

Authentic Leadership and Entrepreneurial Thinking in the Context of
Professional Standards for Educational Leaders:
Perspectives of Practicing Charter School Leaders

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by

Matthew M. McDaniel

Major Professor: Penny Tenuto, Ph.D.

Committee Members: Richard Bauscher, Ed.D.; Sydney Freeman, Ph.D.;

Michael Kroth, Ph.D.

Department Administrator: Kathy Canfield-Davis, Ph.D.

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Authorization to Submit Dissertation

The dissertation of Matthew M. McDaniel, submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy with a major in Education and titled, “Authentic Leadership and Entrepreneurial Thinking in the Context of Professional Standards for Educational Leaders: Perspectives of Practicing Charter School Leaders,” has been reviewed in final form. Permission, as indicated by the signatures and dates given below, is now granted to submit final copies to the College of Graduate Studies for approval.

Major Professor: _____ Date: _____
Penny L. Tenuto, Ph.D.

Committee Members: _____ Date: _____
Richard Bauscher, Ed.D.

_____ Date: _____
Sydney Freeman, Ph.D.

_____ Date: _____
Michael Kroth, Ph.D.

Department
Administrator: _____ Date: _____
Kathy Canfield-Davis, Ph.D.

Abstract

Authentic Leadership and Entrepreneurial Thinking in the Context of Professional Standards for Educational Leaders: Perspectives of Practicing Charter School Leaders

The landscape of twenty-first century public education in the USA includes more than traditional elementary, middle, and secondary school offerings. Magnet schools, alternative schools, and charter schools are among the variety of school choice options now available to students, stakeholders, and educators. Public charter schools, specifically, have become a popular choice.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perspectives of practicing public charter school leaders of their work roles and responsibilities through the lens of professional standards for school leaders, Authentic Leadership Development, and entrepreneurial thinking. The study focuses on identifying leadership traits and perspectives of practicing public charter school leaders with regards to their professional practice. Participants all practiced in one state within the Pacific Northwest region of the USA. Research questions that guide the study are: (a) What are charter school leaders' perspectives of their identity as authentic leaders, (b) What are charter school leaders' perspectives of themselves as entrepreneurs in education, and (c) Which of the National Policy Board for Educational Administration's Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (2015) are most relevant to practicing public charter school leaders?

This research uses a qualitative multiple case study design, combining participant interviews with document review and observation to analyze data. The theoretical framework of this study incorporates themes from four sources of literature which served as a lens through which the problem was viewed. The first is Authentic Leadership Theory (Bass,

2000; Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008; Hirst, Walumbwa, Aryee, Butarbutar, & Hui Chen, 2016). The second is leadership using entrepreneurial thinking and logic (Rigby, 2014). The third is the National Policy Board for Educational Administration's (NPBEA) Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, or PSEL (2015). While the PSEL are not theoretical in nature, they do provide the foundation within which the theoretical components of the framework and model are presented. The fourth is traits of public charter school leaders (Carpenter II & Kafer, 2010; Carpenter II & Peak, 2013). A sample of seven participants were selected based on a specific set of criteria outlined in this dissertation.

Keywords: Educational Leadership, Charter Schools, Charter School Leadership, Professional Leadership Standards, Authentic Leadership, Entrepreneurial Thinking

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An insatiable desire for knowledge and learning is embedded into every fiber of my being. The journey which has resulted from the pursuit of satisfying this desire, however, has never been one that I traveled alone. While there have been stretches of the path that I've traversed by myself, they were never traveled without a roadmap or subtle cues of the direction I should take from those who've been there before.

I am indebted to my guide on this journey, Dr. Penny Tenuto. Her constant encouragement of me to continue moving forward, her willingness to listen to my perspective and then gently redirect me when I was veering off course, and her ability to find the right balance between helping me on my way and letting me find my own way have leveled out a path filled with peaks and valleys. She has expertly shared her light with me to brighten a path that was once dark.

Others have served as essential guideposts along the way. Dr. Sydney Freeman provided valuable instruction to me in the years leading up to this study and was always there to offer kind and sincere advice on how to be a better researcher and writer. Dr. Michael Kroth challenged my thinking as this study was developed and pushed me to direct my eyes to the horizon instead of keeping my head pointed downward focusing only on the path immediately in front of me. Dr. Richard Bauscher contributed decades of expertise in public education leadership, allowing me to have a vision of the landscape around me that went well beyond the path.

The charter school leaders who participated in this study provided the beautiful view that I was privy to along the way. Without their candid contributions, the journey would not have been the same.

Dedication

To my parents, Milon and Joyce, who have unceasingly encouraged and supported my educational dreams, and to my wife, Kristina, who is my rock.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Public charter schools have been in operation in the USA since the early 1990s, when in 1991 the Minnesota state legislature approved the establishment of such schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). According to the National Center for Education (2017), by the end of the 2014-15 school year, 7% of all public schools in the USA were charter schools, totaling nearly 7,000 schools. By fall of 2014, 5% of the nation's school children were educated in public charter schools, with several states having double digit percentages of students enrolled in public charter schools, including 43% of students in Washington, D.C., and 19% of students in Arizona (United States Department of Education, 2017). Eight states did not have public charter school legislation passed as of the 2014-2015 school year: Alabama, Kentucky, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, and West Virginia (United States Department of Education, 2017).

With the existence of these schools of choice comes a leadership style that is different from that of a traditional public school leader. Public charter school leaders have myriad responsibilities; often they have responsibilities that stretch beyond the expectations of the traditional public school administrator (Carpenter II & Kafer, 2010). Carpenter and Peak (2013) contended that few of the most important leadership responsibilities of public charter school leaders relate directly to instructional leadership which is a central component of traditional public school administration at the building level. Public charter school administrators who serve in a sustained capacity must possess a specific set of skills, habits,

and traits that are different from their traditional public school counterparts (Carpenter & Peak, 2013).

The Problem of the Study

Public charter school leadership requires a different leadership skillset, mindset, and profile than those which traditional public school leaders need (Carpenter II & Kafer, 2010; Carpenter II & Peak, 2013). The lack of charter-specific training for pre-service administrators and ongoing charter-specific professional development for practicing public charter leaders presents a problem that needs to be addressed. Part of this problem is understanding who current charter school leaders are and what traits have shown to be elements of success for the individual educational leader, his or her organization, and that organization's students (McLeod Swearingen, 2014). There is a lack of research on this topic in the literature, and this study aimed to fill a gap. A qualitative, multiple case study methodology was employed to examine the questions which guided this research. In-person participant interviews, review of documents, and observations of participants were used as data collection processes. Cases were studied specifically within the context of national leadership standards, authentic leadership development, and entrepreneurial thinking in educational leadership.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand the perspectives of practicing public charter school leaders as they considered their leadership philosophies and practices. The study aimed to identify the traits of public charter school leaders, especially as they related to the National Policy Board for Educational Leadership's Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL, 2015), Authentic Leadership Theory and Development, and

entrepreneurial thinking. Charter school leadership, in general, is not well-researched (Carpenter II & Peak, 2013). This study sought to understand who charter school leaders were and what they considered to be essential elements of their leadership practices and responsibilities. This was accomplished through the lens of professional standards (NPBEA, 2015). Within the context of national standards, a more specific focus on the theoretical concepts noted, including Authentic Leadership Theory and entrepreneurial thinking, were considered.

Significance of the Study

Public charter schools and their leaders are significant to education at the national level because they offer a viable alternative to traditional schools for some students and they also serve as valuable and sustainable alternatives to traditional public schools (Rand Education, 2009). The number of public charter schools is on the rise in the Pacific Northwest region and across the USA (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2016). The need for qualified public charter school leaders who understand the depth and breadth of their positions is great (Ni, Sun, & Rorrer, 2015). Public charter schools exist in an environment in which school closure is always a possibility, as non-renewal-of-charter verbiage is part of each state's public charter school legislation. This requires agile leaders with a firm grasp of the charter-specific problems their schools face. This study provides findings that may be used by current and future school leaders to strengthen the depth and breadth of their understanding of these specific leadership positions.

This study is significant because it adds to the body of literature that supports a greater understanding of public charter school leadership in the contexts of national leadership standards, authentic leadership development, and entrepreneurial thinking in educational

leadership. Findings from the study may not only benefit current and future public charter school leaders but may also inform the community of education professionals interested in the development of school leadership practices in general. It may also inform policy-makers, state education officials, and those who prepare educational leaders in formal programs. This study may also affect how public charter school leaders are trained.

Contextual Background: Charter Schools and Charter School History in the USA

A review of policy as well as a brief history of charter schools in the USA helps to set the contextual background for this study. Charter schools are tuition-free public schools that offer constituents an educational alternative from the traditional public school system. Public charter schools typically offer primary and secondary education with each local educational agency (LEA) determining within its charter which service levels will be offered. Elementary-only, secondary-only, and K-12 schools permeate the charter school landscape. The ‘charter’ is a contract between the school and its authorizer that governs all aspects of the school’s operation. Details of the school’s operation, including “its name, organization, management, and curriculum, are set by the charter, which also outlines how the school will measure student performance” (Center for Public Education [CPE], 2012). The authorizer is an agency that grants the ‘charter’ and which is responsible for performing ongoing charter school oversight as required by law. Authorizers can be state education agencies, local school districts, higher education institutions, or other state-designated entities (National Charter School Resource Center [NCSRC], n.d.). Compared to traditional public schools, charter schools have significant “regulatory freedom and autonomy from state and local rules they receive in exchange for having their charter reviewed and renewed [or revoked] by the authorizing agency every few years” (CPE, 2012). While public charter schools “operate

primarily beyond the authority of the school district and are free from many district rules, ... they're accountable to the public via state-approved authorities for agreed-upon results spelled out in a legally binding performance contract” (Finn, Manno, & Wright, 2016, p. 7). This performance binding contract comprises the modern charter. The charter exists as an accountability measure for both the authorizing agency and the school.

The concept of chartering and school choice emerged even before Horace Mann began to gather public education into government-operated systems (Finn, et al., 2016). Historians Tyack and Hansot shared that in colonial times, “many forms of schooling deserved the favor of government [and] citizens tended to have an attitude toward education that Americans today have toward religion: attend the school of your choice” (Tyack & Hansot, 1982, pp. 28-29; Finn et al., 2016). In the modern era, the term ‘charter’ may have been developed in the 1970s by Ray Budde, a New England educator who suggested that “small groups of teachers be given contracts or ‘charters’ by their local school boards to explore new approaches” (NCSRC, n.d.) to curricular development and pedagogical practices. The term ‘charter’ was specifically chosen by Budde as a reference to colonial-era explorers like Henry Hudson who got charters to seek new lands and resources (Budde, 1988). In this era, explorers were granted charters to someone with a vision or a plan to accomplish a goal that had not yet been undertaken, and the charter called for “exploration into unknown territory and involved a degree of risk to the person undertaking the exploration” (Budde, 1988, p. 49). Budde (1988) argued that chartering in education would allow people with a vision of a better school to leave the safety of common practice and traditional structure to promote the evolution of public education while at the same time maintaining a sufficient amount of accountability to a charter grantor (Budde, 1988).

In the modern charter school movement which emerged in the late 1980s, Albert Shanker, then president of the American Federation of Teachers, gave a speech in 1988 at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. in which he proposed the idea of a ‘new type of school’, even ‘charter schools’ (Kahlenberg & Potter, 2014). Shanker developed Budde’s chartering idea by sharing the concept as a way for teachers to be able to start their own schools with the intent of boosting their professionalism and connection to their professions (Kahlenberg & Potter, 2014; Finn et al., 2016). Shanker invigorated this movement from an entrepreneurial angle, stating that “a school system might charter schools distinctly different in their approach to learning... [so] parents could choose which charter school to send their children to, thus fostering competition” (Finn et al., 2016, p. 16). These new schools would be considered schools of choice, meaning no student, teacher, leader, or any other constituent would be compelled to be part of one if they chose not to be (Kahlenberg & Potter, 2014). Referring to the importance his idea placed on putting teachers at the forefront of innovative practice, Shanker said in his speech, “you don’t see creative things happening where teachers don’t have any voice or power or influence” (Kahlenberg & Potter, 2014, p. 7). After Shanker’s speech at the National Press Club, he spoke later in the same year at the Minneapolis Foundation’s Itasca Seminar, again sharing his ideas of charter schools (Kahlenberg & Potter, 2014). Senator Ember Reichgott Junge, a member of Minnesota’s legislative Education Committee, and a group of educators from the same state were in the audience for that speech. Inspired by Shanker’s words, they organized themselves and were instrumental in the passing of the first state-level charter school legislation in the United States in 1991. The first American public charter school, City Academy Charter School, opened in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1992. Shanker, Reichgott Junge, the Citizens League, and

the former director of the Citizens League, Ted Kolderie, outlined three pillars of the original vision of charter schools (Kahlenberg & Potter, 2014):

1. Experiment with desperately needed new approaches to reach students, approaches from which traditional public schools could learn;
2. Provide an enhanced level of teacher voice and teacher empowerment compared with traditional public schools;
3. Help reinvent the old idea of the American common school by severing the tie between residential neighborhood segregation and school segregation.

Today, state statutes enabling public charter schools are found in 42 states and the District of Columbia. From 2005 to 2015, the percentage of public schools in the United States that were charter schools increased from 4% to 7%, to total approximately 7,000 public charter schools (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2017). The charter movement has shown to increase the number of American students participating in public education (NCES, 2017). From 2004 to 2014, “the number of students enrolled in public charter schools increased by 1.8 million students (from 0.9 million to 2.7 million), while the number of students attending traditional public schools decreased by 0.4 million” (NCES, 2017). This shows an increase in public school enrollment of 1.4 million students.

While each state has taken a slightly different approach to establishing rules for governance and operations of public charter schools, they all share several common features. Among these commonalities are rules requiring non-discrimination in admission, non-discrimination for students with disabilities, and mandatory participation in each state’s testing and accountability systems (NCSRC, n.d.). Often, individual states have accountability measures in place for public charter schools that go above and beyond those

required of traditional public schools. These measures are overseen by an authorizing agency, or public charter school authorizer.

National Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL)

In 2015, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) released the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders with the purpose of “elevat[ing] areas of educational leader work that were once not well understood or deemed less relevant but have since been shown to contribute to student learning” (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015, p. 2). The NPBEA is a national alliance of major membership organizations, including the School Superintendents Association, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration, and the University Council for Educational Administration (National Policy Board for Educational Administration: Alliance for Advancing School Leadership, n.d.). *Table 1*, created by the researcher, provides a brief overview of the 10 standards included in the PSEL.

Table 1.1

Professional Standards for Educational Leaders

| Standard | Description |
|----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Mission, Vision, and Core Values | Effective educational leaders develop, advocate, and enact a shared mission, vision, and core values of high-quality education and academic success and well-being of each student. |
| 2. Ethics and Professional Norms | Effective educational leaders act ethically and according to professional norms to promote each student's academic success and well-being. |
| 3. Equity and Cultural Responsiveness | Effective educational leaders strive for equity of educational opportunity and culturally responsive practices to promote each student's academic success and well-being. |
| 4. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment | Effective educational leaders develop and support intellectually rigorous and coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, and assessment to promote each student's academic success and well-being. |
| 5. Community of Care and Support for Students | Effective educational leaders cultivate an inclusive, caring, and supportive school community that promotes the academic success and well-being of each student. |
| 6. Professional Capacity of School Personnel | Effective educational leaders develop the professional capacity and practice of school personnel to promote each student's academic success and well-being. |
| 7. Professional Community for Teachers and Staff | Effective educational leaders foster a professional community of teachers and other professional staff to promote each student's academic success and well-being. |
| 8. Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community | Effective educational leaders engage families and the community in meaningful, reciprocal, and mutually beneficial ways to promote each student's academic success and well-being. |
| 9. Operations and Management | Effective educational leaders manage school operations and resources to promote each student's academic success and well-being. |
| 10. School Improvement | Effective educational leaders act as agents of continuous improvement to promote each student's academic success and well-being. |

National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2015)

Murphy, Seashore Louis, and Smylie (2017) addressed how the 2015 PSEL can be brought to life. The 2015 PSEL are anchored in a conceptual framework called Positive School Leadership (PSL), a leadership perspective and model that combines “the best ideas from recent research into positive psychology” (Murphy, Seashore Louis, & Smylie, 2017, p. 23). The PSL model provides a new lens through which best practices are viewed, as opposed to working from a deficit model, or the assumption that leaders were not applying best practices, which was implied in standards such as the Educational Leadership Policy Standards: Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) previously adopted by the NPBEA (The Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2008). The new standards, using the PSL model, have the goal of letting leaders’ natural inclinations serve as starting points “for efforts to pursue genuine improvements in the workplace” (Murphy et al., 2017, p. 23). The PSEL (NPBEA, 2015) provide a concise and meaningful starting point for educational leaders to understand the depth and breadth of their responsibilities. While they are not the end all, they should be considered a normative platform that unites the purpose of school leaders. Public charter school leaders, like all other public school leaders, should subscribe to and strive to meet the standards outlined by the NPBEA in the PSEL (2015).

Murphy, et al. (2017) provide a concise set of goals, or dimensions, that the new set of standards brings to the table for all educational leaders, including public charter school leaders. *Table 2* outlines these dimensions as compiled by the researcher.

