of reality. Principals are constantly dealing with such tensions daily (Ripley, 1997). Such tensions and unreflective practices can create burnout, stress, and ineffective performance (Crow, 2006). My experience was certainly no exception--such tensions emerged in recurrent my dreams or nightmares.

The nightmare was most likely a reminder to prepare for the worst. When one is stuck in survival mode, even the small things appear to be a crisis. I found it intriguing that the dream was about swimming. As I reflected on this portion of the dissertation, I recalled that empty river, Grandpa Turley’s anecdotes about flash floods, the swamplands of qualitative research noted by Denzin and Lincoln (2011), and Villani’s (2006) Five Stages of Socialization regarding survival.

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) declared “all qualitative researchers are philosophers” (p.12). As such the qualitative field is like “walking swampy lowland” because it is full of problems, complexities so qualitative researchers inevitably engage in philosophy to seek truth. Being a building principal navigating the Villani (2006) Five Stages of Socialization also requires one to be a philosopher in order to navigate the muddy process.

Such survival exposes the liminality in leadership between being a novice and being an expert. The narrative *Anxiety Riddled Dream* exhibits characteristics of me in the first stage, which is the survival stage (the novice principal may encounter individual experiences that cause professional insecurity and situations where personal concerns are high) of *The Five Stages of Socialization*: survival, control, stability, educational leadership, and professional actualization (Villani, 2006). The unknown, much like the hidden dangers of a dry river (with which I began this interlude section), can perpetuate one to become stir-crazy just waiting for the next 100-year flood to rage. In the narrative *Life and Death*, my idea of personal wellness became real when I realized that I may have cancer. Nevertheless, I was flooded with grief and emotions upon losing a student. Again, it is hard to know when the river will rage. In my quest to get ready for the flood of professional duties, I am embarrassed to say that I lost balance in my personal life as a husband and father, which unfortunately is not uncommon (Clark & Reynolds, 2002). As my personal wellness, specifically my physical health continued to deteriorate, my frustration with my job also continued to grow (Clark & Reynolds, 2002; Plowman, 1985). As my frustration with my job increased, so too did my ability to do my social wellness as evident in the narrative *You are Scaring Me*, when I started to reject differences with Superwoman as is fairly common when health and social wellness deteriorate (Clark-Reynolds-2002, Plowman, 1985).

In the narratives *April 10, 2003* and *The Call*, I experienced a trigger or flashback to a very traumatic day in my young life when I received a phone call at work informing me that my brother Chayston had died. The placement and composition of the narrative April 10, 2003 suggests that I still feel extreme guilt for failing to call Chayston back a few days prior of him dying—when he left a voicemail with his tuxedo measurement to be in my wedding. I told myself I would call him that weekend, but Chayston died on a Thursday, and I missed the chance

to talk to him one last time. Even at a young age of 24, I justified my failure to call Chayston due to being busy as a young teacher. This pattern of prioritizing work before family also became prevalent in the narrative *The Call*, when I was in the middle of a meeting discussing classroom utilization ratios, and was pulled away to help Theresa, that flashback helped me put things back in focus...but only because it was an emergency. The same could not be said, in the *Your Building a School That Existed in the 1940s* narrative, when I failed to get home at a decent time only to be reprimanded by my daughter Olivia. Narratives in both *Part One* and *Part Two* demonstrate how the principalship consumed me socially. Each of these narratives illustrate how my social personal wellness was negatively affected by being consumed by work thus resulting in a failure to show concern and fairness for others (Powers, 1994).

As a novice principal, I would be lying if I said I was not terrified. A novice tackles being both a learner and a leader of a school environment at the same time (Jentz, 1982). The best I could do to survive was to reach out to my pre-service training. In the narrative titled, *The Oracle (1st Visit)*, I appear to be transitioning into the control phase of Villiani's (2006) *5 Stages of Socialization* because I am starting to use research practices to solve pressing problems that in the survival stage—I would simply wait until they occur being reactive. As noted in *Interlude Part One*, I sought control by preparing for every single detail prior to the big interview. Once I had the job, I found myself again starting to seek control by revisiting my pre-service training resources anytime I encountered a critical incident. Principals prefer learning in context relevant, collaborative settings (Daresh & Playko, 1992). I was seeking control by pulling together as much pre-service training as I could. A common theme inferred across the narratives is that I hated the *survival stage*. I hated feeling vulnerable. I hated feeling incompetent. If there was

anything I could do to find control, I would. As I sought reassurance in the *Part One* from trusted mentors, I sought control through my pre-service training in *Part Two*.

I do hope that readers do not indict me for being schizophrenic when reading *The Oracle* (*1st, 2nd, and 3rd visits*), if so, I guess that is the risk I take by publishing this autoethnography. To be fair, my usage of the Oracle concept originated with Gloria E. Anzaldúa's sanctuary El Mundo Zurdo from *Borderlands* (1987), whereby her personality could transcend the norm-based lines relating to a certain group. Anzaldua's helped me conceptualize the idea of The Oracle in my attempt to make education leadership scholarship engaging in an arts-based dissertation.

I was also inspired by John Grisham (2000), *The Brethren*'s portrayal of three former judges smoking, scheming, and playing Texas Hold'em poker in a federal Florida prison while doling out jailhouse justice. Arts-Based inquiry allows and often necessitates some latitude for creativity—so long as it does not deter from the evocative nature of autoethnographic focus, as noted by (Ellis & Bochnker, 2018). In any case, the Oracle (*1st visit*) illustrates the tools I knew when I started as a new principal. I am embarrassed that the gurus I initially quoted were not very diverse. While I am embarrassed, I am not entirely surprised, as I have studied the topic of leadership, I have found that most of the publication spaces are barely representative of diverse perspectives.

The first visit primarily focused on my quest to pick a design team. The task was political. Right out of the gate, I was required to divide people. I found that Fullan's (2007) work on change management helped me navigate the storm by providing strong advice to focus on the small key details of the change process. Cronin's (1998) *Paradoxes of Leadership* advised me that it is natural for a leader to make controversial decisions that upset people, despite one's

desire to unify diverse people and interests. Again, without having studied leadership authors like Fullan (2007) and Cronin (1998), I likely would have remained in the *survival stage* (Villani, 2006) of socialization because such leadership research provided me with enough resiliency to negotiate the problems I encountered. Knowing about Cronin's (1998) *Paradoxes of Leadership* allowed me to feel more in control when making day-to-day administrative decisions because I was able to see a pattern that was predictable when making decisions that divided people. I also realized that even though I only had seven seats at the design team table, I could consolidate representatives of similar areas such as English, Math, and Social Studies (utilities needed for these classrooms are similar). Moreover, by understanding Barber's *Personality Traits of Leaders* (1972), I was able to identify what I thought was a balance of critical attributes I would need on the team, so that we could attempt to represent the various factions of our school community.

Leadership liminality refers to the transitive space between being a novice and an expert. In this transition, leaders move from a focus on personal survival to feelings of professional stability as defined by Villani's *5 Stages of Socialization*. In order to do this, in my personal experience, I had to attend to my own personal wellness (Adams, 1997), specifically, my physical health, which followed a similar trajectory. Initially, when I suffered from sleep apnea, I had been fighting through the *survival stage* of socialization. However, in the narrative *The Great Awakening*, after being placed on APAP treatment, I became more stable in my physical, social, psychological, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual health Adam's *Perceived Wellness Model* (1997) and as defined by Clark-Reynolds (see table 1). This sense of personal wellness also helped me transition from *survival* toward *stability* in my career by allowing me to get adequate rest, (Eberst, 1984) when one dimension was exercised, the changes would also affect

the other five dimensions. It is important to keep the whole person in mind rather than focusing only on individual aspects of one's health.

Perhaps the most important aspect of my first visit to the Oracle were the broad strokes that Heifetz and Linksy (2002) provided for leadership through their work *Leadership on the Line*. In the book there are five major aspects recommended to survive challenges inherent with leadership: think politically, get off the dance floor and go up to the balcony, orchestrate the conflict, hold steady, and give back the work. While the schemata was a solution for every situation, it was as though I possessed an initial structure in which I could construct understanding of the many critical incidents that were flying at me during the first few days. In the ongoing theme of leadership liminality or the space from novice toward expert leader (Cronin, 1998), I searched for answers through research and gurus to move from survival toward stability by bringing control to the chaos going on around me and what was happening to my personal wellness.

It seemed as though every time I encountered an overwhelming professional challenge, I sought academia for the answers. I used academic triage (taking fast-food water-downed research provided by leadership gurus) to navigate the critical incidents (daily problems I encountered as a building principal during a major building design). Quong (2006) notes that his own experiences as a novice principal found him navigating daily dilemmas as knowing when to act and when not to. Whether to act or not, I always felt the need to seek out higher learning. Sometimes it was just-in-time learning, as evident by taking the EDLEA 830 Educational Facilities Planning through Kansas State University, and yet at other times it was to respond to something said by an architect or engineer and avoid looking glib. The narrative titled *Drinking from the Fire Hydrant of School Design* was fitting because it demonstrated how I consumed

more and more information regarding leadership and design with every day; so much so that even the Oracle started to get crowded.

Intellectually, one could not ask for a more invigorating experience than navigating the school design process simultaneously while ensuring socialization of the principalship. Having the opportunity to read school design classics such as Barnard's (1847) *School Architecture*, Seaborne's (1971) *The English School Its Architecture and Organization 1370-1870*, and Christopher Alexander's (1979) *A Pattern of Design*, and Nair and Fielding's *The Language of School Design* (2005) helped me understand the rationale behind the architectural designer's processes. All of this knowledge was essential for the principal to know, especially when working with architectural and engineering specialists concerned with providing a functional facility for learners (Davis, 1973); after all, "bad school houses are silent killer of teaching and student learning" (Tanner, 2000, p. 312). The pressure of getting the design right for not only the now but also for the school of the future meant that failure was unacceptable.

Although the entire design and socialization process were intellectually stimulating, it came at a cost to my personal wellness (Clark-Reynolds, 2002; Adams, 1997; Powers, 1994). When analyzing the other components of Adam's *Perceived Wellness Model* (1997): physically, socially, psychologically, intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually, the narratives titled a *New Home Rash*, *Digging Out of My Inbox*, *April 10, 2003*, *The Call 10-20-14*, and *Disability or Design* collectively illustrated my worst fears, of becoming disconnected socially and emotionally from my family due to the incredible demands of the job. For example, we moved into a new home—I was not available to help move due to my trip to Garden City. In the narrative *A New Home Rash*, Theresa endured a month long encounter with poison ivy that required intensive medical treatment—I was not readily available. One of my daughters needed

more time with dad while another one started to struggle in school—I was not as available as I should have been. The composition and placement of this narrative suggests the socialization of the principalship was becoming as toxic as the poison ivy oils that inflicted my wife. In both (Adams, 1997 & Powers, 1994) personal wellness literature, increased frustration with the job of being principal can lead to social withdrawal from others including family (Powers, 1994)

As I wrote many of these narratives, I experienced guilt for not being available for my family during this time, because I could not bring myself to remain in the *survival stage* when meeting the duties of my normal job and the duties of grappling with school design. In my quest to transition into the *control stage* (Villiani, 2006) to avoid the Survival Stage 1, which I found to be painful due to self-doubt and vulnerability, I simultaneously harmed my personal wellness by working too many hours and medicating with food. Ironically, after my first year as principal, I also exhibited emotions of guilt for being unavailable due to the time and energy invested in writing these narratives.

Summary

In Chapter four, the reader read about me taking on the professional duties of being a principal during a flurry of activity, as I navigated not only the socialization process and the beginning stages of school design, but also my personal roles as a father and husband. Moreover, the reader is offered insights into how my personal wellness starts to change. I intentionally intertwined the order of the narratives related to the following four areas of practice and theory: personal, professional, educational leadership scholarship, and the school design scholarship as a way to engage the reader. In any case, this chapter provided readers with narratives that centered on my personal life such as *Anxiety Riddled Dreams*, *A New Home Rash*, *April 10, 2003*, *The Call*, *Disability and Design*, *Five Classrooms Short*, *Life and Death*, and *The Great Awakening*.

The narratives related to my socialization regarding professional duties were also provided, for example, *Back to the Reality of Pushback*, *Digging Out of My Microsoft Mailbox*, *You are Building a School that Existed in the 1940s*, *Charrette or Charade*, *Unveiling Salina High School South 2.0*, and *You are Scarring Me*. Again, as a way to make the narrative more engaging, educational leadership scholarship, as well as school design scholarship were provided through the visits to the Oracle. Chapter four ended with *Part Two: Doing the Job and Thrown into the Swamplands Interlude*. Like chapter three, this liminal space pauses the narrative to offer the reader with analytical insights that the narratives provide.

Chapter 5: The School Design Oracle

The School Design Oracle is located just down the hall from the Education Leadership Oracle meeting room, yet it still reeks of cigar smoke due to sharing the same ventilation system. I chuckled to myself at the irony of housing the Design Oracle in such a poorly conceived facility. Although the room is very similar in design and décor, there are fewer seats. Christopher Alexander, a tall man with disheveled grey hair, dressed in a blue polo shirt with a pocket protector replete with pens ready for action, sits in the front and center chair. To his left, is C.K. Tanner, a school design researcher nearing his mid-70s sporting a plaid button-down shirt with a leather vest and donning a cowboy hat. Although I cannot be certain, one would think he had a dip of chewing tobacco in his lower lip. J.C. Davis is the most professional looking designer at the table. He is in a three-piece suit, and carries an aura of confidence that he is the only serious professional in the room. Toward the outer edges of the major bench was J.L. Cotterell, a young, charismatic, self-confident designer. N. Gislason, also seated on the outer edge of the bench had wise eyes hidden behind a pair of big bushy gray eyebrows. G. Hubler, the last Design Oracle member exhibited a warm, kind smile that gave him an air of being not-quite-all-there.

“Good morning. Thank you in advance for being prepared and assembled.” I said. This group of professionals were always ready to go.

“How can we help you Mr. Stevens?” Christopher Alexander asked.

“As you know, we’re getting ready to begin our individual department meetings to discuss the specifics of our classroom designs. We’re now down in the weeds of proofing the final construction plans. I need to know what to be looking for,” I responded.

Hubler piped up, “A principal’s input is worthy because the leader of the school typically looks at the design from an operations standpoint and can quickly spot design features that will hinder the schools’ functions.” (Hubler, 1997, p. 30).

“You mean like the courtyard fiasco.” I asked.

“Yes,” replied the usually reserved Hubler. “I presume your gut was telling you that the courtyard would not be used for much. That is why you did not favor such a lavish item. Very few consultants would have foreseen that the commons area in your particular building would be used for so many events. A courtyard would have hindered the functionality of the building.”

The others muttered and mumbled in agreement.

“Too often principals and teachers are frequently left out of school facilities planning” (Hubler, 1997, p. 28). Hubler continued: “The process is led by vendors, consultants, and mass opinion. As a result, our school buildings have become an under-performing component in the education process.”

“Thank goodness for the budget,” Alexander chimed in. “Otherwise, Salina High School South might have encountered a similar dilemma at the hands of your poor leadership.”

Although his additional comment was unnecessary, however, I could hardly disagree with his assessment. “What else do I need to consider?” I asked.

Niel Gislason cleared his throat and looked sternly at each of his peers. “If no one else is going to address the elephant in the room related to the failed “Open-School Concept,” then I guess I will,” he stated, grimly.

“I agree that the “Open School Concept” is troublesome to some outsiders,” I quickly interjected while Gislason paused to collect his thoughts. “However, I wouldn’t call it a

completely failed concept. Most faculty and students say that the open school concept at Salina High School South actually helped to improve the school culture.”

“I’ll draw your attention to the image on the screen,” Gislason grumbled. The lights dimmed and a projector displayed a picture as shown in **Figure 5.1** on a portable projection screen. “Do you recognize this scene?”

Figure 5.1 SHSS Open Classroom Concept with Walls Dividing the Classrooms.



Figure 5.1. SHSS open classroom concept with walls dividing the classrooms. A photograph taken by C. Stevens, 2016. *Open Division*. [photograph]. Copyright 2016.

“Of course,” I answered, not liking where this was heading. “It’s one of our classrooms.”

“Yes, even the temporary classrooms you created in the library,” Gislason repeated in an accusatory way. “If you look at the pods today, there are dividers between the classrooms and most of the teachers have tried to assemble make-shift back walls using storage cabinets. The open-school concept simply does not work because teachers were unable or unwilling to adapt their classroom practices to an open setting.” (Gislason, 2009, p. 18).

“Yes, there were parts of the pods or open classrooms that would not be missed,” I agreed defensively. “But make no mistake; we still need to have a place where teachers can open their classrooms and spill into collaborative spaces.”

“Granted, the open-concept setting contributes positively to the social climate,” Gislason submitted. “However, there are certain disadvantages inherent in the design. Above all, the open space does not allow for the kind of visual and acoustical control found in traditional classrooms. For example, when teachers lecture, there is a tendency for students seated at the periphery to lose focus because it is difficult from that position to hear what is being said. Also, the hallway traffic distraction poses a third occasional challenge to maintaining student focus.” Gislason, 2009, p. 28).

“Yes, I agree that is a problem we need to try to avoid.” I surrendered. “However, I’m certain that we can address these issues with the right design considerations. Collaborative spaces should be created near existing classrooms. Some of the classrooms I’ve seen, like the one at Joplin High, have the ability to retract a wall between classes or open like a barn door out into a hallway.”

“Observations found greater amounts of students off-task behavior in open plan classrooms,” Cotterell added, as he flipped through a stack of notes. “And there are higher rates of managerial intervention by teachers during transitions from one activity to another. Together, these findings suggest that despite the pleasant surroundings and attractive buildings in open-plan schools, students and teachers experience higher levels of anxiety and stress than is found in classrooms of conventional design.” (Cotterell, 1984, p. 472-473).

“That study only accounted for the initial months of the year,” I countered. “But students adjust and settle during the year as routines are established.”

“Yes, well...” Cotterell trailed off, and returned to sifting through his research notes for another argument.

“Well, it seems like everyone is beating up on Salina High School South’s existing open school design,” Tanner observed. “Unfortunately, I’m afraid I’ll have to join the pile-on. I’m certain you already know that the situation with no windows would be deemed as educational malpractice. Light is the most important environmental input, after food and water, in controlling bodily functions.” (Tanner, 2008, p. 454).

Christopher Alexander, who up to this moment had been quietly glancing out the window in contemplation as the meeting brewed around him, suddenly sat up and became more alert. “Yes, I completely agree,” he said emphatically. “I refer to this as my *Wings of Light*. For a room to be naturally lit, it must not be too deep or the edges of the room opposite the windows becomes dark. To ensure that every room in a house has sufficient natural light it is important to consider the proportion of the rooms. When a room must be deep, design elements such as clerestory windows (high section of wall containing windows above the eye level) can help bring light into otherwise dark spaces.” (Alexander, 1977, p. 526).

“You have no disagreement from me,” I responded, vividly recalling the days I had worked in a windowless classroom when I arrived at work in the dark and left in the dark and had no idea what sort of day it had been in between.

“There is a growing body of evidence which suggests that man actually needs daylight,” Alexander carried on. “The cycle of daylight plays a vital role in the maintenance of the body’s circadian rhythms. Therefore, the change of light during the day, though apparently variable, is a fundamental constant by which the human body maintains its relationship to the environment. (Alexander, 1977, p. 527).

Before I could get a word in, Tanner added, “Lights of different colors affect blood pressure, pulse, respiration rates, brain activity, and biorhythms. Full-spectrum light is required to influence the pineal gland’s synthesis of melatonin, which in turn helps determine the body’s output of the neurotransmitter serotonin. It is critical to a child’s health and development” (Tanner, 2008, p. 454).

“Got it,” I said, hoping to signal the end of the light discussion. However, Tanner was on a roll.

“The presence of natural light in classrooms has received attention from several researchers. In a 1999 study of more than 21,000 students, controlled for socioeconomic status, in California, Washington, and Colorado, the Heschong Mahone Group found that students with the most day lighting in their classrooms progressed 20% faster on mathematics and 26% faster on reading tests over a period of one year than students having less daylight in their classrooms.” (Tanner, 2008, p. 454-455).

When Tanner finally stopped speaking, the room fell silent for a moment. “What about our existing commons area and its structure?” I asked. “Should we consider a different configuration?”

Tanner responded as he pounded his fist on the desk almost as if he experienced bullying as a student in school, “Aggression and destructive behavior are increased as the number of children in a room increase. Some of the consequences of high-density conditions that involve either too many children or too little space are: excess levels of stimulation; stress and arousal; reductions in desired privacy levels; and loss of control. High density and crowding detract from the quality and functionality of the school” (Tanner, 2000, p. 316).

“To make sure I have this right, we need to try to break up the large groups of students so there will be less stress, correct?” I asked.

“Correct.” The entire group answered in unison.

“Bottom line Curtis, you need to hold your ground during the final design process,” Davis advised after taking a sip of hot tea. “Keep in mind, the building level is where things happen. Without a well-designed and functional structure, it would be difficult to fulfill inspiring and idealistic educational objectives. The architect, the school board, and the superintendent are too far removed from where the learning actually takes place. You, on the other hand are in the perfect position to imagine the ways the building will be used” (Davis, 1973, p. 25).

“That seems easier said than done,” I retorted.

“I’m not saying you should dismiss them totally,” Davis said. “But find a balance. The model of the dynamic relationships among the members of the facility planning team are indicative of many formal and informal interactions among team members. A team approach is needed because a school plant is much too complex for one person to have all the expertise needed to design a functional facility. The principal and his or her planning team are key personnel in the preparation of a set of educational specifications to guide the architect in the development of a functional school concept” (Davis, 1973, p. 33).

“I’m going to stop you for a minute,” I interrupted. “There sure didn’t appear to be any concern from the architects and engineers on limiting the number of classrooms despite both high school principals insisting that we needed classrooms for teachers.” I interjected.

“We all know that conflicts in scheduling classes hinders 100 percent utilization of available spaces,” Davis said in a wearing voice. “It’s unrealistic to assume that every room in a

secondary school building can be used every period of the day. You have to remind them they need to listen to the principal.”

“Again, easier said than done.” I responded, as I thought back to the quagmire I had encountered back in the early fall. “We’ve spent quite a bit of time discussing the ills of the open concept, the lack of windows, and the role that proper lighting plays in our learning and health. And I know I need to be involved in the design—But what else do I need to know about design as it relates to school security? Our preliminary plans from the community-wide meeting discuss the need for secured-entry. I have heard discussions about the numbers of cameras to be installed in both high schools.”

“I’m glad you asked,” C. K. Tanner said. “Design features that enhance school safety and security are vital. In the wake of increased school violence, various theories have been advanced. For example, large buildings with a labyrinth of hallways like Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado could be a safety and security hazard for students and school personnel. Smaller schools with ample exits could be an alternative. Furthermore, we could design schools with easily supervisable circulation patterns. These designs will probably become a standard requirement for the 21st century school.”

“Thank you, as always for your wisdom and information,” I said, picking up my clipboard, and scanning the notes I’d made. “I’m afraid I’ve got to get going. My time is pretty limited these days. But wish me luck. We’ll start sculpting our block of cheese tomorrow!” With that, I left the Oracle of Design to confer amongst themselves.

As I walked out of the Oracle of Design Chamber, I noticed a diverse group of professionals in the hallway. They appeared to be upset. “What’s going on?” I asked.

“We’ve been trying to get into the Educational Leadership Oracle session for a long-time. The door’s locked.” One of the scholars said in frustration as she pointed to the large oak door.

“No it’s not. Just knock on the door, it’ll open.” I responded with confidence.

At that moment, a woman scholar knocked on the door really hard—after waiting for about ten seconds there was still no response. “See, I told you! Let’s go.” The woman said to the diverse group of other professionals.

“Hold on. Let me try.” I turned to face the door and knocked, and it immediately opened. As I turned to the group to say, “See...I told you...” they were gone.

Frustrated and upset, I started to walk through the door but before I could the door closed and I started to hear “Curtis, are you going or not?” asked Tressa, my administrative assistant.

Realizing I was now sitting in my office staring at a pile of design research articles, I asked, “Going where?”

“We have a design meeting that’s about to start! Remember, this is the meeting you told me no matter what—make sure you get to it on time. Well, you’re already late!”

Panicked, I stood up, and rushed out the door to the meeting.

Summary

Chapter Five provided an overview of school design. C.K. Tanner, J.C. Davis, J.L. Cotterell, N. Gislason, G. Hubler, provided dialogue with me regarding their research. All researchers and gurus in the school design process unpacked my error in leadership regarding the courtyard. The School Design Oracle also provided insights into why the open-school design concept was flawed, citing how student achievement was hindered with problems associated with noise, distraction, and the lack of natural light into the learning space of students. Chapter Five ends with me locating a group of diverse scholars in the hallway of the Oracle’s building,

all denied access to the Educational Leadership Oracle. The group disappears as I try to demonstrate to them that the Educational Leadership Oracle will allow them to come in. As I try to address the issue, my job pulls me away for another design meeting.

Chapter Six, will provide the reader with detailed narratives of not only the design process but also numerous managerial duties embedded within my day as a high school principal, and the toll the duties take on my personal wellness.

Chapter 6: Into the Design Weeds Sculpting Our Block of Cheese

The entire process moved like clockwork. Various departmental representatives from across the building shuffled into the cramped meeting space—an upstairs area overlooking the commons area. Architects and interior designers sat at different stations with nothing more than a few blueprints, drafting pencils, and patty paper (paper that is very thin—like wax-based paper) for sketching any requested modifications.

“All right, as I’ve said before, we only have 30 minutes per group.” I reinforced. “Stay focused on the task and let’s keep to a schedule.”

The Counseling Department as they sat down with the architects and showed them a patty paper replete with a blueprint changing the original design as shown in **Figure 6.1**.

Figure 6.1 SHSS Counseling Department's Original Modification to Original Design

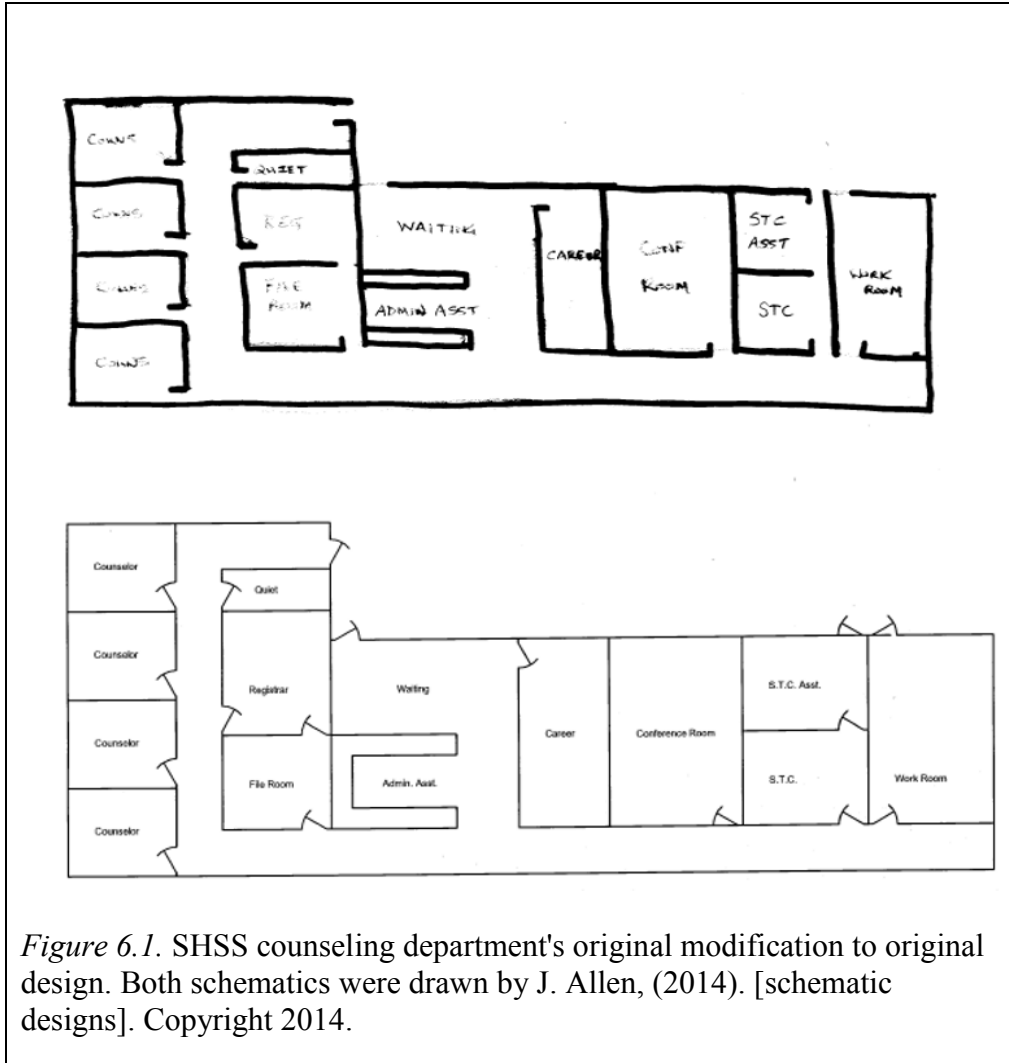


Figure 6.1. SHSS counseling department's original modification to original design. Both schematics were drawn by J. Allen, (2014). [schematic designs]. Copyright 2014.

While the final design ultimately proved to be slightly different from what the counselors had drafted—not much changed. I use this example to illustrate that individuals who actually work in the assigned areas frequently have the best insights when designing them. To illustrate this point, one recent film I watched popped into my head. In “The Founder,” (Handfield, & Hancock, 2016) the McDonalds brothers show this concept in practice as they use a tall ladder, a tennis court, chalk, and crew to create the best design for a restaurant that maximizes efficiency, effectiveness, and minimizes needed effort to turn out great tasting food.

“And your time is now up!” I said to the counselors.

“We haven’t even had a chance to talk about the Career Center!” Lamented one of the counselors.

“Each group has thirty minutes. It is what it is,” I explained firmly as the Chemistry PLC (Professional Learning Community) made their way over to the drafting table.

Of all of the PLCs, chemistry and physics required the most discussion. The deliberation was primarily due to the utility intensive requirements both classes demanded: natural gas, specialty equipment, storage for volatile substances, safety hooks for pulleys, etc.

Both chemistry teachers walked in with two pages in their hand and ready to do business. “There really are three major areas we need to cover,” said one of the chemistry teachers. “Class and lab space, safety, and spaces for collaboration and storage.”

“We need classrooms large enough for thirty students,” the second teacher explained.

“But the capacity model-” The architect started.

“We know what the original model says,” interrupted the first teacher, somewhat bitterly, “But we’re the ones who actually have to instruct the students, and we often get thirty of them at once.”

“Garden City built labs shared by two classrooms,” observed the second teacher. “We need our lab and classrooms to be the same, but they should contain separate areas for each of us. Right now, our students have to sit at the same stations where they do experiments, which is obviously a safety concern, but we don’t have anywhere else to put them.”

The architect wrote feverishly as both chemistry teachers rapidly fired comments and emphasized points from their notes.

“We’d like the lecture area in the center of the room.”

“And there should also be a demonstration table with electricity, gas, and a deep sink with both hot and cold water faucets, so we can easily view all learning stations.”

“We’ll need plenty of storage cabinets along all the walls and eight four-person lab tables.”

“The tables need to be built for stability. Wouldn’t want some kid to bump into one of the tables and accidentally cause an explosion.”

“Or spill acid.”

“Or create a poisonous gas.”

“Okay, got it,” the architect said, hoping to move the pair along.