Table 1.2

Dimensions of the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders

| Dimension of PSL | Rationale |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| A stronger professional calling | Leadership must involve the feeling of being drawn into and impelled toward a life of service to others and working toward a broader social good. |
| A stronger moral framework | PSL is anchored in a system of principles of right and wrong. Personal and professional ethics are center stage in leadership practice. |
| A focus on character and virtue | Moral qualities of a leader are paramount. Educational leaders must be passionate, optimistic, authentic, benevolent, respectful, transparent, courageous, and resilient. |
| A focus on the interest of others | Leaders at all levels must act in the best interests of others – children, professional personnel, families, and the community. They should not abandon self-interest, but instead transcend it. |
| Personalized relationships | While policies and structures are important, schools are powered by human relationships. Much of leadership occurs through interpersonal interaction. Leaders must emphasize the importance of personalism, caring, trust, and respect. |
| Empowerment and community building | A focus on growth and the building up of people and groups through learning is essential. This is rooted in an optimistic and asset-based view of human nature and potential. |

Murphy, Seashore Louis, & Smylie (2017)

In his own offering detailing the PSEL (NPBEA, 2015), Murphy, a member of the PSEL writing team, described several essential understandings that readers and practitioners should know (Murphy, 2017). First, it is erroneous to believe that the PSEL (NPBEA, 2015) are based solely on empirical evidence (Murphy, 2017). While the bulk of the content of the standards relies heavily on the best available empirical evidence, many norms and values of

professional practice, as well as craft knowledge and wisdom of practice, are included as important building blocks for the standards (Murphy, 2017). Second, the standards are not limited to use by professional preparation programs (Murphy, 2017). While there were many considerations during the creation of the standards that they become widely used as part of school administrator and leadership preparation programs, the developers also considered the importance of widespread infusion of the standards by forming strong connections “between the standards and the full array of ‘leverage points’ that could influence the definition and practice of school administration” (Murphy, 2017, p. 4). Third, the standards are directionable, not measurable (Murphy, 2017). This means that the standards push and pull the profession in ethical and developmental directions instead of serving as explicit indicators of the achievement or completion of specified quality points (Murphy, 2017). Finally, Murphy (2017) noted that the standards are built upon the pillars of academic press and caring support. The academic press pillar represents the vast array of literature that exists to support the concept of standards as well as the content of each of the PSEL. The caring support pillar represents the intangible nature of providing nurture and support to the educational community. Each of these essential understandings underscore and provide support for the creation and dissemination of the PSEL (NPBEA, 2015).

The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (NPBEA, 2015) directly address culturally responsive leadership practices as an essential component of effectively influencing student achievement (Minkos et al., 2017). Minkos et al. (2017) specifically examine the importance of Equity and Cultural Responsiveness (PSEL Standard 3) as it relates to leadership practice and the role of school administrators. With the increasingly diverse student populations that public schools in the United States have, educational leaders “play an

important role in creating safe environments and guiding educators to address the needs of all students in an equitable manner” (Minkos et al., 2017, p. 1264). While being a culturally responsive leader is important, knowing how to be or become one is more difficult. Minkos, et al. (2017) shared that educational leaders must commit themselves to “continuous learning at the individual level” and to adopt practices that “recognize, embrace, and celebrate differences as opportunities for growth” for the learning community (p. 1264).

Leadership standards are not unique to the USA. China is an example of a country that actively seeks borrowable policies and structures from foreign countries to constantly work towards improving its educational model and leadership training (Wei, 2017). When constructing a set of standards for its own national system, China reviewed a set of ‘foreign’ leadership standards to serve as the basis for its own. The researcher created *Table 3* to show four sets of national standards used by China as foundational documents for creating its own standards, the Professional Standards for Compulsory Schools Principals (Ministry of Education of People’s Republic of China [MEPRC], 2013). Commonalities among all four sets of international standards are found in only one leadership domain: student learning and program/curriculum development (Wei, 2017). Five other leadership domains, including setting directions and creating shared visions, teacher development, collaboration, administration and management, and working with communities and social relations, are established by at least two of the standards documents (Wei, 2017). Only the NPBEA’s PSEL (2015) address all six of the common domains outlined by Wei (2017).

Table 1.3

International Leadership Standards

| Jurisdiction | Launched by | Year | Document Name |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Australia | Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership | 2011 | National Professional Standards for Principals |
| United Kingdom | British National College for Teaching and Leadership | 2014 | National College for Teaching and Leadership |
| Canada | Ontario College of Teachers | 2009 | Ontario Leadership Framework |
| United States | National Policy Board for Educational Administration | 2009; 2015 | Professional Standards for Educational Leaders |

Wei (2017)

When considering the importance of professional standards for leaders in education and their relevance to this study, it is possible that some standards are more important than others to practicing leaders. While it may be that all leaders accomplish all the standards outlined in the PSEL (2015) in their practice, this study aims to better understand the context of standards in the practice of public charter school leaders. The research will attempt to understand if some of the PSEL (2015) are more relevant than others to practicing leaders, or if any are irrelevant. It also aims to determine if there is essential content missing from the PSEL (2015) as it pertains to public charter school leadership. The PSEL (2015) will serve as the table setting for this study working from the assumption that all public school leaders, regardless of the type of school they lead, employ practices that are defined and generally accepted in the PSEL (2015). The PSEL (2015) will be established in chapter two of this study as an important part of a model for leading in public charter schools developed and conceptualized by the researcher.

Research Questions

There are three key research questions that this study seeks answers to. They are:

1. What are charter school leaders' perspectives of their identity as authentic leaders?
2. What are charter school leaders' perspectives of themselves as entrepreneurs in education?
3. Which of the National Policy Board for Educational Administration's Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (2015) are most relevant to practicing public charter school leaders?

Limitations

Limitations of this study include characteristics that influence the interpretation of the findings of the research and are beyond the control of the researcher. In this study, participants will be asked questions that require some reflection about how they view their identities as being authentic leaders and some individuals may not share their reflections as openly as others in the study. Others may need more time to process the information they are contemplating. A limited amount of prior research studies on this topic also serve as a limitation. Because of the brief period allotted to the research, longitudinal effects may limit the study; the data collection will not cover identity development over time or traits that leaders may yet acquire. Access to participants may limit the study, as potential participants may decline to be studied, or oversight bodies including governing boards and school administration may deny the researcher the opportunity to study a specific case. Another limitation is that charter schools are different one from another because of their unique charters. This variance will be difficult to replicate in another study. Finally, participant view

of the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (2015) and other topics may vary depending on what level of education they work in.

Delimitations

This study is delimited to practicing administrators at public charter schools which serve varying levels of students in one region of the Northwest section of the USA. It will take place over a specific period of time with a specific number of participants. The findings of this study are delimited by several choices made by the researcher. A qualitative case study methodology has been selected for this study. Had another methodological approach been considered, the data could yield different results. Additional studies including more observations and continued follow up interviewing are recommended. Understanding that these constraints are in place may help the reader and researcher contextualize and appropriately analyze the data.

Definitions

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions will be considered uniform across all instances of usage throughout this dissertation.

Authentic leadership – “A pattern of leader behavior that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development” (Walumbwa et al., 2008, p. 94).

Authorizer – an agency that grants the ‘charter’ and which is responsible for performing ongoing charter school oversight as required by the law. Authorizers can be state education

agencies, local school districts, higher education institutions, or other state-designated entities (NCSRC, n.d.).

Charter – a contract between a public charter school and its authorizing agency allowing the school operational autonomy to pursue specific educational, fiscal, and functional objectives (NCSRC, n.d.).

Charter school – a public school operating under a charter (NCSRC, n.d.).

Charter school leader – Principal, vice-principal, co-administrator, administrator, charter management organization administrator, or any other title that indicates a position of school-wide leadership in a charter school.

Entrepreneurial leadership – “Influencing and directing the performance of group members toward the achievement of organizational goals that involve recognizing and exploiting entrepreneurial opportunities” (Renko, El Tarabishy, Carsrud, & Brannback, 2015, p. 55).

Entrepreneurial logic – Employing solutions to problems in education using processes and procedures typically found outside of the traditional education sector (Rigby, 2014).

Entrepreneurial thinking - A thought process based on “promot[ing] education reform through activities, beliefs, and mechanisms borrowed from the private sector” (Rigby, 2014, p. 623).

Professional standards – A written description of “the nature and the quality of work of persons who practice that profession”, “created for and by the profession to guide professional practice and how practitioners are prepared, hired, developed, supervised, and evaluated”, and serve to suggest “how practitioners can achieve the outcomes that the profession demands and the public expects” (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015, p. 2).

Researcher, the – The primary investigator of this dissertation. Throughout this dissertation, references to “the researcher” always denote the same person, Matthew McDaniel.

Summary

Chapter one of this dissertation developed the background, purpose, problems, and research questions associated with this study. This study adds to the body of knowledge pertaining to public charter school leadership. By studying charter school leaders in the context of standards-based leadership, entrepreneurship, and Authentic Leadership Theory, a clear description of who charter school leaders are emerged. This description of practicing public charter school leaders contains varied aspects of school leadership and school-culture development. It includes the stories of public charter school leaders and their history as educators and educational leaders, which may help both current and future generations of public charter school leaders better understand the roles and responsibilities associated with this specific sector of the educational leadership profession.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Leadership is a complex, multi-dimensional process (Northouse, 2015). Educational leadership theory is broad and evermore fragmented (Eacott & Evers, 2015). A variety of educational topics and leadership theories have emerged that both quantify and qualify the functions of school leaders. This chapter presents a theoretical framework outlining the key factors from the literature that provide the foundation for this study. The explanation of the theoretical framework is followed by a review of the relevant literature. The topics that were researched and included in this review of literature are: (1) an overview of studies relating to traits in leadership in public charter schools, (2) authentic leadership, and (3) entrepreneurial thinking. Information and concepts found in the literature were arranged into themes and incorporated into a theoretical framework that is used as a lens through which this study is viewed.

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework is both a guide for thinking about a research question or problem, as well as a lens through which data can be viewed (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). Just like the framing of a home or other building serves as the supporting structure of the edifice, the theoretical framework of a study provides “structure, scaffolding, [and] frame” (Merriam, 1998, p. 45). By utilizing literature that supports the content of the chosen theoretical framework, a study can have an increased possibility of credibility and trustworthiness. This credibility and trustworthiness do not come from the researcher or study itself, but by the proven work of others which can serve as a foundation or springboard for new research questions to be explored. Often, elements of multiple theories are blended together and then applied to the problem being investigated (Egbert & Sanden, 2014). The

theoretical framework must work in tandem with the research methodology and the worldview or perspective from which the researcher is approaching his or her work.

A theoretical framework supports the development of a model for leading in charter schools as they apply to this doctoral dissertation research. A brief explanation of the purpose of this study is presented with the problem which is central to the investigation. An explanation of the theoretical framework as it applies to the research topic is then presented.

The theoretical framework of this study incorporates themes from four sources of literature which served as a lens through which the problem was viewed. The first is Authentic Leadership Theory (Bass, 2000; Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008; Hirst, Walumbwa, Aryee, Butarbutar, & Hui Chen, 2016). The second is leadership using entrepreneurial thinking and logic (Rigby, 2014). The third is the National Policy Board for Educational Administration's (NPBEA) Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, or PSEL (2015). While the PSEL are not theoretical in nature, they do provide the foundation within which the theoretical components of the framework and model are presented. The fourth is traits of public charter school leaders (Carpenter II & Kafer, 2010; Carpenter II & Peak, 2013).

These foundations have been considered to find commonalities among practicing public charter school leaders. This confluence of ideas is represented in a model conceptualized by the researcher (*Figure 1*). This model has been derived as a result of the framework and from concepts in the literature.

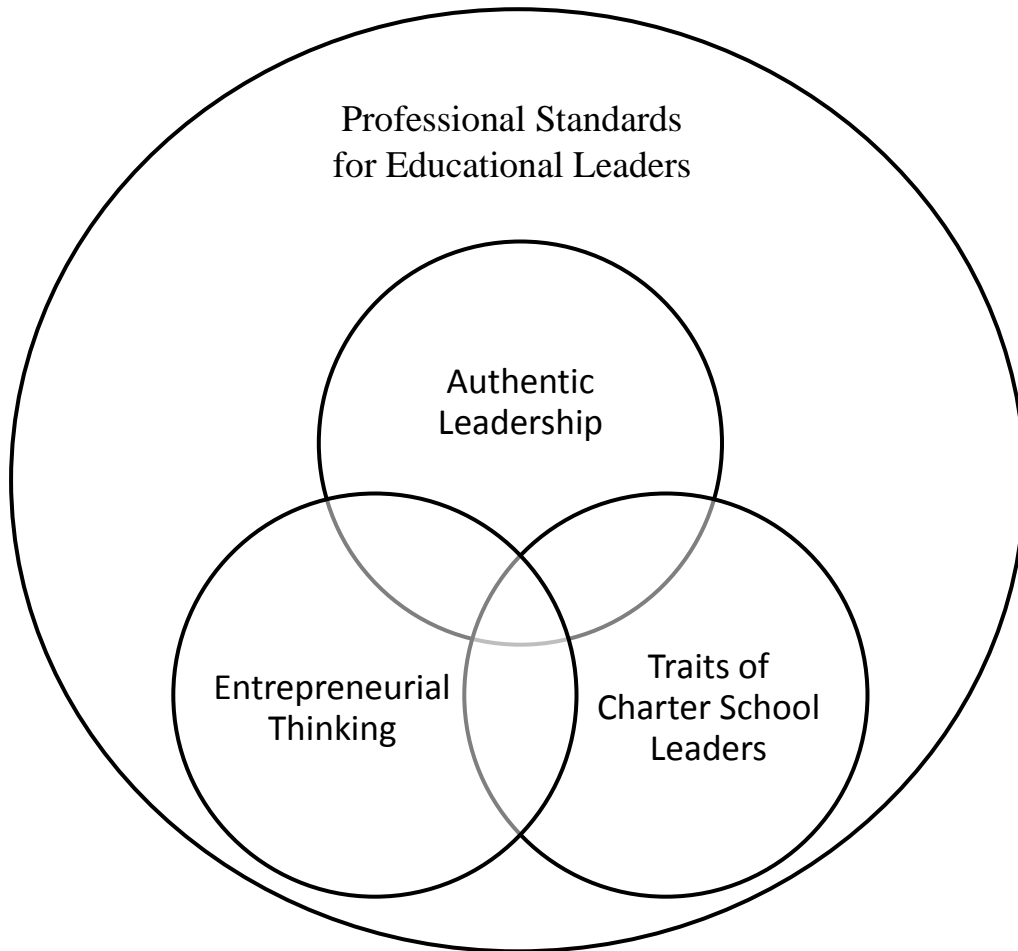


Figure 2.1: A model for leading in public charter schools.

This model functions from a conceptual approach that assumes that the tenets of Authentic Leadership Theory, entrepreneurial thinking, and a charter leader's traits all work within the confines of widely accepted leadership standards. When considering the model above, the point at which these ideas meet was the target outcome of this study. Several foundations represent the rationale for this model. For example, it is recommended that all public leaders utilize the concepts and standards set forth by the NPBEA in the PSEL (2015). Within that pool of school leaders, a smaller pool subscribes to the tenets of Authentic Leadership Theory and employ entrepreneurial thinking while leading. It was proposed by

the researcher that practicing public charter school leaders' traits aligned with the tenets of all three of these concepts to provide an element of separation that could help define the specific roles filled by these leaders. The model seeks to provide a definition of charter-specific leadership which encompasses theory, practice, and ethics as fundamental traits.

Traits of Public Charter School Leaders

With the public charter school movement nearing 30 years of functional and legislated existence on the public education landscape in the United States, the body of literature surrounding these schools of choice is healthy and growing. Literature on charter school leadership continues to develop and evolve as researchers gain a better understanding of the path forward for public charter schools. In the earliest days of the movement, the longevity of public charter schools was in question. Today, charter schools are here to stay, with public charter schools receiving significant political support over the past two decades (Junge, 2012). The current administration's education agenda leads to the assumption that this trend of support will likely continue in the near future (Chunk, 2016).

A broad look at charter leadership. Finn et al. (2016) described the general role of a public charter school leader. Most charter school principals have wide-ranging authority and significant responsibility within their schools (Finn et al., 2016). Instead of functioning in the traditional role of 'building administrator', a public charter school administrative position comes to resemble that of an independent-school head, as these individuals often singlehandedly have the power to "make staffing, budget, and curriculum decisions and must deal with boards, parents, community leaders, and local politics, not just internal school operations" (Finn et al., 2016, p. 96). Though not true of the geographic boundaries of this study, in some states, charter school principals are not required to hold traditional

administrative certificates, opening the door, for better or for worse, to non-traditional educational leaders, including self-proclaimed education reformers, business-minded entrepreneurs, second-profession seekers, and private-sector theorists, among others (Finn et al., 2016).

Historically, little research had been conducted on the profile and responsibilities of charter school leaders due to the relative infancy of their existence. In research published as one of the earlier empirical studies of public charter school leadership, Dressler (2001) sought “to gain knowledge about perceptions of the day-to-day leadership responsibilities and challenges of charter school leaders” (p. 171), as well as what public charter school leaders perceived to be their “role and function” (p. 171). Dressler’s study examined 17 public charter school leaders. While, perhaps predictably, the findings of the study showed the majority of responses from participants with regards to their job responsibilities and challenges were similar to principals in traditional schools, the research identified areas that charter leaders should seek to be different from traditional public school leaders. Charter school leaders need to fill a role that is more than just managerial (Dressler, 2001). Scholar-principals are needed in public charter schools to provide leadership that goes beyond management, as charter schools are designed to be more responsive and accountable to school patrons and authorizers than their traditional school counterparts (Dressler, 2001). Charter schools need to be proving grounds for not only new curricular and instructional ideas but should also be “sources for a richer exploration of leadership” (Dressler, 2001, p. 182; Manno, Finn, Bierlein, & Vanourek, 1998). Charter school leaders must be prepared to deal with all of the same challenges faced by traditional public school leaders, as their responsibilities will encompass these challenges and more (Dressler, 2001). Leaders in public

charter schools must understand the consumer-related nature of the existence of their institutions and be prepared to perpetuate this market-driven and entrepreneurial outlook (Dressler, 2001). Dressler (2001) noted that “the role, functions, and expectations of [charter] principals will need to be markedly different than tradition has dictated... [meaning] that how principals are prepared must be changed” (p. 184). This call for change in educational leadership preparation programs includes better understanding the needs of educational leaders in schools of choice (Dressler, 2001).

In a more recent study of the leadership experiences of charter school administrators, Thomas and Lacey (2016) agree that charter school administrators face many of the same challenges that traditional school leaders face, including effective communication with stakeholders and routine business and academic roles (Thomas & Lacey, 2016). Though this is the case, charter school leaders face a set of challenges that go beyond the expectations of traditional school leaders. Among these extended responsibilities are: having or acquiring business-style acumen; understanding and executing compliance beyond the building level, including satisfying statutory requirements of the school, district or authorizer, and state agencies; running a freestanding school with minimal external support; establishing a community of stakeholders as opposed to only integrating oneself into one; and functioning in a high-stakes environment where school closure is always an option if accountability and compliance measures are not met (Thomas & Lacey, 2016).

With the development of public charter schools as a viable educational offering, a focus on who leads public charter schools and how these schools are led emerged. Colorado is an example of a state that has been cultivating the public charter school system since the early 1990s and is a state where charter school research has been active for over two decades.

Because of the relative longevity of charter schools in Colorado, public charter school leadership profiles have been well established and studied. In their 2010 report for the Colorado Department of Education Schools of Choice Office titled *Charter School Leadership in Colorado*, Carpenter and Kafer aggregated basic demographics of charter leaders in the state. Among these are the ideas that charter leaders in Colorado are mostly white, highly educated individuals who have little previous experience in charter education leadership (Carpenter, II & Kafer, 2010, p. 8). Many have years of leadership experience outside of education before assuming their educational leadership positions. Data for this report were collected by the Colorado State Department of Education.

Charter school leaders have myriad responsibilities; often they have responsibilities that stretch beyond the expectations of a traditional public school administrator (Carpenter II & Kafer, 2010). Carpenter and Kafer (2010) developed the concept of leadership traits and characteristics of charter school principals. They also explore the perspectives principals have about their leadership roles, including self-confidence and job satisfaction. Other job tasks identified as critical to a charter administrator included leadership of school safety, student achievement, faculty development, long range planning, budgeting, and parent engagement, among others. Functionality within these task boundaries are essential traits necessary for successful charter administrators.

For the purposes of this study, success may be understood in a variety of contexts, including the performance level of a school as determined by their authorizing agency, the achievement levels of students on standardized testing, the proficiency rates of administrators, teachers, and staff as delineated by their annual performance reviews, and the overall personal job satisfaction of the individual school leader.

Time management skills were identified by Carpenter and Kafer (2010) as a key trait for charter leaders. Though it is true that this concept is not unique to charter administrators, the way charter leaders' time is split is the defining characteristic of the trait in this context. After reviewing the list of over twenty identified areas of time usage, many of these would not be pertinent to a traditional public school leader. This is the essence of the qualitative questions at hand. Among these key concepts that charter leaders may spend more time on than their traditional counterparts are strategic planning, managing facilities, student assessment, establishing the curriculum, program evaluation across the entire local educational agency, working with a governing board, ensuring stakeholder involvement in the school mission, managing a complex organization-wide budget, and articulating a vision (Carpenter, II & Kafer, 2010, p.25). These tasks are often overseen and led by the district-level personnel in a traditional district.

In short, the highly educated and diversely qualified leaders of the Colorado public charter school system express how thin they are spread when it comes to leadership needs. They must possess a broad array of traits and qualifications to find themselves successful. Because of this, longevity is brief, at just over four years per leadership capacity (Carpenter II & Kafer, 2010). It was found that the "fit" of the leader was one of the key factors to longevity and success (Carpenter, II & Kafer, 2010, p. 32). Charter leaders were shown to be deficient in the areas of literacy and math initiatives, which affected their overall ability to lead successfully. Beyond this, a lack of charter-specific professional development was cause for concern.

Carpenter continued his work on understanding public charter school leaders' roles in his collaborative article with Peak (2013). Carpenter and Peak (2013) noted that charter

school leadership is under-researched. This article examines how charter administrators define their leadership roles and their ability to lead. Three primary functions are determined: building and moving the internal school community in a common direction, managing staff, and school safety. As noted in *Charter School Leadership in Colorado* (Carpenter, D. & Kafer, K., 2010), charter leaders expressed less confidence in leading in the areas of math and literacy than their general ability to lead the school.

The primary question guiding Carpenter & Kafer's (2013) research is: "What perspectives do charter principals hold about (a) the nature and purpose of their roles as leaders and (b) their ability to lead?" (p. 151). Data for this study came from a survey of Colorado charter school leaders. Participants ($n = 78$, 50% response rate) included Colorado charter school leaders during the 2009-2010 school year. Descriptive statistics were examined specifically regarding perceived importance of different leadership responsibilities relevant to the principal's role and perceived actual influence the respondents have over those responsibilities.

Carpenter and Peak (2013) found that few of the most important leadership responsibilities of charter school leaders related directly to instructional leadership, including managing curriculum and leading curriculum and instruction. Additional findings that emerged from Carpenter and Peak's (2013) study included: (1) charter leaders placed greater value on teacher autonomy which was theorized to produce more individual desire to seek professional development opportunities; (2) charter leaders are highly confident in their abilities to provide a safe school environment; and (3) charter leaders are generally unengaged when considering fundraising and financial resources. This is evidence that equity in charter funding is becoming more prominent, providing less of a need for worry from charter leaders.

Peak and Carpenter (2013) also found that charter leaders are organizationally internally focused. Areas of study that are indicated as potential extensions of Carpenter and Peak's research include: (1) how school leaders utilize the resource of time, (2) how the implications of this study may be generalized to other states, and (3) how the implications of this study may be generalized on a world-view scale (Carpenter II & Peak, 2013).

Authentic Leadership

Bass (2000) described the concept of authentic leadership in education by considering the idea that educational leaders "need to be authentic in their efforts to inspire their teachers and students" (p. 37). Bass's initial conceptualization of authentic leadership was later developed to encompass Authentic Leadership Development (ALD) by Walumbwa et al. (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008; Hirst, Walumbwa, Aryee, Butarbutar, & Hui Chen, 2016). For the purposes of this study, authentic leadership is defined as "a pattern of leader behavior that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development" (Walumbwa et al., 2008, p. 94). This definition of authentic leadership will be used throughout this study. It is independent of leadership style, meaning that a leader can still possess the traits of being a charismatic, servant, spiritual, or transformational leader while exhibiting the traits of authentic leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). These traits include psychological capital, moral perspective, self-awareness, self-regulation, organizational context, and performance, among others (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Avolio and Gardner (2005) even went as far as to

say that authentic leadership is the “root construct underlying all positive forms of leadership” (p. 316).

Authentic leadership has come to be accepted as a construct (Alok, 2014). Within the last 10 years, ALD and other authentic leadership theories have made a distinction between pseudo and authentic transformational leaders (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Price, 2003). Authentic leaders set personal examples, create a shared vision, take risks, promote trust and collaboration, and reward others, while pseudo-authentic leaders seek selfish ends through their followers (Alok, 2014). Authentic leadership is the result of an evolution of developing capabilities and patterns of behaviors that lead to a spectrum of varying degrees of authenticity, with no one person being completely authentic or inauthentic (Alok, 2014; Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005; Gardner et al., 2011).

What is an authentic leader? Shamir and Eilam (2005) posit that there is no one definition of authentic leadership, and that across the literature, different authors use the term somewhat differently (e.g. Bennis, 2004; Luthans & Avolio, 2003; George, 2003; Gardner, Coglisier, Davis, & Dickens, 2011). Gardner, et al. (2011) identify 13 different definitions across the literature dating back to the 1960s. Though there are varying definitions, certain elements of each are shared by all; authentic leaders possess self-knowledge and a personal point of view which reflects clarity about their values and convictions, they identify strongly with their leadership role, they express themselves by enacting their leadership role, and they act on the basis of their values and convictions (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). Authentic leaders as those who have the following attributes: “the role of the leader is a central component of their self-concept; they have achieved a high level of self-resolution or self-concept clarity; their

goals are self-concordant; their behavior is self-expressive” (Shamir & Eilam, 2005, p. 399).

In short, the authentic leader is one who is willing to accept who he or she is and allow a leadership style to emerge which is true to one’s self. Authentic leaders are believed to be more effective than inauthentic leaders, leading to a general desirability of authentic leadership development (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). This belief is based on two assumptions: the leader role requires a high level of energy, resolve, and persistence; and authentic leaders have a more beneficial effect on their followers, developing an authentic followership (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). The role of an individual’s life story is key to ALD, as lived experiences contribute significantly to the energy, resolve, and persistence of a leader (Shamir & Eilam, 2005).

How does one become an authentic leader? In his 2015 book titled *Discover Your True North: Becoming an Authentic Leader*, Bill George explores five essential elements of becoming an authentic leader: (a) self-awareness, self-compassion, and self-acceptance; (b) defining values, principles, and ethical boundaries; (c) finding a leadership ‘sweet spot’ where motivations and strengths align; (d) building a support team, including mentors and true friendships; and (e) leading an integrated life, including balancing professional life with family life, personal life, and one’s community and friends (George, 2015). *Table 4* shows a list of essential questions that a person must ask him or herself on the path towards authentic leadership. This table was created by the researcher as a visual summary of George’s (2015) work.

Table 2.1

Becoming an Authentic Leader – Questions to Ask

| Leadership Element | Key Challenge |
|--------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Self-awareness | How can I increase my self-awareness through introspection and feedback? |
| Values | What are my most deeply held values? What principles guide my leadership? |
| Sweet Spot | How can I find my sweet spot that integrates my motivations and greatest capabilities? |
| Support Team | Whom can I count on to guide and support me along the way? |
| Integrated Life | How can I integrate all aspects of my life and find fulfillment? |

George (2015, p. 78)

Answers to these questions can provide a leader with a plan to develop oneself as an authentic leader. With the goal of being “true to themselves and to what they believe in”, acknowledging shortcomings, admitting errors, and finding vulnerabilities help leaders become more authentic (George, 2015, p. 8). Twenty-first century authentic leaders must be purpose-driven, maintain a global vision, consider the institution’s best interests, be long-term thinkers, promote distributed leadership, maintain a high emotional quotient (EQ), and measure personal growth through intrinsic contribution as opposed to external validation (George, 2015).

Authentic leadership and education. One example of the importance of authentic leadership as it relates to educational leadership is found in the work of Wang and Bird (2011). In a study examining principal authenticity as it relates to teacher trust and engagement, 917 teachers from 60 different schools were surveyed to better understand their

perceptions of authenticity in leadership (Wang & Bird, 2011). In their study, Wang and Bird (2011) connected the trust teachers have in their leaders with the success of the institution. Engagement was defined as each employee's commitment to his or her leader and the positive emotions experienced as a result (Wang & Bird, 2011). Principals who are concerned with transparency, the professional development of their subordinates, the career advancement and future success of their teachers, and a sense of teamwork among the constituents of an institution were found to be the most authentic leaders (Wang & Bird, 2011). Beyond this, moral integrity, an ability to effectively and efficiently frame daily issues in light of 'what's best for kids', and the ability to produce a client-based atmosphere were key indicators of authentic leadership (Wang & Bird, 2011).

Duignan (2014) presented an in-depth review of the development of authentic leadership in education by tracing its developmental roots back to the concept of personal authenticity from ancient Greece. Since the early to mid-1960s, conversations and considerations surrounding authenticity in educational leadership have been underway (Duignan, 2014). Authentic leadership has come to mean more than just an individual's true self; it must be "mediated through relationships in the complex world in which we all live" (Duignan, 2014, p. 157). This is based on the concept that self-identity is formed, in large part, as a result of our schema and our engagement with other people (Duignan, 2014). As an educational researcher, Duignan (2014) noted the need for educational leaders to embrace core values and exhibit ethical, moral, and authentic leadership behaviors. Duignan (2014) promoted the work of Starratt (2004) as both seminal and essential to the development of the establishment of authentic educational leadership as a successor to ethical, moral, and transformational leadership theories. This development includes the personal responsibility of

educational leaders to change those things over which they have control to help alleviate disadvantage and promote human fulfillment (Starratt, 2004; Duignan, 2014). Authentic educational leaders “create and nurture professional and collective processes for leading change related to improvement” (Duignan, 2014, p. 166), giving them the responsibility of influencing others within their learning environments. Organizational cultures that value professional collaboration and collective responsibility with the goal of achieving high-quality outcomes can be created with the help of authentic educational leaders (Duignan, 2014).

Enhancing authenticity and shifting from transformational leadership.

Rodriguez, et al. (2017) connected authentic leadership style with transformational leadership (Green, 2013), as well as authentic leadership style and job satisfaction (Rodriguez, Green, Sun, & Baggerly-Hinojosa, 2017). Authentic leadership is a construct that is formed by transparency, morals and ethics, balanced processing, and self-awareness (Rodriguez et al., 2017). While considering the previous discussion of measuring authenticity on a spectrum, leaders who proposit to be authentic have a path towards increasing authenticity. Rodriguez, et al. (2017) referenced five developmental phases established as a cycle through which leaders must regularly pass to achieve greater levels of authenticity (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005). Each leader must:

1. Identify one’s ideal (authentic) self;
2. Perform honest self-evaluations;
3. Formulate plans for change;
4. Execute, experiment, and modify plans;
5. Enlist the aid of support systems;
6. Return to the first step in the cycle.

Authentic leadership has emerged as a viable candidate to succeed the popular and well-established theory of transformational leadership (Green, 2013; Rodriguez et al., 2017). The two leadership styles have been found to be more similar than dissimilar, with both sharing “strong foci on leadership, followership, and the leader-follower relationship; furthermore, both are heavily research based and lean democratic, as opposed to autocratic” (Rodriguez et al., 2017, p. 32). Authentic leaders continue to place less emphasis on organizational activity while focusing on task accomplishment (Rodriguez et al., 2017).

Authentic leadership and mindfulness. An empirical study conducted by Baron (2016) sought to understand if, and how, authentic leadership could be developed and what role mindfulness had on this process. It was hypothesized that “participation in a leadership program based on action learning principles is positively associated with [authentic leadership] development,” (Baron, 2016, p. 299). Action learning was described as the process of independent personal development as a result of reflecting on one’s work and beliefs (Baron, 2016). Baron (2016) also hypothesized that “participation in a leadership development program based on action learning principles is positively associated with greater mindfulness (p. 300). Data were collected over three years from individuals enrolled in leadership training programs. Participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and questionnaires were used as instruments of data collection. The results of this study showed that mindfulness was positively associated with authentic leadership (Baron, 2016). Baron noted that this research was the first of its kind to make this association by sharing, “this paper is the first to demonstrate that participation in a program of leadership development was associated with improved mindfulness” (Baron, 2016, p. 306).

Among seven practices for transforming one's leadership, organization, and life, Bunting (2016) shared that mindfulness was imperative. He defined mindfulness as "awareness and attention to immediate experiences, or 'living in the moment'," (Bunting, 2016, p. 30). Bunting (2016) used Baron's (2016) empirical study to provide practical application of the concept of mindfulness in leadership. Bunting (2016) reiterated the importance of the connection between authentic leadership and the practice of mindfulness. Mindfulness was explained to be a trait of authenticity that developed and got stronger over time (Bunting, 2016). Bunting (2016) also concluded that leaders can become more authentic and more mindful as a result of positive experiences over time.

Kruse and Johnson (2017) examined cognitive dilemmas faced by educational leaders and considered the place of mindful leadership among these dilemmas. Mindfulness was described as a disposition, a skill, and a process, each of which contributed to individual and organizational development (Kruse & Johnson, 2017). Intensified leadership and adaptive response to organizational dilemmas created a leadership structure that was authentically shared, purposeful, and mindful (Kruse & Johnson, 2017). While Kruse and Johnson (2017) discussed the importance of mindfulness in one specific educational setting, the professional learning community, they shared that "the development of mindful practice creates a venue for leaders to explore multiple ways of understanding and 'seeing' the organization around them" (p. 600).

Summary of authentic leadership development. A line of inquiry for this research seeks to better understand the traits of public charter school leaders as interpreted through the lens of Authentic Leadership Theory. While it is noble to propose that all school leaders naturally subscribe to a leadership disposition like the one outlined by the literature

surrounding ALD, it is more likely that this disposition is one which is desired by school leaders more than one that is acted upon. In public charter school leadership, external factors such as the charter document, a contract between the school and its authorizing agency outlining what the school will and will not do, the disposition of the school's governing board, the expectations of patrons, the expectations of the school's authorizer, and the possible oversight of a charter management organization all may influence the ability of a public charter school leader to perform as an authentic leader regardless of his or her desire and innate nature to be such.