“Each student lab station needs to be equipped with two gas nozzles, a deep sink-”

“Not like the shallow ones we have now.”

“And at least eight electric outlets for computers, hot plates, microscopes, and so on.”

“We need to be able to control gas and water for the entire class, so we can easily shut it off in an emergency.”

The floors should have either polished concrete or tile.”

“No carpet!” both teachers emphasized simultaneously.

“You’re now half-way through your allotted time.” I interjected.

The teachers looked at each other, and then through their remaining notes. A look of panic crossed their faces, realizing that although they burnt half of the time—they still had more than half of their comments to go. Pushing on, they picked up their pace, adding only more stress to the already frazzled architect, who was now resorting to taking down their demands in barely legible short-hand and what may have been hieroglyphs.

“We need to discuss safety. Across the entire science department, all classrooms need to be equipped with fume hoods, safety showers, eye-wash stations, storage for aprons and goggles, several exhaust fans, high ceilings, and an ultra-violet light for sterilization.”

“You have five minutes remaining.” I said, as I watched from afar listening and taking notes. Recording all of comments proved to be a challenge, but doing so was essential to keep everything organized in a spreadsheet for all of the groups. The room was cramped, hot, and loud, and I could feel a massive migraine metastasize cross my forehead.

“Now I know you’re probably hearing this from every department—but when we say we need storage—we mean it.

“Chemistry is unique. We need a separate space that is well-ventilated to secure and store volatile chemicals.”

“And we need additional secure storage space for expensive equipment.”

“Expensive equipment.”

“Yes, expensive equipment, like balances, a centrifuge, electron microscopes, a chromatograph, scales, and spectrometers.”

The pair of chemistry teachers continued to emphasize the importance of storage, and security until I announced that their time had run out. They looked disappointedly at their notes, then at each other. I thought they would complain that they hadn't been given a fair chance, but instead they stood and shook the hand of the architect.

“Thank you,” said the first.

“Yeah thanks,” the second agreed.

“Okay, I need the next group.” I called as the chemistry teachers vacated their seats. I waved at the physics teachers to come to the table. They came as another pair. “Ready?” I asked the architect. She stretched her fingers, then nodded, “Okay, you've got 30 minutes,” I said to the faculty as I started the timer.

Many of the concerns of the chemistry teacher were shared by the physics department. In addition, they had several more content-specific requirements.

“We'll need high ceilings, so we can hang mobile projects, and we'll need a place to attach a pendulum. Also, higher walls give us more storage options. A lot of our equipment won't fit a standard storage cupboard.”

“And a secure storage area,” the second teacher reminded the first.

“Right, we'll need a place to store the really big stuff (ramps, measuring wheels, bubble tubes).”

The architect pulled her drafting pencil across the paddy paper making a note on the original design to see if such an idea would work.

“Also, I feel it is important to have plenty of electrical outlets,” the first teacher continued, while the second nodded his head. “A lab prep area, and longer and wider lab tables with a built-in cross bar system for attaching pulleys and other equipment. Another concern I have is where student desks are too close to the demonstration table. It could be dangerous because of the type of pendulum experiments we do.”

“The space is designed to industry standard,” the architect assured the teachers. “I know it’s hard to visualize—but this is a very common design for physics classrooms. You’ll probably find it’s not an issue once you see the space.”

The first teacher nodded, and the second voiced his consent, “Okay, understood.”

“Do you have any other requests?” the architect asked.

“It would have been nice to have the physics classrooms adjacent to the open collaborative areas they will use,” The first teacher suggested.

“Which collaborative area are you referring to?” I asked not understanding the request—the design already included a collaborative area directly adjacent to the teacher’s physics classroom on the blueprint.

“I mean the STEM lab on the first floor,” the teacher explained.

“Oh, yes, I see now,” I responded. “The STEM lab was placed adjacent to the construction science program since they’d likely be using the same set of tools as the shop area.

“Yeah, we know, but...” began the second teacher without concluding.

“I realize it’s a teacher convenience issue, but I think you still have an option for collaborative space immediately outside your room if needed. Besides, if that space doesn’t work, the STEM lab is located directly below you. It’s just one flight of stairs.”

“Right,” agreed the first teacher with a tinge of frustration. “But you asked so we thought we’d tell you.”

“We have just a few more minutes,” I announced, trying not to sound rude. “Anything else you can think of?”

“Oh! I just about forgot,” the second teacher exclaimed. “We’ll need three hooks that can hang 50-100 pound objects.”

The architect noted three specific areas in which the hooks could be placed, just as time ran out. I could tell they felt, like all the others, that they did not have enough time.

“All right, math people, you’re up next.” I said, forcing a smile. My head was starting to ache, my face seemed flushed, and my pulse was picking up. The air in the room was humid with the heat of too many bodies pressed together.

Much to the architect’s delight, the Math Department, emphasized simple items, overall, such as a common collaborative workspace where all math teachers could work in close proximity. This area should also be replete with lockable storage for math textbooks, scientific calculators, and other small items. The math instructors favored the individual trapezoid desks without a cubbyhole and without the attached chairs displayed on the blueprints. From an instructional standpoint, they wanted whiteboards with grids for graphing and Promethean boards for instructing.

“Will we be able to move the teacher’s desk?” asked the Department Chair. “Or are the rooms only wired for one wall to have the phone, internet, electricity and project?” asked the Department Chair.

“There will be two locations wired in the room,” the architect responded. “However, there will only be one location in which a projector is installed.”

“Can we have a say on which wall the projector is installed?” The math teacher asked.

“I’ll do my best to make it happen,” I said. “Just keep in mind, you could be asked to move to another room at any point in time. Obviously, I can’t guarantee that every room will have the projector screen installed exactly where any given teacher would like it. Nevertheless, I’ll do my best to consult with you if there is a choice.”

“We’d like to have collapsible walls in between each math classroom so we can open them up and collaborate with classes adjacent to our room. Is that possible?” Asked another math instructor.

“We can’t afford it for every classroom because of cost and fire codes,” I explained. “But each department, with the exception being science, will have two rooms with collapsible walls.

“Speaking of fire codes, we need more fire exit doors and windows that actually open,” vented a veteran math educator. “The pods we have now are a safety hazard!”

The other teachers nodded and murmured in agreement.

“We also need to have more restrooms in convenient locations,” the elder teacher continued.

“Here, look at this updated blueprint,” the architect proudly invited, apparently glad to have at least one issue already resolved. “As you can see there’s both an egress and adult restroom just around the corner or within about 150 feet from each of your rooms.”

“What about the windows?” asked another math teacher, unwilling to let us get away from the subject.

“Unfortunately, the windows will not open.” I replied. The answer was met with grumbling, “If we could we would,” I explained. “But it’s a matter of safety and security.”

“Can we at least have light switches near the door?” complained yet another teacher.

“I’m tired of having to walk through my classroom in the dark just to find the light switch.”

Sensing the meeting was going to take a turn, I looked toward the architect praying the answer was yes.

“Well, yeah,” she said displaying unfamiliarity with our existing structure. “You don’t have this now?”

“No we don’t.” I admitted as the teachers chuckled. Even I had to smile. It broke whatever tension had been building.

“Listen, I know we sound grouchy,” said the teacher who originally aired the grievance. “It’s just that we’re looking forward to the improvements. I’m sure everything is going to be a lot nicer than it currently is.”

“For sure,” I agreed. “Thanks for your input, everyone. Time’s up.”

I looked at the busy blueprint already covered with scribbles and post-it notes. “Ready for the next group?” I asked.

The architect looked up at the next group waiting in the foyer, and then sheepishly motioned to me saying, “It is time for my lunch break.”

“Damn,” I reacted, desperately thinking through this new problem. “Okay, I get that you need to eat, but I’ve arranged substitutes for all of these teachers so they can be here right now, which means we’re on a really tight schedule, I’m very sorry, but is there any way you can take your lunch break later? Or can I have someone go and get you a sandwich so we can keep this going?” I asked.

“I guess that’d be fine,” she replied, looking a little dismayed.

“What would you like to eat?” I asked, hoping that my generosity could alleviate some of my guilt by asking this woman to work through her lunch. “I can have my assistant go get you anything you want.”

I relayed the architect’s order to Tressa, so we could keep rolling with the Special Education Department teachers.

By now, a horrible migraine had spread across my forehead. I could calculate my heart rate by counting the quasar-like pulses emitted from the ring of stars in the outer periphery of my eyes. It was only 12:30 p.m. and I could have lied down and slept for a week.

Our Special Education Departments was comprised of ten instructors: Four who worked with students with intensive needs, and six who worked with students with moderate learning disabilities. For the most part, the input offered by the group remained focused on improving problems from the old facility.

One special education teacher led the conversation with the architect, “We need the entire department for students with intensive needs to be located in one central area, but it shouldn’t be too far removed from the general students. The floor needs to be a hard surface to allow for easy cleanup. It would also be nice to have partitions and furniture so that students can easily rotate through different learning stations.

“Do you want offices or larger classrooms?” the architect asked directly. “It has to be one or the other.”

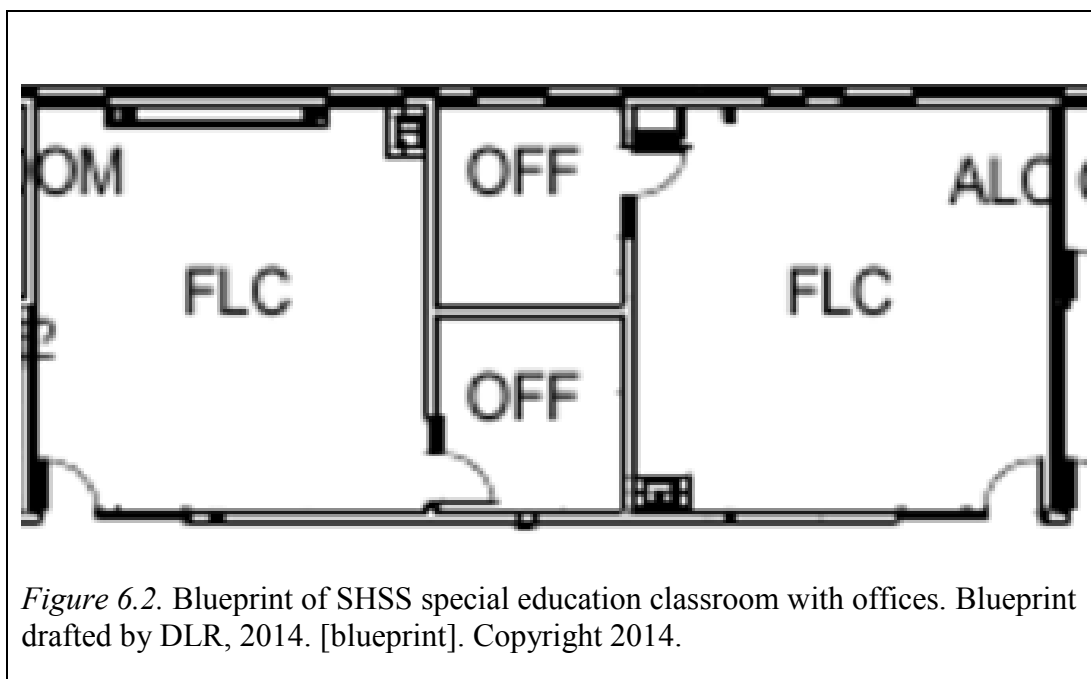
“Offices!” the teachers replied unanimously. They laughed at their unexpected agreement and enthusiasm.

“We need offices for confidentiality when talking to parents, or colleagues, or administrators.”

“How much smaller will our classrooms be with the offices?” asked the special education teacher, “We still need to have enough room for students in wheel chairs and paras/nurses who accompany them to move throughout the room. Not to mention storage.”

“The rooms now are about a 1,000 square feet, but if you remove the square footage for the offices, you are looking at around 800 square feet,” the architect explained as she showed them **Figure 6.2**.

Figure 6.2 Blueprint of SHSS Special Education Classroom with Offices



“Even if it means the rooms will be smaller, I still think we need offices.” One teacher replied.

“Okay, offices it is!” I exclaimed, hoping to hurry the group on. “You now have ten minutes remaining.”

Not wanting to waste any more time they dived in to the rest of their requests. “We want the same apartment setup that we saw at Garden City and Joplin,” said one teacher.

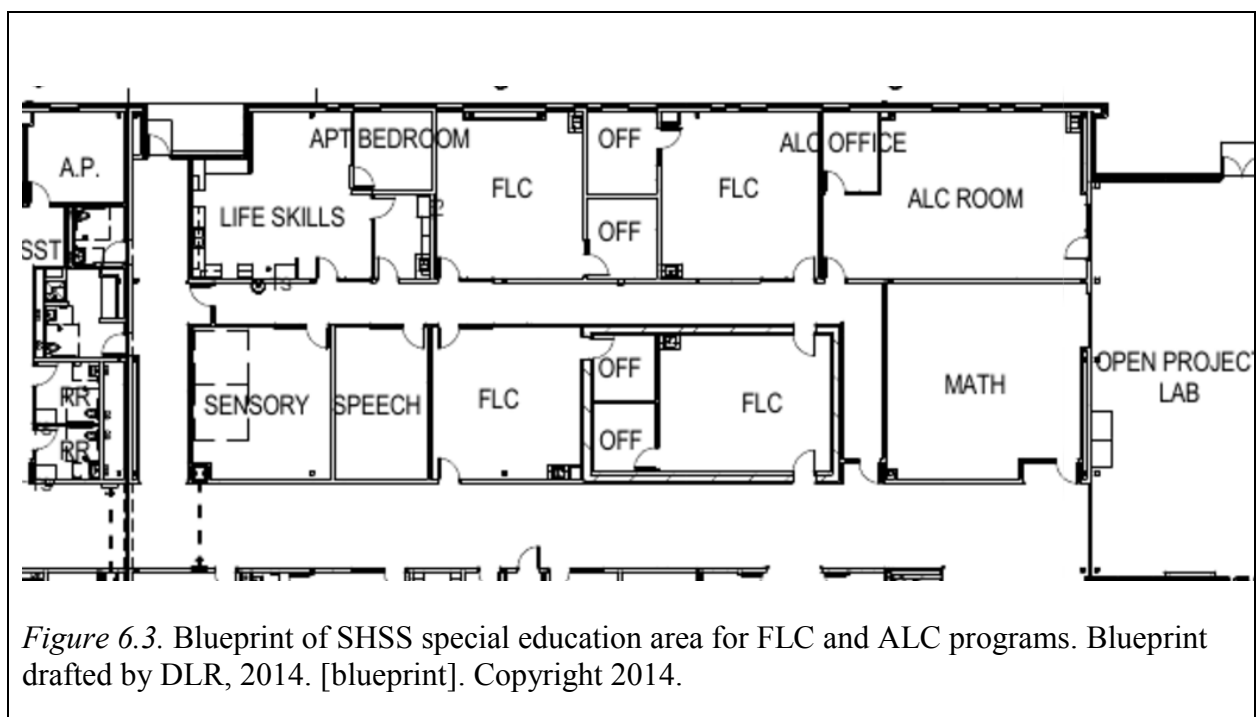
“Yes!” agreed another teacher. “And make sure the doorways are wide enough for wheel chairs.”

“The whole space needs to be wheelchair accessible,” a third teacher weighed in.

“We’ll also need a sensory room that is large enough for two swings, with dimmable lights, and enough space that we can use the area for a time-out as well,” explained one of the teachers who had remained silent up to this point in the meeting.

“What do you think of this?” asked the architect after making several more adjustments to the blueprint as show in **Figure 6.3**.

Figure 6.3 Blueprint of SHSS Special Education Area for FLC and ALC programs



“We’d like to have sinks in each of the classrooms,” suggested the FLC teacher.

“Yes, the little rectangles in the corners of the classrooms are sinks,” the architect explained, pointing them out.

“Where are the restrooms and changing room located? Some of my students require diapering.”

“The restrooms are located across the hallway on the left side of the picture. Only one of them will have a changing table with a lift,” replied the architect.

“I am sorry to tell you all this, but you’re out of time, and we’re running behind schedule.”

As a group, the teachers began moving toward the door. Beyond them, I could see Tressa holding the architect’s lunch. The architect also caught sight of her. If she’d been a cartoon, she’d have started drooling ravenously and her stomach would have roared like a lion.

“Curtis, we have not even had time to discuss the classrooms for our students with a learning disability,” the department chair protested.

The architect looked up at me pleadingly.

“Listen, Ericka, I’ll need to hold another session with you, and show you the proposal. You can weigh in then, but I need to get these teachers back to class, so we can get their substitutes to cover another department. But we’ll get to it I promise.” I said.

Ericka reluctantly left the office. The P.E. Department were already making their way in.

“I know we’re running a little behind, and I apologize, but we’re going to need to take a quick break so that Ms. Appleton doesn’t pass out from hunger,” I said attempting to use good humor to defuse their impatience. “I guarantee, you’ll have your chance to have your say.”

I escorted Ms. Appleton to my office where Tressa had retreated with her burrito. “All right, I will say this as gracefully as I can, I need you to eat like teacher today! Our teachers usually only get about a 17 minute lunch break. The restroom is over there. I will see you back upstairs at 1:03 p.m.”

“O...kay. I will scarf my food down or would you rather just have me eat my burrito off to the side of the blueprint?” Ms. Appleton said as if she were jo--.

“Well...if it is not too much to ask?” I said as I started picking up.

“I was joking Curtis. I need to eat!”

“Got it. You were joking. I will see you now in 16 minutes—and I am not joking,” I said as I closed the door.

Despite their grumbling at having to wait for Ms. Appleton to scarf her order of Taco Bell down at a pace similar to Lucy in the episode where she and Ethel work in a chocolate factory, surprisingly, the P.E. Department was ready to get to work.

“Can we please get all of the walls in our gyms repainted, the 1980s Dueling Cougars painted on the wall must go!” said one teacher.

“God that thing looks gross. The wall should have been painted over years ago.” reflected another teacher. She was an alumna of the school, and could remember when it was originally painted by an art student wearing a red leather zipper-jacket. “Can we also remove the basketball in the center of the basketball court, and replace it with an updated cougar decal.”

“Done, assured Ms. Appleton, who was clearly in better spirits now that had a full stomach and was hoping to keep the flow of ideas going. “What else?”

“We really need the health classrooms to be near the gyms for supervision reasons.” Explained the health instructor. If our rooms are all the way over on the other side of the building, we aren’t able to be down in the locker rooms when the students arrive.

“I absolutely agree with this!” I said, knowing all too well what happens when locker rooms don’t have adult supervision.

“One concern we have is that if you block off the old concession stand area and create health classrooms near the gyms, then the gym is the only way to get to the conditioning room and pool. There needs to be a hallway, so we don’t have people constantly passing through the gym.”

“We can do it, but it means that the health classrooms will be smaller,” Ms. Appleton cautioned.

“If those are the option...” replied the teacher. Can you show us a blueprint of what the area would look like with a hallway?”

Ms. Appleton replied point to a **Figure 6.4**, “Absolutely, as you can see in the classrooms become smaller with the hallway. We are able to repurpose space by removing an existing stair well.”

Figure 6.4 SHSS Gym & Health Classroom Blueprint

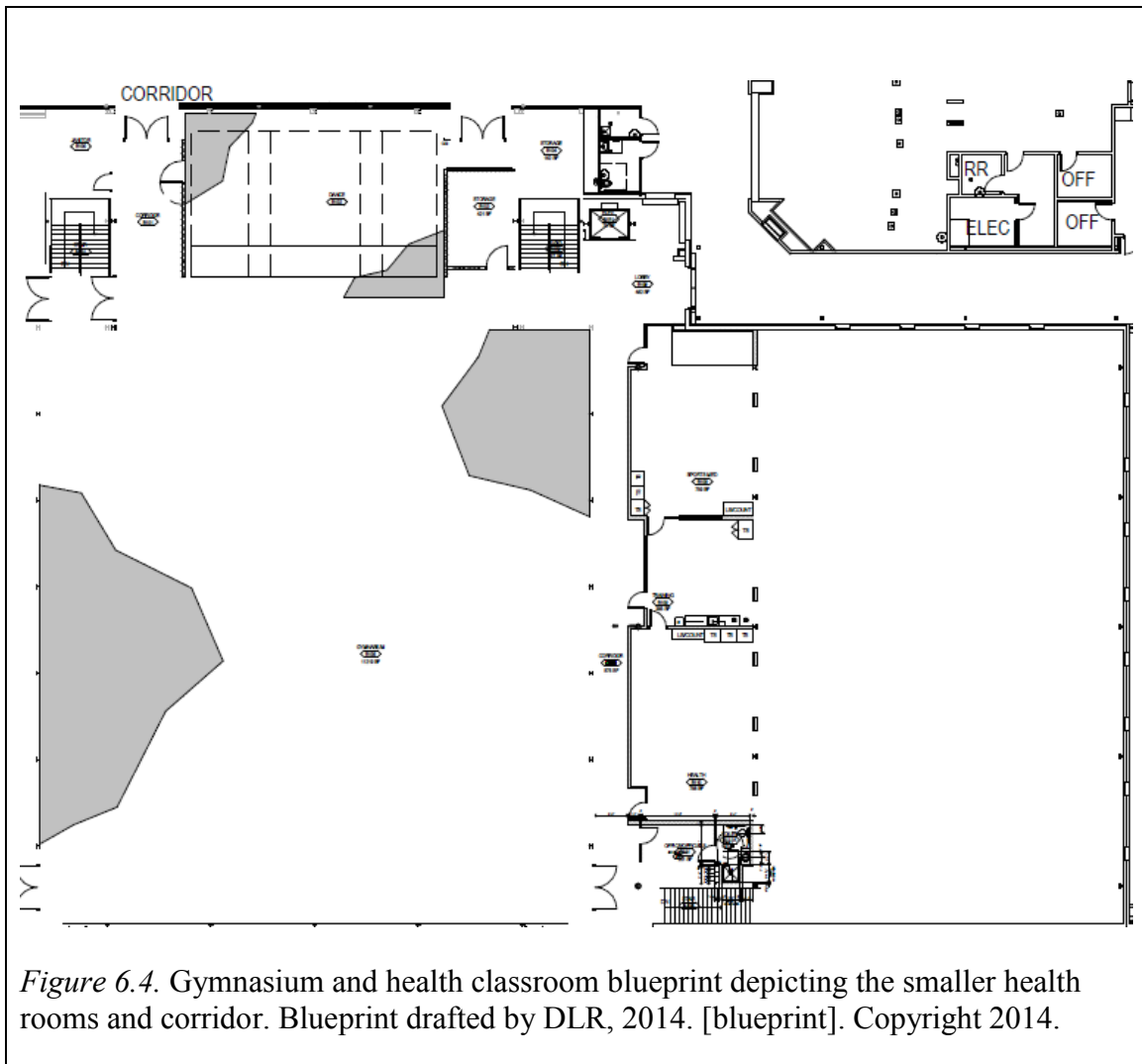


Figure 6.4. Gymnasium and health classroom blueprint depicting the smaller health rooms and corridor. Blueprint drafted by DLR, 2014. [blueprint]. Copyright 2014.

“It’s still kinda hard to visualize, reflected one of the teachers, “But we need the corridor. It’ll keep the gym floor traffic to a minimum, especially during competitions.”

“Yeah,” agreed another teacher. “Last thing we need is someone’s toddler getting loose and running into the middle of a basketball game.”

“I’m fully in support of the corridor.” I agreed as my head swam with potential law-suits.

“Great, let’s move on,” the P.E. department chair said, taking charge. “We’ve just got four more items: One, we need larger and better organized storage areas adjacent to the gyms.

Right now, all of the different sports are cluttered and we're actually having to store equipment in the instructional storage spaces. Two, we'd like to get a different space for the batting cages other than the gyms if possible. Three, we want to make sure the non-competitive gym is setup to accommodate standards for volleyball nets and correct court dimensions. Finally, we really need technology (screens for projectors, mounted projectors, etc.) and white boards in the health classrooms.

"Is that it?" I asked, checking my watch and surprised to find that they still had eight minutes remaining.

"Yes." said the P.E. Department Chair.

"I think we can accommodate everything but the batting cages." Ms. Appleton said.

"Great," the chair said. "Well, unless there's anything else, we'll let you get on with it."

"That's it," I said. "Thanks." The P.E. group left, and I radioed for Tressa to tell the World Language Department to come up to the meeting room as soon as possible.

There was just enough time for Ms. Appleton to quickly use the restroom before the next group of teachers appeared at the door.

"Have a seat," I invited.

"Here," said the department chair, handing me some papers.

"What's this? I asked.

"We heard about everyone running out of time, so instead of talking we decided to give you this list to read, and then you can ask us questions if you need to."

"Brilliant, I said."

The architect looked impressed too, as we both looked over the list in silence.

Table 6.1 SHSS World Language Department Needs

| Description | Category |
|--|---------------|
| Flexible classroom spaces that allow for various seating and work arrangements. Tables for two to allow collaboration when needed, but more individual workspace as well. | Collaboration |
| Doors leading from one classroom directly to the next (for teacher use) - encourages collaboration; added safety measures with a second exit from a classroom. | Collaboration |
| A real teacher's workroom/lounge; at least 1 per floor (1st | Collaboration |
| Large bulletin boards: posters, word walls, etc. would stay | Fixtures |
| Outdoor communal space, accessible for students and staff | Site Massing |
| Built-in storage cabinets/closets for each classroom, with | Storage |
| Keep technology and presentation space such as Promethean boards, wireless network, whiteboards, non-Google laptops/desktop computers with a language lab. | Technology |
| Multiple electrical outlets on each wall. | Utilities |
| More than one internet outlet in a classroom so teachers can have a choice in location for their desk, rather than being locked in one position for every teacher who would ever use the room. | Utilities |
| Windows for classrooms with outside walls and windows to the hallway. | Utilities |

After reading the concise list, the architect responded, “The only issue I see is your request for doors from one classroom to the next. We could put collapsible walls in some rooms, but we don’t typically put doors in between classrooms because you will lose wall space. Also, if there’s a need for a fire wall, it can’t have a door according to code.”

“Also, I don’t think we’ll be keeping the COWS,” I added, referring the antiquated computer stations on wheels. “Most high schools have both moved to one to one Chromebooks for their students. Everything else definitely appears doable.”

“Well, that’s all we have,” said the chair of the World Language Department.

“Thanks,” I said. “And thank you for your efficiency.”

Once they left the room, everything was quiet. I glanced at the architect who looked about as exhausted. I rubbed my temples in a quest to relieve a now three-hour throbbing headache.

“We need a better process for doing this,” I said.

The haggard looking Ms. Appleton said, “I agree.”

“I liked how the last group went.” I observed.

We need to have the others do the same.”

“Me too,” Ms. Appleton responded, “Maybe we can have the others do the same.”

“I’ll send out an email and tell the remaining groups to come prepared with a list like the World Language Department did. Then, we can look them over, write out our limitations/questions, and then invite them up to resolve any issues. I let out a tired sigh. “We still have about half the departments left.”

“Well, let’s hope that having them do the lists will be more effective and efficient,” Ms. Appleton said as she crunched down on the last remaining Dorito in the snack size bag that came with her burrito.

“I’m sure it will be,” I replied hopefully. “Thanks for all your hard work today.

“Sure,” the architect responded. “I’ll be back next week, and we’ll tackle the other half of the faculty,” Ms. Appleton said while packing up her belongings and preparing to head back to her office in Overland Park, KS.

“Till then!” I responded as I shook her hand. It was 2:30 p.m., and school was about to get out. I needed to step outside for yard supervision to make sure all the kids left the school property in an orderly manner. After that, there was the paperwork I’d been avoiding all day as I

met with all the teachers. I sighed again, looking forward to another long night, and coming home to reheat another cold dinner while the kids got ready for bed!

Preparing for and Executing the Final Design Session

“This process must be more efficient,” I thought to myself, as I stared at the white board in my office with a list of the remaining departments to interview as well as those I’d already seen. I started to group them by needs; their similarities and differences. I began to draw lines and to connect them. World Languages and Math should be some-what similar to English and Social Studies—with perhaps only a few significant differences. Science would be similar to Art, Family and Consumer Sciences, and Industrial Arts due to their reliance and needs for utilities such as gas, and electricity. These would take much more time and detail to plan during the upcoming meetings.

Looking hopelessly at the overwhelming web of connections I’d weaved, I realized there was no way around it. Meeting with all of the departments was imperative—to get their unique needs and insights of each. Besides, leaving out any given department at this juncture would only engender hostilities and jealousies. I was reluctantly willing to sacrifice a half hour now for avoiding a litany of complaints about unfairness later.

Following the first session, I recognized that I needed to schedule the groups to allow for a more appropriate amount of time. The design meetings would have gone much smoother if I’d avoided having resource intensive departments presenting back to back and rushing them. But then again, there were the substitute teachers, and their limited availability. The whole process was too rushed and too complicated! The meetings should have been scheduled on a work-day, not a school day! But it was too late now.

I drafted the following email to the remaining department chairs:

Dear Colleagues,

Please draft a list of your department's top ten list of priorities for the design process of your area of the building, and email the information to me no later than Friday at the end of the day. Make sure your list is specific enough to cover all of your needs. Assume you will only get a few of these items. Prioritize your list. You will all have 30 minutes to discuss your concerns, review the blueprints, and ask questions. As your fellow colleagues who have been through the process can attest, there is not nearly enough time. Please be organized upon your arrival.

I also need to reschedule each of the remaining departments. Please delete the first schedule I sent out, and follow the one below:

MONDAY:

English: 8:00 a.m.

Social Studies: 11:00 a.m.

Custodial Staff: 8:45 a.m.

Family Consumer Science: 1:00 p.m.

Business: 9:30 a.m.

Library Media Center: 1:30 p.m.

Construction Science: 10:15 a.m.

Kitchen Staff: 2:00 p.m.

TUESDAY:

Art: 8:00 a.m.

Administration Staff: 9:00 a.m.

Sincerely,

Curtis

Just two hours after hitting the send key on the email to the remaining department chairs, I received a list from the English Department as shown in Table 6.