Entrepreneurship and School Leadership

School principals often enjoy discretion over their decision-making processes and outcomes as long as they advance and improve student achievement (Yemini, Addi-Raccah, & Katarivas, 2015). They have the ability to mobilize resources, promote new initiatives, and lead change in their schools which are all fundamental principles of entrepreneurship (Yemini et al., 2015). Because education is generally a non-profit field, researchers have struggled to consistently apply entrepreneurial concepts to the organizational structures found therein (Borasi & Finnigan, 2010). In their 2015 study of school principals, Yemini, et al. compared the behaviors and motivations of 10 school principals identified as entrepreneurs by their peers and school supervisors with those of business entrepreneurs as presented in the literature. Four components were found to be true of these principals. First, the entrepreneurship of these principals was found to be "driven by particular values and visions that are important to them, which are then adopted by the school staff" (Yemini et al., 2015, p. 535). This implies a top-down approach to culture and vision. Second, entrepreneurial principals never work alone, but instead "engage school staff to win over their support for the

suggested venture” (Yemini et al., 2015, p. 535). Organizations are developed by mobilizing the people within them, so school leaders cannot find success singlehandedly. Third, they are not hindered by “funding constraints in implementing visions they have dedicated themselves to” (Yemini et al., 2015, p. 535). Even if funding has not been secured for a project they want to undertake, they will move forward anyway with the mentality that they will find a way to fund it. Finally, entrepreneurial principals are ready and willing to take risks (Yemini et al., 2015).

Entrepreneurial logic of instructional leadership. Rigby (2014) conducted a content analysis of the literature to examine conceptions of instructional leadership in the institutional environment. She identified “entrepreneurial logic” (Rigby, 2014, p. 623) as one of three conceptions of instructional leadership in the institutional environment, along with “prevailing logic” and “social justice logic”. While Rigby (2014) focused outcomes of entrepreneurial logic on instructional leadership specifically, the underlying principle of entrepreneurship in leadership can be applied to a broader leadership theory which the research will identify as an essential element of a public charter school leader’s profile. Rigby’s entrepreneurial logic of educational leadership assumed that “rather than relying on the public sector to ameliorate the problems in public education, ... the marketplace could provide more efficient solutions” (Rigby, 2014, p. 623). The most important concept of entrepreneurial logic is that it employs solutions to problems in education using processes and procedures typically found outside of the traditional education sector (Rigby, 2014). Public education “can benefit from the logic, technology, and strategy of business” (Lahann & Mitescu Reagan, 2011, p. 14).

Rigby's (2014) entrepreneurial logic assumes an approach to leadership that "promote[s] education reform through activities, beliefs, and mechanisms borrowed from the private sector" (p. 623). For the purpose of this study, these concepts combine to form what will be considered entrepreneurial thinking. This thinking is based on ideas Rigby (2014) explained were embraced by a movement called the 'new sector', or a group of individuals who sought to challenge the status quo in education in the early 1990s. Rigby's (2014) explanation of the new sector, including its ideas and philosophies, support the inclusion of entrepreneurial thinking as an integral part of the model for leading in public charter schools as conceptualized by the researcher (Figure 1).

While not part of standards-based leadership, Rigby (2014) shared that practical evidence of entrepreneurial thinking is widespread in documents and literature produced by many educational organizations with a goal of increasing numerical associations of student outcomes, namely test scores. Beyond this, a business-based look at developing school leaders was part of Rigby's logic (2014). Traditional school leadership development programs may not always be the answer to finding the best school leaders (Rigby, 2014; Hess, 2003).

The literature contains varied definitions of what entrepreneurial leadership style means. Renko et al. shared that entrepreneurial leadership "entails influencing and directing the performance of group members toward the achievement of organizational goals that involve recognizing and exploiting entrepreneurial opportunities" (Renko, El Tarabishy, Carsrud, & Brannback, 2015, p. 55). This is the definition of entrepreneurial leadership that will be used for the purpose of this study. Entrepreneurial leaders have the following attributes: vision, opportunity-focus, influence, planning, motivating others, achievement

orientation, creativity, flexibility, patience, persistence, risk-taking, high tolerance for ambiguity, tenacity, self-confidence, power-orientation, proactiveness, and internal locus of control (Renko et al., 2015). Another connective concept of entrepreneurial leaders is that they find success through their own actions as well as by influencing others to follow them with an emphasis on experimentation (Renko et al., 2015).

Borasi and Finnigan (2010) found that educational leaders can use entrepreneurial thinking, attitudes, and behaviors to be effective change-agents. *Table 5* presents a summary, created by the researcher, of the themes that emerged from Broasi and Finnigan's (2010) empirical research on the attitudes and behaviors of successful entrepreneurial leaders as change-agents in education. These themes contribute to the needs of a USA public education landscape that is currently in a crisis for more individuals who can lead innovative practices that will result in better services and outcomes for students and communities (Borasi & Finnigan, 2010). Using this entrepreneurial approach to leadership, a stronger focus on mission and vision can help direct organizations on a path towards success as well as prepare educators to become more successful agents of change (Borasi & Finnigan, 2010).

Table 2.2

Entrepreneurial Attitudes and Behaviors of Successful Change-Agents in Education

| Theme | Attitudes and Behaviors |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Driven by a vision | A sense of urgency to fulfill a vision or philosophy that is inherent to their 'way of being' by persuasively communicating its importance |
| Relentlessly engaging in innovations | Initiating and carrying out value-adding innovations to address shortcomings and take advantage of opportunities to improve the overall quality of services |
| Being alert to and ready to seize opportunities | Awareness of their environment and field to identify unmet needs and providing solutions for those needs |
| Not constrained by resources | Available resources never determine a decision to move forward with a vision-oriented innovation |
| Master at networking | Excellent at developing and tapping into connections, relationships, and networks to advance the vision-oriented goal |
| Making quick and timely decisions | With brief windows of opportunity, quick decision-making can help avoid losing them |
| Creative problem-solving | Highly skilled at finding ways to work around problems and identifying alternative strategies or approaches |
| Confident risk-taking | Never embarking on an initiative that could not be successfully implemented, but make decisions that are highly competent and thought out |
| Finding a champion for each innovation | While not being able to oversee all parts of a project, the leader identifies the right person (highly trusted) to lead the initiative |
| Capitalizing on crisis and dysfunction | Stabilizing organizations or operating within crisis-laden organizations to be able to implement their initiatives with minimal concern (due to the hyper-focus on the crises) |

Borasi & Finnigan (2010)

A 2014 study by Pihie and Asimiran identified the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership practices of school principals on school innovativeness through the perspectives of teachers ($n = 294$). Teachers in this study perceived entrepreneurial leadership as highly important for school principals (Pihie & Asimiran, 2014). School principals as entrepreneurial leaders were found to have a specific set of personal and functional competencies. Personal competencies include personal characteristics, skills, and knowledge inherent to the individual leader, while functional competencies are the capabilities of leaders that “empower them to act differently from other types of leaders” (Pihie & Asimiran, 2014, p. 3). Proactiveness, innovativeness, and risk-taking are personal competencies identified as the most important to leading a forward-thinking educational organization (Pihie & Asimiran, 2014). Task-performance by successfully anticipating future possibilities and taking risks to enact the vision of the organization, along with inspiring groups of committed supporters to enact the same vision are cited as essential functional competencies of entrepreneurial leaders in education (Pihie & Asimiran, 2014).

Summary

Chapter two of this dissertation presented a theoretical framework for the study as well as a review of the literature as it pertains to the research questions. The NPBEA’s PSEL (2015) are assumed to serve, whether consciously or not, as a foundation for professional practice for public school leadership and administration. The tenets of the PSEL are widely supported by numerous organizations and educational researchers as central to the “leadership that our schools need and our students deserve” (NPBEA, 2015, p. 1). Authentic Leadership Development (Walumbwa et al., 2008; Hirst et al., 2016) served as a boundary to further encapsulate and qualify public school leaders and administrators. In this research, Rigby’s

(2014) entrepreneurial logic was used as another boundary beyond the Authentic Leadership Development theory already presented. Rigby's assessment of the dimensions of leadership, including instructional leadership, focus of attention, theory of change, instructional practices, leadership practices, and the role of the principal (Rigby, 2014) were evaluated within the contexts of this study. Not all public charter school leaders may be interested in an actively entrepreneurial approach to leadership, but the educational model of public charter schools as an alternative to traditional public education offerings is rooted in the idea of market demand and presents an inherent nature of entrepreneurialism. The public charter school leaders identified as participants of this study were examined through these lenses.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Qualitative research is the process of studying the behavior of individuals by “learn[ing] about, describ[ing], and explain[ing] them from the perceptions of those involved” (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013, p. 6). It is “a situated activity that locates the observer in the world” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 4). A qualitative methodology of research was chosen for this study to gain a better understanding of how charter school leaders make sense of their own perspectives as individuals. The topic of this study is the identification and analysis of leadership traits and characteristics of public charter school leaders. The purpose of this study was to understand the perspectives of practicing public charter school leaders as they considered their leadership philosophies and practices. The study aimed to identify the traits of public charter school leaders, especially as they related to the National Policy Board for Educational Leadership’s Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL, 2015), Authentic Leadership Theory and Development, and entrepreneurial thinking. The study focused on identifying the leadership characteristics, skills, habits, and traits of practicing public charter school leaders in one state within the Pacific Northwest region of the USA. The Center for Study of the Pacific Northwest at the University of Washington defines the Pacific Northwest as “the American states of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho” (n.d., para. 1). While a quantitative approach could be used to examine this topic, the data collected through qualitative interviews, observations of each leader, and document reviews was hypothesized to be more likely to provide a broader picture of the topic with more detailed results and robust contexts than a quantitative study might have yielded.

This study used a qualitative multiple case study approach to collect data related to the leadership profiles of practicing charter school leaders in one state within the Pacific

Northwest region of the USA. Creswell (2013) defined the case study approach as “a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) . . . over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information” (p. 97).

Research Design

Research design is the careful forethought and planning of conducting a study (Schwandt, 2015). This study was designed to take a calculated approach to population identification, sampling and data collection. According to Marshall and Rossman (2011), a study’s design should be “the result of a series of decisions he [or she] has made based on knowledge gained from the methodological literature and previous work” (p. 7). A qualitative methodology was selected to give a voice to the participants and because the topic was one that needed to be *explored* (Creswell, 2013). Within the qualitative approach to the study, descriptive multiple case study research (Yin, 2009) was used to explore the research questions. Descriptive case study research focuses on providing a detailed account of each case (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). The need for descriptive case study research in this circumstance arose from the desire to understand complex social phenomena (Yin, 2009). Case study research was also chosen because the focus is intensive and narrow in scope, with clear boundaries and limiters on the definition of the case (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013).

Study Design. Yin (2009, p. 27) proposed five key components of a case study research design:

1. a study’s questions;
2. its propositions, if any;

3. its unit(s) of analysis;
4. the logic linking the data to the propositions; and
5. the criteria for interpreting the findings.

Each of these components will be discussed briefly as the study relates to them.

Research Questions. Three research questions identified for this study were stated in Chapter 1 of this dissertation. As suggested by Merriam (1998), these questions have been derived from the theoretical framework of the study. The three research questions are:

1. What are public charter school leaders' perspectives of their identity as authentic leaders?
2. What are public charter school leaders' perspectives of themselves as entrepreneurs in education?
3. Which of the National Policy Board for Educational Administration's Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (2015) are most relevant to practicing public charter school leaders?

These questions served as the roadmap for identifying the relevant traits of charter school leaders and their perspectives of authentic leadership, entrepreneurial thinking, and professional leadership standards.

Researching with a foundation of propositions was essential to moving the study in the right direction (Yin, 2009). The propositions of this study are evident in the research questions but can be restated as expository statements which become guiding topics for the research. They include the following: (a) authentic leadership plays a key role in the day-to-day work and decision making process of a public charter school leader; (b) public charter school leaders use entrepreneurial thinking in their leadership practice which guides their day-

to-day work and decision making processes; and (c) the National Policy Board for Educational Administration's Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (2015) are fundamental standards that guide the day-to-day work of public charter school leaders. These propositions each served as individual topics of exploration (Yin, 2009) that were woven together with the goal of telling the stories of these leaders' work.

The unit of analysis for this study, or the defined case, was individual practicing public charter school leaders. Each leader was considered an independent case. Further discussion on the purposeful selection of participants, number of cases, and case criteria will be found later in this chapter.

In preparing for the data analysis step of the research process, identifying analytical techniques for linking data to the propositions and research questions was essential (Yin, 2009). The researcher used pattern matching logic, comparing the data from this study to empirically based patterns already established by theorists as outlined in chapter two of this dissertation (Yin, 2009). As a multiple case study, patterns were matched across all seven cases and collectively were compared against the foundational concepts presented by the theoretical experts cited.

Once data were analyzed, interpreting data in an ethical and appropriate manner was essential to the presentation of findings. Qualitative data analysis computer software helped the process of analyzing data, but interpretation took place as a reference back to the original research questions and propositions of the study. Yin (2009) suggested identifying rival explanations for findings to help differentiate the study findings from the results that others have found. This step was done during the design stages of the study.

Selection of Participants

This study was designed to take a calculated approach to population identification, sampling and data collection. Purposive sampling and population identification was used to identify participants. Purposive sampling is the selection of a sample with a *purpose* in mind (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). As one purpose of this study was to identify the leadership characteristics and traits of practicing public charter school leaders in a specific region, those were the individuals who met the selection criteria. Prospective participants were identified by obtaining a list of the names of all the public charter schools in the region. Once this list was obtained, leader names and contact information were found on each school's website or as part of the original list. Population identification was approached in that order. Once the purposive sample was identified, the study sample was narrowed using convenience sampling based on geographic considerations until an appropriate sample number was achieved.

Multiple cases, or bounded systems, researched in this study included practicing public charter school leaders. For the purpose of this study, a public charter school leader was defined as principal, vice-principal, co-administrator, administrator, charter management organization administrator, or any other title that indicated a position of school-wide leadership. Each participant was purposefully selected for the study and served as an independent case along with the institution at which he or she practiced. The intent of identifying these specific cases was to capture data that were real, contemporary, and relevant. Because the intent of this study was to understand a specific issue as perceived by multiple cases, it is considered a *collective case* (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995). Seven participants were identified and selected to provide authenticity and depth of research data which allowed

for more rich interpretation. School leaders agreed to participate in the study and permission was granted by their corresponding supervisor or governing board.

Description of Participants

The seven participants in this study, each of whom served as a separate case, and the types of public charter schools they led were diverse. Each participant was a practicing public charter school leader. Among the demographics represented were male and female leaders, different ethnic backgrounds, a wide span of years of experience in education and leadership, ages ranging from early-30s to mid-60s, and participants had varied education backgrounds and certification areas. All participants self-identified as professional educators. Each of the leaders was a state-certified school administrator. The minimum level of education completed by any participant was a master's degree, with three participants holding degrees beyond a master's (education specialist or doctoral degree) and one participant holding a master's degree while currently pursuing a doctoral degree. Participant professional titles varied, including principal, administrator executive director, charter management organization administrator, superintendent, and education director. Three of the participants considered themselves founding administrators, meaning each was either the first administrator of the school or was responsible for the conceptualization or initial development of the school. Of the other four participants, three had been employees of the school in some capacity before becoming an administrator at the school. One participant was hired as the administrator of the school without having any previous association or professional affiliation with the organization before being hired.

Table 3.1

Demographic and Professional Characteristics of Participants

| Characteristic | Frequency |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Gender | |
| | Male 1 |
| | Female 6 |
| Highest Degree Earned | |
| | Doctorate 1 |
| | Specialist 2 |
| | Master's 4 |
| Age | |
| | 30-39 1 |
| | 40-49 2 |
| | 50-59 3 |
| | 60-69 1 |
| Years of Administrative Experience | |
| | 1-10 4 |
| | 11-20 2 |
| | 21+ 1 |
| Self-Described Race/Ethnicity | |
| | Caucasian 5 |
| | Latino/a 2 |

The schools that participants led included brick-and-mortar schools with a physical location that students attended daily, virtual or online schools that students attended via distance education technology, and schools that offered hybrid instruction that students attended in some combination of a physical building and the utilization of distance education technology. The study included public charter schools authorized by existing local districts as well as public charter schools authorized by the state's public charter school commission, each of which function as independent local education agencies (LEAs). These schools served students from grades kindergarten through twelfth grade, but not every school served

every grade. Three of the seven charter schools in the study served elementary-only populations, educating students in grades kindergarten through several different elementary grades not exceeding eighth grade. The remaining four charter schools served students populations that included all students in grades kindergarten through twelfth grade. Each of the schools represented by participants in this study had its own governing board regardless of the agency or district authorizing it. Boards were made up of school and community patrons with vested interests in the development of each public charter school.

Collection of Data

Data collection which “draws on multiple sources of information, such as observations, interviews, documents, and audiovisual materials” (Creswell, 2013, p. 100) was carried out in this research. This study relied heavily on personal interviews, review of documents, and observation of active charter leaders as the researcher interacted with them during the interview process. Data collection took place in a variety of steps. After IRB approval was obtained and the population was identified, an initial email (Appendix A) was sent out to purposively sampled, qualified participants. Once the sample was established from consenting participants, permission was sought from the appropriate administrator, and/or the superintendent, and/or the board of trustees of participating charter school leaders. Once appropriate district or charter level approval was obtained, participants were asked to sign a document of informed consent (Appendix B) before any further steps in the data collection process occurred. Prior to the in-person interview, a request was made of the participant to fill out a demographics questionnaire (Appendix C) and to provide a copy of his or her resume. A time was set up to meet in person with the goal of conducting an interview, collecting relevant documents such as participant resumes, policy manuals, continuous

improvement plans, administrator summative evaluation forms, and staff and student handbooks, and to conduct basic observations of the leader's work environment. All interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed verbatim, providing information which was paramount to the data pool.