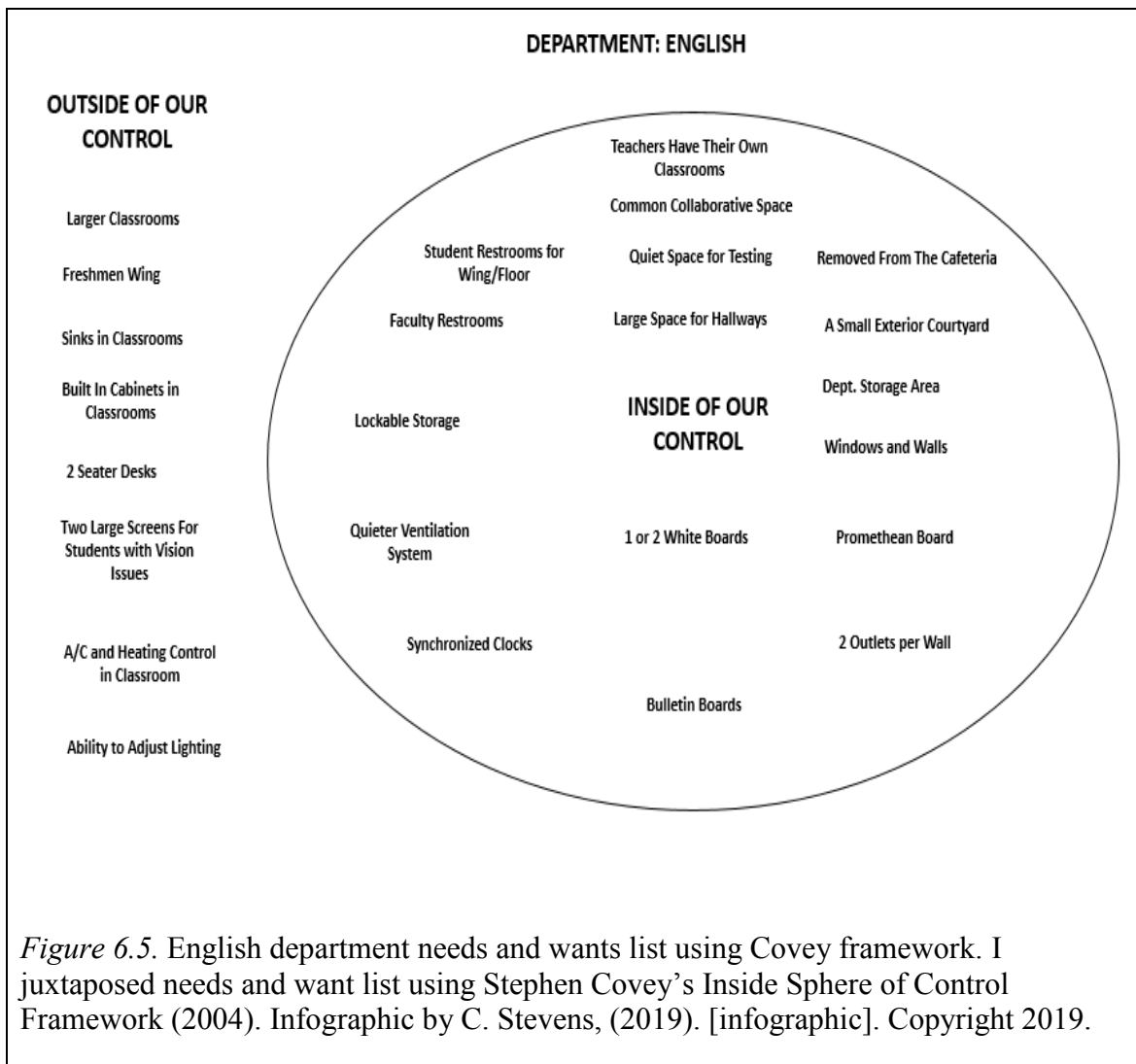
Table 6.2 SHSS English Department Wish List

| Description | Category |
|---|---------------------|
| Common space for teachers/Collaboration space | Collaboration Space |
| Conference area for independent testing within a wing | Collaboration Space |
| English Department Wing | Departments |

| Freshmen Transition Center/Wing | Departments |
|---|--------------------|
| A courtyard for student/class use (the ability to get some fresh air) | Exterior |
| Two seater desks w/out cubbies | Furniture |
| Built in bookshelves | Fixtures/Furniture |
| At least one white board in a room, if not two | Furniture/Fixture |
| State of the Art bulletin boards | Furniture/Fixture |
| Cafeteria/Commons area away from academic wings | Massing |
| Hallways/stairwells large enough for movement | Massing |
| Shared Office space between rooms/ door connecting the rooms | Office |
| More faculty bathrooms | Restrooms |
| Student restrooms within a wing (one at each end would be nice) | Restrooms |
| Sinks within rooms/ or hand sanitizing station/ Clean | Sinks |
| Water fountains that can refill water bottles | Sinks |
| Larger rooms...space to move. No traveling teachers...every teacher has a room | Square Footage |
| Lockable storage | Storage |
| Book room/supply room per department | Storage |
| Windows & Walls | Structure |
| Doors that lock | Structure |
| Walls that we can “stick” things on | Structure |
| Promethean Boards | Technology |
| Two large screen computers for each classroom (option for students w/ eye issues or tired eyes) | Technology |
| Synchronized clock system | Technology |
| Two outlets on each wall | Utilities |
| The ability to adjust lighting | Utilities |
| Climate control w/in a room or wing of the building (local control) | Utilities |

The original list contained just the items listed on the left side of the above table. I attempted to categorize their needs in order to frame our conversation with the architect and keep things on track. The next step I took after making categories was placing items into a Stephen Covey chart delineating what was inside and outside of our Control Circle based on the conversations I had had with our Director of Bond Projects. I organized the following document prior to the meeting as shown in **Figure 6.5**.

Figure 6.5 English Department Needs and Wants List



Over the course of the next few days, the other departments followed suit, sending lists of requests of varying lengths and complexities. I dutifully organized each of them over the weekend, hoping that the time I took for preparation would pay off in more efficient meetings.

The architects arrived Monday morning from Overland Park looking recharged and ready to go. They each opened their long cardboard tubes, and rolled out onto the table the latest blueprints riddled with post-it notes and irritated scribbles.

“Hi, good morning” I greeted them. “Listen, I wanted a chance to talk before everyone starts showing up. I think we should make some changes to how we’re doing these meetings. We don’t have enough time to go down the list in a random fashion, like we were.”

“So, what do you want to do instead?” Asked the architect.

“I asked the teachers to prioritize their lists to make them tighter. Hopefully, it’ll speed up the process. I also...”

“I thought they did this before the last visit.” The architect interrupted while pointing her finger toward me.

“They did, but this time I’ve had a chance to preview their lists,” I explained. And I have a clearer picture of our overall budget, so I can better guide the conversation, and let them know what is within our control and what is outside of our control budget wise.”

“Okay...we will give it a try,” She said, while gesturing as if waving a white flag to move on.

The English Department teachers filed into the meeting room. The Inside/Outside our Control circles were projected up on the wall.

When everyone was seated, I began. “We’ll start this morning with a diagram. Just so you’re all aware of the priority items under our influence.” Items that fall outside the circle—at this point, will likely not happen.”

There was some grumbling from the faculty.

“These are matters of budgeting and building regulations, and like I said, it’s completely out of our hands, so dwelling on them will only reduce the amount of time we have to discuss the items that are within our control.”

“Will there be enough classrooms so that everyone in the department will have their own room?” asked the department chair.

“Originally there was discussion to reduce the number of rooms and require teachers to travel and share, but fortunately, we were able to provide enough rooms for everyone,” I explained.

The group of teachers suddenly appeared relieved. Their body language made it apparent to me that there had been rumors circulating through the building of the intent to reduce classrooms.

“Is there going to be a collaborative space for our Professional Learning Community and Department?” Asked one of the more senior teachers in the department, referring to a common meeting space outside of the classroom.

“You’ll have your individual classrooms but most likely there won’t be an empty classroom designated for your PLC.” I answered. “It was one or the other, but we couldn’t do both.”

“It would really help to see the layout of the department again.” Suggested another veteran teacher. “Can you please pull that up on the screen?”

“Certainly,” I complied. As shown in **Figure 6.6**.

Figure 6.6 Blueprint of SHSS English Department

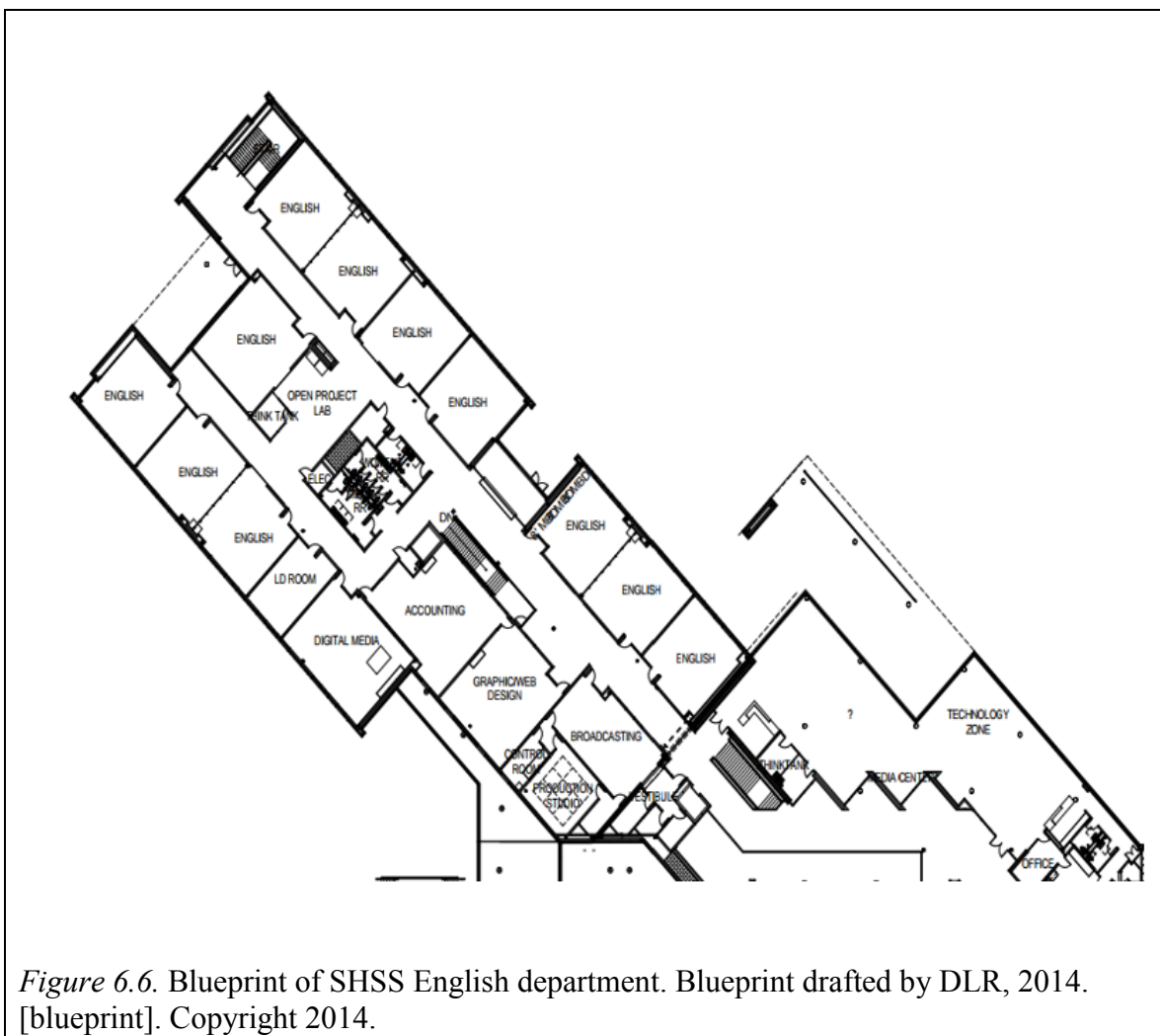


Figure 6.6. Blueprint of SHSS English department. Blueprint drafted by DLR, 2014. [blueprint]. Copyright 2014.

“As you look over the blueprint, what questions do you have? I asked. “As you can see you’ll all have a classroom. There’s also a think tank, which basically is a quiet place where students can take a test or read, but still be supervised.”

“What about storage?” Inquired a new teacher. “We’ll need a place for our books.”

“You’ll have a storage area comparable to what you currently have. Your new storage room is located next to the collaborative area, here.” I explained, as I pointed to it on the blueprint.

“According to your list, I see that the two-seater desks, built-in cabinets, and sinks are not going to be in the new classrooms,” asked another teacher. “Since these aren’t possible, what will our furniture actually look like?”

“You’ll have furniture,” I assured the faculty, wondering if they really expected me to leave them all standing around in empty classrooms. You’ll have storage cabinets, but they’ll be movable. We’re going to meet with our furniture consultant, Scott Rice, in a couple of weeks to talk about what we need so we can get the best price for what we need.”

“It says we will have a small exterior courtyard. What does this mean?” Asked the Department Chair.

“Bunch of cheap crap,” someone in the back of the group muttered. “

“We’ll be looking at a number of criteria for furniture. In addition to price, we’ll also need to consider function, utility, and durability,” I said. “So, no, we’re not just going to buy a bunch of ‘cheap crap.’”

There was a small chuckle from the teachers.

“Anyway,” I continued. “This is a conversation we can have later. In the meantime, let’s get back to present business.”

“It says we will have a small exterior courtyard.” Observed the department chair. “What does this mean?”

This is the area located outside these doors. Since you’re all on the second floor, you can use the stair case here to access.” I said, pointing to the west portion of the building. “There will be a little nook or patio on this side of the building. We could have benches setup if you’d like to use the area for a Socratic circle of something like that.”

“It’s difficult to visualize,” complained the chair. “What’s the shaded space on the blueprint behind the restrooms?”

“Huh,” I shrugged. “I’m not sure.”

“That space is designated for utilities and the duct work for the HVAC,” the architect explained.

“What does HVAC stand for asked?” Asked one teacher.

“Heating, ventilation, air conditioning,” the architect explained.

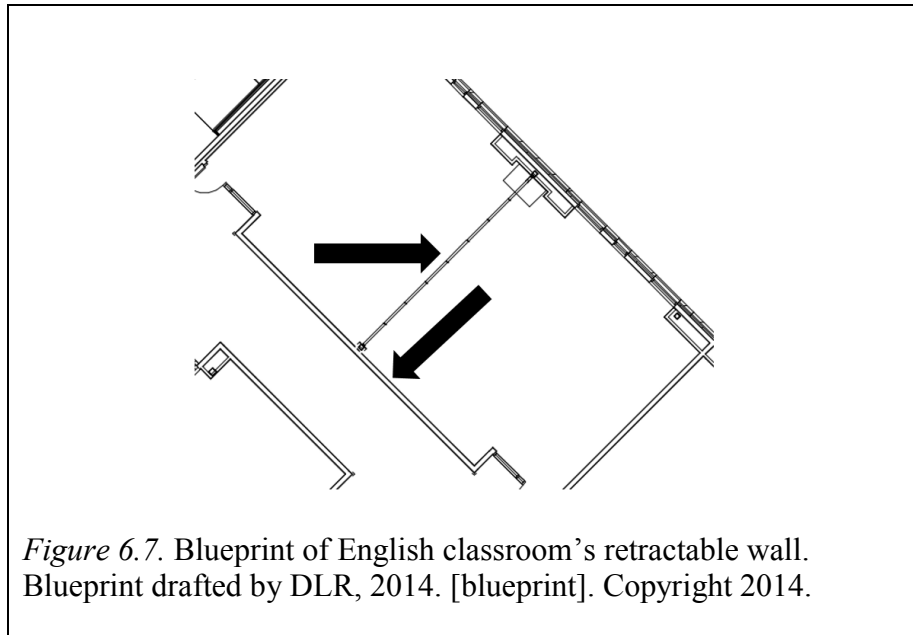
“Good point,” I said. “All these acronyms are a bit like alphabet soup. I’ve been getting immersed in an entirely new language as well. You’ll just have to bear with us all,” I apologized to the architect.

“No problem,” she replied patiently.

“Anyway, are there any other questions?” I asked. “We’re about half-way through our time.”

“What’s this? Asked the department chair point at the blueprint. “How come some of the walls are drawn with straight lines while these three classrooms have a few walls with these dash marks on them?” Asked the department chair as she pointed to **Figure 6.7**.

Figure 6.7 Blueprint of English Classroom's Retractable Wall



“Those dash marks represent a collapsible wall,” explained the architect. “In other words, if two teachers want to open a wall between their room, they can to make a larger collaborative space. Walls without the dashes do not have the capability of opening or closing.”

“How will the room assignments be handled?” asked the department chair.

“We’ll cross that bridge when we get there. However, I will say that I believe in allowing teachers who work in a common Professional Learning Community to share adjacent spaces for the sake of efficiency. I also believe in allowing the departments to settle room assignments. If there’s a problem administration can weigh-in. But again, we’ll cross that bridge when we get there. We still have two years before anyone is going to be able to move into any of the rooms.”

“What type of technology will be placed in the classrooms?” asked the department chair.

“You’ll have a Promethean board with a short throw projector. Every wall will have electric outlets. Every classroom will be equipped with a telephone, and there will be docking stations for laptop computers, similar to what you already have now.”

“You noted that there will be synchronized clocks. Does this mean they’ll be installed into the wall like in our pod classrooms?” asked one of the English teachers.

“Probably not,” I answered. “Clocks that are wired into the wall are becoming passé.

“Clocks that are wired into the wall are really becoming passé. They’re too much trouble to fix or replace, and there are a lot of clocks on the market that can synchronize without having them hard-wired. I presume the main reason you’re asking is because all of our current clocks have a different time.”

“Yes, that is exactly why I am asking.”

“We’ll look into it as a building when we decide on the FF&E budget.”

“Any other last minute items before we close this session?” asked the architect.

“Are we going to have opportunities to tour the new building as it’s being constructed?” asked the department chair.

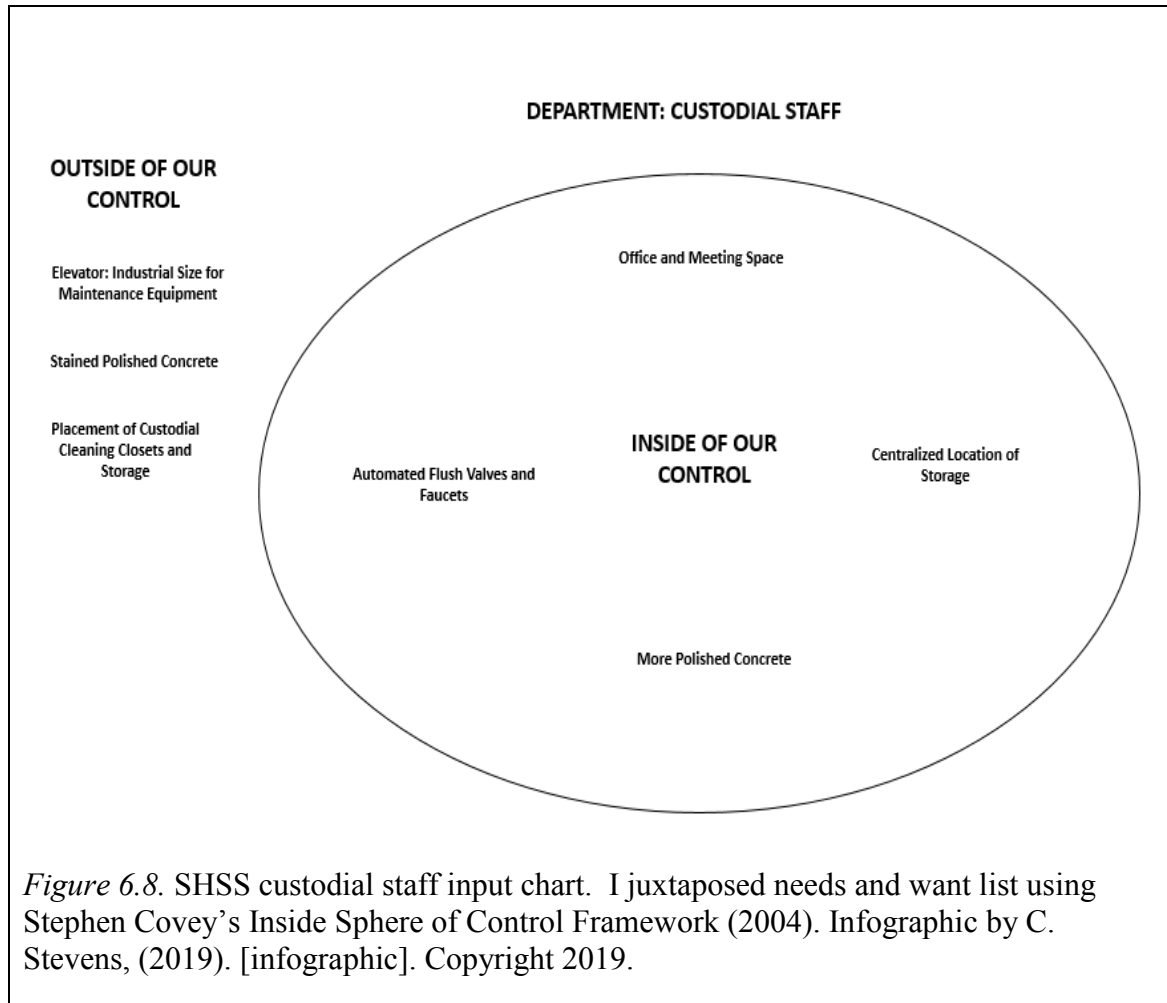
“I will do my very best to make it happen,” I answered. “It’s my understanding that we’ll have enough hard hats, vests, and safety clearance to go into the work site. But I’ll again do my best to keep the departments abreast of the changes throughout the construction project, and hopefully we can accommodate a few tours as things take shape.”

“Thanks, Curtis,” said the chair, standing. The group mumbled in affirmation. “We’re glad to be included in the design process.”

“Of course, Krista.” I said.

The SHSS Custodial Crew’s requests were fairly straight-forward and took only a few minutes to organize the weekend prior to our Monday morning meeting as shown in **Figure 6.8**.

Figure 6.8 SHSS Custodial Staff Input Chart



“Is that it?” the architect asked, surprised at the relative brevity of their requests.

“Yep,” I said. “Let’s hope so.”

The four members of the daytime custodial crew entered the meeting room, and sat down. Unlike the faculty, they had a generally laid-back vibe. Most likely, they were enjoying the extra break time to come talk with us.

“Good morning!” I said, “There are some donuts and coffee over on the table, please help yourself.”

When the custodians returned to their seats with their refreshments, the building operator announced. “We don’t have very many items, but what we listed we really need.”

“As you look over what we can for sure have in place—what are your thoughts?” I asked.

“At first glance, if we can’t have the industrial elevator, we’ll need to be careful as we purchase equipment like riding sweepers. Otherwise, we won’t be able to move them up and down between floors. Most of the existing equipment we already have was purchased with a one-story plan in mind. South High never had a second floor before.”

“What’s the maximum weight needed for our existing equipment?” I asked.

“About a thousand pounds,” one of the custodians responded.

“With or without a load of water on it?” I asked.

“That would be the maximum weight with a full tank of water,” responded the Building Operator.

“Uh-huh,” I nodded. “And what’s the maximum weight our new elevators can hold?”

“The elevators will have a maximum payload of twenty-five hundred pounds,” explained the architect. “The floor scrubbers shouldn’t be an issue.”

“Good, but I think Mark raises a good point here,” I said, careful to make sure that the custodial staff felt like they were being heard. “While we may not have an industrial elevator—we’ll certainly need to be careful about purchasing equipment so that it will fit in the elevator and go upstairs. This is exactly the type of conversation we needed.”

“I see where stain for the polished concrete is not an option?” asked one of the other emboldened custodians. “Can I ask why?”

“The concrete will have the staining agent added to the mix, so we won’t have to restrain it after it’s poured,” explained the architect. Both are extremely expensive to do given the scale of this project, but the second option would require ongoing maintenance, and would save money and labor over the long-run.”

“As for the custodial storage closets, or what you call “Dog Houses,” their location is preset by the architects,” I said. “You’ll find that they’re strategically positioned throughout the building, though maybe not exactly where you want them to be.”

The faces of the custodians appeared indifferent to the location of the custodial closets. They were examining the blueprints with interest, and attempting to visualize how much easier or harder their future work life might become.

“You noted on the lists of items that are within your control that a central location for storage would be provided,” said a skeptical custodian. “Where’s that at?”

“If you look on the blueprint of the basement corridor that connects the lower gyms—this area will be designated for storage cages for all athletics.” I responded.

“Again, the only issue I foresee is we’ll need to make sure that any maintenance equipment needed in the lower gym, locker rooms, and the new storm shelter will be under the weight maximum of the elevator,” responded the lead custodian.

“No question,” I agreed. Despite the relative ease of negotiating with the custodial staff, I felt a headache coming on, and began to rub my temples in an attempt to relieve it.

“Well, if there are no other comments—I guess that does it,” I said, looking at my watch. The meeting had only taken ten minutes—a new record. “Thanks for your input,” The crew stood, and shuffled out the door, a couple of members grabbing an extra donut and refill of coffee for the road.

“I need to take a break.” I said to the architect.

As I stood up, I started seeing the little stars and the all too familiar rings emerged like a halo around my eyes.

“You okay?” asked the architect with a tone of concern in her voice that made me feel even less at ease. Was it obvious?

“Yeah,” I lied. “I’m fine. Just a bit of headache.”

I walked down to my office all while rubbing my neck in a quest to eradicate the tension that stiffened my shoulders. I always keep a special crash kit in my office for occasions like these. Inside the kit is a toothbrush, toothpaste, an extra razor (for those evening PTA meetings when I start sporting an evening shadow), and a large bottle of 500 mg extra strength Tylenol. I shook a couple of chalky white tablets from the bottle, and knocked them back with a mouthful of tepid coffee.

With lamps in my office dimmed to calming cave-like ambience, I closed my eyes and tried to will away the growing pressure in my skull. Just as I was starting to have a moment to think and reflect on the past meetings, my train of thought was derailed by a knock on my door. “Mr. Stevens...this will only take a second.” It was the most common lie ever told to a principal.

“Yes, how can I help you?” I asked in the most caring voice I could muster.

“I don’t want to be the one to report these type of things to you,” started the young millennial teacher—but you need to know that there are some teachers coming to work late.”

“Oh really, like who? I asked, as she was blowing the lid on the school controversy of the century. In truth, the news was dull, but as principal, I knew I was being paid to give a darn about things like this. All I really wanted to do, though, was go home, lie down, and ride out the vice-like squeezing sensation at my temples in quiet misery.

“Well, I don’t feel as though I should be the one to tell you their names.” Said the teacher backing away from the previous cavalier statement.

“Then what the heck do you want me to do about it, Beth?” is what I wanted to say. What I actually said is, “Oh, well what was the teacher’s response when you told them they were late.”

“Well...I would never feel comfortable confronting them,” explained the teacher.

“Ah,” I said. “Okay, well thank you for the information.”

“You’re welcome, Mr. Stevens,” She paused as she was leaving, and asked, “Are you alright, Mr. Stevens?”

“Yeah,” I lied for the second time. “Why?”

“It’s just, you don’t look well,” Beth admitted. “No offense or anything.”

“None taken,” I said, wishing she’d just disappear. “Just a bit of a headache.”

“Oh,” Beth said. “My aunt had a great home-remedy for headaches. You need to mix some cucumber and yogurt and cayenne pepper, mix them together, and then spread it over the places where you feel the most tension. After fifteen or twenty minutes, it’ll be gone.”

Even if I had had the ingredients at hand, which I didn’t, I wasn’t about to meet with half the school covered in vegetable dip. I opened my mouth to thank Beth for her useless advice when my Motorola Radio Squawked.

“Code 1! Code 1! In the FLC!”

“I’m on my way,” I radioed back, rushing from my office, and pushing past the alarmed teacher in my doorway.

The FLC or Functional Learning Center was a classroom in the Special Education Department, just across the hallway from my office. As I approached it, I could hear the screaming voice of a student. An orange plastic chair went sailing past the doorway to the

classroom. Then the table was overturned scattering its contents across the floor. Finally, a stapler flew across the room and hitting the opposite wall, and chipping the paint from the concrete.

“I need everyone to leave the room.” I instructed.

After finishing up working with the student with special needs, I made my way back to the design meetings. The architect had been forced to go on without me in order to maintain her own schedule, but the meetings seemed to be going well. As I walked in, the Business Department was wrapping up their discussion.

“Mr. Stevens, will we have three graphic design labs or only two?” asked the instructor.

“We’ll start with two, but hopefully we can add one more. It’s going to depend on how much funding we have available for technology.” I responded.

“What about the desks with locks?” asked one of the most veteran members of the Business Department—“how am I supposed to keep all of my Mac laptops from walking off if there are no locked drawers to set them in?”

“I guess we’ll need to see what we can purchase with FFE to make that happen.” I said, praying we had enough money after covering unexpected costs.

“So you don’t know!” accused the skeptical business teacher.

“How can I?” I responded—with more than a tinge of impatience. My migraine was now making full impact. “You’re asking about step 2,034, and we’re still back on step five. All I can say at the moment is that time will tell, and assure that I’ll do the very best I can to advocate for needed furniture in your area.”

In the gap between the business department leaving and construction science department arriving, I said to the architect, “I’m sorry I wasn’t here. I had to handle a crisis. How’d it go?”

“They were very thorough,” she replied.

“I’d think less of them if they weren’t,” I said with a chuckle. The architect returned a weak smile as if to say the joke wasn’t funny.

The Construction Science department consisted of only two teachers, and of those, only the fifty percent named Vince attended the meeting. Vince was a senior teacher, whose tenure was nearly as old as the original construction of the school itself. He walked in and spent several minutes looking over the blueprint. Finally he said, “While I appreciate seeing the shape of the classroom drawn on the blueprint—I’m afraid I’ll need a little more detail than this to be able to make sure the plans will work.”

The architect straightened in her chair, and I could tell she took offense to being talked to like one of his remedial students. “What do you mean you need more details?” she asked with barely masked irritation.

“I mean I need more details!” he returned in an almost exasperated voice. “We have nine major machines that need electric outlets that meet their specifications, and the dust ventilation duct work needs to link right over each tool. How do I know this blueprint will work without these details?”

While I didn’t care anymore for his dismissive tone any more than the architect appeared to, the that I listened to him, the more I recognized that he was right.

“These are just shades of grey, for the purposes of preliminary planning,” the architect defended. “We’ll get more detailed information as we finalize the design.”

“Ok, well until you’re ready to get to the details, there really isn’t much of anything else I need to weigh in on,” said the construction teacher, concluding the meeting. In total, the meeting only took six minutes, breaking the record set by the custodial staff.

“I’m sorry for the way he-” I began to apologize to the architect, still visibly annoyed, but was interrupted by my radio.

“Code 1 FLC!”

“Not again!” I shouted in frustration, as I stood up and ran toward the crisis.

I darted into the classroom again, and told everyone to leave. Just as I turned around—I saw the student charging toward me with a closed fist. Using my best Mandt maneuver ⁹—I blocked the student’s first blow. However, the student quickly landed a punch on my right temple. As I staggered backwards in surprise, he yanked my glasses off of my face, and threw them to the ground.

“Ha...I broke your fucking glasses!” he shouted enthusiastically.

Without my glasses, the whole world was a blur. I couldn’t see what the student was doing, and worried he was preparing another attack. I retraced my steps, and backed out of the classroom, holding the door closed.

“What happened?” asked the paraprofessional waiting anxiously in the hall.

I ignored her question, and instead directed her to keep track of how much time passed in 15 second intervals. As I held the door—I thought to myself—well, I will have about an hour of paperwork to fill out due to the Emergency Safety Intervention of seclusion we had to utilize, nevertheless, I was thankful that no one was hurt.

⁹ The Mandt System is a comprehensive, integrated approach to preventing, de-escalating, and if necessary, intervening when the behavior of an individual poses a threat of harm to themselves and/or others.

As I walked back up to the library, I met the Social Studies Department coming down the stairs.

“Wow,” said the department chair, raising his hand to the side of his head. “How did that happen?”

“FLC had a student acting out. I had to intervene. Just glad no one was hurt.”

“No one but you, you mean,” the chair corrected.

“I’m alright,” I replied, wondering how many times today I’d tell the same lie. “Anyway, how’d the meeting go?”

“Everything looked great,” she said. “We’re really excited to see what it will all look like when it’s done.”

“That’s good to hear,” I said.

“Well, better get back to class,” said the chair. “You might want to get some ice for that.”

“Thanks,” I said, and carried on to the meeting room, wishing all of the groups were as easy to please.

The architect glanced up as I entered, and a look of shock crossed her face.

“It looks worse than it is,” I assured her. “Who’s next on the agenda?”

“We’re at lunch.”

“Lunch?” I repeated, wondering how half the morning had just slipped away from me.

Tressa came in carrying a large bag of Jimmy John sandwiches, and I felt my spirit lift as my stomach growled eagerly. Eating lunch was such a foreign thing to me. I waited my turn and allowed our guest architects and designers to go first. After filling my plate and sitting down to strategize the rest of the day, my cell phone rang. I didn’t recognize the number, but like a fool I answered it anyway.

“Hello, this Curtis Stevens,” I said while I admired the oily surface of my gargantuan sandwich.

“Yes, Mr. Stevens, this is Jane Dorsett,” said the voice on the other end of the line.

“What can I do for you Ms. Dorsett?” I asked, scanning my mental rolodex for a Dorsett kid.

“I’d like to know why your school and staff allow my son to be continually bullied and refuse to do anything about it,” the upset parent complained. Before I could respond, she went on to say, “John has endured enough for the past 3 months. You and your staff just let it happen and refuse to stop it, and I’m pissed! All of this is a reflection of your poor leadership and inability to manage a school!”

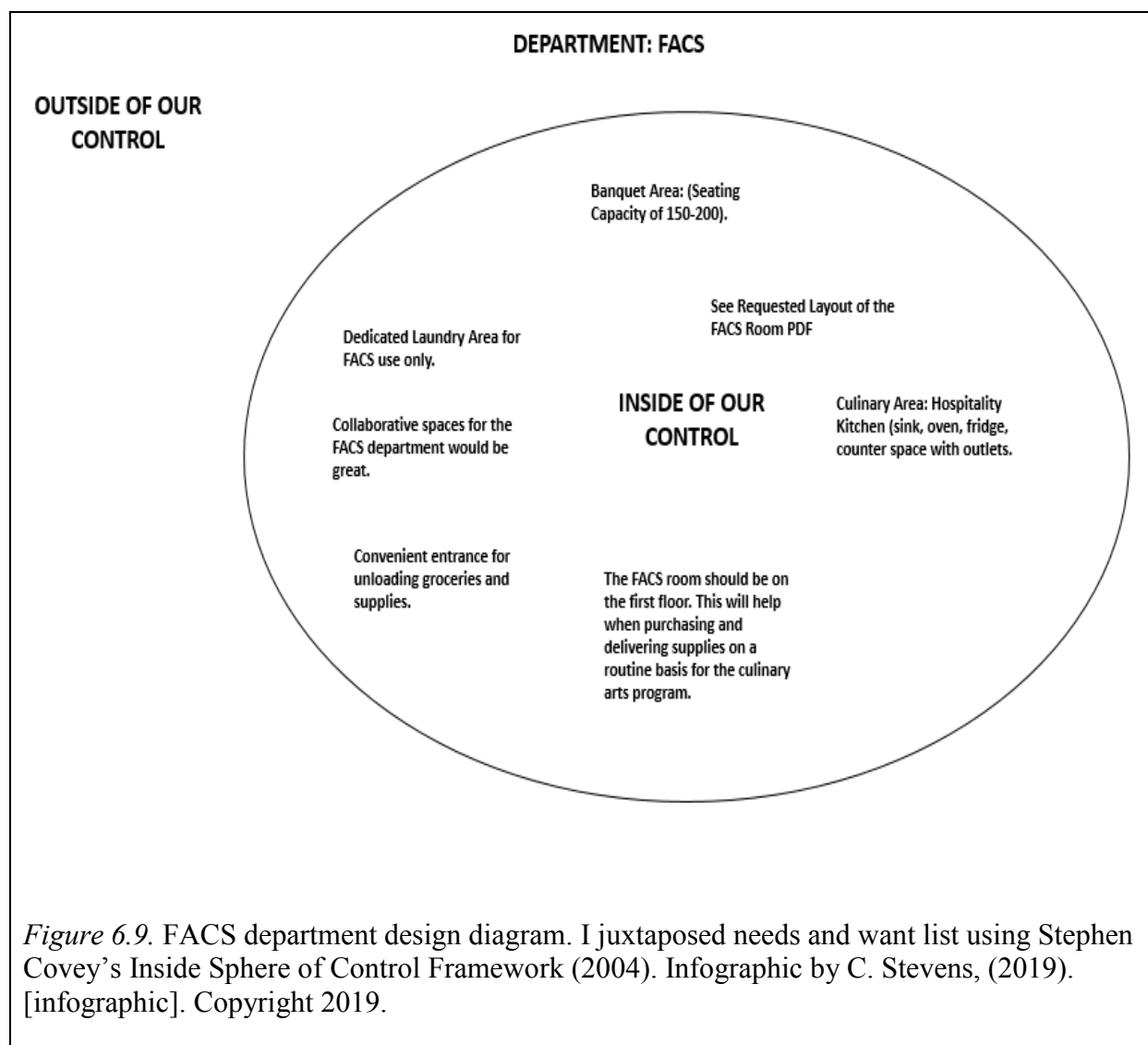
Immediately I got up and walked over to an office where I could communicate with more privacy. I was still trying to place a face to the name, John Dorsett.

“Mrs. Dorsett, your concern is very important to me. Just to make sure I understand the problem, I’m going to take notes and repeat back what I’m hearing, okay?” I said.

By the time the call was over, it was five minutes past the end of lunch. I looked longingly at the untouched sandwich sitting untouched on my desk, and then at the nagging clock on the wall. I got up, walked to the door of my office, and paused. Quickly, I returned to the desk and bit off a large mouthful of bread, cold cuts, mustard, and cheese. Struggling to chew and swallow the last of it before entering the meeting room, I at least felt cheered by this small, barely significant act of rebellion against the endless demands of the day. ‘Chalk one up for Curtis,’ I thought to myself. ‘At least today wouldn’t be a total shut-out.’ Wiping the last crumbs from my mouth with the back of my hand, I opened the door and found both of the Family and

Consumer Science or “FACS” Teachers, Wendy and Bonnie, waiting expectantly for me with the diagram of their requests projected onto the wall as shown in **Figure 6.9**.

Figure 6.9 FACS Department Design Diagram



The two teachers looked over the diagram and spoke in low excited whispers to each other.

“So does this mean we’re going to get everything we asked for?” asked Wendy.

“Your requests were entirely reasonable,” I said.

“Well, we’re just tickled,” Bonnie exclaimed.

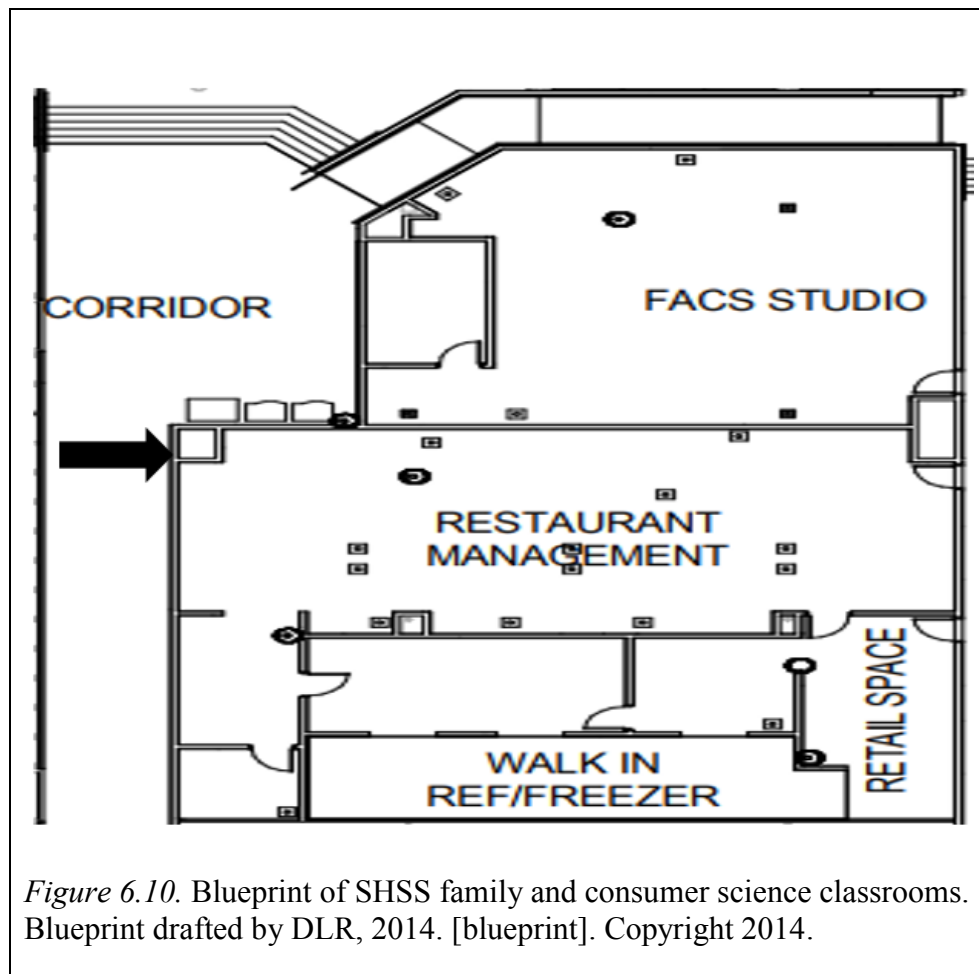
“We’re glad we’re able to accommodate you ladies,” the architect said warmly. After the cold reception from the construction science chair, she was relieved to see some friendly faces. As faces at the school went, the FACS teachers had a reputation for being amongst the friendliest.

“Well, is there anything else you can think of while we’ve got you here?” I asked.

“Nope,” Bonnie responded right away.

“Well...” Wendy began hesitantly. “I was just thinking... Is it possible to have a door installed in the back hallway of the FACS room as shown in **Figure 6.10**?”

Figure 6.10 Blueprint of SHSS Family and Consumer Science Classrooms



“Oh yeah!” Bonnie agreed. “That would be great.”

“Why do want a door back there?” I asked.

“We could bring supplies and groceries straight from the auditorium doors into the classroom without having to go all the way around to the other side of where the main entrance door is.” Bonnie explained.

“It would make things a lot easier,” Wendy added.

Together, the four of us examined the blueprints.

“That makes sense to me,” I said, and looked at the architect. “Are there any electrical outlets, pipes, or structural columns that would prohibit the placement of a door?”

“Nothing we couldn’t move or work around,” the architect said. “Just keep in mind you’ll give up wall and counter space to fit another door.”

The two teachers exchanged glances, then nodded.

“We’re okay with that,” Wendy said.

“It’s worth it to be able to deliver my groceries easier.”

“Does everything else look okay?” I asked.

Wendy and Bonnie looked at each other and began to shake their heads, then Wendy suddenly exclaimed, “Wait! There was one more thing.”

“What?” I asked.

“Will there be a door between the concession stand and the rest of the classroom?”

Wendy asked. Bonnie nodded in support. “The reason I ask is that because of all the sound from the commons during lunch. Besides, I have some very expensive equipment in my classrooms that I want to be secure.”

“Of course,” the architect replied, pointing to the blueprint. “You’ll have a door here between the concession stand and the rest of the classroom.”

“That’s excellent!” enthused Wendy.

“I’m sure we’ll have more questions as we get closer to the construction and as we discuss the equipment,” Bonnie said.

“But for now, everything looks good,” Wendy added.

“Really good,” Bonnie agreed.

“Ok. Thank you for coming in today and providing your input,” I said.

“No problem, Curtis,” Bonnie replied.

“It was a pleasure to meet you, Jen,” Wendy said, shaking the architect’s hand.

“It was a pleasure meeting both of you as well,” Jen, the architect, responded, shaking Bonnie’s hand.

“Have a great rest of the day,” Bonnie said, and the pair exited the room, chatting excitedly with each other about the expected improvements to their classrooms.

“We’ve only got one more for today,” I said to Jen.

“Great,” replied the architect. “I think things have gone much smoother today, with your charts.”

“Don’t speak too soon,” I warned. “We’re meeting with the Library Media Specialist next, and rumor has it that she’s not too happy about the proposed design.”

I could handle some mild discontent, but what I was dreading was the librarian’s thoroughness. She completely contradicted the stereotype of librarians as quiet and mousey figures. Rather than insisting on silence, she was prone to speaking what was on her mind, no matter what. There was a part of me however the really respected her for being this way.

As I sat for a moment to take in the last remaining minutes of silence, it dawned on me that the last 3 hours were so busy that I forgot my headache had subsided. The secondary trauma, caused by the sporadic events earlier in the day, forced my mind to swirl like glitter in a dime store snow globe. I found it therapeutic from time to time to be alone or sit in a silent room to untangle my mind—like a concussed football player is ordered to sit in a dark and silent room by a doctor.

“Mr. Stevens!” Crackled my radio.

“This is Stevens...go ahead!” I responded after picking up the radio and pushing the button.

“There is a parent in the office here to see you about an urgent issue.” The administrative assistant politely pleaded with a tone one could infer reflected abuse by the visiting parent with an urgent issue.

“I will be right there.” I responded getting back at it after a short mental break.

“Mr. Stevens...are you going to be here for the Librarian!” The architect asked in an almost panicked voice.

“I will get back as quick as I can.” I said, as I walked out of the office and headed down to the main office.

I stepped into my office, closed the door, and picked up the phone—suddenly everything went dark and there was a bright light. I could hear chuckling in the background, smell cigar smoke and started to see a group of familiar researchers. “Well Stevens...we all knew you would fall for that!” The laughter grew louder again.

“Look, I call the Oracle to order, not the other way around!” I fumed. “So now you want me to visit!”

“Don’t you at least want to know why we called you!” said Dr. Fullan with his hands up puffing out a perfect ring of smoke.

Although he made a good point—I was too angry to look eager but also too tired to fight. “Why did you call me here?” I asked in a defeated voice.

“You need to think this meeting through or you are going to screw everything up!” Dr. Fullan explained. “You need to recognize that all successful strategies are socially based, and action oriented; change by doing rather than change by elaborate planning” (Fullan, 2007, p. 44).

“You know what...I sure wish you guys could make up your minds!” I said in an exacerbated voice. “First you tell me that I need to define the tight and loose, and then Covey explains how I should frame the issue from what is within and outside the teachers control, and now you are bringing everything back full circle saying I need to go soft by grounding my strategies socially! I really don’t know what the hell you all want me to do! You remind me of the story of the schoolteacher who came to apply for a job during the Depression in a small country town. The school board was divided on whether the world was flat or round, and they asked him how he taught it. The poor fellow needed a job so much he said, “I can teach it either way.” “Make up your minds! After all you are all supposed to be the gurus of leadership! You know what, I feel I should fire every one of you! Or at least ban you from accessing the Oracle.”

“You wouldn’t!” Fullan dared as he crushed out his cigar.

“Why not, you’re excluding others to your sessions!” I responded referencing the group not even the given courtesy to sit in and watch.

I turned to leave and before slamming the door shut I yelled, “You’re all fired!”

“Good afternoon. It has been a long day, I am going to provide you with a blueprint and a framework to focus our conversation today.” I said as I looked at the long time Library Media Specialist who I know was ready to get something off of her chest.

The architect did not waste any time and immediately started in by saying, “The first slide is a blueprint of the new library media center. As you can see, the space has a wonderful lookout over the campus and there is a commanding presence on Magnolia St. The total circulation capacity of the library rests at about 15,000 books. See **Figure 6.11** and **Figure 6.12**.

Figure 6.11 SHSS Library Media Center Blueprint

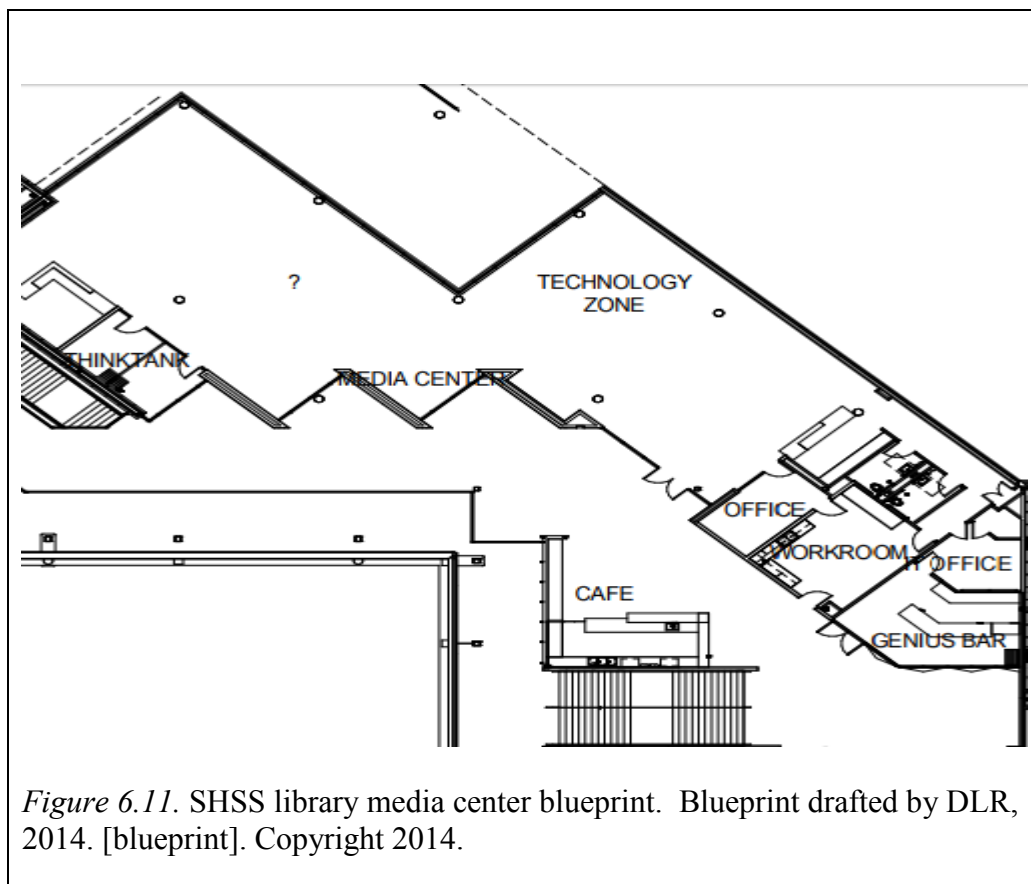


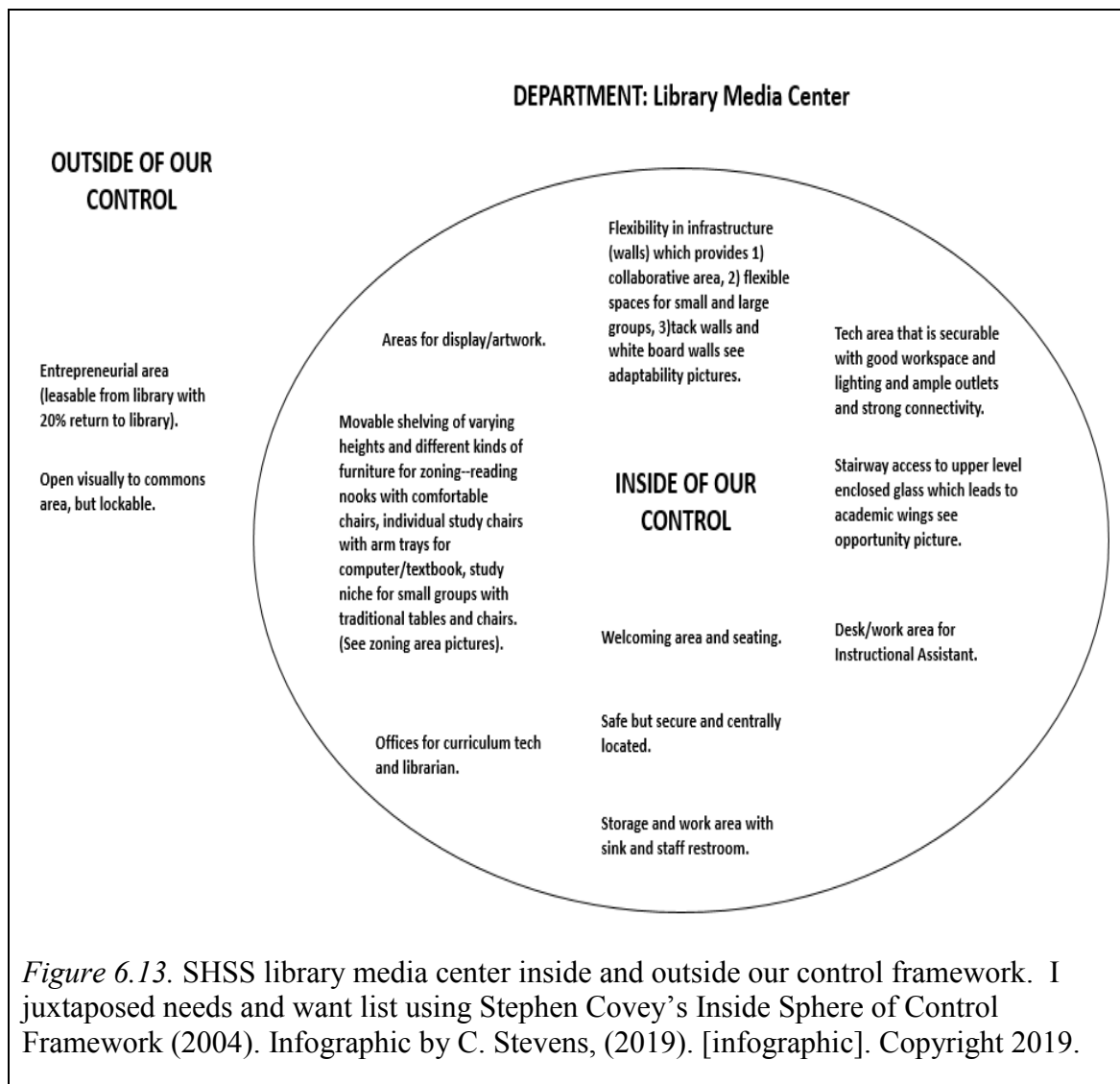
Figure 6.12 Mockup picture of SHSS Library Media Center.



Figure 6.12. Mockup picture of SHSS library media center. Mockup photograph by DLR, 2014. [mockup photograph]. Copyright 2014.

So far so good, I thought to myself. The Librarian shuffled in her seat a couple of times, but allowed the architect to say what she needed to say. “Last but not least, Mr. Stevens wanted me to share with you a graphic that shows what requested items you received, and what items fell outside of your control when designing this space. As you can see, the Library Media Center received all but two of their requests from the design input data as shown in **Figure 6.13**.

Figure 6.13 SHSS Library Media Center’s Design Diagram



“Do you have any questions?”

Again, silence sank in.

“All right, well thank you for your time,” the architect said as she closed out the presentation.

As I went to lay out the other items in preparation for the last meeting of the day Minerva, the librarian, approached me and quietly yet with a frustrated and serious look said, “I’d like to speak with you tomorrow some time in my office.”

“Okay,” I agreed. “Do you have a time in mind?” I asked.

“Will ten o’clock work?” The library media specialist asked.

“Sure,” I replied. I immediately typed the meeting into the calendar on my cell phone.

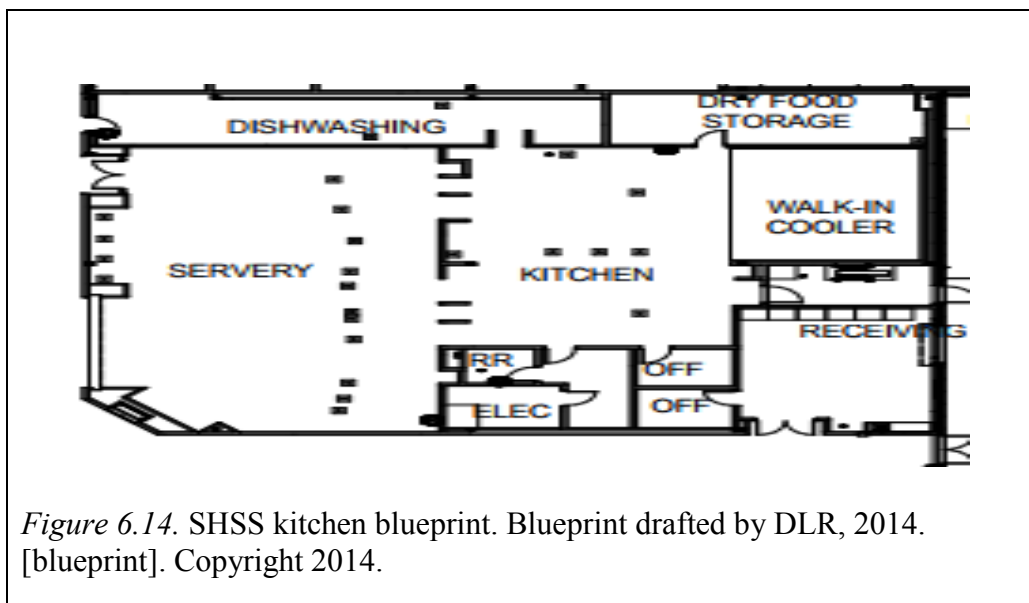
Minerva left me alone to nervously anticipate what the next day’s conversation might entail. I felt that a verbal attack was imminent.

“Good afternoon,” said The Kitchen Director as she walked into the room. She sat down directly across from me, and slapped a note-filled pad of paper on the table in front of her.

“Good afternoon, Carla,” I said. “Looks like you came prepared. That’s good. You’re the only person attending this meeting and we’ve got a lot to cover.”

I pulled up the blueprint of the new kitchen as shown in **Figure 6.14**.

Figure 6.14 SHSS Kitchen Blueprint



“At first glance, do you see anything that catches your attention?” Jen asked.

“Keep in mind that we’ve been serving out of a bunch of lockers for the past 20 years,” She said with a smile and laughter. “I can’t imagine what a real full size serving kitchen is like... At first glance—it’s perfect!”

“The loading dock is on the back end of the kitchen. Everything moves forward through the kitchen in one direction to minimize people getting in the way of one another,” explained the architect. She looked relieved that this meeting was going so smoothly.

“I just have one question,” Carla said. “What’s the actual height of the loading dock?”

“You don’t need to worry about that,” the architect responded. —it’ll be standard height for all semi-trucks.”

“Well actually that was my concern,” the kitchen director responded. “We do need a loading dock for semi-trucks, but we’re also a designated kitchen for the middle school and several elementary schools.”

Jen looked puzzled.

“Our food service truck for transporting the food to other schools is at a lower height and uses a tommy gate lift,” Carla explained patiently. “Will the loading dock be able to have one height for semi-trucks and a lower one for our tommy gate truck?”

“Right now it is only designed for the height of the semi-truck,” Jen admitted. “But we could add a ramp so items can be rolled down to the lower level where the tommy gate truck is parked.”

“I guess I’d just need to see what it looks like,” Carla said. The problem I foresee is trying to roll in and out the food storage carts. Those carts can get pretty heavy, and it could take

several people to move them up a ramp, when they could be doing other things. It'd really help to have a loading dock for the tommy gate truck."

"We'll make it work," I assured her. "We can look into adapting it through capital outlay dollars if we determine later that it does not meet our needs as it is designed now. Also, we have a special meeting with a consultant who will help us purchase the kitchen fixtures, furniture, and equipment as we get closer to construction."

"Ah, I'm always looking forward to getting new toys to play with," chuckled the kitchen direct. "I look forward to the meeting."

"Thanks, Carla," I said. When she left, I turned to the architect and said, "Well that wraps it up for us today."

"Great, I'll see you tomorrow," she replied. I left her to pack up her things and headed back to my office.

The morning bell rang, and the Art Department made their way up the steep stairs leading to what used to be the main office.

"Good morning," I greeted them, and gestured for them to take a seat around the table strewn with blueprints. "Let's get started. What's your top priority?"

"We want our classrooms to mimic an actual art studio," said the first art teacher.

"Can you elaborate for me on that?" Jen asked.

"Starting with the floor, it should consist of very durable polished concrete that contains dye in the mix," the art instructor explained. "No tile and definitely no carpet."

"Okay," Jen agreed. "That certainly fits with the overall design of the building. What else?"

The art teacher looked at her colleagues, but they seemed comfortable letting her take the lead.

“As far as the walls... While we need windows for natural lighting, we also want enough wall space for storage cabinets. And we need spaces to display artwork as well - both in the studio as well as a gallery located nearby. Part of the gallery would be used to display professional artwork for students to discuss and critique in the studio.”

The architect jotted down the notes and started sketching places where possible windows, display cases, and storage cabinets could be placed within the design.

“Since the art studio is now located adjacent to an exterior area, we’d also like to have access to the outdoor patio area so that it can be used for drawing and spray painting outside. Also, we’d like a sandpit area for raku firing, and an outdoor welding space.” Said the art instructor, pointing to the blueprint shown in **Figure 6.15**.

Figure 6.15 SHSS Blueprint of the Art Classrooms

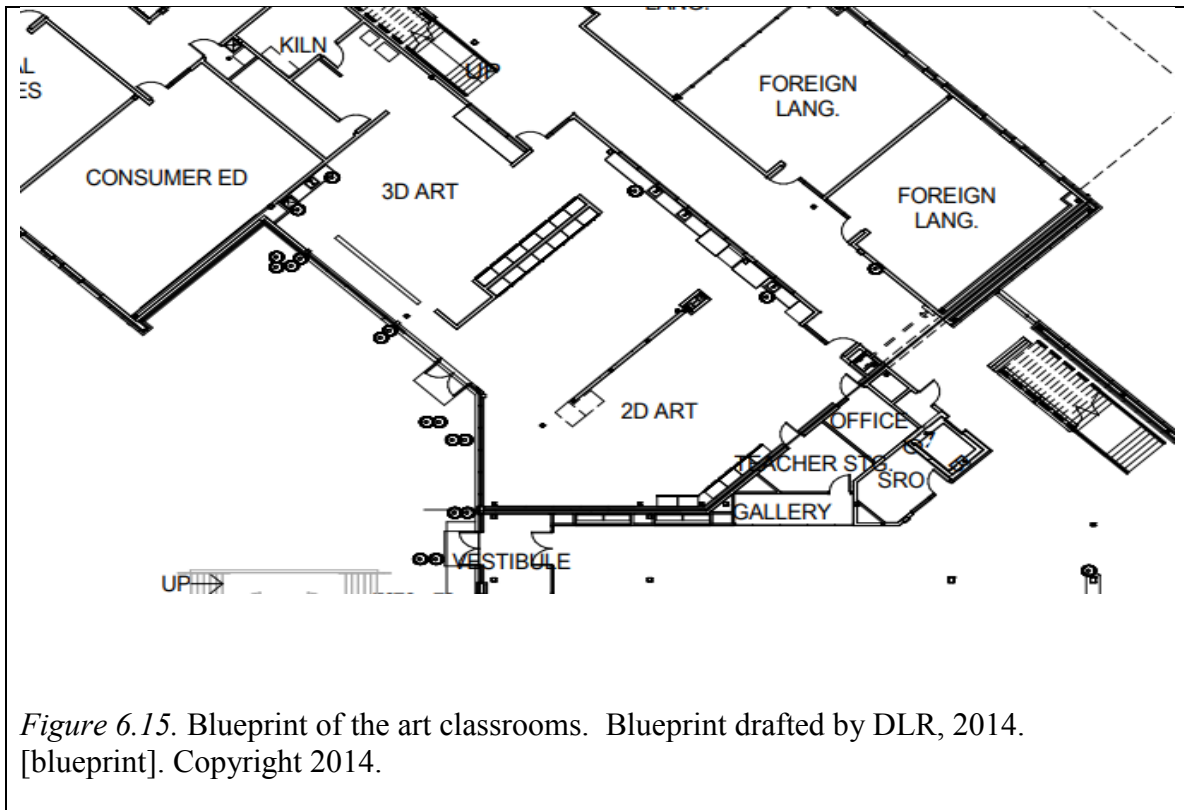


Figure 6.15. Blueprint of the art classrooms. Blueprint drafted by DLR, 2014. [blueprint]. Copyright 2014.

“Does anything look out of place?” asked the architect.