Yin (2009) shared that interviews are “essential sources of case study information” (p. 106). The research used the researcher as an instrument to employ the use of a “focused interview” (Yin, 2009) with the purpose of interviewing participants using a specific set of questions derived from the literature review and theoretical framework. An interview guide (Appendix D) which includes a list of pertinent questions was used to allow participants to share their perspectives as practicing public charter school leaders on topics pertinent to the research questions of this study. Beyond this, interview questions probed the training process, training curriculum, and the perceptions of the participant with regards to their level of preparedness for their current responsibilities as public charter school leaders. Interview questions also included inquiries related to authentic leadership qualities, entrepreneurial thinking, and the NPBEA's Professional Standards for Educational Leaders. Interview questions used an open-ended question format with the goal of allowing the interview to take on a conversational feel (Yin, 2009). Utilizing the researchers as an instrument was a fundamental component of the research instrument.

A data collection checklist (Appendix E) was created to ensure that similar content was collected from each case in this multiple case study. The checklist included the key information and documents that were sought from each case (including a resume from the leader, basic demographic information specific to each leader, school policies on administrative function, a job description of the administrator, and the school's charter).

Much of this information was collected digitally before and after interviews. Beyond this data collection checklist, a one-on-one qualitative interview was conducted with the goal of learning about the history of the individual leader (as opposed to the history of his or her school) as well as his or her perspective on the content specifically determined as boundaries of this study (standards, Authentic Leadership Development, and entrepreneurial thinking). While an initial interview was scheduled and completed with each participant, the researcher understood that this may not yield sufficient data from every case to satisfy the needs of the study. In these cases, the researcher was willing to conduct additional interviews until it had been determined that the amount and quality of data was sufficient to provide a basis of support for the study. Each interview was audio recorded and later transcribed verbatim. During the interview, observations were recorded through written notes of the school environment and the leader's work setting, as well as participants' responses to interview questions. The researcher took notes and journaled about the experience as an observer. The researcher considered the fact that the data collected in the first interview may not be enough to satisfy the purposes of the study. For this reason, the researcher was open and willing to gather more data until a point of data saturation was reached. While this may have included a second round of in-person interviews, it was satisfied through requests for information via phone call or email to clarify or seek additional data.

Data were collected and triangulated in the form of interviews, document analyses, and observations of the demeanor of study participants. Participants were asked to provide such documents as school policies on administrative responsibilities, staff and student handbooks, school continuous improvement plans, administrator job descriptions, the school's charter document, administrative summative evaluation forms, and any other documents he or

she felt would contribute to an understanding of the work he or she performed. Observations of the demeanor of study participants was limited to the interactions with the researcher during the interview.

Study Pilot

Piloting the interview and data collection process allows the researcher to “come to grips with some of the practical aspects of establishing access, making contact, and conducting the interview” (Seidman, 2013, p. 42). In anticipation of the research, a pilot of the interview protocol, including a trial of the Interview Guide (Appendix D), was conducted by the researcher. Piloting the study was meaningful and allowed the researcher to reflect on the initial processes and procedures that were expected to take place, and then to revise the research approach based on the experience (Seidman, 2013). A full-length interview was conducted by the researcher with three different practicing public charter school leaders. The participants in the pilot all met the criteria established as requisite for participation in the study. None of the participants in the pilot participated in the actual study.

The researcher also piloted the process of collecting some of the essential documents that would be reviewed if the pilot participants were actual study participants. This process was fruitful for the researcher. As a result of the pilot, several of the questions that were initially considered for the Interview Guide were voided, as they were found to be either repetitive or unnecessary to gathering rich and meaningful data which could provide support for the research questions. Also, several questions were rearranged, and others added to the Interview Guide as the researcher found gaps in the initial protocol leaving key guiding questions unanswered. The Data Collection Checklist (Appendix E) was also amended because of the pilot. Some items that were initially considered for inclusion were rejected, as

they were no longer relevant to the work of the pilot participants. Other documents that were not initially present on the checklist were added as pilot participants shared their importance to their work. Piloting the data collection process, including interviewing participants, observing their demeanor, and collecting documents relevant to the study proved to be beneficial in adjusting numerous procedures in anticipation of collecting data for the actual study.

The Researcher as the Instrument

Qualitative inquiry has the unique possibility of allowing the researcher him or herself to be a key cog in the data collection and interpretation process. While quantitative analysis can be quite rigid and number-centric, qualitative data requires a researcher who is willing to play a role in the research that becomes something more than a number cruncher. Instead, the researcher must be responsive to the needs of the participants. Merriam (1998) suggested that the human researcher as the instrument has an advantage over other data collection methods because “the researcher is responsive to the context; he or she can adapt techniques to the circumstances; the total context can be considered; [and] what is known about the situation can be expanded through sensitivity to nonverbal aspects; the researcher can process data immediately” (p. 7). The researcher must be able and willing to address the changes that may present themselves during an interview. He or she must be able to understand his or her role as a potential force of change within a study and determine how involved to be during data collection. Utilizing the researchers as an instrument will be a fundamental component of the research instrument.

Since the researcher was the instrument used in collecting data for this study, a description of the researcher’s background as it relates to education, educational leadership,

and charter schools is presented here to help establish the credibility of the researcher's perspectives and interpretations. Establishing credibility is essential to ensure the researcher's work is credible. By using a researcher with credible background, he "brings a construction of reality to the research situation, which interacts with other people's constructions or interpretations of the phenomenon being studied" (Merriam, 1998, p. 22-23).

Researcher Positionality Statement

At the time of this study, the researcher had over a decade of experience working in charter school settings in a variety of capacities, including teacher of multiple content areas across the secondary curriculum, department chair, activities director, Title IX coordinator, co-administrator, and superintendent designee. When this research was conducted, the researcher had served in a school-wide administrative role at a charter school for six years. In the role of co-administrator, the researcher had taken on the varied role of leadership required by a charter school leader collectively with one other individual. In this responsibility, the researcher also carried a teaching load.

Among the responsibilities and experiences of the researcher that had contributed to his knowledge and credibility to conduct this study were: (a) the establishment of a working relationship with his state's charter school authorizing agency, a public charter school commission; (b) relationships with numerous public charter school operators and their program coordinators; (c) a sound knowledge of public charter school laws and operating procedures as developed by the state in which the researcher lives; (d) an understanding of fiscal operation of public charter schools; (e) an understanding of the managing personnel and human resources operations of public charter schools; (f) an understanding of serving as the leader of curriculum of a public charter school; (g) an understanding of managing students of

public charter schools; (h) leading non-curricular programs associated with public charter schools; (i) creating and delivering professional development opportunities for public charter school staff and faculty; (j) the establishment of a working relationship with the school choice coordinator at the state department of education; (k) an understanding of a variety of public charter school foci, including instructional and operational methods; and (l) participating in the accreditation process of a public charter school as both a teacher and administrator. These responsibilities and experiences, combined with the day-to-day experiences the researcher had lived as a public charter school teacher and administrator combined to give him a high level of familiarity with the operations of public charter schools as well as their place in the landscape of public education in his state and region.

While the researcher had a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of best practices for public charter school operation, including the importance of the establishment of a climate and culture that are unique to the school, the researcher also understood that unique approaches to education are common, and a high tolerance for ambiguity (Merriam, 1998) should be expected when serving as the primary instrument for data collection. The researcher acknowledged biases towards high quality school leaders and those leaders who lead high-performing public charter schools. Despite this bias, the researcher did not intend to report the findings from this research in any way that bent or distorted the data to yield results other than those which, through the process of data interpretation, were found to be accurate.

Analysis of Data

Qualitative data analysis is rooted in “the activity of making sense of, interpreting, and theorizing data” (Schwandt, 2015, p. 57). In other words, qualitative data analysis consists of

the idea of sorting and categorizing data into meaningful groups or themes that help the researcher arrive at conclusions supported by the collected data. Whether these conclusions support the personal leanings of the researcher or the original research hypothesis was irrelevant to the outcomes.

Computer software was used to aid in the organization, coding, and other analytical processes of the research. While the writers of this software program, NVivo, acknowledged that it was not to serve as a replacement for the human work of coding and analyzing thematic material, it did serve to “increase the effectiveness and efficiency of [learning from the data]” (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013, p. 2). In this software, qualitative interview transcripts, observation notes, and other pertinent documents gathered during data collection were uploaded to create a single database. The data was then unitized and coded to identify important data points, their descriptors, and key categories for further data analysis. Codes were stored in nodes which were then be sorted into cases, classifications, and comparisons.

In preparing for the process of coding and categorizing data and considering the researcher as the primary instrument, using *a priori*, or theoretically derived codes (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013) was considered but rejected by the researcher. Though the theoretical framework presents a coherent structure to possible coding due to the key elements that serve as its foundation (Authentic Leadership Development, and entrepreneurial thinking), the researcher used a reactional *a posteriori* coding system. The purpose of this approach was to allow the data to drive the coding process instead of starting with a preconceived notion as to what codes may emerge. *A priori* coding can confine thinking and present undesired psychological boundaries to the analysis process (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). The researcher

maintained this awareness at the onset of the study in order to best allow the data to speak for itself and minimize researcher bias.

Creswell (2013) proposed four forms of data analysis for case study research that were used by the researcher in this study. After reading through all collected data, categorical aggregation, or the identification of the *a posteriori* themes previously mentioned through the grouping of multiple-instance markers in the data, occurred. The goal of categorical aggregation was to identify groups of data with issue-relevant meaning (Creswell, 2013). Next, direct interpretation was the identification and study of single instances of meaningful content in the data that could stand alone as a significant analytical marker (Creswell, 2013). Through this process, the researcher tried to find meaning in the data. The researcher then established patterns and looked for correspondence among multiple categories (Creswell, 2013). Using the codes and themes that emerged, the researcher reviewed the data again to look for additional evidence to support each code. Finally, naturalistic generalizations were developed so that, upon dissemination of results, “people can learn from the case either for themselves or to apply to a population of cases” (Creswell, 2013, p. 200). The researcher used these codes and themes to make and interpret meaning.

After organizing data into meaningful themes, data management took place. Data management included reflection and note writing. Then, reading data, memoing, and annotation took place. This aided in the establishment of specific categories and comparisons. Classifying and interpreting data followed, with the goal of interpretation that maintained fidelity to the multiple case study research methodology. Pattern matching was the primary analytic technique employed to “compare an empirically based pattern with a predicted one”

(Yin, 2009, p. 136). Unitizing, coding, the coding process, and journaling both during data collection and during data analysis was employed.

Reporting of the data, found in chapter four of this dissertation, used data from all seven cases to support themes. Multiple case qualitative research sometimes has the purpose “not to portray any single one of [the cases]” of the research, but instead “synthesizes the lessons from all of them and is organized around... topics” (Yin, 2009, p. 173). Appropriate examples from the seven cases of this study were used, but none of the seven cases of this study were presented as a single-case study (Yin, 2009).

Participant confidentiality was of extreme importance to the study. All people, places, and institutions were assigned pseudonyms to provide confidentiality for participants in the study. All data, including both digital (i.e., audio recordings, electronic documents, etc.) and hard copies were stored in a locked cabinet to which only the researcher had access. Digital data was also be stored only on a password-protected computer in a discreet location on the hard drive.

Trustworthiness and Transferability

Ensuring quality during the research process was important to the researcher. While a term like ‘validity’ is often associated with quantitative data analysis, Savin-Baden and Howell Major (2013) considered its use in qualitative contexts as taking the shape of trustworthiness or other questions of what quality is. Creswell (2013) also suggested qualitative researchers consider validation in terms of “trustworthiness and authenticity” (p. 250). Triangulation of data was a key element in ensuring quality during the research and analysis processes and the determination of the trustworthiness of the data. Triangulation

required that observation notes, interview transcriptions, and other pertinent documents reviewed as part of the analysis process work together to substantiate findings.

Beyond triangulation, the researcher sought trustworthiness of the results by using member checking. Member checking “involves checking with participants for feedback or verification of interpretation” (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013, p. 477). This process gives “participants a voice in what the findings say and the opportunity to correct any possible misinterpretations on the part of the researcher” (Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013, p. 477). Once the data was analyzed and the researcher chose which passages of the qualitative interviews were to be used in the study, a hard copy of the portions of the dissertation referencing each participant’s contributions was sent to him or her for review. The data was already anonymized, including the assignment of pseudonyms to names of all people, places, and institutions, with the goal of providing maximum confidentiality and confidence to the participants of the study. Participants were able to reflect on the nature of their responses as well as view the context in which the researcher had used their responses to interview questions. It was requested that participants inform the researcher if they believed their responses had not been represented or characterized accurately.

Transferability of the findings and results refers to their ability to be transferred to other contexts, or that they can be applied to other similar settings (Center for Innovation in Research and Teaching [CIRT], n.d.). After dissemination, the results of this study may have an effect on how public charter school leaders view their own work, how future public charter school leaders prepare for their work, and possibly even how public school leadership training programs develop and present curricular material. Ideally, this study will have produced results that resonate with most public charter school leaders. The researcher hoped to tell the

stories of the participants in a way that did not degrade, underscore, or misrepresent their work, but instead, provide insight into their unique responsibilities, as well as the traits that set them apart from their traditional school counterparts. Ideally, there will be no argument that different people, places, or times would produce drastically different results, thus contributing to the transferability of the data and results.

While the sample size of this multiple case study was relatively small ($n = 7$), it was larger than Creswell's (2013) suggestion of no more than four or five cases. There is always the possibility that many more opinions and profiles of public charter school leaders exist, but this larger-than-average sample size aimed at combating concerns of trustworthiness and transferability of the data. While a larger-than-suggested sample size may have resulted in less final description and content per case, it produced a large amount of data to support resulting codes and themes. Because the content of the study and the research questions were not overtly controversial in nature, but rather more functional and didactic, the hope of the researcher was that the results would be transferable in concept and practice, as they undoubtedly present real-life stories and perceptions of acting leaders.

Limitations of the Methodology

Every research methodology has limitations and challenges that a researcher must consider at the onset of a study (Creswell, 2013). One challenge of using the multiple-case study methodology is that "the study of more than one case dilutes the overall analysis; the more cases an individual studies, the less the depth in any single case" (Creswell, 2013, p. 101). This challenge was addressed in the study by working to ensure that all participants had a voice in the reporting of study findings. While there was limited time and space to study each of the seven cases in depth, due diligence was given to each case as a significant

contributor to the overall goals of the study. While Creswell (2013) recommended that multiple case studies choose no more than four or five cases, additional participants in this study may increase the opportunity to capture rich and meaningful data. Another limitation of the multiple case study methodology is the possibility of too much data (Creswell, 2013). The researcher considered boundaries for the data collection process to avoid being overwhelmed in terms of “time, events, and processes” (Creswell, 2013, p. 102).

Summary

Chapter three examined the use of a qualitative multiple case study methodology to research the traits of practicing public charter school leaders in one state within the Pacific Northwest region of the USA. Participants, research design, methods and procedures, the researcher as the instrument, data analysis, and concerns for validity, reliability, and generalizability were all addressed. This methodology was selected to provide substance to the description of each leader while simultaneously dissecting the perspectives of each as they relate to the research questions.

Chapter 4: Findings

Chapter four presents the findings of this study. The research sought to understand practicing public charter school leaders' perceptions of professional standards, authenticity in leadership, and entrepreneurial thinking. This chapter is divided into four sections corresponding with findings associated with each of the three research questions guiding the study, as well as one additional section addressing traits of practicing public charter school leaders which supports the model for leading in public charter schools (Figure 1) as conceptualized by the researcher and explained in chapter two of this study. The first section presents findings related to participants' views about concepts associated with authenticity in leadership. The second section addresses participants' views about entrepreneurial thinking. The third section includes reflections from study participants on professional standards in public charter school leadership. The fourth section presents findings related to the traits of practicing public charter school leaders. These four sections are the four components that make up the framework and model for leading in public charter schools conceptualized by the researcher (Figure 1).

Participants' Views about Concepts Associated with Authenticity in Leadership

Study participants were asked to reflect on their perspectives of authenticity in leadership. The first research question of this study was: What are charter school leaders' perspectives of their identity as authentic leaders? Participants were not given context to the topic of authentic leadership before the in-person interview to promote genuine responses. Four themes were identified as common and important to all study participants:

1. Perseverance and consistency.
2. Applying mindfulness in their approach with others.

3. Participants viewed transparency as being beneficial and challenging.
4. Modeling moral and ethical behaviors.

Each of these themes is represented through the narrative of practicing charter school administrators who participated in the study. While each of these themes was present in all the participant narratives, the narratives selected to be presented in these findings represent an analysis of the data as collected and synthesized by the researcher.

Perseverance and consistency. Study participants were generous and genuine in sharing their thoughts and perspectives with regards to what they felt it meant to be authentic as a leader and what authenticity in leadership meant to them. Each participant gave a number of descriptors they associated with authenticity. While discussing authenticity, participants were observed to be reflective and thoughtful as they sought to describe themselves and their association with this concept. This increased the trustworthiness of responses. Documents reviewed by the researcher also confirmed these responses showing support from each participant's respective organization with regards to the expectations and responsibilities of each practicing charter school leader when it came to the desired qualities as compared to personal and professional identity. Participants shared that perseverance and consistency were key components of their nature as authentic leaders.

Kristina Vale used a number of words and phrases to describe her authentic nature from a personal and professional perspective. Among them were "being genuine all the time", "being the same all the time", "fair", and "honest". Personal and professional identity blended together for her, which showed her intention to be consistent. Ms. Vale explained,

I would hope that when families and students see me outside of the school day, it's the same personality. They recognize me, they know it's me, I talk about the same things.

I feel like I'm an educator and I work with families twenty-four, seven. I feel like I am an educator whether I'm at school or not.

As a professional, Ms. Vale considered authenticity from a unique standpoint. She felt like she was underqualified and underexperienced to be the best she could be at her job. "I look forward to the years of experience when I can speak to the reasons that maybe things changed, and the pros and cons of things as they developed over the years," she said. Her desire to be persistent in the pursuit of knowledge to better herself as a professional was both noted and observed.

Kristina Vale shared that she felt her authentic professional identity was developed through emotional consistency as a leader.

You have to enjoy all of the variety that will come at you in a day and stay calm. You have to be level. Take it all in. When you think, when there's a day that you think nothing else can come across your desk, then the fire alarm goes off. Then the buses aren't there because they had to reroute because of the train, or an accident, or something. You're just continually thinking on your feet.

Being consistent with these positive attributes helped others to see Ms. Vale as more approachable as a leader. Being approachable was important to her. She said, "I want people to always feel like they can come in and approach me. I hope I'm approachable, and fair, and honest, and that I have an even keel". From a personal and professional standpoint, Ms. Vale was concerned with both the perceptions of others as they related to her and how those perceptions affected the extent to which she was able to accomplish her goals as a school leader. This concern tied directly back to her personal and professional identity as an authentic leader.

Michelle Stewart shared that authentic self-identity “goes back to being super, super clear with who you are”. Perhaps the most commonly used word she used to describe her authentic nature was “consistent”. She shared that she worked diligently to be consistent in her conversations with others, her physical presence in the school, and her approach to leadership in general. She said that consistency in authenticity meant “that I am the same everywhere I am”, and that “I am consistent in the way I talk to people, the messages I give to people, whether it is kids, teachers, parents, you, or vendors”. Her comments evidenced the connection of participants’ personal and professional identities as authentic leaders.

Consistency was seen as an individual personality trait for Ms. Stewart, which organically found its way in to her professional practice. She felt that it was a personality trait that helped make up her authentic identity. Consistency as a positive personality disposition helped her explore selective delegation as a school leader.

It is part of my identity. It may never go away. It is part of me and I like to do things well. I am just learning how to model that for certain people and give people ownership. It has been a good year for me in managing change positively and giving ownership to certain people for certain things.

Authenticity was directly tied to charter school leadership by Michelle Stewart. Besides sharing generally that “being authentic is critical” and stating that she wasn’t sure “you could be a very good leader if you are not authentic”, she returned to the idea that charter school leadership requires a different path in education than traditional-school leaders. When considering this path, Ms. Stewart asked, “Does the place you are a leader match with your leadership style?” She continued by saying, “being an administrator is hard, and you won’t love it if the school does not align with what you see as best for kids”. Her comments

were evidence that authenticity in public charter school leadership included being personally and professionally aligned with the organization for which one works. Authenticity, Ms. Stewart argued, “is overarching. It goes across everything I do.”

Considering the word ‘authentic’ as it related to her personal and professional identity, charter school leader Barbara Lewis said, “I think of, [pause] to not be fake”. She found consistency, follow-through, and perseverance to be essential to her work. She went on to say, “hopefully being authentic is just being real, and you are what you say you are, and you do what you say you’re going to do, and you’re going to follow through on what’s expected”. Through this statement, Barbara Lewis also connected authentic identity with transparency, a theme to be explored later in these findings. Observations of Ms. Lewis in the context of the in-person interview confirmed many of her self-reflections on her personal and professional identity as an authentic leader. “I’m pretty blunt,” she said. She said, “I have good follow-through”, “it’s that whole perseverance piece”, and having a “can-do, no-quit kind of attitude” were descriptors of Barbara Lewis’s perspective of perseverance and consistency as a leader. Perseverance was essential to Ms. Lewis, who has seen many changes over the course of her career as a charter school administrator. “There’s been some really smart moves, and I know a lot of stuff now, but some of the stuff I really just honestly attribute to being lucky and persevering,” she reflected.

Applying mindfulness in their approach with others. Participants spoke purposefully about their work and gave examples citing their ability to apply mindfulness in their approach with others into their professional practice. They were aware of their position within their organizations and were mindful of how that position connected to others. Documents substantiated the expectation of this awareness from participants’ affiliated

organizations. These expectations were particularly evident in administrative summative evaluation forms, where leaders were expected to be collaborative with, supportive of, and accountable to their school communities. Leaders who participated in this study shared that realistic and practical approaches to their work were helpful in focusing their attention when being mindful of those they served. While all participants agreed that understanding how to lead was important to exhibiting the traits of authenticity, they felt that their work played out in a realistic and practical fashion which didn't always align exactly with their theoretical preparation as leaders.

Authentic leadership was more than a concept of personal and professional identity for Macy Spencer. When considering what one does to be authentic, she said, "doing what you know is right for students would be authentic to me". She was mindful of the different groups of people she led on a daily basis. There were three things that she felt were key to practicing mindful authenticity: being a collaborative leader, expressing appreciation, and prioritizing the administrative workload.

Ms. Spencer felt the job of charter school administrator was sizeable for one person to complete. To help overcome this challenge, she found ways to distribute leadership in her work.

I have people I can talk to and get my thoughts in order. That is very helpful. If I didn't have a team, there is no way [I could do this], and that is everybody. A lot of people are involved, including teachers and administrators. I couldn't do it without the people that I work with.

Expressing appreciation for those around her was another important way for Ms. Spencer to personify real and practical authenticity. "They need to know they can do it. They

can do it!” she said when considering how she supports and considers those around her. Ms. Spencer continued to describe how she applied the concept of gratitude by saying,

we do meetings four times a year as a whole staff, and I work very hard to be sure to celebrate the staff, all of them, and let them know how appreciated they are. And the work that they do. I send notes out every Monday of calendar items and other information, so I want to keep in touch. I think they think I am approachable and working for the school in a positive manner.

Another participant found work as a charter school leader “very thrilling”, especially when considering all of the lives she had the possibility of affecting positively. As the most important decision-maker of her organization, she understood that “there’s nobody else you can blame”, sharing that in traditional districts, the buck is often passed on to others and accountability was more difficult to achieve. This supported a perspective that “sometimes a traditional school doesn’t have to be as creative because you have the district office to solve your problems. They’re telling you what to do rather than you having to figure things out.” As a leader, she was mindful of her position within her organization, and saw being *the* person as inherently tied to her leadership position.

While this participant agreed that she did not like to sugarcoat things, she understood and was aware of the fact that she should deal with different people in different ways. “It’s good for me to sometimes step back and say, ‘how can I present this in a more positive manner, or sugarcoat this a little more so it isn’t quite so painful?’” In response to this self-evaluation, she said, “I’ve worked harder at not immediately responding to something and trying to be more open to that kind of stuff.” Agreeing that sometimes others “don’t feel that

[she's] as warm and fuzzy as they want", she has made efforts in her leadership practice to be more approachable.

The same participant also shared that an important part of her authentic-self and practice as a leader was knowing when she made a mistake. She was mindful of others and how her behaviors affected them. While others may have described her as "intimidating", or "unapproachable", she felt the key to presenting herself in a more open way was to ensure that she owned it when she may have made a wrong decision.

There's been times where I've had to eat crow and call a parent or call a teacher and say, 'I am so sorry, I made a mistake'. I was wrong. It was very unthoughtful of me saying or doing that, or whatever. I think that makes people know that you're a little more human.

The human awareness element of leadership was essential to this leader as she considered the real and practical nature of her leadership position.

Another practicing charter school leader shared how he considered the needs of others as a primary goal of his leadership practice. A mindful approach to leadership was accomplished through delegating aspects of the leadership responsibilities of the school to staff members to promote buy in. In his opinion, mindfulness helped create a sense of community among school stakeholders. He spoke about partitioning the goals of the school and giving out assignments to various individuals with the goal of spreading the workload and allowing those who weren't in a traditional leadership position to make an investment in the school. His mindfulness of the needs of his staff to be participants in the decision-making process he was charged with overseeing was important. "We had a return and report model where folks would go out and do their work, and then come back and at that little table behind

you, we would meet once a week and talk about the progress,” he said when describing his work to improve the school he led. He felt that this process produced results, improved communication, and created structure within the organization. It allowed stakeholders to feel like they were part of the leadership process.

Participants’ views of transparency as being beneficial and challenging.

Participants felt transparency was important to their identities as authentic leaders and that they practiced it regularly, but that there were both benefits and challenges that resulted from efforts to be transparent. Not only did they share that transparency was a regular part of their professional practice, but participants said that it was inherent to their work. Data collected through document analysis showed that transparency appeared frequently in administrator evaluations, school policies on leadership, and in administrator job descriptions. It was prioritized by participants as one of the most important functions of their jobs as leaders of public organizations.

As the head of a public charter school, one participant was sure to let the researcher know that her purpose was to run a school that was open and transparent in its leadership and operations. One challenge she associated with transparency was her perception of how people outside of charter education viewed the roles of charter leaders. She was afraid too many people saw charter school leaders and stakeholders as part of their organizations only for some sort of personal gain. She shared that that idea was simply not true, at least at the school she led and among fellow leaders she had interacted with. Public charter school organizations should not only be transparent, but they may even need to help people see what is going on according to this leader.

Transparency plays a big role. You have to really help people to see what you're doing. Otherwise, they just think that you're doing things out of, just personal. And I think that's really important. That everyone knows what's going on. They get shared ownership when they know what's going on. Sometimes I wouldn't mind not everyone not knowing everything, but you get shared ownership. You know what's going on. You can understand the reasoning behind something. You can have better buy-in with transparency. I think that's what you want; you want us all working together as a team moving together forward. So, we have to have that. I think transparency is important.

When discussing transparency as an element of her work, this leader was cautious because she felt that transparency opened the door to undue scrutiny and negative attention, especially through the media. This was another challenge of transparency. While she knew that transparency was essential, she understood that public access to information provides opportunity for others to shed negative light on the school and its work.

Everything is out there. I feel like I have to do a good job of making sure that I'm representing the facts without breaking confidentiality. There was a news report this year [stating] that our stats were low compared to other schools. It really aggravated me that they show that. Think about what that says to these kids. You're feeling like you're slamming the school, but you're not slamming the school, you're slamming our kids. What is said impacts these kids. It doesn't instill pride. These kids are doing the very, very best they can.

Regardless of the type of attention, positive or negative, that transparency brought to her and her school, this charter leader still cited it as one of the most essential elements of her

work as a leader. She connected transparency directly to the people she served as a leader when she said, “they’re trusting me and the people I’ve hired to do the right thing for their kid. Boy, I better do it!” Her constituents expected her to do what she purported she would do. Her personal pride was shared as the driving force behind this element of her work. Trust and pride were benefits of transparency.

Another participant knew that if she did not exhibit transparency in her work, there was no way she could expect it from others. “If I can’t be transparent, how can I expect others to be?” she reflected. While transparency was important, she recognized that transparency as a charter school leader didn’t necessarily mean telling everyone everything.

I try to be very transparent with my staff to the extent that they need to know. There are things that an administrator knows, that I know, that I think we carry a burden.

We all carry a burden and we don’t need to give burdens to other people unless they need it, so I do think about that.

As an actionable concept, this leader worked to incorporate elements of transparency into her work, especially with staff. She promoted, and her staff practiced, a ‘circle’ discussion time regularly in which she and staff members could share their feelings about their work and the happenings of the school. This was a time that she created purposefully to allow transparency to be exercised, not just conceptualized. She explained, “I am very transparent with my staff, particularly during certain times like my circle, or during on-on-ones with them. During those times that are built-in to those relationships with them, I try to model [transparency].” This time benefitted her and her staff by allowing them to better understand one another and the needs of the organization.

Transparency was a mechanism for achieving important organizational goals for another participant. These goals included school improvement, creating a welcoming school environment, and ensuring a fair representation of the school in the community. These goals were beneficial for the organization. Regarding school improvement, the participant was clear that in her school organization,

everyone needs to know what is going on. For example, we had charter renewal this year, and so we let everyone know, and we say, ‘good, bad, and ugly’, because we are not going to improve if we don’t begin there [by being] transparent, giving the staff an opportunity to participate.

While preparing for a site visit from the school’s authorizer as part of the charter renewal process, a schoolwide evaluation of programs by the school’s authorizer to determine if the school is functioning at an acceptable level and meeting charter-specific and authorizer established goals, this participant shared how she was able to use transparency to promote the school to stakeholders. She said, “we had a site visit preparation and I didn’t require people to come, but I invited them, and we talked about it online, and I think that was good and letting them know.”

This practicing charter school leader shared many of the sentiments of another participant when considering the relationship between transparency and the image that it could project for the school and organization. “We want to be transparent and listen,” she said, but she also felt that there were negative side effects of transparency that were not good for the school. These negative side effects were a challenge. She felt her work to be transparent included “making sure that when there is a mean article” being published by the media or other outlets, or one in which she felt the school was misrepresented, she could work

to collect and share information about her school that was correct and relevant as a rebuttal to ensure an accurate representation of the school.

Modeling moral and ethical behaviors. As authentic leaders, study participants shared the importance of moral and ethical behavior as it related to their work. Many of the participants in this study found themselves with tremendous decision-making power that had the ability to not only sway an organization, but to directly affect the lives of stakeholders, including faculty, staff, students, families, and other groups with direct ties to each charter school. For several participants, self-described shared leadership models were employed to promote checks and balances on their work as administrators, providing a natural environment for modeling moral and ethical behaviors to emerge organically. For others who showed more authoritative tendencies as leaders and who sought less input from others, importance was placed on ensuring their personal and professional approach to leadership was both moral and ethical. Verbiage was evident in each participant's annual summative evaluation form created by the governing board of each agency that outlined expectations for moral and ethical behaviors in leadership. While participants placed a high level of importance on modeling moral and ethical behaviors as school leaders, it was also mandated of them by their organizations and state credentialing department. Failure to act in such a way that would be anything but above reproach had potential negative repercussions for participants both within their organizations and at the state level.

For Brooke Birch, moral and ethical leadership was as much about intent as anything else. She shared that when dealing with and "supporting families and kids", that "we want to do it right". She made her desire to do the right thing at the right time clear. Ms. Birch shared a story of a time when one group of parents questioned her rationale for keeping

students with special needs at the school. She explained that this was a situation where she had to make the right ethical decision as a leader. “Ethically, I have to stand up,” she said.

She continued by saying,

as far as opinions of others, or opinions I know that connect to the ethical side and moral side of things, I’ve had parent opinions saying, ‘this particular student’, or ‘that student’ should not be here. Ethically and morally, yes, they are here.

Brooke Birch felt this situation led to discussions with the school’s governing board regarding the importance of student confidentiality. She worked to ensure training and education were available to her staff and governing board to maintain a high standard of morals and ethics. To accomplish this, she “[brought] some people from the state department to speak to the board about understanding that ethical side of confidentiality and why I’m not going to tell you everything about that kid”. Ms. Birch continued by saying, “ethically I’m not going to do it, and even lawfully I’m not going to do it. In the special ed arena, I think confidentiality within a school setting is huge”. Standing up for herself and her school were important to her and were a part of her identity as an authentic leader. She shared a clear personal and professional obligation to ensure that her actions were of the highest moral and ethical standard. Principal Birch felt that by setting this example and by modeling morally and ethically appropriate behaviors, not only could she expect the same from those around her, but it would ensure that her work on this front could never be questioned.

When describing authenticity in leadership, Russell Stone was observably passionate about the importance of moral and ethical behaviors in relation to school leadership. He leaned forward in his chair, placing his hands on his desk and began speaking in a pointed and precise way. One phrase defined Mr. Stone’s feelings when considering the importance of

moral and ethical leadership behavior: “non-negotiable”. When asked what role morals and ethics play in his work, he replied, “non-negotiable. Non-negotiable. Decisions here are made to help the kids, even if it means that I take a loss somewhere.” While many aspects of leadership were institutional in nature for Mr. Stone, moral and ethical practices were deeply personal. Because he valued this aspect of his work so much, he shared how he would react in a situation where he may be questioned over his professional practice by saying,

In working with my students, I take ethics extremely... [pause] that is one of those things. If I was ever questioned, I would like, raise hell, you know? If someone said [that I was acting unethically], and pardon my language there, but those things are [non-negotiable for me].

Mr. Stone articulated the cause and effect relationship of morals and ethics on his leadership practices. He shared that as a school leader, “you have to have a strong moral and ethical and vision-centered compass that will act as that foundation for those things you are not prepared for”. He was firm in his belief that preparation was the key to success. Being prepared to make the morally and ethically appropriate choice when presented with a difficult situation would eliminate the guesswork and potential uncertainty because he already knew that these decisions and outcomes were “non-negotiable”.

Moral and ethical behavior in charter school leadership led to trust and clarity for another participant. She described that she had an internal sense of what was right, and that when confronted with a decision, she often could feel that it was right or wrong before making the decision, even when she made the wrong choice. She directly correlated these feelings to her authentic-self and explained how these decisions modeled these behaviors for others. She explained,

Any decision that I've made that was a mistake, I had a little nagging that that it wasn't right. There was something that wasn't right, that didn't feel right. There's something that I don't like about that particular decision. And every single time, it was right. That wasn't a good decision! So, I think being authentic, which is true to yourself and true to the people that you're representing, because you're a leader, it's not just all about you at all. It is not about you. It's not about your ego. It's about making sure that this is good for the people who trusted you and who've come here.

This participant continued to describe her personal relationship with the importance of moral and ethical behaviors in leadership. Because moral and ethical behavior went beyond professional practice for her as other study participants agreed, she felt that her personal connection to the idea directly translated to her identity as an authentic leader. She shared that ethical leadership is "extremely important".

I just feel like it's so important in every avenue that you are a moral and ethical leader because that leads to trust. That leads to a security. It's so easy to cut corners. People can cut corners so easily, especially in this world. Especially at a virtual school you can cut corners. And I just think that's not right. You have to be ethical and moral. You just have to be. For me, it's a personal thing. It's who I feel like I am. I get my identity out of that.