“Not really. By the way, thank you for placing the kiln separate from the student work area,” stated the art teacher, “I’ve have always been worried about our students working only a few feet from our current kiln.”

“Well, current building codes have changed, so it was necessary,” the architect explained.

“Anyway,” the art teacher carried on. “The only thing I can see is the need for durable counters, a place where students can utilize soldering guns and power tools.

“Yes, that’s possible, assuming the budget holds out,” I said.

“Oh...and are the squares on the table tops pictured sinks?” the teacher asked, picking up steam.

“Yes,” said the architect.

“Great, we’ll need those,” the teacher responded happily. “Hopefully they’re large enough. Some of the sinks I saw in one our tours were only about six inches deep.”

“I have to say, Curtis, we’re extremely pleased with what’s here,” said the first teacher. The others nodded in agreement. “I mean, you’ve seen the space we’ve been working in now. It’s cramped and messed up. So, we’re happy with any improvement.”

“We’re only offering these comments to improve on things that didn’t work in the other space,” the younger art teacher said with a nervous laugh.

“Absolutely. I really appreciate your input,” I said. Both teachers looked relieved. “As we get closer to the actual construction, I’ll make sure you get the chance to walk through the site.”

“That’d be fantastic!” the lead teacher agreed.

With that, the meeting concluded. The art department shuffled out and our final group promptly took their places. The office staff is one of the most essential groups who guarantee a smooth functioning school. Salina High School South has three different distinct groups: 1) Main Office, 2) Attendance Office, and 3) Counseling Center Office.

The Main Office staff is responsible for greeting visitors, directing student and parent traffic to administrators, handling school communications, running the copiers and fax machines, scheduling meeting rooms, and about a million other things as well. The Attendance Office staff is located on the other side of the building, and is strictly responsible for making sure students are where they need to be every block of the day. Our Counseling Office staff schedules appointments with students for their social and emotional needs, as well as handles transcript requests.

The Main Office staff went first. “Ladies, this next slide is a blueprint for your area of the building,” said Jen, as she pointed to **Figure 6.16**.

Figure 6.16 SHSS Main Office Blueprint

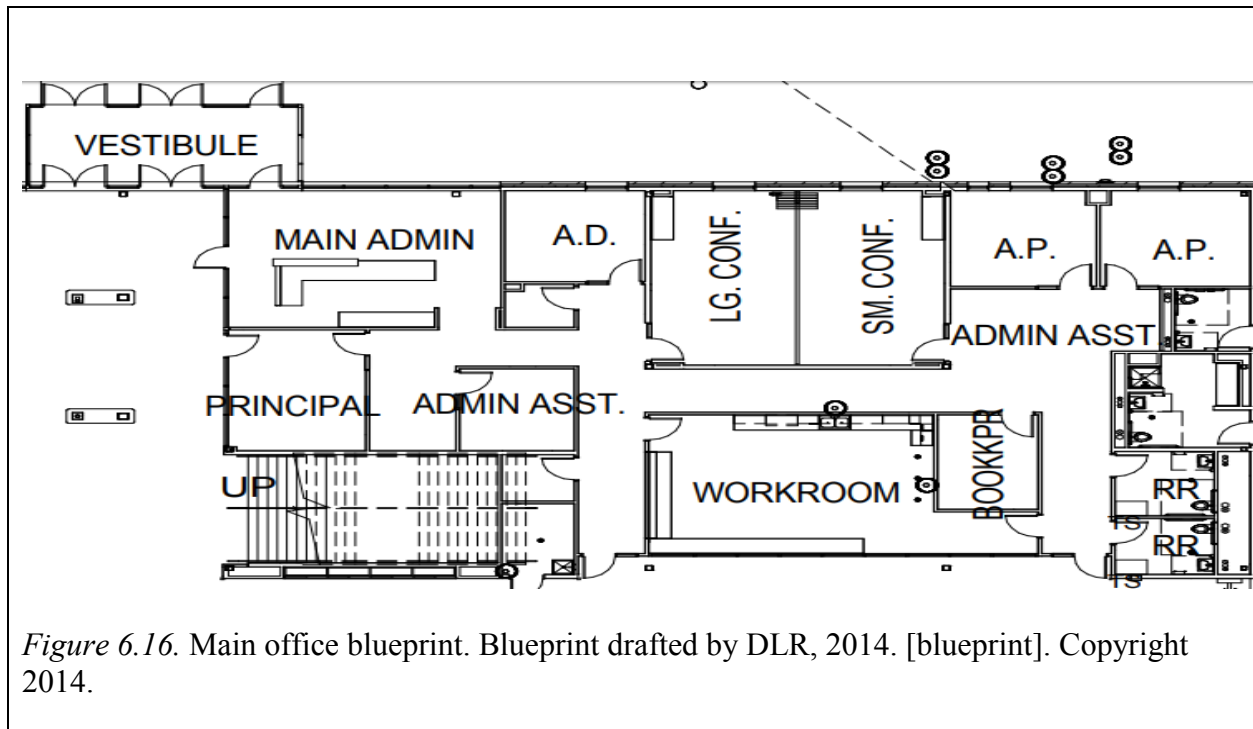


Figure 6.16. Main office blueprint. Blueprint drafted by DLR, 2014. [blueprint]. Copyright 2014.

“What happened to the storage closet under the master stairwell,” I asked, now its absent from the plans.

“In order to utilize the space, you’d need to install a fire sprinkler system,” explained the architect.

“How much does that cost?” I asked.

“For this space... approximately \$3,000,” answered Jen.

“Alright, let’s do it,” I said. “We’ll need the additional space. I’ll approve the added expense.”

Jen scribbled a few notes.

“And where am I located?” the assistant principal’s administrative assistant asked.

“There’ll be a desk outside the assistant principal’s offices,” the architect said pointing to the area using her laser pointer. “The Financial Administrative Assistant and the Athletic

Administrative Assistant will also have space in the front office. The financial assistant will have a bookkeeper's office to prepare financial deposits. The principal's administrative assistant will also have an office so they can discuss confidential issues in privacy, such as sick leave."

"What about the part-time building assistant that handles lamination and in-house copies," asked the Head Administrative Assistant. "There's no designated desk space for them."

"That's true," I said. "Okay, we can add a space for them, can't we?" I asked the architect.

"Sure," the architect agreed. "But it might mean sacrificing some storage space."

"We need some place for them," the Head Administrative Assistant argued.

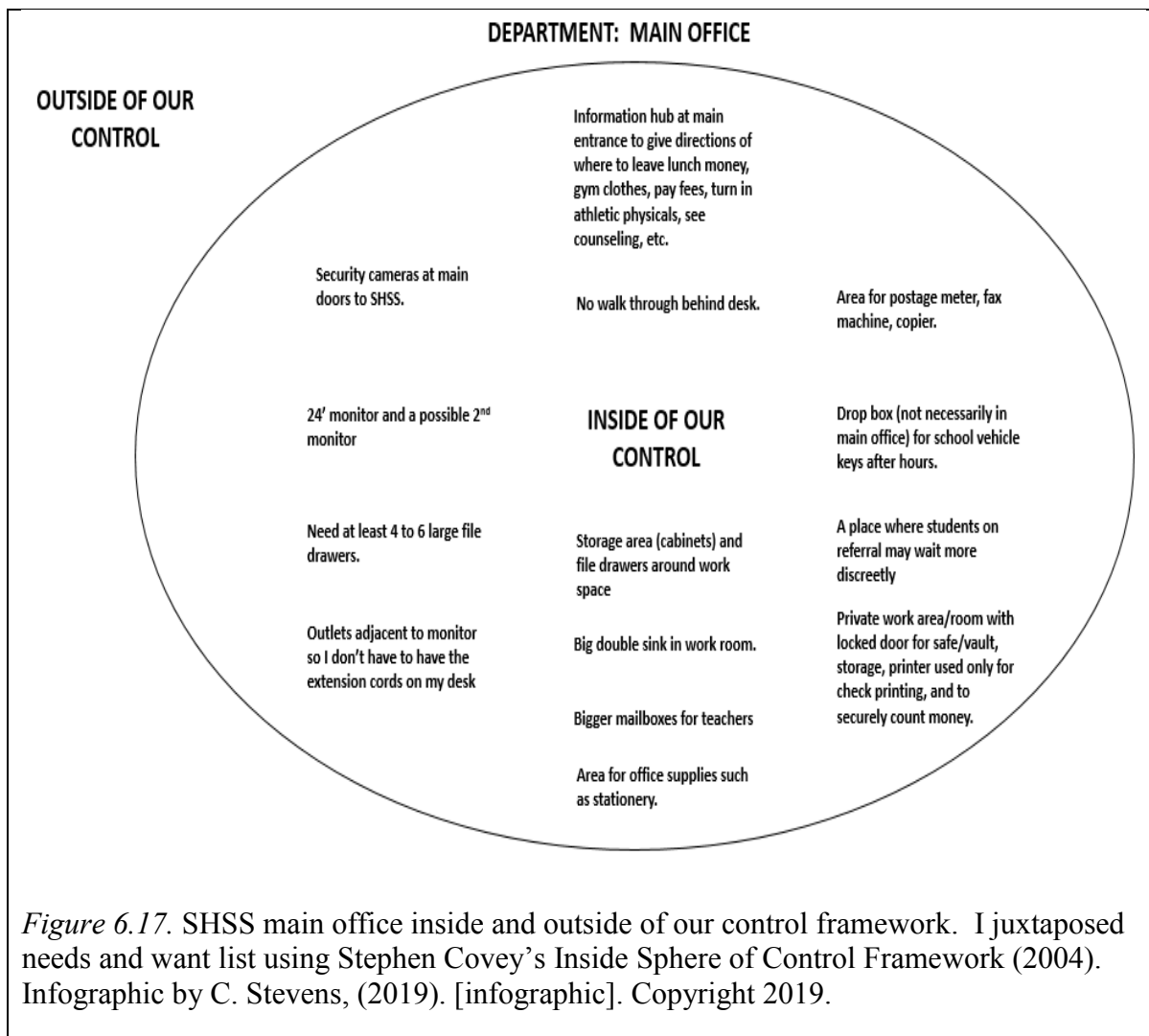
"Okay," said the architect, making a few more notes.

"I also wondered if the work room would have hookups for our ice machine, and the refrigerator," inquired Denise. "Also, our coffee pot hooks up to a water line, too."

"Yes, you'll have access to all of those things," answered the architect.

"To help save time, I took what all of you listed as your priorities and categorized the items into things within our control and things outside of our control. Take a minute to look it over." I cued up the next slide as shown in **Figure 6.17**.

Figure 6.17 SHSS Main Office Design Diagram



“Any questions?” asked Jen.

“No, but we really thank you for listening to our input and doing everything you can to make the requests happen,” said one of the administrative assistants.

The Main Office group was finished after only 15 minutes, but the administrative assistants from attendance were right behind them, and ready to get down to business.

“Mr. Stevens, I was told to have you call Assistant Principal Gary White as soon as possible,” said Suzy as she sat down.

“Do you know what it’s about?” I asked. Suzy shook her head. Whatever it was, I knew that a call from an assistant principal generally meant one thing: *Urgent*. “Okay, I’ll be back in just a few minutes. Go ahead without me.”

I stepped out of the room and into a nearby storage closet for privacy before dialing Gary on my cell phone. He picked up after only one ring. “Hey Gary, this is Curtis. Just got your message. What’s going on?”

“Curtis, we need to mobilize our crisis team.”

“What happened?”

“I just received a call that some type of bomb has gone off at Jerry Ivey Park (just across the street from the school).”

“Oh my God!” I could feel my stomach immediately get queasy and my heart rate spike. “Boss, we’ve got Special Education students over at the park today for a picnic.” Starting to panic, I left the storage room, and headed toward the north exterior door.

“The police called to let us know to keep kids away from the park,” Gary said.

“Okay, I’m heading over there now,” I said. I’ll need you to mobilize the crisis team, while I check things out. Have the office clerical staff call the teachers. We don’t want to use the intercom or email (in the event someone forwards the message to a news outlet) because it will alarm people. Once the crisis team is assembled, tell them what we know, and have them cover all the doors. No one leaves this property until we know for sure there aren’t any more bombs. And the last thing we need is for the kids to leave and go over to the park to see what’s going on. Make sure any guests enter only through the front doors.”

“Alright, got it,” Gary responded.

“Listen, we don’t have much time. You know social media is going to be all over this very soon.” I had broken into a jog towards the park, which was only two blocks away. My words were coming out in hard puffs of breath.

“Sure thing. I’m on it,” Gary reassured me and hung up.

I rounded the corner of the school, already short of breath, a consequence of being severely out of shape. Gasping, I looked down Edwards Street towards Jerry Ivey Park. I could see the flashing lights from the Salina Fire and Police Department vehicles. As I neared closer, I saw Kansas Highway Patrol was also present. The cars and trucks surrounded what appeared to be an abandoned pickup. As I got to the park entrance, I got a clear view of the blast area. I looked back toward the school and estimated that the explosion occurred less than 80 yards from the conditioning classroom .

“Officer, my name is Curtis Stevens, I am the Principal of Salina High School South. What happened?” I inquired.

Officer Gentry, responded, “We just got word that a guy blew himself up with a pipe bomb. The blast threw him from his pickup and blew off the guy’s legs—an ambulance just came and picked him up to transport him to Salina Regional.”

“You mean he actually lived through the blast?” I asked as I looked over at the pickup pictured in **Figure 6.18**.

Figure 6.18 Pickup Following Pipe Bomb Explosion in Jerry Ivey Park



Figure 6.18. Pickup that had a pipe bomb go off less than 1,000 yards from Salina High School South. [photograph].

“Hard to believe isn’t it.” The officer responded shaking his head.

“Look, I know you are all tied up, but please, I need to know if there is any risk to our school? I asked.

“Right now, everything looks to be under control.

Just then Officer Gentry’s radio crackled, “26—be advised that the victim is 10-40.”

Growing up in a household where my step-father was a police officer, I was aware of what most of the 10-Codes meant. A 10-40 was a...fatality.

“He died...didn’t he?” I asked Officer Gentry.

“Yeah.” Officer Gentry said as he shook his head. “We figured he probably would given the fact that the device was a double threaded pipe 5 to 6 inches in length and 3 ½ inches in diameter.”

“Oh, my. That would explain why the pickup looked the way it did.” I said pointing over at it.

Fortunately, all of our students were safe. The kids were on the other side of the park, giving reports to police officers. A personal nurse of one of our students with intensive health needs—was a first responder on the scene.

I was relieved that the students were safe, but that only opened the gateway for the next set of concerns. Were there any other bombs near or on our campus? Could the airborne substances used in the pipe bomb harm our students and staff? Several of our heating and air-conditioning intake vents were on the south-east side of the building, and the wind was blowing in that direction. This threat and a dozen others ran through my mind. I called over to the school and asked to speak with Gary White, one of the assistant principals, to make sure students and staff were okay.

“Gary, how’s everything at the school?” I asked.

“Word is just starting to break on the story. Parents are lighting up the attendance office line and asking to come get their students.” Gary explained.

“Allow the students to leave with parents, but make sure we have a record of everyone who leaves. Also, make sure that parents stay clear of Jerry Ivey Park. I don’t want any students seeing the accident scene until Salina Fire Department gets everything cleaned up.” I explained.

“No problem boss. We are working on a statement to get out to the students and community. This is so bizarre.” Gary stated.

“Gary, the police wouldn’t reveal the identity of the guy from the truck, but they at least confirmed that he wasn’t a student of the school, or a relative of any of the students. He was pronounced dead in route to Salina Regional.” I reported. “Thank God this guy didn’t try to harm our students.”

“No doubt. I will get that statement out to staff and students.”

“Thank you. I agree this is one of the more bizarre days I have ever encountered.”

As I turned to walk back over to the school, I saw a state news network reporter holding a microphone with a camera operator filming the reporter. I tried to stay out of camera range so people did not associate me, or the school, with the incident. Walking near but out of camera range, I heard the reporter say, “Kathy, that is correct, Salina Police Department has declared the scene here at Jerry Ivey as being secure, though the park will remain closed until the A.T.F. Agents out of Kansas City, arrive to investigate and review the extensive debris field. At this time, police are not releasing the name of the victim. But did confirm that the individual is a 46 year old male. As you can see behind me, there is broken glass, and metal almost 150 feet from the vehicle. The police determined that the incident was most likely a suicide. We will have more tonight at 10, back to you Kathy.”

Upon arriving back at school, our crisis team debriefed about all the things we needed to do differently for an event such as this should it happen again. Later, I followed up with the architect and the office staff. They assured me—they had everything covered.

The school day ended without any other incidents. I went home and collapsed on my bed at 4:00 p.m. exhausted but dazed about the crazy day at work I just experienced.

At about 5:00 p.m. I awoke in panic, as I realized that I had forgotten to talk to the Library Media Specialist. Amidst all of the meetings and craziness of the day, it had completely slipped my mind. I lay on my mattress, staring at the ceiling and trying to shut off my racing thoughts, praying that Minerva would understand why I was not able to meet with her.

Pain in the Asbestos

Kansas, during the heart of winter, is hopeless time of the school year. The cold temperatures and limited sunlight hours (most of which are spent in school) make it a stressful time for students and staff. Psychologists refer to the phenomenon as Seasonal Affect Disorder, or SAD. Student attendance, motivation, and behavior seem to bottom out. February, especially, is too far removed from the holiday break to remember, yet too distant from Spring Break to provide hope.

On February 2, 2015, I finished spending most of the morning doing classroom walk-throughs and providing feedback to teachers on posting daily learning objectives, explicit instruction of vocabulary, routine checks for understanding, and requiring students to read complex text and to write daily.

As I left Mr. Nutter's biology classroom, on February 2, 2015, my cell phone started ringing. My cell phone rarely rings during the day, with most people preferring to blow up my

email inbox instead. The unexpected sound set me on edge. Not knowing what to expect, but suspecting it was important, I answered.

“This is Stevens.”

In a raspy voice that rivaled a Don LaFontaine movie-trailer, I heard “Curtis, this is Kris Upson.” He was the Director of our Bond Office, a temporary department created for the oversight of the \$110 million construction projects.

“Hey Kris,” I said.

“We need to talk. Are you available today?” His voice seemed urgent.

“Yeah,” I answered wearily, and checked the schedule on my phone. “I can be available to meet here in thirty minutes. Will that work?”

“Absolutely, I’ll meet you in your office,” Kris said.

“Okay, see you in a little while,” I returned.

As I walked toward my office and turned the corner, I ran right into the Library Media Specialist causing her coffee to splash all over her new design blouse she recently purchased.

“What the hell!” She yelled.

“Oh my God, I am so sorry.” I apologized.

“You have ruined my blouse!”

“Again, I am sorry. I will pay for a new one.” I offered.

“It’s a designer blouse.” She responded. “You know what..forget about it...you should have that down pat--just like you forgot about our meeting!” She said with spite.

“Hey, I am sorr...”

“First you screw up our library’s design and now you ruin my blouse—Jesus how incompetent are you!” She turned and stormed off down the hall.

Thirty minutes later, Kris and I sat at a mahogany conference table in my office.

“Can I get you any coffee?” I asked.

“No thanks. Brought my own.” He held up a paper cup with the emblem of a local coffee chain. Then he leaned forward with a serious expression. “Why is your shirt wet?” He asked.

“It’s a long story.” I responded.

“Listen, Curtis, I guess to cut to the chase, you need to know that we found more asbestos.”

“How much asbestos?” My heart started to race, knowing that the entire phasing and logistical transition plans hung in the balance of his answer.

“Well...” Kris began quietly and hesitantly as if delivering a terminal diagnosis to a medical patient. “We aren’t completely sure... but we do know that there’s considerably more than we originally thought. Based on the most current information, there could be about a million worth of abatement remaining.” After a second of my stunned silence, he added, “...give or take.”

“One million dollars!” I shouted. “How did we miss \$1 million of asbestos abatement!” Without thinking I slammed my pen down on the table hard enough to snap it in pieces and send them scattering to the carpet. I noticed Kris flinch, and knew this wasn’t how a professional behaved, but I was powerless to stop myself. My chest was becoming tighter and tighter making it difficult to even breath. I could feel my face flush red hot.

“Curtis, that number is very preliminary...and-”

“How preliminary?!” I interrupted. “We’ve been at this now for almost a year! There’s no way I can plan the transition of over a hundred plus classrooms in a week’s time. I need to

know if this is going to force us into modular classrooms. The teachers will hate it. The students will hate it. I hate it! But if the 200 and 300 pods aren't operational, I can't avoid modular classrooms!"

"As I said, we are looking into this some more," Kris said taking a stern but measured tone. "Here's what happened: All public facilities are required by federal law to know where asbestos is located in occupied areas and to keep records and check the status every year. By occupied spaces, we're talking about areas where people can come into direct contact with the substance. We are not talking about asbestos above the ceiling, or between the walls, and crawl spaces. The preliminary asbestos testing only focused on areas of occupied spaces."

"Oh Jesus!" I said, pressing the palms of my hands against my eyes.

"Once we start a construction project, there's another entire set of federal guidelines that require more aggressive testing. When demolition of an edifice takes place you have to look in *all* the crevices, not just the places where people will be directly exposed.

"Oh my God...a million dollars worth," I muttered, running my hands across my scalp.

"We designed our building and organized the phasing based on the preliminary inspection report that only looked at occupied spaces rather than conducting a more aggressive pre-construction inspection which has tighter rules." Kris concluded.

"So, what do you need me to do?" I asked in an exacerbated manner throwing my hands in the air and surrendering to the reality of the issue. As Dr. Covey would have said, the first step was to identify what was in and outside of my personal control. Dealing with the asbestos issue was unavoidable.

"At this point, you don't need to do anything, since we don't know the total amount," Kris instructed. "The million dollars was a ballpark figure that doesn't need to be circulated

until we know more.” “I’m only letting you know in case we need to make an alternate phasing plan.”

“I’m sorry, Kris,” I said, making an effort to check my emotions. “I know you’re just trying to keep me in the loop... It’s just, wow... that’s a bitter pill to swallow.”

“Sure, Curtis. I understand,” Kris said. He appeared to relax again, though I wondered if I’d done any serious damage to the relationship by snapping at him. “It’s not great news, but I thought if I could give you the heads up, you could strategize a little and try to get out in front of this thing.”

“Thanks, I appreciate it. But I am left wondering something.” I said.

“What are you wondering?” Kris asked.

“What part of our building goes away due to the abatement cost?” I inquired as I pointed to the blueprint hanging on my wall.

“Look I am sure it will not cost a full million.”

“How can you be so sure when you once said there was not that much asbestos to be removed.” I asked with a skeptical look.

“I am sure that the number is not \$1 million and that abatement can be completed during the summer months when students were not in session meaning there will be no need for modulares.” Kris explained.

“Do you have a timeline on when the construction abatement survey will be complete?” I asked.

“Right...so... as of now we have an idea of where the asbestos is at,” Kris explained, pacing his words. “But we don’t have an estimation of what it will cost to remove.”

“Can I see the survey of where the asbestos is located?” I asked. I wanted to get an idea of what might need to be moved where, and how large the scope of the problem was.

“Sure,” Kris said, laying out a blueprint on the table. “This shows you the areas where we found it.” Kris gave me a minute to look it over, then continued, “All of the shaded areas in the old wing show where asbestos still remains. You can see there’s a grey line that goes around each of the pods — they found some asbestos in the rock texture or exterior coating that wraps around the building. We originally didn’t think it was contaminated.”

“So, what does that mean?” I asked.

“We’ll need to remove all of the overspray asbestos above the ceilings in the old Family and Consumer Science and art classrooms as well as the counselor’s offices. Abatement will also have to remove the exterior coating that wraps around the building, and the asbestos tiles that exist in the kitchen. We’ll likely be able to get the lion’s share of the asbestos during the summer, but that will also drive up costs since almost all school abatement takes place during the summer months.” Kris Upson said as he pointed to a slide that presented **Figure 6.19**.

Figure 6.19 Salina High School South Pre-Construction Asbestos Survey

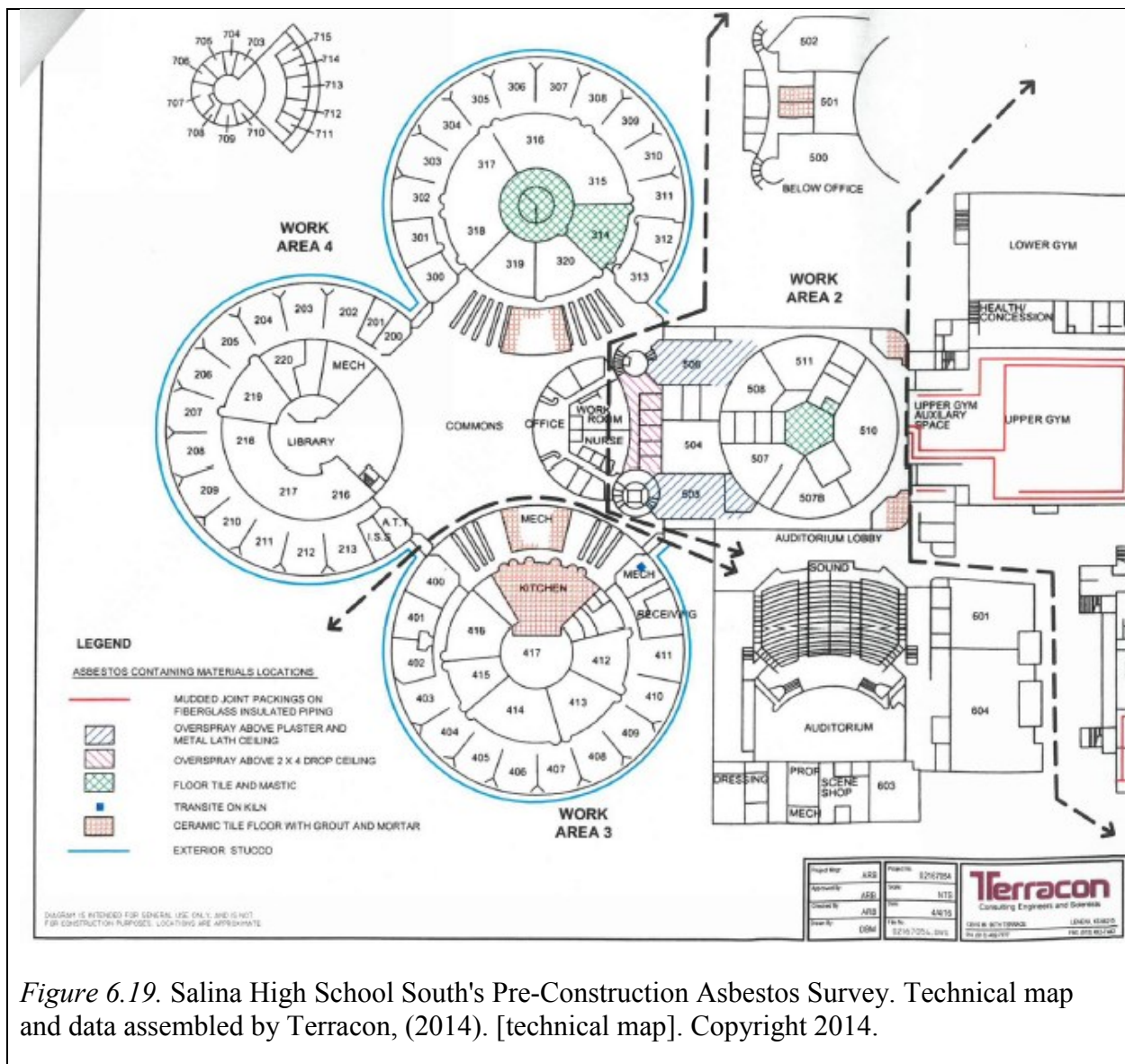


Figure 6.19. Salina High School South's Pre-Construction Asbestos Survey. Technical map and data assembled by Terracon, (2014). [technical map]. Copyright 2014.

As I examined the survey, I wondered what material would be used to wrap the entire building. If we were lucky enough to get everything abated over the summer—there would still be one winter for the 400 pod and two winters, at a minimum, for the 200 and 300 pods.

“Do you think we can abate all of this and still keep using the pods?” I asked.

“I hope so,” Kris said, and let out a sigh.

“I do too,” I agreed as I rubbed my temples due to the formation of an excruciating migraine setting in. “Please let me know so I can plan out ahead as much as possible.” I said.

As Kris stood up and started heading for the door we both heard a knock on the door.

Looking through the window next to the door, I saw the librarian. “Yeah...I need to take this.” I said gesturing toward the door.

“Good luck with this one. You need to know the Superintendent told me that your librarian was hot about the new library’s design.” Kris reported before opening the other door from my office that opened into the commons. “Hang in there.”

After Kris left, I opened the alternate door and let the librarian in.

“We need to talk.” She said as I closed the door. “I am sorry that I snapped at you earlier in the hall. I know you did not mean to bump into me and ruin my blouse.” She said as tears started pouring down her face.

“I accept your apology.”

“I don’t know why I am so upset about the new library design. After all, I am not even going to be here when it is built.” She said with a slight chuckle acknowledging her looming retirement.

I thought the same thing all along in my mind—but I did not dare say it, knowing it would exacerbate the situation.

“I am sorry that I forgot our meeting. Yesterday was a little busy in the office.” I said as I pointed to the front page of the paper showing the headline about the pipe bomb going off in the park.

“Oh my God...I didn’t know!” She said with a slight tone of remorse.

“How much do I owe you for the blouse?” I asked, wishing to move the conversation on.

“You don’t need to pay for the blouse.” She said.

“No, I insist.” I said.

“Curtis...forget about the blouse.” She said.

“The library’s design is set. It will be on the second floor. It will have blue carpet. I know you are upset with what it looks like—but I feel it going to be one of the main focal points of the building.” I said in a direct tone.

“I realize this...I am just frustrated because the one priority we had was that it would be on the main floor—and we didn’t even get that.” She said, as she started to tear up again.

“I am sorry I let you down.” With that, the librarian got up, due to getting a little emotional again, and left my office.

Shingles..But Not On The Roof

On Monday morning in June of 2015, I woke up with a pain like no other. First, I noticed I had an excruciating headache and flu-like symptoms, but I did not have a temperature. There was a sharp itching tingling type of pain along a strip on the right side of my back like a hundred needles poking my side.

Not wanting to hear the early morning alarm, I reached over and flipped the switch before the clock could go off. I swung my legs over the side of the bed, and walked to the bathroom to see what was going on with my body. I flipped on the light switch in the bathroom, and did the best I could to hold a mirror to see my back. There appeared to be about five little white pockets of fluid filled sores. I had no idea what in the world was happening to my body.

“Theresa, can you come in here and look at this?” I asked.

Theresa woke up, and groggily walked into the bathroom to examine my back.

“It looks like an outbreak of something,” she said. “Were you in the backyard? Is it poison ivy?” She had a bad case of it back in October.

“I haven’t been back there for 8 months... not after what you went thr- Ah!” I felt a sharper pain set in. “Something’s going on! I’d better go get examined.” As I started to put a shirt on, the material rubbing against my skin caused me to wince.”

“It’s really bad isn’t it?” Theresa asked, with real concern in her voice.

“I’ve never felt pain like this before in my life,” I said struggling to fit my other arm into my shirt.

“I’d better drive you, then,” Theresa said. “Just take it easy.”

“Well Curtis, it looks like you have the shingles!” Doctor Singh said.

“Shingles?” I said incredulously. “I thought only people over the age of 60 get shingles.”

“Actually Curtis, half of the people who get shingles are under 60. You’re one of the lucky ones.” Singh ripped a scribbled prescription off the pad and pressed it into my hands.

“How could I possibly be so lucky?” I asked sarcastically.

“You caught it early!” Singh stated. “If you’d waited another day or so, the rash would have been full blown. You would not want to move at all!”

“Why do I suddenly have the shingles?” I questioned.

“Stress can cause an outbreak,” the doctor said, pointing his finger at me. “This is why I am always telling you to exercise and eat right.” It was as if he’d been reading my mind. There was a Sonic next door to the Comcare Clinic, and I’d been thinking that a large pouch of cheddar bites, cherry-limeade, and a 1,000+ calorie hamburger would do the trick. Instead, I decided it would be better to go directly to the pharmacy.

Theresa drove us quickly across town, to the drive thru pharmacy where I usually go to fill prescriptions. While sitting in my pickup, I picked up the prescription note and tried to decipher the writing. Finally, I recognize the name, Valtrex. Why does that sound familiar? Suddenly it dawned on me, Valtrex is the same medicine to treat herpes. They'd been running a heavy advertising campaign on t.v. recently.

Theresa pulled up to the window, and I heard a young voice say, "Oh hey, Mr. Stevens. What can I do for you?"

"Ugh...yeah, I just wanted to check and see when I could get another C-Pap Mask?" I inquired.

The student went to go check his computer terminal. Meanwhile Theresa, shot me a look, as if to say, 'what the hell are you doing?'

"They're one of my students," I explained.

"So?" Theresa argued.

"So, Dr. Singh gave me a prescription for Valtrex."

"So?" Theresa insisted.

"It's Valtrex! You know, Valtrex?" I sang a line from the advertising jingle. "It's used for treating herpes."

"So?" Theresa said for the third time.

"So, do you think I want a rumor going around school that the principal has herpes?" I asked in a frustrated whisper.

"Oh for God's sake," Theresa said. "Give me the prescription."

"What are you going to do with it?" I asked suspiciously.

"Just give it," she demanded.

I reluctantly handed my wife the slip of paper, just as the student came back to the window.

“Well, it looks like you can get one here in only another week.” The student said.

“Okay, perfect,” I responded.

“Oh, and would you mind filling this prescription for Valtrex for me?” Theresa said confidently as she passed the slip of paper through the window.

“Certainly, Mrs. Stevens,” the student said. “Just give me a minute.”

As he disappeared again, I turned to Theresa and shouted, “What the hell?”

“What?” she asked. “I said it was for me?”

“Do you think Mr. Stevens’ wife has herpes is a better rumor for the school?”

“Don’t be such a baby,” Theresa teased. “Sticks and stones will break my bones, but a rumor about herpes will never hurt me.”

“You’re not in charge of more than a thousand teenagers,” I refuted.

After a few minutes, the student returned to the window.

“Here you go,” he said, passing the white paper bag to Theresa. I closely studied his face for any sign of a smirk, but could not detect one.

“Thanks,” Theresa said.

“Have a good summer,” I added.

“You too,” replied Ben, the student.

Hatchet Day

Curtis, you need to come over to the Operations Center this morning around ten,” said William Hall over the phone. He was the superintendent for USD 305. “*You’ve* got some critical decisions to make about your building budget.”

“We have to make these decisions today?” I asked. I could feel my pulse raising.

“Yes. I placed this meeting on your calendar almost two days ago,” Mr. Hall responded.

“Yeah, I saw it on my calendar, but for some reason I thought we’d be exploring options as a part of the construction manager at-risk process. I didn’t realize the actual decisions would be made today.”

I did my best to mask my outrage, but I could see my knuckles turn white as they gripped the arm of my office chair. How was I supposed to make decisions without reviewing the updated plans from the architects? There was not even time to call the design team in for an emergency session. The meeting with Mr. Hall was less than an hour away. I was stuck.

I hung up the phone, and scoured my office for my laptop bag, the blueprints, and all the meeting notes from the past year. When I had collected everything I could find, I headed to the Operations Building the same way a condemned man heads to the gallows. ‘Recognize what is in and outside of your control,’ I told myself repeatedly as I drove.

I arrived early, hoping to get a little last-minute cramming in before the meeting, but was surprised to find a team of people already assembled. The heads in the room swiveled in my direction, mirroring my astonishment. Meeting participants reciprocated my shock. I sensed that I was unwelcome as they watched me place my notes, computer, and blueprints on the table. There was whispering and nodding between the others, and then they began to collect their belongings and move into an adjacent meeting room.

“What’s going on?” I asked one of them, feeling more than a little disrespected.

“We’re holding a pre-meeting,” the architect replied.

“A pre-meeting?” I repeated in disbelief. “Don’t you think I should be involved?”

“No this is just for the engineers, architects, and district administrators.”

“I’m the principal!” I objected, bluntly, my anger beginning to come to a boil. “You’re asking me to make the call on about \$1.5 million worth of reductions in the entire Salina High School South project, but I’m only getting information at the last minute that you’ve all had the time to review! And now you’re not even including me in the pre-meeting?”

The representative looked at me as if I had just turned into a werewolf and began speaking Norwegian. She gave an apologetic shrug and quickly exited the room, leaving me alone to fume. In her desperate and quick desire to vacate the room the architect must have not realized she left two documents on the table. Then again, maybe she did? I stood up and walked over to the other side of the table and picked both documents up and was astonished in what I found. Both sheets of paper must have been what they were discussing in the next room. One document was the updated overall budget. The other document contained a list of cost saving measures.

As I looked over the two documents, I wished I had the ability to consult the design team due to their expertise in each area, however, involving them at this juncture would not be possible given they were off contract for the summer and time was short. I believe I could navigate the design items regarding curriculum and instruction matters, but I was certain I would need support on the athletic side of things. I picked up my cell phone and called Ken Stonebraker, a veteran South High employee, who to this day was the most winning football coach in South High history. He had been an athletic administrator since 2007, the same year I became principal.

“Hello?” inquired the voice on the other end of the line.

“Hi, Stoney, it’s Stevens,” I said.

“Oh hey, how’re you doing?”

“Not too great to be honest,” I admitted. “Listen, I could really use your help. I’ve got a facility planning meeting coming up at the Operations Center. It’s going to be big, and I just found some new information I’d been missing. Do you think you could get up here?”

“What? Now?” Stoney asked.

“Yeah, if you can,” I said, realizing that I hadn’t considered he might have anything else to do on a sunny July morning.

“Sorry, Stevens,” Stoney said with mild annoyance inflected in his voice. “I’m heading to the golf course to meet a group of friends.”

“Dammit,” I swore quietly.

“What are they even talking about at this meeting?” he asked.

“I just found out that I am being expected to make decisions on about \$1.5 million worth of cuts to South High’s new facility today!” I fumed. “I didn’t think the decisions were going to be finalized until the start of next school year!”

“You’re serious?” Stoney asked.

“Yeah, I was hoping you could come up here and be another person to weigh in,” I explained. “Something seems off... *really* off.”

“Okay, fine,” Stoney responded with a defeated sigh. “I’ll be up in a few minutes!”

“Oh my god, thank you!” I exclaimed feeling the relief of having at least one ally at this meeting.

“Yeah, sure,” Stoney said. “See...you...soon.”

After ending the phone call with Stoney, I opened a spreadsheet containing my notes of potential saving options I’d spent the last few months trying to identify. Most of the design data, blueprints, and meetings notes were like Swiss cheese—they contained many holes. But every

time I would press for data or information to fill the gaps, I would get push back from district officials or our contractors. “These are only broad strokes of the process,” was the regular line. “We’ll get you involved when we get into the weeds.” Well know I had those missing pieces. I quickly evaluated the two documents.

Stoney walked into the Operations Center, and assessed all of the papers spread out on the massive conference table. I could tell by the look on his face that he would have much rather been golfing.

“You weren’t kidding,” Stoney said in amazement.

“I’ve got to pull a million and half out of this house of cards without collapsing the whole thing,” I complained. “And it’s happening today. They didn’t even give me a chance to consult with the design team.”

“What are we do...ing?” Stoney said, still scanning the overwhelming mess of documents and blueprints.

“Well, first we need to examine the overview of the budget.” I said as I slid the document across the table.

“When did we get the final budget?” Stoney asked astonished that I found this document.

“I just got it this morning before the architect left for the pre-meeting” I said.

“What pre-meeting?” Stoney asked.

“*They* are all next door deciding the bigger decisions so here in thirty minutes that they can make us feel as though *we* am a part of the process.”

“Really...well...I’m glad I’m missing my golf game to be here to approve decisions already made,” Stoney said as he tossed the budget (as shown in **Figure 6.20**) down on the table.

“Ok. Well, I’ll start by going down the faculty needs list.” I said, seeking to find a beach hold on this overwhelming task. “We’ll need to move quick, the pre-meeting will be over in the next 30 minutes.”

“What is all of this?” Stoney asked pointing to the documents both shown in **Figure 6.20**, **Figure 6.21**, and **Figure 6.22**.

Figure 6.20 SHSS Preconstruction Design and Cost Projection




| <div>    </div> | | | | |
|---|-----------------|----------------|---------------|------------------|
| South High School | | | | |
| Soft Costs | | | | Subtotals Totals |
| Architectural/Engineering Fees | | | | |
| Bond Management | | | | |
| A/E Reimbursables (printing/shipping/travel) | | | | |
| Geotechnical Engineering | | | | |
| Survey | | | | |
| Submittal Exchange | | | | |
| Plan Review Fees | | | | |
| Construction Materials Testing | | | | |
| FF&E | | | | |
| Moving Expenses | | | | |
| Soft Cost Contingency | | | | |
| Total Soft Costs | | | | \$7,352,768 |
| Administration | Gross SF | Cost/SF | Totals | |
| New Administration | 9,480 | \$210 | \$1,990,800 | |
| Subtotal Administration | 9,480 | | \$1,990,800 | |
| Art | Gross SF | Cost/SF | Totals | |
| New Graphic Arts/2D & 3D Art | 6,000 | \$180 | \$1,080,000 | |
| New Art Garden/Patio | 2,880 | \$20 | \$57,600 | |
| Subtotal Art | 8,880 | | \$1,137,600 | |
| CTE Program | Gross SF | Cost/SF | Totals | |
| New Program Spaces (equal to CHS total) | 30,400 | \$210 | \$6,384,000 | |
| Subtotal CTE Program | 30,400 | | \$6,384,000 | |
| Athletics | Gross SF | Cost/SF | Totals | |
| New Auxiliary Gym/FEMA Shelter | 10,000 | \$280 | \$2,800,000 | |
| Renovate Lower Gym | 7,486 | \$120 | \$898,320 | |
| Renovate Pool | 10,220 | \$120 | \$1,226,400 | |
| Renovate PE, Upper Gym & Girls Lockers | 19,300 | \$120 | \$2,316,000 | |
| Subtotal Athletics | 47,006 | | \$7,240,720 | |
| Kitchen | Gross SF | Cost/SF | Totals | |
| New Kitchen in Science & CTE Bldg | 5,760 | \$210 | \$1,209,600 | |
| Subtotal Kitchen | 5,760 | | \$1,209,600 | |
| Commons/Cafeteria | Gross SF | Cost/SF | Totals | |
| New Commons/Cafeteria | 17,400 | \$210 | \$3,654,000 | |
| Subtotal Commons/Cafeteria | 17,400 | | \$3,654,000 | |

Figure 6.20. Salina High School South design and construction cost projection. DLR, (2015). [preconstruction projected budget]. Copyright 2015.

Figure 6.21 Estimate Narrative of SHSS Project Part 1

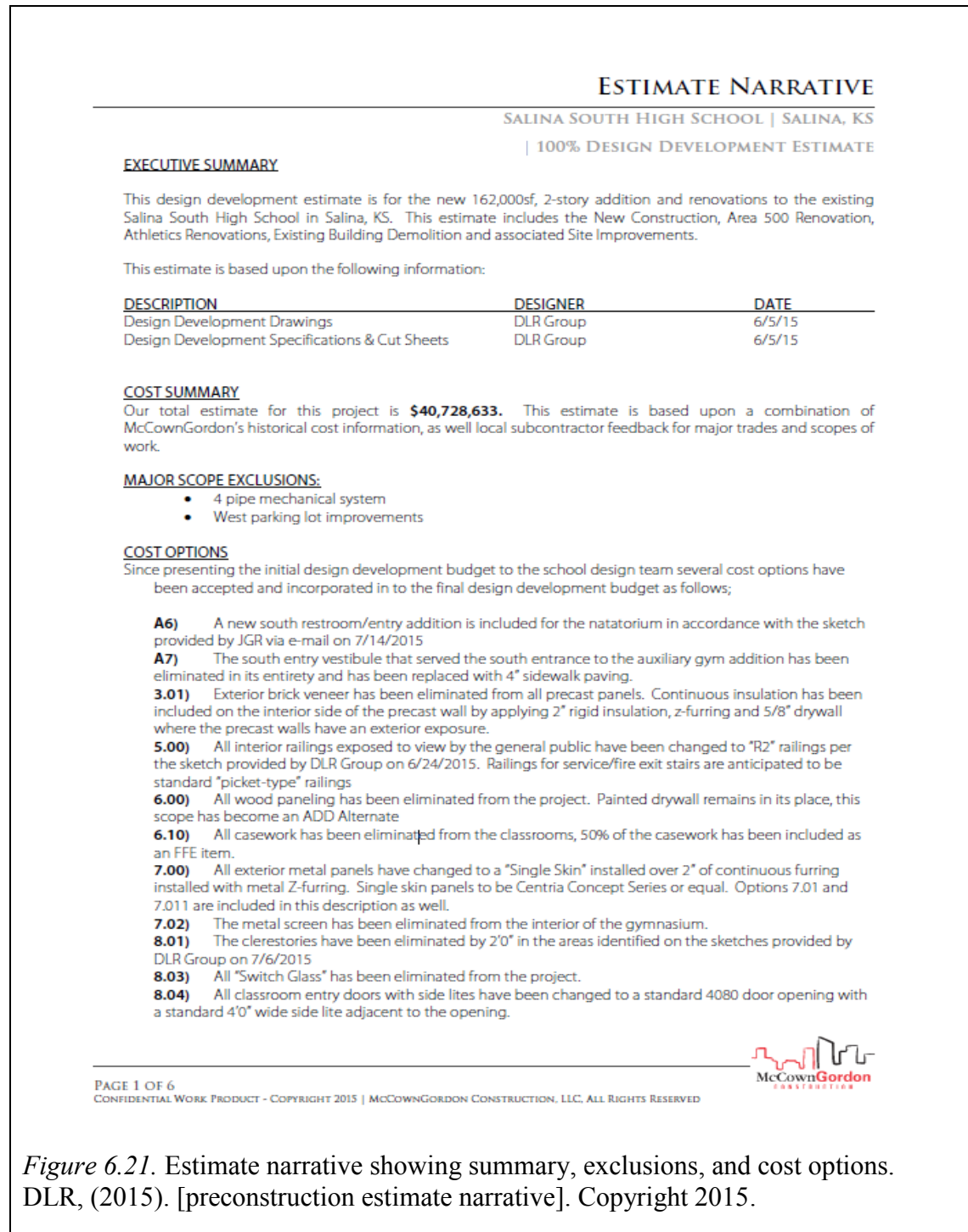


Figure 6.21. Estimate narrative showing summary, exclusions, and cost options. DLR, (2015). [preconstruction estimate narrative]. Copyright 2015.

Figure 6.22 Estimate Narrative of SHSS Project Part 2

9.00) The quantity of Soundscape "Blade" acoustical ceiling panels have been reduced by 50% from what was identified in the 100% DD documents
9.03) Acoustical wall panels have been eliminated from all existing gymnasiums
9.04) The ceiling mounted acoustical panels in the new auxiliary gym have been reduced 50% or approximately 2,000sf.
9.05) Rockfon acoustical ceiling tiles are included throughout in lieu of the specified ceiling tiles.
9.07) All graphic wall coverings have been eliminated. This scope has been made an ADD Alternate.
10.00) (2) interior operable partitions have been eliminated from classroom spaces. This change has been made an ADD Alternate
10.20) The sliding glass "Barn-Door" style marker board allowance has been eliminated by 50% to \$3,500/each.
13.00) A \$200,000 reduction in the scope of work associated with the Natatorium has been included.
15.10) All HVAC work has been eliminated from the existing lower gymnasium
16.00) All sound systems have been eliminated from this scope of work, rough-in as necessary has been anticipated. Additionally, this includes options 16.01, 16.02 and 16.03.
99.00) All clerestory glazing has been eliminated between column lines 25 and 30
99.01) Elevator E1E1 has been eliminated from the scope of work. The 2nd floor opening has been infilled structurally and is anticipated to become part of the adjoining corridor.
99.03) The clerestory and 2nd floor framing has been modified as to eliminate a significant portion of the structural roof modifications to "Area 500" per the e-mail received from DLR group on 7/2/2015
99.05) All LED lights have been eliminated from the project and replaced with non-dimming T-8 fluorescent light fixtures.
99.06) All FACS kitchen equipment has been eliminated from the project.
99.07) The building height has been reduced by 8" in accordance with the e-mail received from DLR group on 7/10/15
99.08) The clerestory has been reduced at Area "G" in accordance with the sketch provided by DLR Group on 7/20/2015

Figure 6.22. Second part of estimate narrative showing summary, exclusions, and cost options cont. DLR, (2014). [preconstruction estimate narrative]. Copyright 2014.

"This is the narrative of items that are on the cutting block." I replied.

"Where did the document come from again?" Stoney asked.

"The less you know about that the better you will be. Let's just say it was left in my possession this morning." I replied. "Is there anything that is listed that you cannot live with?" I inquired.

As Stoney looked over the documents for a few minutes making scribbles off to the margins he asked, "Won't the new gym look kind of funny without brick that matches the rest of the building?"

“Good point. I’ll ask about that one. What about the removal of the restrooms near the alternate gym/storm shelter (A7) in favor of moving it over to the pool entrance (A6)?”

“Well, it is going to require patrons during volleyball to walk farther over to the restrooms from the softball field...since we currently do not have any exterior restrooms on that side of the building?”

“Why are they moving the restrooms again?” I asked.

“Most likely because our pool area really does not have a vestibule that connects to the rest of the building. Our patrons have to walk around the building to locate the pool entrance. This would kill two birds with one stone and save money. Nevertheless, it’ll require the softball players and fans to walk farther to the restrooms—which I guess is not a major disaster since softball season is only a about 3 months compared to swimming—which is in season with both boys and girls from November through May.”

“Got it. We are almost out of time—let’s move on. I see where 6.10 all casework has been eliminated from the classrooms, 50% of the casework has been included as an FFE item.”

“What do they mean by casework?” Stoney asked.

“Cabinets, counters, etc. I presume.” I said. “So half of our classrooms will not have cabinets or counters. Well—I guess we’ll have a new building with old furniture.” As I reflected on this measure—I thought of all of the eclectic furniture South High staff has had to mix and match over the past years. “Without casework we better hope we can get enough furniture through FFE to make up for it.” I added.

“There’s no question. Do *they* really think that *we* can cut 50% of the casework?” Stoney asked.

“I don’t know what *they* think *we* can get by with, but I know what *we* are going to have to fight for. This will most likely have to happen on the FFE side of things when ordering furniture.” I said.

After Stoney and I looked over the proposed cuts, we compared our notes with one another. Finally, I asked, “Can you live with the following prioritization of cuts?” showing him the notes I made on an excel sheet that I integrated from my previous notes over the past month in addition to the golden nugget of information I was shown by the documents erroneously left by the architect.

Table 6.3 SHSS Proposed Cuts By Administration

| SHSS Proposed Cuts By Administration | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Priority of Cut | Description |
| 1 | Switch glass |
| 2 | Temporary modular classrooms will not be needed |
| 3 | All wall graphics |
| 4 | Wood wall paneling |
| 5 | Interior metal screening |
| 6 | Booth seating |
| 7 | All interior signage |
| 8 | Window covering |
| 9 | New gym flooring for the old middle lower gym |
| 10 | Clerestories have been eliminated by 2 feet throughout 2 nd story hallways |
| 11 | Brick veneer for new alternate gym. |
| 12 | Resinous coatings for the natatorium seating area |
| 13 | The sliding glass “Barn-Door” style marker board allowance has been eliminated by 50% to \$3,500/each |
| 14 | New bleachers for the existing upper and lower gyms |
| 15 | West parking lot improvements |

“I guess...I just can’t believe we’ve had to cut so much from the budget.” Stoney said shaking his head in disbelief. “How much does all this add up to...I mean do you think we’ll end up cutting more?” He asked.

“I know this all sucks, but at least we now have a strategy for negotiating the cuts. Up till now I’ve been working with no details and numbers. Now I’m at least in the ballpark for

possibilities of cuts as well as projected costs—assuming that all of them go through. Keep in mind I want us to do our best to keep cuts from hindering instruction first and extra-curricular activities second. We have a strong start. Here’s what I’ve come up with so far.” I said as I referred to Table 8.

| Salina High School South 2.0 Project Budget Overview | | |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Estimate Description | Schematic Estimate | Design Development Estimate |
| Baseline Design Development Construction Estimate | \$ 40,790,129 | \$ 42,110,302 |
| Design Contingency | \$ 2,197,178 | \$ 1,085,119 |
| Baseline Construction Estimate w/ Design Contingency | \$ 42,987,307 | \$ 43,195,421 |
| Accepted Cost Options | \$ ----- | \$ (2,466,788) |
| Revised Construction Estimate w/ Design Contingency | \$ 42,987,307 | \$ 40,728,633 |
| USD 305 Construction Budget | \$ 40,731,620 | \$ 40,731,620 |
| Over/(Under) Budget | \$ 2,255,687 | \$ (2,987) |

Table 6.4. Salina High School South 2.0 Project Budget Overview.

“Well, it’ll be interesting to see how it goes...” A knock on the door interrupted Stoney. I stood up and opened the door. “Did I leave some documents in here?” Asked the architect.

“Yeah, here they are.” As I pulled them from my pile of papers and handed them to her, she looked at me with a panicked look on her face. “Hey, are *they* about ready to start our meeting?”

“Yeah, we’ll be in in a few minutes.” She said.

“Great, tell the other meeting participants that we’re ready.” I said with a smile.

About fifteen minutes later, our marathon of a meeting began. The room was subdued and quiet. *They* knew what *we* were doing when the architect returned for the missing form. So

much for one of the guiding principles of the community forum—transparency, I thought to myself.

In the end, through our laborious discussions, Stoney and I tried to limit strategically most of the decisions to cosmetic changes. Examples of such included concrete panels in place of brick for the new storm shelter; a lower-grade material for roofing; medium range-grade for exterior metal panels; less glazing to allow natural light in from the ceilings along the hallway corridors; keeping the existing pool guttering rather than replacing it with new stainless steel; eliminating elaborate signage and stenciling throughout the building. Substituting a set of blinds for state of the art windows in the principal's office that could be changed from transparent to opaque with the flip of a switch made a difference of \$30,000. For some reason that was the cut that stung the most. I knew the windows were extravagant, but they would have been *really* cool. One by one, all frills were eliminated from the building.

As the meeting ended, Stoney said, "Can I please now go and golf."

"Yes, go golf away! Thank you for your help!"

Part Three: Principal Publius, An Interlude of Dichotomous Internal and External Factions

"You are going to major in history! When will you ever use that?" These were questions asked by almost everyone when they first learned of my post high school plans. I heard that line on a frequent basis, so much so, that I began to doubt my chosen future path. While teaching was at the back of my mind, outside of education, perhaps the common question was spot on. When would I ever use this "useless knowledge"? Even as an educator, the question of "When will I ever use this?" frequently stumped me when posed by a frustrated student.

I never thought that *Federalist 10* and *Federalist 51* could play an applicable role in my life later on. Yet, there I was, in August of 2014, drawing upon Publius, or the pseudonym used to mask the identity of John Jay, Alexander Hamilton, and James Madison, all whom authored *The Federalist Papers*, a series of essays published in an effort to get the states to ratify *The U.S. Constitution*. Historical knowledge, while not applicable to every situation in the “real world,” is applicable to leadership in every sense of the word, especially when leading an organization that reflects our society—such as a public high school. Schools exhibit internal and external factions within their micro-culture. Internal culture or factions consist of the students and adults who are actually in the building day-to-day. External culture or factions reflect the broader community the school serves. For example, in Salina, external factions during our design process consisted of architects, civic organizations, dance studios, engineers, employers, district office staff, parents, and youth (aquatics-basketball-twirling-volleyball) organizations. Many of these groups weighed in heavily during the visioning and design process, and these groups exhibited a special interest at heart during the process.

When one examines internal factions closely, two groups exist: student factions and adult factions. Student factions such as the artists, actresses/actors, athletes, band members, gamers, gothic, intellectuals, preppies, and skaters do not exist in isolation. A school faculty also exhibits such general cliques: artistic folks, book clubbers, coaches, gossipers, outsider veterans, rookies, and many others. Moreover, adult factions inside a school are also very formal and primarily defined by subjects or areas of the school the adult works in. For example, the administration, art, athletics, counseling, custodians, fine arts, English, history, kitchen, math, office staff, physical education, science, social studies, special education, world languages all comprise the formal structures of school factions.. If one is not aware of the factions that exist in a school prior

to a designing a new building, the principal will be very familiar when the design process is finished.

The principal is the one person in the school expected to protect all factions: majority and minority. So again, there I was in August of 2014, resorting back to *Federalist 10* (Madison 1787) and *Federalist 51* (Madison, 1788), and thinking to myself, how can I balance all of these competing factions in a fair manner? Should I, would I, and could I realistically protect all factions while also maintaining functionality needed for student learning? *Federalist 10* (Madison, 1787), addressed the question of how to reconcile factions with interests contrary to the rights of others or opposite to the interests of the community as a whole. *Federalist 51* (Madison, 1788), noted a method in which appropriate checks and balances and separation of powers were created in our national government to protect the community as a whole from the majority. Thus, despite both essays being more than 200 years old, both were applicable in my micro-problem of designing a school in 2014.

Such knowledge about politics as noted by Madison (1787) in *Federalist 10*, proved essential when understanding just how critical of a role classroom utilization ratios played with external factions. Madison argued that there are two methods of curing mischiefs of factions: one by removing its causes, which consisted of two approaches (destroying liberty or make everyone think the same), not pragmatic or possible.

The second method of curing mischiefs of factions is by controlling its effects. For example, by being transparent about the budget up front, most understood that it was impossible for everyone to have everything. Because there were so many factions across the school (both internal and external factions), I realized that the budget would force groups to compromise and prioritize on their needs and wants or risk losing everything due to being unreasonable and

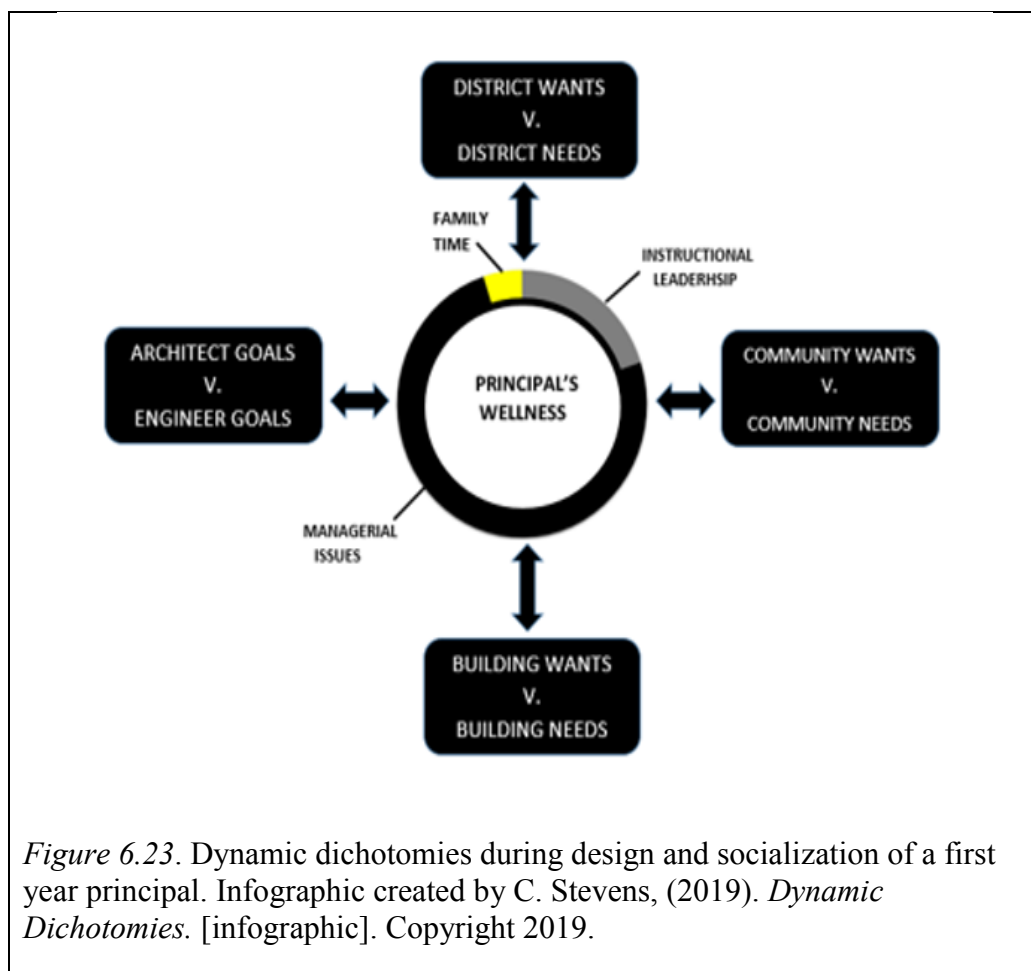
failing to compromise. An example of this theory in practice was the narrative *Courtyard or No Courtyard*, in which depicted that the courtyard had broad support from the faculty, until the faculty realized that the courtyard's cost may reduce the number of classrooms causing teachers to travel between classrooms. The minority opinion of the school was to not have a courtyard. In the end, the minority faction won over the majority faction because I made the budget transparent. Doing so was trial and error, but in the process I learned the power of controlling the effects of the majority faction.

To be fair, I have to also give credit to guru Stephen Covey (2004) for giving me the tool to reframe the design process with the departments using his inside/outside of our control. I also must note that (Fullan, 2007) convinced me that the strategy would work because of how the first group of teachers viewed the design process differently than the principal: Fullan noted "classroom press— immediacy and correctness, multidimensionality and simultaneity, draws teacher's focus to day-to-day effects or a short-term perspective." (Fullan, 2007, p. 24-25). It is the job of the principal to look out long term for the organization by setting a vision and direction. Combining Madison's argument on how to control the effects of factions with guru Stephen Covey's inside/outside of our control circle (2004) and Fullan's argument that the teachers will view design items differently convinced me that we could more effectively and efficiently frame the design process. All of this literature combined with writing as a process helped me understand the power of learning through and from experience as I navigated Villani's Five Stages of Socialization (2006).

Another insight I gained from Madison's *Federalist 10* (1787) was in the narrative *You are Building a High School that Existed in the 1940's*, a knock down drag out verbal exchange ensued between external and internal factions. For a brief moment during the design process,

Central and South High School principals and teachers formed an internal patron alliance. Salina Central High School Principal Shanna Rector and I both understood what was at stake should less classrooms be constructed or renovated due to our deep understanding of the complexity involved in building the master schedule for all programs. Getting architects, engineers, and district administrators (external factions who wanted less classrooms and more “Wow-Factor” spaces to be constructed) to understand the tightness that exists in a high school’s master schedule proved equally challenging and exhausting. This event was the first time I started to envision the following diagram: as shown in **Figure 6.23**.