This practicing leader continued by expressing the importance of her position as a leader and the effect that her decisions had on other people. Modeling the behaviors a leader expects out of his or her constituents was important. She said that making the correct moral and ethical decision "gives clarity to everybody and people *are* watching... they see that.

Look at our news. People are watching. They are making decisions off of you, based on your moral and your ethical stance on stuff.”

In the end, this participant said that one of the most important parts of her job was “to be truthful”. This included moral and ethical decision-making. She wanted to be truthful to herself and her stakeholders. This is what she felt made her a good leader and this trait would promote the growth of her school and school organization. It was part of her identity and was a contributing factor to authenticity in her work.

Summary

Four themes emerged as important answers to the first research question of this study. On what it means to be authentic and the importance of authenticity in leadership, participants all agreed that expressing perseverance and consistency, applying mindfulness in their approach with others, understanding the benefits and challenges of transparency, and modeling moral and ethical behaviors as leaders were essential. Leaders described who they were as individuals and as leaders, contributing to a better understanding of how practicing charter school leaders perform and view their work. While it is possible that these themes find similarity with the work of practicing school leaders across all school types, participants in this study were clear to share their perspectives in terms of their practice as charter school leaders.

Through the narratives presented, practicing public charter school leaders viewed themselves as different, even if the rest of the education community did not. They viewed their work as all-encompassing, individualistic, and weighty. They felt that they were often solely responsible for the decisions and direction of their organizations even when they included a variety of stakeholders in the decision-making process. They shared that it took a

certain type of person to do the work, and do it well, often requiring internal knowledge of the operations of a school to lead it best.

Participants' Views about Entrepreneurial Thinking

The second research question guiding this study was: What are charter school leaders' perspectives of themselves as entrepreneurs in education? Because charter schools are situated in a unique position in the landscape of public education as schools of choice, they must find ways to attract families and students to them, as opposed to traditional public schools that draw from a generally geographically-driven, pre-determined student population. Several participants shared the importance of concepts like marketing their schools and retaining students and families. These concepts have already appeared in cursory form in other findings of this study but are explored in more depth in this section. Entrepreneurial thinking was identified by the researcher as a potentially important concept that connected practicing public charter school leaders, either from a leadership-philosophy or leadership-practice standpoint, together.

For the purpose of this study, entrepreneurial leadership has been defined as a style which "entails influencing and directing the performance of group members toward the achievement of organizational goals that involve recognizing and exploiting entrepreneurial opportunities" (Renko et al., 2015, p. 55). From the onset of each charter school, a charter document was established that outlined the organizational goals of each. Practicing public charter school leaders all agreed that it was their charge to ensure that these goals were sought and that adherence and fidelity to the concepts outlined in each school's charter was an essential element of their work.

Study participants were asked to reflect on the entrepreneurial thinking that helped frame their work as practicing public charter school leaders. Participants were not given context to the topic of entrepreneurial thinking before the in-person interview like they were the PSEL. Four themes emerged as common and important to all study participants with regards to entrepreneurial thinking:

1. Pressure to be innovative.
2. Likening charter school operation to running a business.
3. Fiduciary responsibilities and duties.
4. Staying ahead of the competition.

Each of these themes is represented through the narrative of several of the administrators who participated in the study. While each of these themes was present in all the participant narratives, the narratives selected to be presented in these findings represent an analysis of the data as collected and synthesized by the researcher.

Pressure to be innovative. Public charter schools were conceived, in part, to fill a role of innovation. The charter document of one of the charter schools studied, written prior to its inception, served as a pitch to authorizing agencies while seeking support to open. It stated, “a charter school, is a new ‘creature’ created to fulfill the fundamental need to improve student learning and prepare future citizens”. This statement implied several things. First, it implied that the education system at the time needed improvement, or that the system was not improving student learning or preparing future citizens. Further, it implied that the charter school was somewhat of an unidentifiable conceptualization, or ‘creature’, that was embarking on a new approach to education. This document was representative of many charter documents reviewed in this study. Each provided a unique or new approach that it

would employ to provide education to students. Participants in this study felt strongly that their work was to continue developing and leading this innovative conceptualization of educating students. Participants felt the pressure to continue to be innovative in an environment of change that saw continued development of traditional and non-traditional educational offerings.

One participant felt uniquely qualified to lead the type of school that her organization aimed to develop. Her past experiences and roles in education aligned well with the proposed methods and expected outcomes of the school. While this was the case, she was set on, and felt compelled to find ways to meet the needs of individual students through curricular experimentation and innovation. “I like having innovation and I like being able to change and impact things,” she said. In her preparation as a leader and educator, she shared,

[I] learned a lot about inquiry-based instruction and mastery-based [instruction], really kind of pushing the envelope of what education can be for kids. I also did a lot of work during that time, especially in the last couple of years with Khan Academy. I have learned a lot of about the online environment and about blended learning and programs that help meet the needs of kids.

While this participant didn't lead a virtual charter school, she found that in a world of evolving technology, it was her role to ensure these concepts were infiltrating the curriculum of the school to stay ahead of other schools who were experimenting with similar content delivery methods.

When thinking about the overall development of her school, this leader noted that she “need[ed] to be a visionary; need[ed] to think beyond”. She continued, “you have to see a bigger vision and help move your school to where you want them to go, like with being a

leader that effectively manages change and empowers their staff so that the community is healthy”. One of the ways she embraced this ability to foresee and make changes came after staff at her school had reached a breaking point of frustration with student behavior at the school. After a recent staff meeting, she recalled perceiving her teachers as tired, burdened, and overworked, and that they were “drowning” in “a lot of really extreme behaviors” from students. She had to think on her feet and decide how she could lead her staff through this trying time. While she admitted that in this instance she did not have any similar previous experiences to draw from, she thought critically about how she could handle the problem. Instead of taking matters into her own hands and imposing a solution,

I had asked my staff to go through a kind of 60-day cycle of reimagining what that could look like. I gave different people different aspects to research what they were going to do. We talked a lot about how we could change... During that process, everyone took on different aspects, and at the end, we ended up implementing [a specific digital student management tool]. It’s an app. I hadn’t done research on it, but it was something that was really powerful and to me, what I wanted, and these are the things we wanted, so it has totally transformed behaviors in our school. We have 95% of our families that are connected, and they love it and think it is the best thing ever because they get daily feedback on their kid. We hear time and time again, even families who would or could never talk to [us] are in. They love it. That was a good example of using my staff to change what they really wanted to change. They saw change. We had a timeline and it totally positively impacted our whole school.

While leaders in traditional districts may have had to seek approval from higher levels to implement such a change, this participant noted that this was a unique element of charter

school leadership; this leader could implement change and innovation more rapidly. She said, “as charter school administrators, [we] can make change much more rapidly than if we were a large school”. She added, “we make a lot more decisions, in my opinion, in my experience, we have more freedom in that”. Being a decision-maker was a key contributing factor not only to her ability to be innovative, but her ability to effect change as a result of innovation and a need for innovative practices within her school environment.

The innovative thinking that another leader brought to the table was shared when considering re-thinking the approach to middle-level education at the school she led. She was constantly concerned with the future of the school, asking questions like, “Where are we going?” and “How do you promote those future steps of an organization?” Much of the driving force behind this leader’s conceptualization of innovation in education had to do with trends of student engagement. She referred to these changes as ‘shifts’. She shared,

we’ve been diving into just the shifts of what adolescents are going through, what kids are going through, and how learning needs to shift because of how kids are. Versus thinking, oh, they’re on their iPad so much or are on their phone so much. Yeah, they are. So, what are we going to do different[ly]?

The pressure this leader felt to be innovative came more from her perception that student needs are evolving than it did from the need to stay ahead of the competition. Meeting students where they were at, instead of forcing students to meet the school where it was at, was the heart of her approach to promoting an innovative mindset as a charter school leader. She credited the charter school environment and working with a supportive school board to making the approach to, and handling of these shifts easier. Beyond this, she felt that a charter school was more agile and able to adapt than a larger traditional public school. She

said, “we don’t have such a big ship to turn”, implying that she could implement change more rapidly than if she were leading elsewhere.

Like other participants, this leader agreed that “being able to be a visionary” was essential to her work. This helped her anticipate change and actually take action. She admitted that “in a charter school, you don’t always have a bunch of people around you getting it all done,” which placed the onus of vision and innovation on her. While the people surrounding her may not have been initially ‘getting it all done’, she worked to develop her staff and ensure that they became part of the process of innovating. To do this, she tapped the abilities and inherent qualities that they brought to school each day to develop an in-house professional development (PD) program. She realized that she was surrounded by a group of talented educators, but that it was her responsibility to mobilize them. She noted,

we have some incredibly knowledgeable, lots of educated staff. They can actually lead that PD. So, it’s teachers teaching teachers. Even though we will bring in other people when we need it, or send people out to different things, a lot of our PD is teachers teaching teachers.

Considering professional development from an interorganizational perspective was one of the many ways that this participant felt she was constantly on the lookout for opportunities to ensure that innovation was part of her leadership repertoire.

Russell Stone shared that as a charter school leader he has “had to get very creative” from time to time with regards to ensuring the successful operation of his school which has been an impetus for innovation both inside and out of the classroom. From the beginning of his tenure as a charter school leader, he has always had the mindset of developing the school. Development and innovation was never meant to let the school stray from its mission, vision,

and core values, but instead to draw the school's trajectory closer to those things. When Mr. Stone became the school's leader, there were teaching vacancies, missing processes for budgeting and finance, dysfunctional class and bell schedules, and many other deficiencies that made daily operation difficult. This made his work to meet the school's mission, vision, and core values even more difficult. Innovation, at least at the beginning of his tenure, meant going to the drawing board and refocusing the school as the founders envisioned it. This is a growing pain that charter schools and charter school leaders sometimes must address. For Mr. Stone, it meant asking three questions: "How do we repair the past?", "How do we improve the present?", and "How do we set up systems for the future?". Reflecting on this process, he said, "there is always work to be done. We are a lot better off. We have done many things." He was confident that the future was bright for the school he led.

In terms of the difference between his work as a public charter school leader and the work a traditional school leader may have to consider when thinking of innovative school practices, Russell Stone explained one way that he has approached innovation. He said,

we have our own specialized charter, [and] that is where it looks different. When you start talking about how you approach your curriculum, where before, we looked at common core, here we find ways to embed our core knowledge sequence to common core so that you have a different PD discussion.

Being able to cater the school's approach to curriculum and instruction, as well as the preceding or ensuing professional development that was necessary for this specialization, was a positive byproduct of the charter school model, and one that Mr. Stone felt fostered and promoted innovative thinking. For him, this made innovation easier to navigate and easier to implement as he and his team saw fit.

Likening charter school operation to running a business. Participants in the study agreed that there were many elements of their professional responsibilities that placed their work squarely in the conversation of comparing them to running a business. Some participants felt strongly that their schools essentially were a business, while others saw the business concept as peripheral to other educational goals. All participants shared that they had to think as a business leader would at some point or other in their regular duties strongly tying this theme to the research question of better understanding how practicing charter school leaders thought entrepreneurially.

“I say often that I feel like we are in a business. We are in the education business. We have a product to put out,” said Barbara Lewis when reflecting on the entrepreneurial nature of her work as a public charter school leader. The idea of keeping a business, or school in this case, up and running is part of Ms. Lewis’s motivation to continue serving as a charter school leader. “Once you get into charter school leadership, it’s all on you, so if you screw up, it’s you; you did it,” she said. Leading a charter school is an all-encompassing job, and Ms. Lewis said it takes a certain personality type to do the job well. “I’m a gambler,” she said.

I like to gamble. I like to play poker. I like to take risks, so I know it’s all on me, so I’m going to be dang sure that it doesn’t fall apart. You have to have that attitude that there’s not really a safety net.

As Ms. Lewis continued to describe the trait of an attitude of optimism, she considered some of the tasks that are required of charter leaders as business leaders when she said,

What if it doesn’t work? You can’t think that way. It will work. We will get customers. We will get founders. We will get financing. We will find a building.

You have to have the mindset that there is no safety net. If it doesn't work, you're screwed. You're out of a job. You're on the street. So, you have to land on your feet!

Opening or leading a charter school is not as easy as having an optimistic attitude, however. Ms. Lewis shared that "you can have a great concept, you can be very authentic and have great morals and all of that kind of stuff, but if you don't have a business background, it's not going to work". She cited several failed charter schools as examples of schools that had good conceptual underpinnings, but financial models or operational processes that made it impossible for the schools to survive. She shared an example of how this might look in the business world:

You can have people that have a great idea, or a great vision, or a great mission, but they don't know how to pull it off. You've seen that with some charter schools.

You've seen that with some businesses. It's like, gosh, that was a great restaurant!

That was a great concept! Why did it not work? Well, it didn't work because they weren't open at the right hours. The pizza products weren't coming in on time. They didn't pay their bills and their employees all quit and someone shut off the lights, and all of those things. But, dang, they had good food! It was awesome! It's the same thing with some of these schools.

Charter schools are closed if they do not meet the goals outlined in their continuous improvement plans, charter documents, and other school accountability measures. Ms. Lewis compared charter school closure to the operations of a traditional public school.

One is the whole business aspect of it. [Traditional school leaders] don't have any worry. They don't have any worry. I have to worry. The comparison would be kind of between myself and a superintendent. They have a little bit of worry. But even in a

traditional school, they still have all the property taxes and the guaranteed customer base. As a charter school, you [do not]... You're just not going to close a traditional school. We have to worry about those things a lot more.

In the end, Barbara Lewis was firm that "there's a whole lot of entrepreneurial stuff" that goes into her daily work. Having taught economics and having run a couple of businesses before getting into charter school leadership were shared as important elements to her success as a charter school administrator. "I love the puzzle pieces of figuring out how to make this business run, and I love wheeling and dealing with folks" to ensure the school gets the best deal. She noted the importance of business-mindedness as a charter school leader by again comparing to the functions of a traditional school. She said,

I think that's the one thing that we make sure we do. I think a lot of charter schools do that because I think a lot of charter schools know we're in business because of these kids. But I think a lot of schools don't always do that; don't always think about it that way. They're in business because they're in business. They're the home school. They've always been around and will continue to be.

Another participant also brought a business background to her position as the leader of a charter school. In fact, one of the businesses she ran was the impetus for the creation and development of the charter school she led. When considering the operation of a charter school, she said, "It's running a business, which I think is good that I have background in running a business, because it sure is running a business. That's exactly what it is." She likened her work as a public charter school leader to running a small business instead of a major corporation. "It seems a lot more personal. With a big business, and even with those bigger districts, their decisions are not unique and specific," she said. She felt that the smaller

feel of the school benefitted her school community because she could make decisions and changes for the school much more easily.

We have our policies and procedures as well, and we try to make them as solid and ethical as possible so there's not any inconsistencies, but I can change stuff up. I can go to the board. I can say, you know, 'here's the deal, would you be fine with that?' It just seems a little bit more personal.

When considering what the most important part of running the business of a charter school was, the participant was quick to note that it was imperative for her school to continue improving to ensure students and families stayed with her school, much like a patron of a business would continue to return as the business offered them the goods and services they desired.

You've got to keep on improving. With our stats, we have to keep on improving. That's just where we're at. We're constantly in a state of school improvement and always will be. I don't think we will ever not be by the nature of who we attract, and who we want to attract. That's exactly it when we're hitting our demographic. I want those kids. I want us to keep improving as a school. We need it. It's an ongoing focus.

Another participant was quick to remind the researcher that "as a charter school, we are a school of choice". She said this because when considering the business world, people have the chance to choose which businesses they will patronize. Important facets of maintaining the operations of the school she led included school improvement, as well as compliance with laws and regulations.

As a school of choice, continually improving the product the school offered, or the education it delivered, was paramount to this practicing charter school leader. “I have to continually improve my school,” she noted, to keep students coming. School improvement was vital to her view of likening leading a charter school to owning or managing a business. “Continually improving the school is the most important thing you have to do... It’s so easy to say, but it’s a humongous job,” she noted.

Compliance was important to this leader as she considered the need for her organization to meet its operational and educational goals. “You have to keep compliance, of course,” she noted. Like another participant had also shared, charter schools exist in a world where school closure is an option if compliance requirements are not met. This participant said, “your school will shut down if you don’t keep compliance.” This is comparable to a business that is not meeting the needs of its customers or one that is not meeting its other operational obligations.

While these elements of business-mindedness were important to this leader, she was sure to share that there were many resources and sources of support available for charter schools and their leaders to succeed. She reflected on her earliest days in her position when she wasn’t sure if she could manage the expectations of the job by sharing,

I wish I had known all the supports I would have, because I did not know that as I stepped in. I immediately found out, and then thought maybe I should have applied sooner! There is legal counsel. The [charter management organization] has tons of support for me. I had an awesome team and all-around support.

These supports helped her ensure that her school could be successful.

Fiduciary responsibilities and duties. School administrators, at every level and in every setting, are tasked with budget management and other fiduciary responsibilities as a key component of their professional roles. Participants in this study were no exception. Each shared the significant role that budgeting and finance played in his or her work. Participants who led schools that were operated by a CMO had significantly less involvement in the general financial operations of their schools, while participants who led schools that were independently operated had significantly more involvement in the budgeting processes of the charter school. Each participant in this study led a school with a multi-million-dollar budget, with some schools handling budgets in excess of \$7 million. After reviewing school budget documents for participants' schools, the average proposed budget of participant schools for the 2018-2019 year was \$4.9 million.