Figure 6.23 Dynamic Dichotomies During Design and Socialization



As one reviews the above diagram, functionality, or what internal stakeholders view as necessary, sat at the bottom of each branch. For example, engineer goals, building, district, and community needs are items that relate to functionality (engineers care about basics plumbing and other utilities, the district and building care about classrooms to teach English, community patrons basic needs might be a storm shelter for patrons in the neighborhood without a basement to use).

On the top of each section, are the architect's goals, building, district, and community wants. Demand for wants is always infinite. The architects love to have trendy and statement driven work. When I traveled to Garden City High School, there was no doubt in my mind that its designer aimed to make *Architectural Digest*. Our district wanted the buildings to have the "wow-factor," in that the school caught the public's eye due to its novelty and aesthetics. The community groups wanted anything and everything they could get. Salina Aquatics wanted more updates to the pool beyond what the budget would allow. The building's faculty wanted a courtyard. Again, wants are always infinite. All of these represent dynamic dichotomies that engulfed me, the principal caught at the center of the storm determining the allocation of resources inherent in a contentious design process.

As the principal, I argued for functionality, what appeared to me to benefit student learning and day-to-day operations as noted by Hubler (1997) when he notes that a principal knows the school from an operations standpoint. Focusing on functionality is not to be heroic but rather pragmatic. I found myself worrying, and asking questions. Where will this class meet each day? Where will this essential equipment be stored? What facility and utilities will be needed to delivery this new program\curriculum? The list of questions and worries were endless. When our design team could not make the decision due to a short time-line of notice from our architects or

contractors, I was called on to make tough last minute decisions as I navigated each critical incident.

An example of a critical incident I navigated was in the *Hatchet Day* narrative, Stoney and I made big decisions in a small amount of time. I would love to say that pragmatism drove most of my decision-making, but in the end, most decisions arrived more from trial and error, however, I did have basic design knowledge thanks to my visit to the School Design Oracle as articulated in chapter five. Design knowledge aside, no decision exists in a political vacuum, “learning how to do a job does not occur in the vacuum of a profession or an organization” (Crow, 2006, p. 322). I was very much a coin-tosser leader during this narrative as articulated by (Hall & Horde, 2011). My decision-making was caught in a hurricane of competing internal and external factions, all surrounded me, typically advocating for *wants* being first and *needs* being a distant second.

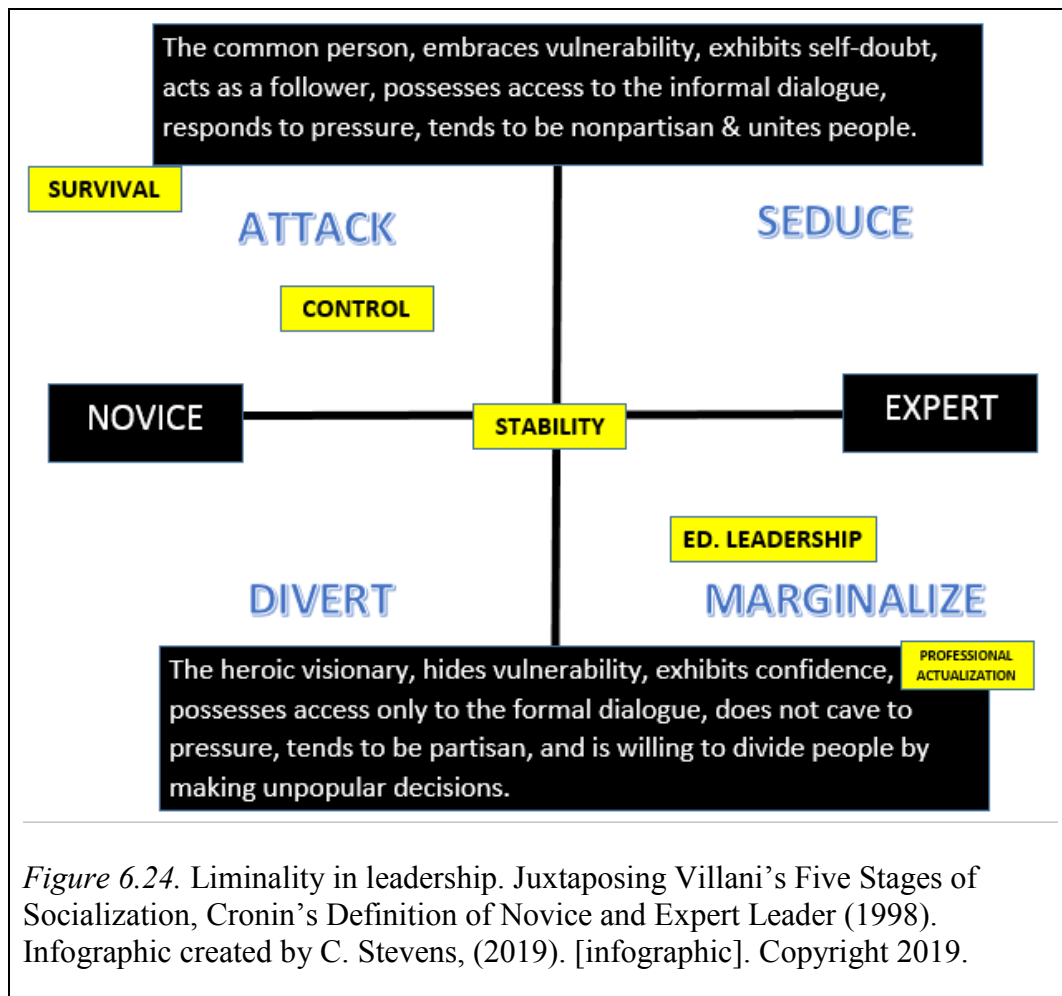
Over time, I began to shift from what Hall and Horde (2011) call a coin tossing leader trial and error and typical of principals in the survival and control stages of socialization (Villani, 2006), to a checkers player, a manager who begins to bring some basic skill to managing problems—typically found in the control stage of socialization (Villani, 2006). After five years, I am starting to have moments of being a chess player (a principal who obtains expert status as defined by Cronin, (1998), a leader who achieves professional actualization or stage five of Villani’s socialization model (2006). It has been a long journey to say the least, but this is not to say I do not have moments of transitioning back to the other stages. The daily work of being a principal is never the same.

To continue my reflection of liminality in leadership, I find that the open theoretical space between a novice and an expert leader as defined by (Cronin, 1998) becomes more vivid

with experience. A leader incrementally moves across Villani's *Five Stages of Socialization* with each and every critical incident encountered. During the design process, many of my narratives illustrate such movement. As a leader, I started to move across Villani's Five Stages of Socialization during the narrative *Preparing for and Executing the Final Design Session*. In this narrative, I recognized that the initial design meetings were not efficient. Consequently, I tried to figure out a better way to solve the problem—rather than keep doing the same thing over and over. This was not an example of me as an expert by any means as defined by (Cronin, 1998). After all, I was still reacting rather than being proactive, a common characteristic that separates the novice principal from the expert principal as noted by (Leithwood & Steinbach, 1995).

In addition to Villani's (2006) socialization model, Cronin's (1998) definition of novice and expert, Hall and Horde leadership types (2011), I offer one last layer of leadership scholarship to help novice principals navigate critical incidents during the socialization process and for helping understand how factions resist change or ideas that run counter to their own. Heifetz and Linksy (2002) argue that when people resist change, usually they do so with four responses: They will attack, divert, marginalize, or seduce the leader away from his/her goals. As a principal make decisions, he must become aware when those he leads are exhibiting characteristics of each of these negative responses. There are times the leader must abandon his goals, and let the group lead. Then there are other times that the leader must dig in at all cost and expect such push back but hold firm, even if it doing so means dividing people by making an unpopular decision as shown in **Figure 6.24**.

Figure 6.24 Liminality in Leadership and Socialization



Villani’s *Five Stages of Socialization* has liminality between each stage—so much that the new leader is clueless as to which stage he or she is really at. By juxtapositioning Cronin’s definition of novice and expert (1998) with Villani’s *Five Stages of Socialization*, greater coherency can be created for novice leaders to recognize the achievement of each level with greater ease. Most novices, or those who are surviving and seeking control, are like coin-tossers, in that the leader uses status quo to guide the vision, public opinion is given primary consideration, changes are viewed as suspect. Essentially the leader uses trial and error or flipping a coin to make decisions without leadership constructs to guide decisions. As a leader

transitions closer to stage three stability, he or she is becoming more of a checkers player, or one who seeks efficiency to guide the vision, gives primary consideration to resources, and cushions changes at the start. Essentially the checkers player is a manager. Upon achieving professional actualization, or as Villani (2006) describes it “empowerment, growth, and authenticity, the focus is on attaining personal vision” (p. 64). Hall and Hord (2011) describe the leader as a chess player, one who lets research guide vision, student achievement is given primary consideration, is creative and uses policies and resources to bring significant change, supports ethical personnel and holds staff accountable.

This model provides key analytical insights to the novice administrator. It is important to know the whole-part-whole of socialization so that the leader is cognizant of the need to move toward professional actualization. More importantly, the model provides the novice-leader with what each stage looks like along the way when navigating the liminality between novice and expert. The model also demonstrates that the greater one’s expertise—the more the leader must be aware of how others negatively respond to the leader pushing change. The expert leader gets pushback in very covert ways as opposed to the novice leader. The person fighting change will usually seduce or marginalized an expert leader, simply because they know the expert leader will hold them accountable (Hall & Horde, 2011; Heifetz & Linksy, 2002). Whereas the novice leader, will usually get attacked verbally or have their attention diverted with some other less important issue by the person fighting change (Heifetz & Linksy, 2002), because the person fighting changes knows a novice leader is still not confident. During the design process, these constructs provided me with framework through which I could create coherency through the messy process.

As far as design expertise, Pabón's (1988) *A Model for Design/Construction Integration* proved to be an essential source during the initial design phase. He educated me on the construction manager at-risk process and just how politically volatile and messy the entire process would be. Moreover, his insights reaffirmed to me that although I may have very well lacked the expertise of the architects and engineers, I should not forget that I did possess the authority to weigh-in; especially as it related to the utilization ratio information when determining the number of classrooms needed for the school. Without Pabón, I am not sure I would have realized just how powerful the various internal and external factions that existed across the district would be during the design process. Not only did South High have both internal and external stakeholders, but our school district was large, and within a highly competitive political environment with another high school, two middle schools, and eight elementary buildings—and only one overall budget. *Federalist 10* and *51* were most certainly still alive in 2014. I was willing to use Madison and Hamilton's help, and other classical works of political literature if doing so helped navigate the treacherous factionalized design storms successfully by seeking to control the effects of factions during my socialization to the principalship.

Summary

Chapter six provides the reader with narratives that address school design in action. *Preparing for and Executing the Final Design Session*, offered a granular examination of the classroom design issues that are important to teachers. Whether it is offices or instructional space for both general and special education, custodial storage areas, kitchen-loading docks, elevator weight maximums or in general the functionality of collaborative spaces—this narrative

addressed it. *Preparing for and Executing the Final Design Session* also addressed the daily challenges I faced as a principal. Some were small challenges such as a teacher being late, while others were much more pressing such as bullying concerns, code 1's in the FLC department, and the pipe bomb going off at Jerry Ivey Park just across the street from South High. My personal wellness was also addressed in the narrative *Singles...But Not on the Roof*. Chapter Six also provides the reader with *Part Three: Principal Publius, An Interlude of Dichotomous Internal and External Factions*. Similar to *Part One: Getting the Job* and *Part Two: Doing the Job*, this liminal space pauses the narrative to offer the reader with analytical insights that the narratives provide.

Chapter 7: En Charrette

The first section of this chapter will revisit the purpose of the study. Following the purpose of the study, each of the research questions will be answered with the use of integrated scholarly sources (substantive, theoretical, and methodological), as well as with insights gained through reflexivity. The second half of the chapter will note limitations to this study, as well as offer implications and recommendations. In the last section of this chapter, a conclusion will provide answers to the overall research purpose.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the personal wellness of a first-year principal during the design phase of a new building.

The central questions are:

1. How is a principal's personal wellness, (physical, social, psychological/emotional, intellectual, spiritual) impacted during his transition and first year as a principal?
2. How is a principal's personal wellness influenced as he applies research based practices to critical incidents inherent in his first year of the principalship and during a design phase of a construction project?
3. What patterns of critical incidents does a leader encounter when transitioning from an assistant principal into a head principal during the design phase of a construction project?

In this autoethnography, I presented a detailed navigation and negotiation transitioning into multiple roles in my personal life and professional life. I demonstrated how not having prior socialization made the journey arduous and often out of balance, with a cost to my personal, familial, and professional wellness. One principal's autoethnography is not intended to be a

grand narrative of all principals, nor did I situate the study that way. However, with rich, deep, and thick description, such experiences of isolation (Neale, 2014), anxiety (Daresh, 2006; Normore, 2004; Covino, 2003; Lickel, Schmader, & Hamilton, 2003), self-doubt (Ripley, 1997; Kidder, 1995), health-related issues (Gmelch, Koch, Swent, & Tung, 1982) are not simply unique to this narrative. In this section I respond to the research questions collectively as they are entangled with each other, much like the messy ways in which my personal and professional life were entangled during the first year of my principalship.

Responding to Research Questions

How is a principal's personal wellness, (physical, social, psychological/emotional, intellectual, spiritual) impacted during his/her transition and first year as a principal? In my experience during the socialization process as described by Villani (2006) *Five Stages of Socialization*, during transition and my first year as principal my personal wellness was negatively impacted as it pertains to physical, social, and psychological/emotional dimensions of Adam's Wellness Model (1997). Despite numerous dimensions being negatively affected, my personal wellness, as it relates to intellectual and spiritual dimensions, were positively impacted.

During my transition from being an assistant principal through the first year of being a principal, my body weight increased by 45 lbs. The narrative *Five Classrooms Short* depicted a scene of me late at night eating a strawberry pop-tart and washing it down with chocolate milk following a recurrent nightmare. I blame no one but myself. I have a horrible habit of self-medicating with food when encountering stress that is too often common with being a principal as noted by (Covino, 2003; Lickel, Schmader, & Hamilton, 2003; Kennedy, 2002; Ripley, 1997). My doctor lectures me about such habits at each visit. He has increased my prescription of Linsinopril from 10 mg. to 20 mg. and added a diuretic. It was really only after experiencing

three outbreaks of the Shingles as illustrated in the narrative *Shingles...But Not on the Roof*, and being diagnosed with sleep apnea noted in the narrative *You are Scaring Me*, have I started to become much more conscience of how stress negatively impacts my health as described by (Clark-Reynolds, 2002; Robbins, 1999; Powers, 1994). I know what I need to do, but I stop short of doing it. After all, knowing is not doing.

The transition from being an assistant principal to principal negatively impacted my social dimension of personal wellness. I lost contact with friends and even family members (two brothers and one sister). The last time I went out with a friend was in the narrative *Getting the Job*, and even that experience proved to be a burden due to my fiends inquiring about the position (Clark-Reynolds, 2002; Robbins, 1999). When analyzing the string of narratives, outside of the Prologue, I never mention any of my siblings. The only time I even mention a sibling is Chayston in the narrative *April 10, 2003*, when I described the pain of losing him. Although I once taught at Salina High School South and had strong ties to teachers, I immediately lost access to the informal dialogue. In the narrative, *Life and Death*, I found myself caught between a counselor chastising me for permitting students to have a moment of silence that was a borderline funeral service and a group of students simply needing to express their grief. Right or wrong, I sided with the students. Dwyer, (1984) noted that principals who have a unhealthy psychological dimension during socialization are aware of the restrictions and problems posed by their respective community, but do not know how to solve them. I knew what the answer was for one group in the school (students), but not the other (counselors). Once the person in the principal's office starts making decisions using students' best interest for a framework over what is convenient for adults—the door to the principal's social network closes (Muhammad, 2009; Robins & Alvy, 2004).

My transition and socialization to the principalship negatively affected my psychological and emotional dimension of personal wellness. Upon learning that Linn Exline was leaving, the narrative *Recurrent Nightmare* illustrated a new kind of anxiety in form of a recurrent dream as described by Carr (2014). Moreover, I encountered an unusual nauseousness in the restroom at Pizza Hut upon being offered and accepting the job in the narrative *Getting the Job*. The daily press of working as a principal pushed me psychologically and emotionally (Fullan, 2007). One minute I would be working on paperwork and then the next minute I was responding to an emergency that involved student or staff safety as described in *Preparing for and Executing the Final Design Session*. The dramatic and frequent changes of tasks throughout a normal school day impacted my ability to keep on-task and stay focused on daily goals (Huberman, 1983). As indicated in the narrative, I frequently left design meetings to handle emergencies like escalated students with special needs, a pipe-bomb in the park, or an upset parent reporting bullying. Working through crisis-situations involving students with adverse childhood experiences, the administrator can develop secondary trauma or compassion fatigue—an emotional duress that results when an individual hears about the first trauma experiences of another. Such was the experience in the narrative *Life and Death*, upon learning that Allie Saum died, or when I encountered the man who committed suicide with a pipe bomb a 1,000 ft. from our school. I especially struggled with situations upon learning that a student experienced physical or sexual abuse or extreme neglect at the hands of their parent or guardian. During the first year, I lacked a mentor to help process this type of critical incident since the event fell after our last meeting for the year (Neal, 2014).

Despite numerous dimensions being negatively affected, my personal wellness, as it relates to intellectual and spiritual dimensions, were both positively influenced. Most of the work

of a principal is staying current in order to utilize staff development to create coherency by setting a vision to develop people to respond to new problems (DeFour, 2016; Fullan, 2007; Muhammad, 2009; Ardell & Tager, 1982). Although my frequent visits to the Oracle provided me with access to nondiverse researchers and gurus—I was still growing through the socialization process in my attempt to transition myself out of *Stage 1 Survival* to *Stage 2 Control* (Villani, 2006). I pushed myself through a district licensure program and committed myself to professional reading during my preparation and first year as a principal. Moreover, it was through my experiences writing the narratives about the *Oracle: First, Second, and Third Visit* and finally in the narrative when I fired the Oracle *Preparing for Executing Final Design Session*, whereby I came to the realization I needed to access more diverse scholars.

My spiritual dimension of personal wellness was positively affected by the socialization of becoming a principal. Since I married to a Catholic, our family usually goes to church weekly. While I attend a Catholic church, and have memorized almost all of the prayers, I am by no means an expert. In fact, I am still protestant. I have found that my spiritual interests increased as I have taken on the principalship. Every time in church when we are prompted to pray for those issues close to us, I almost always say in my head—to help all of our students and staff stay safe, have honor, and be successful. This is not to say I am bound for sainthood. Quite the contrary, there are weeks that I skip church because I need to retreat from people or public events, if for only one day a week (Johnson, Aiken, & Steggerda, 2005). When this happens, I can guarantee something bad will occur at school. Despite my need from time to time to be alone—overall, my spiritual wellness has grown, but mostly out of selfish reasons when I was seeking to transition out of *Stage 1 Survival* (Villani, 2006).

Overall, my personal wellness as principal, as it relates to the physical, social, emotional/psychological dimensions was negatively impacted by my transition to and first year as a novice principal. Nevertheless, intellectually and spiritually I benefited from the socialization process to the principalship.

The second research question asked, “How is a principal’s personal wellness influenced as one applies research-based practices to critical incidents inherent in his first year of the principalship and during a design phase of a construction project?” As I started to do the job by applying research-based practices to critical incidents during my first year and during the design process, my physical, emotional, and psychological dimensions were negatively impacted, however my intellectual and spiritual dimensions were positively influenced.

As my physical wellness declined, after getting the job, as demonstrated in the narrative *Five Classrooms Short*, I started waking up at night more frequently losing sleep from recurrent dreams about work not going well (Johnson, Aiken, Steggerda, 2005). As I put on additional weight, sleep apnea disrupted the amount of sleep I was getting. I quickly realized my frustration increased and creativity decreased as evident from the narrative *You are Scaring Me* when I lost my temper, most likely out of frustration and sleep deprivation, during a meeting with Superwoman (Plowman, 1985). Plowman notes that increased job frustration, decreases tolerance of others. During the narrative *The Great Awakening*, I became aware of how much disruption had happened to my sleep when I learned I was waking up unconsciously at night due to restricted airflow. My body was in a viscous cycle: stress, sleep deprivation, anxiety, more stress, more sleep deprivation, and more anxiety—and on and on it continued. In the narrative *Life and Death*, when the doctor thought I might have cancer, given how I was feeling prior to the visit, I did not doubt the diagnosis for a second. After learning I did not have cancer, I tried to

find a way to joke about the situation to cope with the extremes of thinking I had cancer one minute and not realizing I did not have it another—when I told my wife following the doctor’s visit, “I am too busy to have cancer!” Lyons and Murphy (1994) note how some administrators regulate their personal expectation to correspond to conditions, typically by keeping their humor.

Just as Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1997) would suggest, when a person’s basic needs are not addressed—the upper levels of Blooms Taxonomy cannot be achieved. As my physical stress increased, with each critical incidents I navigated. Even more stress formed through the work of identifying critical needs from unlimited wants—faction after faction. In the narrative *Preparing for and Executing the Final Design*—due to the intense design meetings and the angry teachers who wanted more time with Jen, the architect, I found myself withdrawing socially from the informal conversations around the building before and after school--for no other reason than to avoid having to face those I had upset with a decision. I certainly did not plan to go and seek out the librarian on the day I collided with her in the library in the narrative *Pain in the Asbestos*. Withdrawing socially is dangerous for a principal, as doing so begins to affect negatively affect decision-making (Powers, 1994). More importantly, a principal who is not in touch with the faculty cannot bring about positive change (Fullan, 2007). As noted in the narratives, *A New Home Rash, Your Building a High School that Existed in the 1940s*, the principalship became another marriage pulling me away from my family due to the infinite demands warranted doing the job and during the design process (Neal, 20014; Daresh, 2006; & Normore, 2004) which is noted heavily in educational leadership as being a factor causing principals to leave the position.

Due to the physical and social stress, my self-efficacy as principal started sliding into a dangerous zone of feeling out of control both emotionally and psychologically. Both attributes

started me on a downward spiral of doubt my confidence to resolve problems. I think back to the narrative *You are Scaring Me* when I was extremely tired due to sleep deprivation and carelessly picking verbal disputes with Superwoman. My self-efficacy and ability to lead others in feeling confident that we would be able to solve complex problems—took a hit. Just as a small snowball rolls down a hill and gets bigger—physical, social, psychological stress, if not reduced, can become an even bigger problem. If left unattended, a leader's emotions can become very raw. When a leader expresses raw emotions on a routine basis, followers tend to become bystanders and lose faith on organizational goals due to a credibility gap (Katz, 2009; Muhammad, 2009; Duttweiler, 1986).

Despite the major obstacles I experienced physically, socially, and emotionally when applying research-based practices to critical incidences during my first year as principal, I grew intellectually. Even though Linn Exline (Superwoman) and I shared an intense moment, that was not me at my best, her leadership helped me reflect and realize my physical, social, psychological and emotional personal wellness were not doing well—and that I needed to get help. Although most of my reading consisted of non-diverse guru books like Marty Linsky's *Leadership on the Line* (2002), Stephen Covey's *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (2004), I was still able to find hope and redirect myself to go to the doctor and get help. Doing so prevented the complete downward spiral of failing to stay connected with people and focus on matters within my control.

The metaphorical visits to the Oracle are really a think-aloud of what I was reading at the time, or should I say, revisiting from my pre-service training. Such visits allowed me to take out my frustrations with stressful situations in a covert chamber of thought. Most leaders keep such chamber hidden from the public. Making such reflections overt could cause doubt or loss of faith

from the constituents the leader serves because they think you are crazy. While I realize publishing this dissertation may open me up to judgement—as a principal—the decisions I make are already open for such criticism and analysis, every time a patron says, “What was he thinking when he decided...”. Without reading authors like Calderon, Covey, Curz, Fullan, Hollie, Liang, Linsky, Muhammad, Owens, and many other prominent leadership scholars there is little doubt in my mind that I would have a fighting chance to foster a school climate that embraced a growth-mindset.

Physical, social, psychological, intellectual, and emotional aspects of personal wellness provide a foundation for the spiritual health of a leader. A leader lacking spiritual well-being is not able to create hope for his/her followers. Again, I frequently searched for spiritual hope when as a form of survival when everything else was falling around me.

Villani (2006) suggested that the induction of new principals address the needs of principals as they progress through the following five social stages:

Stage 1: Survival. The novice principal may encounter individual experiences that cause professional insecurity and situations where personal concerns are high.

Stage 2: Control. During this stage, primary concern rests with setting priorities and performing management-related tasks.

Stage 3: Stability. During this stage, frustrations become routinized, difficulties are primarily with facilitating change, and the principal has achieved veteran status.

Stage 4: Educational leadership. During this stage, primary focus is on curriculum and instruction.

Stage 5: Professional actualization. During this stage, which is characterized by empowerment, growth, and authenticity, the focus is on attaining personal vision. (p. 64)

I would love to say that I have moved through all of the stages in a linear fashion—but to do so, would be dishonest. The reality of *socialization*, or the interactive process by which an individual selectively acquires the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and behaviors needed to participate as a member of a profession, is that such a process is extremely messy and chaotic (Bennis, 1985; Hart, 1993; Kaye, 1995; Merton, 1963; Normore, 2004).

To conclude my response to the second research question, my personal wellness as principal, as it relates to the physical, social, emotional/psychological dimensions was negatively impacted when I started to apply research based practices to critical incidents inherent during my first year of the principalship and during a design phase of a construction project? Nevertheless, intellectually and spiritually I benefited from the socialization process to the principalship.

Social Engineering & Architectural Politicking

Reflecting on my transition from being an assistant principal to a head principal during the design phase of a construction project, my thoughts turn to the rich patterns of critical incidents I encountered. As a principal, conflicts I encountered between factions during the critical incidents of a design a new school were the most intense I have ever experienced professionally.

Prior to this experience, I rarely worked with professionals outside of education. The experience introduced me to all kinds of personalities and factions that exist among all areas of architecture, engineering, education, and within our community. Although there are never absolutes, when categorizing the various personality types of professionals, one can assert certain generalizations. Most professionals carry an air of confidence. Such confidence, frequently interpreted as arrogance, transcends all professions and patrons. The narrative *Your Building a High School that Existed in the 1940s* illustrated how differently engineers and architects view

utilization ratios of classrooms from school administrators and teachers. Both groups of professionals were insistent that the other group was wrong. In the same narrative, both principals supported the decision to ignore the classroom utilization data in favor of building more classrooms. “A principal’s input is worthy because the leader of the school typically looks at the design from an operations standpoint and can quickly spot design features that will hinder the schools’ functions” (Hubler, 1997, p. 30). There are times when teachers need to share or travel between classrooms, yet there are also times when all classrooms in the building are being used as is the case of advisories.

Designing and building a public school is far more than organizing the concrete, steel, drywall, bricks, and mortar. With every critical incident I encountered, there were internal and external school factions colliding with one another. With each encounter, a dynamic and dichotomous tug-a-war ensued. Competition was always present, whether such factions were competing for programs, square footage, exterior or interior design, or allotted dollars on the bottom line. Such was the case in the narrative *Building an Airplane in the Air: Determining Programs while Designing Buildings*, the once strong alliance between Salina Central High School and Salina South High School’s principals quickly faded as competition for the popular programs (such as the nursing and welding programs) created a schism between both schools’ administrations. In the narrative *Preparing for and Executing the Final Design Session*, every group represented a competing faction, whether when determining the design or for determining whether to add cost for additional fixtures, furniture, and equipment. In order to get to the former, I had to first understand the latter, and grasp how socially and politically complex a school community culture can be. Novice school leaders begin a design and building project looking at the proposed blueprint, but seasoned professional school leaders learn quickly that a

blueprint for social engineering and architectural politics is equally vital. As noted by Pabón (1988),

success or failure are subjective concepts: what is successful for one of the parties may not necessarily be successful for the other parties. (An award –winning project for the architect, may be a money-losing project for the contractor, and may result in a building that is difficult to lease for the owner. (p. 3-4)

Consequently, leaders should be prepared to control for the factions that exist during the design process and recognize that there will be losers and winners. Despite such divisions, the role of the principal in addition to managing resources and the design process—must also manage the school’s culture as articulated by (Fullan, 2007; Muhammad, 2009). Such a process required me to possess the ability to act with knowledge while doubting what one knows, as defined by Michael Fullan (Fullan, 2007, p. 115). Acting with knowledge, while doubting what one knows, is especially true when working through what our teachers called the “they bias” of architects and engineers.

During the design process, teachers were frequently upset that the engineers and architects said they should not have an assigned classroom but should travel. The architects and engineers designed a large volume of schools, and as such, they viewed themselves as the experts on education. Since architects were also once a student in K-12 education, they frequently felt as though they understand how every school ran day-to-day. During the design process, the architects and engineers frequently perceived our school’s designs as backwards and in need of improvement, and such improvement generally focused on the structure of the building not curriculum and instruction.

Architects and engineers frequently noted that schools generally fail to embrace collaboration, and they (the architects) will fix it with the technical design of the building. Engineer and architects on occasion viewed teachers as uninformed on school design due to being too institutionalized, thus lacking an outside view of how things can and should be. In many of the designs we viewed, it appeared as though an architect was seeking to make a statement by being trendy and emphasizing the “wow factor” and that doing so, would inherently improve the school. Such was the case during the narrative *You are Building a School that Existed in the 1940s*, when classroom utilization dominated the discussion.

Finally, the educators frequently expressed that “they” or architects and engineers, presented broad strokes during the design process with promises of the details “later” but when the details arrived—it is usually too late for modifying the plans because everything was “locked in.” An example of this was in the narrative *Preparing for and Executing the Final Design Session*—when the industrial art teacher was being asked about a blueprint of his classroom but the blueprint lacked details of where utilities would be located, thus the teacher left the meeting. According to Pabón, (1988), “Both disciplines (architects and contractors) are subordinate to the owner’s goals and needs” (p. 4). As principal, I spent much of my time helping bridge the gulf between both camps. Typically, however, budget resolved the issue, as in the case of the narrative *Courtyard or No Courtyard*—whereby the faculty wanted the courtyard, but I did not. Even factions exist within a building of teachers as noted by Pabón (1988) when he wrote, “converting an idea to the reality of a building is a dynamic process that brings together different disciplines represented by people who are motivated by different objectives at different moments in time” (p.4). More often than not, factions within the building, even the same department,

could be just a challenging and stressful to navigate. For example, square footage between different types of science classrooms i.e. physics versus chemistry.

Although a school leader must also recognize that architects and engineers feel the following about principals and teachers. Architects and engineers would frequently suggest to me that educators seem more focused on their proverbial block of cheese, and not the entire school, or what is best for students overall. In discussions with architects and engineers, I frequently heard that elementary teachers seem to go with the flow much more than secondary teachers.

Designing resource intensive classrooms for art, family and consumer science, industrial arts, and general science prove to be much more challenging than areas of instruction used for like English, math, and social studies. For example, I learned the hard way through a critical incident that the principal must make sure that all resource intensive courses are phased in a manner that does not require temporary utilities to be setup due to increased costs. Only on reflection now, after having gone through construction, did I become aware of how challenging this costly mistake was for our faculty and students. For example, we did not have enough restrooms on one side of the building—we brought in portable toilets (with running water) on a trailer. Moreover, we had to move the FACS and Art department two times during construction.

School administrators are frequently viewed by architects and engineers as allowing educators too much say in the input of design—causing more delays and increasing costs due to change of order requests. Finally, engineers and architects view school leaders as unclear on what specific programming they want until the concrete trucks are ready to pour, or the ribbon cutting commences.

As noted earlier, dynamic dichotomies do not just exist between the school side and the design/construction side. Dynamic dichotomies also exist among the design/construction side and within a school district. While it is obvious, architects and engineers have one overall mission—to design and build the building, as a novice to the construction manager at-risk process, I have found competing factions or dynamic dichotomies frequently muddy the waters between the two professions.

I placed architects on the upper level of the dynamic dichotomies chart, indicative of the profession being more abstract and less grounded than an engineer's perspective. Throughout the school tours, and even during the early design phase, the architects seemed very interested in making an artistic statement with the building—something that garners the next cutting-edge profile in *Architectural Digest*. Architects loved bringing attention to the large open collaborative spaces and expensive astonishing colors splashed throughout the building leading to some type of futuristic infused abstract decorative art. Multiple places throughout the building contained “think tanks” with no other purpose than a place for students to retreat behind glass to write.

The architects routinely pushed the envelope of design. They frequently challenged the status quo—viewing current cells and bells configurations of schools as dogmatic thinking. To solicit ideas from students and faculty members, the architects employed abstract methods to collect design data. The process seemed very open, free, and transparent, but most of the proposed ideas came from the architectural firm's existing designs. In the narrative *Charrette or Charade* a month after our first schematic design meeting, I toured Salina High School South with an engineer to discuss our building's phasing options. I asked to look at one of the engineer's blueprints of the new building and was shocked to see a stamped date on the blueprint

June 2014,—almost five months before our charrette was scheduled. From that moment on, the charrette quickly became known as a charade. Although I was disappointed with the lack of transparency, I did value that the firm’s design challenged our thinking. Studded throughout the new building’s blueprint and challenging the status quo, the architects pushed the envelope of design by placing think tanks, a coffee bar, genius bar, maker-space, and a school store.

Beyond the grandiose ideas that riddled the initial design of the building, architects frequently drafted plans that pushed engineers near the proverbial cliff of building around the existing edifice. I heard one engineer say, “anyone can draw pictures on the page, but that doesn’t mean it can be feasibly phased and built to code.” Simply put, architects dream design, but engineers live, breathe, and die by pragmatic requirements such as the Residential Building Construction - RBC, International Building Code - IBC, and Americans with Disability Act – ADA. Engineers work to make sure things do not break and people do not get hurt or worse yet die. When I think of metaphors of the two professions, I see architects as artists and engineers as Marines.

I frequently heard statements from engineers to architects such as, “How do you propose we build that design given the location of the existing utilities?” or “You realize there needs to be a space for the heating ventilation air conditioning (HVAC) unit ductwork where you currently have a...placed.” I also heard, “That material is going to be extremely expensive!” or “How are we supposed to run the temporary and new electrical utilities given the already full crawl-space.” “That snow and water runoff will need somewhere to go where you currently have a higher and lower roof connecting.” “What is the proposal for handling the asbestos prior to our people going in and demoing the building?” Through my novice lens, engineers operated near the functional and technical side of design. Again, the architects were the artists, and the

engineers were the Marines of construction. Both are as essential as a vehicle's accelerator and brake, it takes both types to get anywhere without wrecking.

Although significant division occurred between the technical-professionals side of the process, one should not forget that incredible division also existed between school district and school building factions during design process. The situational lens of district administrators is much different from a building administrator and school staff. The building level is where things happen. Without a well-designed and functional structure, it would be difficult to fulfill educational objectives. The architect, the school board, and the superintendent are too far removed from where the learning actually takes place (Davis, 1973, p. 25). The manner in which district administrators frame issues wields tremendous influence on any major design project. Both district and building administrators accuse one another of "going native" the dilemma inherent with any school organization. Being an upper level bureaucrat, can easily change the leader's perception of those whose boots are on the ground.

Us, as a pronoun, to district administrators, includes far more than what used to just be "we" to a building administrator. Again, I am not trying to ostracize district administrators, going native happens at both levels, but profoundly alters the perception of "us" and "we" to the actors involved. Consequently, the building administrator must be cognizant of the discourse used by district administrators. Hearing *we* may well mean "district" not "building". When budget issues surface, and more than one building project exists—there is not only "us", but rather, "all of us", included in the district's use of "we". Such was certainly the case in the narrative *Hatchet Day*. This narrative illustrated how intense budgeting and factions become during the final design phase.

District administrators frequently feel that those who work in the building are unable to see the big picture of the budget. More often than not, district administrators are correct, however, this phenomenon is usually caused by the challenges inherent with administration in general, filling the communicate gap with *why* or the justification behind decisions, and doing so in a timely manner. If one jumps out in front of the issue, and communicates too early, patrons will have information in their hands in the form of knowledge, but all too often knowledge is not understanding. On the other hand, if a leader communicates too late, it looks as though they are not organized, or are lacking in transparency. In the narrative *Pain in the Asbestos*, Kris Upson illustrated amazing transparency, even though he knew there would be major pushback from me. This event took place toward the end of my first year as a principal—thus I started to develop an understanding that the sky is not always falling. While at the start of the meeting about asbestos I was very frustrated and emotional—toward the end I started to recognize that my emotion was not changing the facts, this experience was a critical incident in which I grew professionally. I learned that if a principal expects people to be transparent, then the principal must demonstrate the ability to handle transparency.

Communicating the *why* is as much a science as it is an art, it requires finding the right balance of *what* and *when* to communicate. Michael Fullan weighed into this when he argued that effective principals attack incoherence (Fullan, 2007, p. 155). Educational administrators attack incoherence by doing three things: 1. Setting directions (shared vision and group goals), 2. Developing people. 3. Redesigning the organization: collaborative cultures and structures, building productive relations with parents and the community (Fullan, 2007, p. 166). Many patrons *want* and *expect* different things from a school and school district. The leader must help develop a shared vision and craft goals that master the art of being vague enough so a diverse

group of ideas can fit into the schemata, yet specific enough, that the organization does not run off course by fearing what the Calvin and Hobbes cartoon called “snow sharks” (fake concerns that divert attention). The superintendent and principal must establish a tight and loose framework of expectations to build a collaborative culture, as well as structures that build productive relations with internal and external stakeholders. Keeping everything together is critical to avoid losing focus on the overall mission of the school district and building.

During the design phase, school district administrators were similar to architects in that they favored visionary, grandiose, wow-factors elements of the design process. The district administrators praised hearing about the think tanks, a coffee bar, a genius bar, a maker-space, and a school store. As we toured the various locations DLR designed: i.e. Garden City High School, Manhattan High School, Joplin High School, Center for Professional Studies in Overland Park, KS, and Hutchinson High School, I kept hearing about the wonderful Career and Technical Education programs, but I never heard specifics of program funding, staffing, and/or placement of such programs.

Building administrators operate toward the bottom of the dynamic dichotomies chart. Similar to engineers, we live, breathe, and die by funding, staff, logistics, transportation and programs, all ultimately communicated and executed by the principal through the master schedule. There is no *we* when it comes to the master schedule. There is only *one person*, the principal.

Building principals operate similar to engineers. The principal has his/her boots on the ground similar to combat medics. The principal must be held accountable for enforcing policy but can easily be overridden by supervisors. The principal has 100% responsibility when it fails and 5-10% authority when it comes to policy development or funding decisions to prevent such

failures. Such a compromising situation and poorly structured position leaves few to wonder why so many leave the building level for district positions?

When it comes to the design process, as a principal, I wanted functionality. I can remember repeating myself to the architects, “I need spaces for students and teachers.” I also recalled asking for more storage to accommodate all of the growing needs of an expansive and specialized curriculum, as well as athletic programming demanded by our patrons. My voice frequently fell on disapproving looks or with headshakes almost as if to say—“you just don’t get it Curtis, do you.” We need the wow-factor and less institutional dogmatic thinking. We need “the cool stuff” not the functional stuff. All while, I am wondering how are we going to store the scissor lift, trash bags, toilet paper, basketball cannon, cheerleading mats, English Department books, host banquet dinners, deliver staff development, and store all of the confidential documents.

Beyond the functional items, how can I ensure that the school will meet the needs for the next 50 years? As (Marx, 2000) argued,

Various societal changes in the USA have impacted school in dramatic ways. Ten trends that US educators face:

- (1) For the first time in history, the old will outnumber the young;
- (2) The country will become a nation of minorities;
- (3) Social and intellectual capital will become the primary economic values in society;
- (4) Education will shift from averages to individuals;
- (5) The Millennial Generation will insist on solutions to accumulated problems and injustices;

- (6) Continuous improvement and collaboration will replace quick fixes and defense of the *status quo*;
- (7) Technology will increase the speed of communication and the pace of advancement or decline;
- (8) Knowledge creation and breakthrough thinking will stir a new era of enlightenment;
- (9) Scientific discoveries and societal realities will force different ethical choices; and
- (10) Competition will increase as industries and professions intensify their efforts to attract and keep talented people. (p. 3)

To think that Salina High School South 2.0 was designed for not only meeting the functionality of now, but to handle the increasing complexity of all of these ten items of the future. Design certainly matters. So too does managing the factions surrounding the principal.

At the end of the design process, I now find myself regretting that I did not push back harder than I did. My words of advice to any other principal going through this is push back unapologetically and push back hard! Respect architects who push a new vision, but equally fight for voices that preach functionality, the same voices who use the facility. “Time spent in listening to staff concerns, hopes and ideas and in grasping the micro-politics of the school is time well spent” (Walker & Qian, 2006, p. 303). No one truly knows the needs of the building better than the students and faculty members who utilize it on a daily basis. Protect some of the trendy stuff where appropriate but eliminate items that are unsustainable. In the words of a former mentor, “When it comes to furniture or school structure durability—think tanks not Porches!” Listen to the art teacher who says, “Make the sinks deeper to avoid water getting splashed everywhere!” Listen and advocate for the student who says, “we need safe places to hang out before and after school.” Listen to the food service worker who says, “the loading dock

needs to be at the same height as our inner district truck that delivers meals to the middle and elementary schools.” Listen to the FACs teacher who says, “Can I have a back door to my classroom, so I can deliver groceries with greater ease in my classroom.” Advocate as much as one can for the people who occupy/live/use the space daily. Always be willing to ask, the worst that can happen is hearing “No!”

The final dimension of the dynamic dichotomies includes the internal and external activity patrons of Salina High School South. This faction is very difficult to pin down due to the wide cross-section of members. At Salina High School South, the internal athletic patrons consisted of football and soccer for both high schools, this faction focused mainly on the stadium construction project. Our swimming programs, for both girls and boys—caring only about the district’s swimming pool (which is located at South High), and volleyball and boys and girls basketball programs, whose block of cheese consisted of the new storm shelter and gym renovations.

The external patrons connected with our athletic facilities consists of the following groups: USA Volleyball programming and Mid America Youth Basketball of (MAYB) our gyms, and Salina Aquatics—our school pool, Salvation Army Football our stadium. Both internal and external athletic stakeholders presented a champaign taste despite the school being on a beer budget. I commonly heard phrases like, “of course we need premium stainless steel to redo the entire gutter of the pool.” Or, “hell yes we need to fund all of the add-on projects such as LED lighting for all gyms, a state-of-the art sound system, and a movable wall that doubles as an expanded set of bleachers for overflow crowd, as well as providing a space for a dance studio.” “What about the need for added storage for all of our equipment setting out in the hallway?” Demand is infinite.

Although at times the groups' expectations resided in the stratosphere of reality, one thing was very common, and that was their steadfast advocacy. After hearing that the school's design was almost two million dollars over budget, and that cuts would have to be made, I found it comical, albeit not surprising, that although the primary reason the school existed, instruction, few voices rallied to advocate for a space to teach Shakespeare. To most, I sounded like a broken record when I would redirect design groups by saying, "stop thinking about the Cadillac, we can only afford the used Gremlin." On multiple occasions, I found it necessary to heed Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky's (2002) advice about getting up on the balcony to see a bigger picture. When I did so, I frequently found a reflection of myself, when I gazed in their hungry eyes fierce with advocacy. The athletic groups, both internal and external patrons, probably looked just as I appeared to district officials. After all, when demand is so great and supply is so short—the loudest raw desperate emotions reign and dominate in every faction.

As I mentioned earlier, designing and building a public school is far more than organizing the concrete, steel, drywall, bricks, and mortar. The internal and external school factions splash and collide with one another, all in a dynamic and dichotomous tug-a-war. Although most school leaders begin a design and building project looking at the proposed blueprint, the seasoned professional administrator (which I was far from in 2014) recognizes the need for social engineering and architectural politicking.

So far the discourse in Educational Leadership literature on principalship has focused on challenges during the socialization process to the profession (Villani, 2006), personal wellness of the principal (Adams, 1997), how the principalship is one of the most poorly constructed positions in education today (Neal, 2014), and yet how important the principalship is to student achievement only being the second most important factor to instruction (Marzano, 2005). In

these spaces, most of the ideas still generate from a privileged perspective. This autoethnography critiques such privileging and calls for a diversification of perspectives. Further, while there are clear trends of attrition of principals within their first 1-3 years of employment (NAESP, 2018; Ranger, 2017; Neale, 2014); this autoethnography contributes to the anatomy of resiliency that can be used as a possibility model to deter attrition.

Limitations

This autoethnographic study's limitations consist of memory work, evocative autoethnographical amplification, model use, and leader subjectivity.

Memory work is always fragmented, even with my detailed note keeping. It is logical that the reader might be suspicious of its trustworthiness. I have diligently demonstrated the process by which I have kept records and used such records to inform my narratives.

Evocative autoethnography calls for amplification of certain incidences so that their saliency becomes transparent to readers. In order to make certain narratives salient, some artistic aesthetic were used to amplify certain truths of the narratives. Certainly there has been precedent for such moves as seen in Arthur Bochner's (2012) *Bird on a Wire: Freeing the Father Within Me* to offer strong focus on certain narrative themes. For example, the exact dialogue of the gang members in the car were unknown to me, but the outcome of the gang activity was verifiable with evidence. Therefore, using existing literature on teenage gangs and their behavior, following writing structures of creative fiction and non-fiction, I crafted a backstory that did not deter the primary narrative, which was the tragic death of a student, but created provocation for teenage violence being a regular issue handled by a transitioning principal.

Finally, the model I used in this autoethnographic study was unique because it consisted of the construction manager-at-risk model. This model of school design is a highly interactive

process whereby the process involved many patrons, feedback loops, and specific cost estimates as the design process unfolded. The narrative might not fit a smaller district that follows a more traditional design, bid, build model where fewer patrons are involved.

The methodology in this study lent itself well for leader-specific discovery during the novice year of the principalship. Although it was the first year of being a new principal, the experience was contextually unique in that it took place during the design phase of \$45 million worth of construction. The analysis of the experience was through the use of the narrative language I developed subjectively. This research was conducted to understand my socialization (Villani, 2006) and personal wellness (Adam's 1997) transitioning through my socialization as a novice leader of a 5-A High School in Salina, Kansas. The choices I made as the principal are subjective to my experiences. Therefore, future research, using this methodological framework may not yield consistent results. The rationale that facilitated my decisions when navigating the discussed critical incidents may not be consistent in future research. Additionally, my personal wellness: physical, social, psychological, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual, are not the experiences of other leaders. The aspects noted in the school design are unique to Salina High School South and other schools logically have many different needs (Cheung & Walker, 2006). The factions of Salina High School South are not exactly the same factions of other schools.

Implications

There are several implications for this study contingent on the stakeholders who might find value in this study. These future stakeholders are novice principals, veteran principals, district administrators, architects and engineers working with schools on a redesign process, and pre-service leadership curriculum coordinators.

Future novice principals and current novice principals would want to know more about how the socialization process affects other principals when coping with stress, resolving problems, and leading schools through changes during stressful and chaotic circumstances.

Veteran principals who are beginning a school renovation or new construction project also want to know what to expect. Principals who are on the verge of burnout, need opportunities to read about other principal's experience to overcome isolation, encourage reflection, and create hope by building self-efficacy when seeing how best-practices, research, and advice from guru's can be applied to solve problems. Since most principals start out as assistant principals, yet such a position does not always best prepare principals. Assistant principals are usually delegated more management-type activities, such as scheduling, discipline, campus supervision, and safety (Weller & Weller, 2002). Golanda (1991) stressed that assistant principals cannot experience leadership by watching; they must be allowed to perform leadership through experiential learning, whereby one learns by doing.

District administrators can benefit by understanding the socialization process on a deeper level thus better support the novice principal with the goal of minimizing the negative effects socialization can have on a new principal. Moreover, this contextually rich example can also benefit educational leadership programs, by aligning coursework and curriculum to common problems encountered by practicing principals and promoting diverse scholars in the field of educational leadership.

Architects and engineers, who work side-by-side with the principal during the design and construction of a new school can benefit from this study by gaining a clearer understanding of a principal's challenges during a major construction project with hopes to improve

communication, minimize problems, and decrease the likelihood of unnecessary costs all too common during a major project.

Recommendations

Recommendations for future studies consist of examining the personal wellness of other principals going through the socialization process of becoming a principal, but also experiences of principals who left the profession. More autoethnographies are needed of principals and assistant principals of diverse cultures, gender, school settings (urban, suburban, and rural), and geographical (regional and international). Moreover, a study that examines the diversity of scholars used across the nations' colleges where leadership studies are provided would be beneficial to promoting diversity in educational leadership across the United States.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the personal wellness of a first-year principal during the design phase of a new building.

Personal wellness of me, as a principal during my first year, in any school would have been challenging due to the lack of socialization in these transitory phases educational leadership training and professional development. However, added to the mix was designing an entire building, while adjusting to a new professional role. Thus, as a first year principal, I was head of the school, selecting and leading the design team, managing program selection, budget cuts, deciding paint color when conflicts between factions existed (even though I suffer from color blindness), furniture and carpet selection, and any other design issues that emerged. Additionally, I participated in functional trouble shooting with engineers and architects when deciding the location of various classrooms such as the FACs and Art rooms and the vestibule for the pool. Any one of these roles in a business setting is a profession of its own, with years of training,

apprenticeship, and then eventual mastery. Unfortunately, for me, I was expected to train myself, and create whatever experiences I needed to create to achieve some kind of mastery in all these areas that had to eventually lead to a school building with key stakeholder buy-ins.

During this process, I regularly upset many groups of people based on my decisions, and possibly legitimately so, since I was continuously improvising and was perpetually out of balance. In chapter 6, I constructed a figure to demonstrate the juxtaposition of movement from being a novice to an expert while moving between Villani's Five Stages of Socialization (2006) iteratively and liminally, to construct my identity as a leader. Additionally, I provided Cronin's (1998) definitions of leadership both novice and expert, Hall and Hord's (2011) three types of leaders, and Heifetz and Linky's negative response to change from *Leadership on the Line* (2002).

This figure demonstrated the critical role of personal wellness for effective success in both personal and professional lives. As a result, I mostly shuttled between the first three stages of Villani's (2006) model and never approximated any kind of professional actualization, even to this day. Therefore, in this study, I have juxtaposed an understanding of personal wellness against constructs of leadership to understand how might one navigate the challenges of being a first year principal, a building designer, an instructional leader, and a father and a husband. This understanding reveals various mistakes, albeit creating vulnerability for me, as I am currently still in the same profession and in the same school described in this autoethnography. Yet, reflecting on the personal wellness, I have traced and mapped moments of great loss in my family, marital discord, missing key events in my children's lives, in addition to minute-by-minute chaos requiring strong improvisation in my professional life. Perhaps educational leaders might reconsider personal wellness more strongly than before due to the high number of

principals leaving the profession. Personal wellness needs to be understood as a key contributor to the success of an educational leader, and therefore, should be prioritized in educational leadership training and professional development.

Epilogue

I am happy to report that I am in my fifth year as the Principal of Salina High School South, I am still married, my kids know my name, and each year has become less stressful. Experiences of critical incidents have tempered my novice anxieties. As I write the final words of this dissertation, the bricks and mortar of Salina High School South 2.0 are settling into place. The school's new landscaped yard wraps around a completed edifice that embodies the substantial investment of the community of Salina, KS, and the toil of many dynamic dichotomies.

I pray this school becomes the space whereby teachers and students develop into culturally responsive citizens who understand James Baldwin's vision (1963), that

America is not the world and if America is going to become a nation, she must find a way – and this child must help her to find a way to use the tremendous potential and tremendous energy which this child represents. If this country does not find a way to use that energy, it will be destroyed by that energy. (para 1)

May this school be equally hospitable and intellectually charged for learning by allowing space that invites the voice of the individual yet embraces the voice of the group, a space that is bounded yet open, and fosters speech yet is a sanctuary for silence (Palmer, 1998). May this space afford all students, both during times of prosperity and times of economic recession, an appropriate education. May this school help keep all students safe, honorable, and successful.

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Appendix A: Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards

1. Standard 1: An education leader promotes the success of every student by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders.

Functions:

- A. Collaboratively develop and implement a shared vision and mission
 - B. Collect and use data to identify goals, assess organizational effectiveness, and promote organizational learning
 - C. Create and implement plans to achieve goals
 - D. Promote continuous and sustainable improvement
 - E. Monitor and evaluate progress and revise plans
2. Standard 2: An education leader promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

Functions:

- A. Nurture and sustain a culture of collaboration, trust, learning, and high expectations
 - B. Create a comprehensive, rigorous, and coherent curricular program
 - C. Create a personalized and motivating learning environment for students
 - D. Supervise instruction
 - E. Develop assessment and accountability systems to monitor student progress
 - F. Develop the instructional and leadership capacity of staff
 - G. Maximize time spent on quality instruction
 - H. Promote the use of the most effective and appropriate technologies to support teaching and learning
 - I. Monitor and evaluate the impact of the instructional program
3. Standard 3: An education leader promotes the success of every student by ensuring management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

Functions:

- A. Monitor and evaluate the management and operational systems
 - B. Obtain, allocate, align, and efficiently utilize human, fiscal, and technological resources
 - C. Promote and protect the welfare and safety of students and staff
 - D. Develop the capacity for distributed leadership
 - E. Ensure teacher and organizational time is focused to support quality instruction and student learning
4. Standard 4: An education leader promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

Functions:

- A. Collect and analyze data and information pertinent to the educational environment

- B. Promote understanding, appreciation, and use of the community's diverse cultural, social and intellectual resources
 - C. Build and sustain positive relationships with families and caregivers
 - D. Build and sustain productive relationships with community partners
5. Standard 5: An education leader promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.
- Functions:
- A. Ensure a system of accountability for every student's academic and social success
 - B. Model principles of self-awareness, reflective practice, transparency, and ethical behavior
 - C. Safeguard the values of democracy, equity, and diversity
 - D. Consider and evaluate the potential moral and legal consequences of decision-making
 - E. Promote social justice and ensure that individual student needs inform all aspects of schooling
6. Standard 6: An education leader promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.
- Functions:
- A. Advocate for children, families, and caregivers
 - B. Act to influence local, district, state, and national decisions affecting student learning
 - C. Assess, analyze, and anticipate emerging trends and initiatives in order to adapt leadership strategies

Appendix B: Meeting and Personal Reflection Data

Meeting

| Date | Objective of Meeting | Personal Reflections |
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| 8/20/2014 | Community Design Collaboration | Heavy on the team work, we used sticker dots to vote on very generic items for visioning, broke up into groups, for lunch we made each other's sandwiches—not sure why. Very expensive room: The heavyweights of McCownGordon Inc. and DLR Architecture Firm, City of Salina, USD 305; total of 61 participants. |
| 8/21/2014 | Community Design Collaboration | Rotated in small groups learning about all of the phases of design and construction in our integrated groups. Programming, Site Massing, Schematic Design, Design & Finishes, and Construction Document Formulation. |
| 9/18/2015 | Tour DLR's Garden City High School Facility built in 2008. | The high school exemplified a shopping mall. Very elaborate facades on the front and back of school. Tight security: ex. A camera takes a picture of every car tag entering and leaving campus. One-way entrance and exit. One community patron said it looked like a fancy prison. Large commons spaces existed but did not seem to be utilized by students or teachers. Science classes shared labs. This building subscribed to the academy model. Career center, counseling in same area as administration. Cafeteria looks like a mall food court. Theresa and I purchased a home on the south side of Salina in August. The closing date for our old home and new home fell on the same day I needed to travel to Garden City, KS. This was one of the first marital disputes since becoming the principal of Salina South. |
| 9/24/2015 | Tour DLR's Manhattan High School Renovation Project | Manhattan's campus had distributed administration offices throughout the building so they could be closer to students. A very white and sterile looking building. The library exhibited entire wall of glazing. Special Education classroom for students with autism was on the same side of building as the city cemetery. The C.T.E. programs seemed hidden back behind the rest of the building. The area of the building became very dull as we transitioned to that side of the building. The school possessed cameras in every area. |

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| 9/25/2015 | Toured the Center for Professional Studies & DLR Headquarters | This school is what I first envisioned after touring Grand Prairie Texas High School in the Ft. Worth, Texas, area in 2004. Wow...what an incredible facility. When the rest of the state worried about NCLB and meeting AYP, this school district was able to make significant strides and focus on career development of its students. |
| 9/30/2015 | Toured DLR's Construction Project of Joplin High School | When I take in all of Joplin High School, I feel as though I am in an airport. The building exhibited an awesome scenic overview that mimicked the glazing near gates at an airport. The building was yet another comprehensive high school, including both vocational programs onsite. There is only one high school in the entire district, so all of their efforts went into this building. Although constructed in a time crunch due to the tornado that struck the old building, the school looked great. DLR designed this building. |
| 10/20/2014 | Intro, Next Generation Learning Environments, Programming (Big Ideas), Next Steps | DLR Executives and Architects, JGR Architects, McCownGordon Contractors, USD 305 District Administrators, both High School Principals and both High School Design Team Members met to discuss and unpack information from all of the school tours. Classroom Utilization Ratios quickly dominated the discussion. The first factions in the design process emerged. Emotions ran high among teachers. I received an emergency call from my wife during the key point in the meeting. I had to leave early and take her to the hospital due to her having an allergic reaction from poison ivy. |
| 11/3/2014 | First Schematic Design Charrette | Exciting process at the start. This was the first high school schematic design charrette in the district, thus there was intense interest from the District Administrators, Central High School Principal and Central Design Team. We started out voting with sticker dots on general and abstract design concepts. Next, the group broke up into smaller groups. Reconvened with three general design concepts: 7:00, Stealth Bomber, and Boomerang. Architects said at the next meeting we would see the SHSS 2.0. |
| 11/11/2014 | Internal Design Team Meeting: Debriefing from 11-3-14 Schematic Design Meeting | I was almost late to this meeting because I received a call from Stewart Elementary Psychologist requesting to test my daughter for Special Education. Three major designs from our first charrette dominated our discussion (7:00, Stealth |

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| | | Bomber, and Boomerang). Most favored the Boomerang Design). When I asked the team about feedback from their departments, the general focus of colleagues related to their own classrooms. Ex. Light switch locations, windows, etc. |
| 11/17/2014 | Discussed long-range planning for CTE | Many changes forthcoming. Now we are making so many changes that we cannot keep everyone up to speed. I was being asked to do A, B, C, D, and E without knowing what fully A, B, C, D, and E were. One of the take-aways from this meeting was that I learned to take notes more accurately, and ask for time to bring others up to speed before answering. |
| 12/2/2014 | Schematic Feedback Meeting | This was the first meeting with DLR in which we saw the first rendition of Salina High School South 2.0. While the design looked awesome, we also learned that the project was almost six million dollars over! Each classroom cost approximately \$250,000. The principal and design team needed to cut the budget. This meeting was a punch to the gut of everyone on the design team. Many wondered why architects showed us pictures of a Cadillac despite having a Gremlin budget. |
| 12/3/2014 | Technical Education Programming | At this meeting, we started to get a realistic look at what programs USD 305 would for sure offer and which ones we would not. The lofty ideas of Networking and Automotive suddenly vanished from consideration due to excessive cost. |
| 12/18/14 | Internal Design Team Meeting: Debriefing from 12-2-14 Schematic Design Meeting | Our Building Design Team reviewed student and faculty data. After the 11-3-14 Design Charrette Meeting 1, I sent out a poll to staff to see if they favored the idea of a courtyard (42 Yes v. 26 No). I struggled with the results, because I did not agree with a courtyard. I wanted a functional commons due to the amount of activities we facilitated in the space. We also examined internal stakeholder data assembled by our architectural firm on what 576 students and 66 staff members thought about the proposed school's schematic design. The survey consisted of 199 freshmen, 165 sophomores, 113 juniors, 99 seniors, and 66 staff members. The students favored a coffee bar, more windows, smaller collaborative spaces, tables in the commons that varied in sizes to provide for smaller groups of students, a library media center with gray carpet, less trendy colors, more comfortable yet durable |

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| | | furniture throughout building, and more school colors of green and gold. Furthermore, students and staff recommended charging stations throughout the building to help keep chromebooks charged. The design team agreed with the survey results. |
| 1/13/15 | Library Media Center Design Input Meeting with Librarian and Aspiring Librarian. | Much of the information provided was very trendy and cutting edge and based on research. They both expressed that they would like the library on the main floor. |
| 1/14/15 | DLR and McCownGordon conducted walk-through of South High | The architects and engineers walked through Salina High School South to examine the structure and utilities to help determine phasing options for construction. During this meeting I caught wind that we would be keeping the problematic 500 Pod structure. Keep in mind when I first heard this I was instantly worried about “sinking” issue. This was the area of the building in which the media took a picture of a basketball rolling down the hallway due to the sinking concrete and a level which showed a two inch gap. At this meeting, I also acquired a copy of a design of the building, which showed square footage of each classroom and a draft of the blueprints dated June 2014 despite the design charrettes not starting until October of 2014. Data collected helped determine phasing and cost of new construction—thus dictating our final schematic design and budget. |
| 1/21/15 | Career and Technical Education Program Assignment for both High Schools: Harold Schmidt Room Board of Education Office | Bill Hall, Linn Exline, Shanna Rector, David Cooper, and Curtis Stevens reviewed the final placement of CTE programs for the high schools. Bill Hall approved Machine Metal despite concerns regarding excessive cost of machines and a small number of interested students based on C.T.E. Student Interest Survey. I strenuously objected to the placement of welding and the certified nursing programs (two of the most popular ones) to be placed exclusively at Central High School. It appeared at this meeting that any alliance formed with CHS Principal during the fight for classrooms is gone. South High would get showcase culinary kitchen, construction science, and pre-teaching program. All other programs, such as broadcasting, computer programming, and digital design, would end up being at both buildings. Over time, our district would spend a lot of money on bussing |

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| | | students between both high schools due to not placing programs in both high schools. |
| 1/27/15 | Final Schematic Design Presentation with SHSS Building Design Team before Board of Education Presentation | The final design would not involve a courtyard, thus saving enough money to move us from being six million over to one and a half million over budget. This was certainly a relief to me—as I did not have to upset everyone by making an executive decision to cut the courtyard, when everyone overwhelmingly wanted it. We did, however, end up cutting one classroom from the original design. The architects and engineer firm believed we could proceed with the existing design, although the architects and engineers did warn us that certain cost-saving alternate decisions would follow later this year in the summer. They did not provide me with a list of alternate decisions in advance of the summer meeting. We all approved the proposed schematic design for USD 305 Board of Education final approval. |
| 2/3/15 | Internal Design Team Meeting: Debriefing from 1-27-15 Final Schematic Design Meeting | Since the 12-2-14 meeting regarding our building being almost 6 million over-budget, I spent about 30 hours reviewing school design proposals, student numbers, past master schedules to hammer out what needs to stay and would need to go in reference to the new design. I was able to find only one classroom that we could eliminate. Upson and I pushed DLR to find savings via materials used and design. We examined the final decisions as building design team to see if there were any other areas we could eliminate from the proposed design. |
| 2/24/15 | USD 305 Board of Education Workshop Meeting | The USD 305 Board of Education approved the Proposed Salina High School South Schematic Design with a 7 to 0 vote. |