Participants shared many instances in which they were using entrepreneurial thinking when addressing the financial needs of their schools. Many specific instances were shared by participants to support the importance of this theme in their work. While not all participants focused on the overarching budget process, each shared the importance of their fiduciary responsibilities as a factor contributing to entrepreneurial thinking in charter school leadership. Job descriptions of most participants included information regarding budget management, with ideas such as "collaborate with the organization director on program and budget requirements", "supervise the preparation of the annual operating budget recommendations and implement the Board-approved budget", and "oversee the school budget, approve all purchases, and oversee payroll and contracts" as part of their work. Ensuring the school's budget was healthy and viable was important to study participants.

Having experience as a traditional public school leader put the budgeting and fiscal processes of charter school leadership in perspective for one participant. His perception and perspective had changed from before he was a charter school leader.

I will say this, when I was in the traditional public school, most of my needs were met in terms of financial needs. Most of them. I did believe that charters had money, so much money that they didn't know what to do with it. I believed they had the cream-of-the-crop kiddos, all these things you have heard, right?

However, after having led in a charter school, he realized that perhaps his perception came from a lack of knowledge regarding charter schools. He continued by saying,

I learned quickly that that wasn't the case. I learned that charters often operate with, not often, they do operate with less per-student per-square-foot than traditional public schools. In my traditional public school role, when I was there, and I had needs, [they were met]. Here, we have to get pretty creative.

This leader approached the responsibility of budget management from a conservative standpoint. Due to fiduciary shortcomings he inherited when accepting a position as a charter school leader, he felt he was hired, in part, to help improve the fiscal operations of the school. Because his school was limited to state and federal funding, as opposed to drawing from local tax bases, he explained the importance of being creative and seeking funding sources that benefitted the school without exhausting the school's stakeholders. He discussed school fundraisers as one important element of providing financial stability.

There is only one pocket, and we can't keep dipping into that pocket over and over and nickel-and-diming folks, so I limit [fundraising] here at the school. I say we are limiting ourselves to only one school fundraiser and one PTSO fundraiser for the year.

Period. Too much nickel-and-diming is one of those things that weighs heavily on my mind. I don't want to put extra burden on parents... They don't need that. We don't need that. So, that definitely weighs on my mind, which has changed that culture of lots of little fundraisers. We do one. I also think that parents are more supportive when they see the vision behind what we are doing.

He wished he had known more about the structures in place for school finance before becoming a charter school leader. "I would have enjoyed knowing the limitations of the finances," he noted, explaining that he wasn't responsible for the same type of organization-wide fiscal duties when he was a traditional school leader that he was now tasked with as a public charter school leader. He felt he could have "been more prepared for it rather than responsive to it" if he had known more about it before taking on the role of a charter school administrator.

Another participant's job responsibilities include overseeing the budget for her school as well. Over the course of her tenure as the leader of her school, her work contributed to growth of the school, including purchasing and improving existing facilities, as well as working with bondholders and other financiers to add brand-new facilities for the school. She shared that she was "a really good manager of finances and pushing the school to success". While she was individually responsible for this task, she explained that it was not an individual effort.

A lot of times, I'll get some input from other people. It's just nice to have a couple different [opinions], either confirming what you're already thinking, saying, 'all three of us are smart!' Or, saying, 'well, you know, I didn't think about it that way, you're

right'. I can look at the numbers, but sometimes it's like, whoa, this is above me! But I have the smart people that can explain it to me and then I can make a decision.

Surrounding herself with smart people and allowing financial decisions to happen organically were important aspects of the financial processes of the school for this leader. Making sure the "timing is right", "sav[ing] money", and "luck" were all part of her thought process when considering fiscal decisions. "There's been some really smart moves. I know a lot of stuff now, but some of the stuff I really just honestly attribute to being luck and persevering," she said.

The budget management process for this charter school leader included more than building-level expenditures. She shared that she was responsible for managing all staff contracts, private contracts with vendors, financing of facilities, insurance and benefits for employees, marketing and development, building maintenance, fundraising, acquiring and managing large grants, and approving all purchases, among other tasks. She added that budget management has included buying school equipment and curriculum as well. She said that when considering the fiduciary responsibilities associated with her position, "there's a lot more there that you have to do" than a traditional building-level school leader would have to consider.

"You've got to make ends meet," another participant shared when discussing the importance of school finance and budgeting in her role as a school leader. She reiterated the concern of other participants that failure to manage and operate the school appropriately, especially financially, could lead to the school's closure, a responsibility that she took seriously. "Other charter schools have gone down in the last three years due to money," she shared, reiterating the importance of making ends meet. Sustainability and investment were

words that this participant found important when describing her role in fiscal management as a public charter school leader.

This participant was a leader who saw herself as someone who needed to do more than maintain the status quo. She could not rely on others in her organization, or some central office to ensure that the budget of her school was healthy. She had hopes and desires for her organization that it would achieve sustainability through continued growth and development. Her thought process as an entrepreneur in education showed that she was worried about the school much like a small business owner would his or her livelihood. While a traditional school may simply replace the administrator and work to rebuild, she shared that her intent carried a personal connection to the life of the school. She said,

If you want to build something that is sustainable, that is going to go on after you're gone, you have to make sure this place is solvent and that you can make money.

You're not making money for your own personal gain, but you are making money to keep the business going and to keep it operating.

The same participant was also concerned with the way she invested money. By investment, she was not referring to stocks and bonds, but instead the outcomes produced by the budgeting decisions she made. She wanted to ensure that her "return on investment" of the public funds the charter school used to operate was as high as possible. She sought the "best bang for [her] buck" when thinking about her budget. She went on to explain the thought process of maximizing the return on investment by asking several self-reflective questions, including "Am I investing well?", "Am I being solid with the money that the state has given me?", and "Is that a good business decision?".

Like other participants, this practicing charter school leader felt constrained by the school's budget compared to the needs she felt the school had. She had to make budgetary decisions that did the most for the most people, and sometimes that mean saying 'no' to certain needs. Among the needs that she left unsatisfied were staffing the positions of a social worker and a school resource officer (SRO). "Our school population would really benefit from a social worker," she said, "so if I had a funding mechanism for that, that would be phenomenal". While not a common staff position, she felt that the demographics of her student population warranted this position. She simply could not find unallocated staffing funds to cover the position or "figure out a way to get reimbursed for it", so she did not feel she could proceed with that need in the budget. Likewise, she wished her school could have a full-time school resource officer, as the school was only able to borrow services and support from the local municipality in times of need. Other schools "actually have a full-time SRO at all times" she said, but when considering this addition to her school's budget, she conceded, "I think that's expensive. I don't think we can afford it." While these decisions were hard to make for her, she fell back on an analogy she had heard and used in education for a long time. She said,

You're entitled to a free and appropriate public education. So, you're entitled to a car that's running, not a Cadillac. Not the Cadillac. I want to give you the Cadillac just because I love the Cadillac, but I need to make sure you have a Ford with a running engine. That's it.

This was also her interpretation of how she should ensure the ideas of sustainability and investment when considering the fiscal management of her school. While it may not always

be exactly what she wanted, it worked, and it was meeting the goals she envisioned for the school.

Staying ahead of the competition. Study participants shared a number of different strategies they employed to be and remain competitive as schools of choice. Among these strategies were student recruitment, student retention, marketing, and other entrepreneurial ideas with the goal of being appealing to prospective families and students. For a business to function, it needs patrons. While traditional schools have a nearly guaranteed ‘customer’ base, as Barbara Lewis would say, charter schools must attract clientele to their ‘businesses’ and then retain their ‘customers’ to ensure the ‘product’ is viable and sustainable, as Joyce Banks noted. The need to attract, recruit, and retain students falls on the shoulders of public charter school leaders. For the purpose of this study, retention deals with the broad concept of a student staying at the charter school, not a student being held back in a certain grade at the school.

Study participants had slightly different views on the recruitment and retention process based on several factors, including whether they were operated by CMOs or not, how long their schools had been in existence, and how long they had been administrators. For participants who led schools overseen by CMOs, the function of marketing and recruitment was led by the CMO, but their positions required them to be involved in the process. For participants who led independent charters not affiliated with a CMO, the responsibility of ensuring the competitive nature of the organization fell squarely on them. Participants who served at well-established charter schools found the need to market and recruit to be relatively minimal, as they felt the school’s reputation and performance drove the process. Participants at younger charter schools felt a strong need to market their schools and to actively pursue

student retention strategies. Finally, the tenure of the participant affected participant perspectives on recruitment and retention. Longer-serving participants generally felt that these concepts were a function of the school's success and that the success of the school would naturally solve these questions. Shorter-serving participants felt that an emphasis on recruitment and retention would, in turn, create a successful school.

Several of the summative evaluation criteria of participants' professional responsibilities included concepts related to staying ahead of the competition. Some participants shared formal recruiting and marketing strategies for their schools. All participants cited the need to produce long waiting lists for their organizations as a sign of the overall health of the school. Participants also agreed that recruitment and retention were important to their jobs and were essential for their schools.

As leader of a school of choice, Michelle Stewart felt the first step in getting students to come to her school was exposure. "We're a school of choice, and it does take time for people to know you're even here," she said. She worked in tandem with several people within her organization to market Bridgewater Charter School. "We have marketing plans," she said. Part of those plans included going to marketing events, places where prospective students and families could learn more about the charter school. She also asked parents of students at her school to lead parent groups as part of a marketing plan. She said that parents are her school's "best recruiters". While these tasks were completed by others in her organization under her direction, she was also heavily involved in the process. "I do a lot of community presentations, and I have people come [visit] the school, like community leaders, and I do community speeches, and I go to different clubs," she shared when discussing her involvement in providing community exposure for her school. Ms. Stewart shared that these

tasks required a certain type of person, the type of person she was. “If you are not a very good public speaker or communicator, people may or may not want to join as readily,” she said.

As Michelle Stewart embarked on the process of marketing the school and gaining exposure in her community, she also maintained the importance of the root of charter schools’ existence; charter schools existed to provide and be something different. She said, “when I think of marketing and recruitment, I think about it like being an entrepreneur. I try to think outside the realm of what we are already doing.” This showed Ms. Stewart’s desire to be progressive and to develop her school. In her case, she was not only trying to stay ahead of the competition, but she had to win a race that was started without her or her school.

Retention was also on Ms. Stewart’s mind when thinking about how her school should function. She shared that both recruitment and retention were part of her annual evaluation. “It’s important that our families are coming back, right? If they are not coming back, then something is wrong. Those retention numbers are important for us,” she said. Ms. Stewart cited the retention numbers for the school when she said, “we have 98% of our families re-enrolled for next year. So, really high numbers. That’s what we want to be striving for.” High retention rates were one of the vital signs of her school. It showed her that students and families were satisfied with the product of her school. The process of recruiting and retaining students was one of “investing in people” for Ms. Stewart.

Another school leader described how telling the story of her school was advocating for her school. Amid controversies, bad press, negative perceptions, and other circumstances that she had navigated as the leader of her school, she felt that being the public face of her organization, one who could advocate for her school, was an important part of staying ahead

of the competition and keeping students. “You have to advocate for your school in order to serve your students,” she said. One form of advocacy took her to the state’s capitol building on behalf of the school organization. “I’m down at the capitol quite a bit,” and “I talk to legislators” she said, as she felt part of her job was “political advocacy”. In the end, staying ahead of the competition came down to one thing for her; “it’s a school of choice, so you have to have a good school”. Once that element was in place, which she felt it was, then “you have to tell people about it. That’s entrepreneurial,” she said. She felt that successful recruitment was born from the fruits of having a good school, as opposed to recruitment driving the success of the school.

To retain students, this school leader reiterated the importance of having a good school culture. She said, “we have to build a good school culture, which we have really put a focus on this last year by doing things such as the outings we organize once a month.” She hoped that this cultural development helped set her school apart from others in attempts to remain competitive. She shared that these schoolwide outings were essential to building a community that students and their families wanted to be a part of. She again noted that, she had to “run a good school” to keep students and families interested in the organization. She felt that the same advocacy she exhibited in order to recruit students and tell the story of her school benefitted the retention, as it showed that somebody was looking out for the organization, which built internal trust among students and staff.

Another study participant shared that an emerging challenge of being a practicing charter school leader was dealing with competition, as opposed to being the competition. Previously, keeping up with the competition had been the challenge of traditional districts as they lost students to charters and other schools of choice, but as more and more charter

schools are approved and opportunities for choice expand, existing charter schools find themselves in a position of needing to ramp up their efforts to remain relevant and competitive as they defend their positions against newer schools. This participant didn't feel that recruitment was a major concern or need for her school, though she did often share with the community the unique approach to education and the opportunities that the school provided. She explained that her school had recently found itself dealing with the issue of remaining competitive. "Right now, we're not the new, shiny charter school. We're the old dog. [There's] a brand-new charter school down the road from us building a beautiful building!" While she cited "pretty hefty" waiting lists for her school as an important indicator that parents and students still wanted to choose it, she still felt that the school needed to continue to develop its product to keep up with the changing educational landscape in her community. She noted that there had already been some impact on her school due to the impending opening of another charter school nearby. As the new charter competitor offered fewer grade levels than her school, at least at its inception, she felt like time was short to ensure she was developing her program to be competitive in a free-market-style education arena. "It's the programmatic side of things that will keep families and kids here," she said. She was not worried about being "new" and "shiny", as she was confident that she had the ability as a leader to progressively develop her program to be competitive and desirable.

Summary

Four themes emerged in connection with participants' perceptions of themselves as entrepreneurs in education. These themes were pressure to be innovative, likening charter school operation to running a business, fiduciary responsibilities and duties, and staying ahead of the competition. All participants felt a close connection between their work and

entrepreneurialism. Each felt that there were ties between public charter school leadership and business leadership. Each perceived that their work as a charter school leader was more business-like than what a traditional public school leader would face. While many shared that their work was similar to the work of a traditional public school leader, several shared that their work was more broad in scope, often traversing administrative and leadership territory that landed somewhere between that of a traditional building level administrator and a district superintendent. Some felt their work was superintendent-like. Budgets were larger, personnel issues were greater and more intricate, developing the concept and ideologies of the school were inherent, and marketing the school to recruit and retain students was important. While these responsibilities were all part of participants' work, none were required to be certified as superintendents. The laws regarding certification in the state in which this study was conducted mandated only that charter school leaders maintain a current principal certification. This was said to be a disconnect for some participants, but all felt that they were capable, sometimes solely capable in the case of one participant, to perform the tasks required of their jobs.

Professional Standards in Public Charter School Leadership

Participants in this study were asked to reflect on their perceptions of professional standards for school administrators, especially as the standards applied to their work as practicing public charter school leaders. The third research question of this study was: Which of the National Policy Board for Educational Administration's Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (2015) are most relevant to practicing public charter school leaders? Participants did not dispute any of the standards, and collectively viewed the standards as both important and necessary in guiding their work as charter school leaders. While

participants did share that some of the PSEL seemed more relevant than others in their work, all of the standards were relevant in some way to each participant. The themes that emerged in response to the third research question of this study include participants' perspectives on the connection between multiple standards as outlined in the PSEL and one unifying concept.

The PSEL were shared with participants prior to meeting for in-person interviews. A condensed form of the PSEL (Table 1) was also provided to each participant for their reference during the in-person interview. Three themes identified in the study were supported by participants' views of the PSEL:

1. Leading with a focus on the mission, vision, and core values of the organization.
2. Managing the organization beyond the students.
3. Creating a student-centric organization.

Each of these themes is represented through the narrative of several of the administrators who participated in the study and represents an analysis of the data as collected and synthesized by the researcher.

Leading with a focus on the mission, vision, and core values of the organization.

Participants in this study overwhelmingly agreed that adherence to the mission, vision, and core values of their schools was the essential to their work as practicing public charter school leaders. PSEL Standard 1, "Mission, Vision, and Core Values", was referenced regularly by participants as an anchoring concept of their leadership practice. Standard 4, "Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment", and Standard 10, "School Improvement" were important to the development of the mission, vision, and core values of the organization. Standard 10 was previously discussed as an important part of authenticity in leadership. Each school also had a charter document that served as a contract between the school and its authorizing agency.

The charter document served as a ‘how-to’ manual for each public charter school. In each of these documents, the school’s mission and vision were the first things lined out. Beyond this, the charter documents and other school-related documents were littered with references to each school’s guiding statements. While these missions and visions naturally varied from school to school, each provided elements that contributed to the uniqueness of each school. Participants felt a strong pull to ensure that their schools adhered to these concepts. When discussing the mission, vision, and core values of their schools, each participant was observed to be particularly passionate about the cause he or she was discussing.

One participant felt a particularly strong pull to the foundations of her school. She called herself a “mission person”. She said “our charter and our founding principles guide us”. As she considered the connection between the PSEL and her work, she said that she would undoubtedly have to connect them all back to the school’s charter document. Whenever she was making key decisions about the school, she noted “I always try to go back to our charter and our [educational methodology]”. When she thought about the impact of the school’s charter document on the decisions she made, she explained:

It’s super-important to me that the charter, I mean, the charter was established for a reason and I support it. All the families that have their children here, they support it, so if there’s a question that goes back to the foundation of the school, boy, I’m on the phone to the founders. I want to keep that going... I try to always seek out the historians, so to speak, of the school.

When asked to describe the impact of the PSEL (2015) on her work, the same participant was quick to share that Standard 1, Mission, Vision, and Core Values, was

important. The process of developing the mission of the school through, and within the student population proved to be imperative.

Mission, vision, and core values are the basis for any school. I know that here at [our school], it's important to us. Our mission is to develop [student] leaders. We go to that all the time. When students need some redirection, you think [of the mission], but equally important to me is the word 'developing'. If a student needs redirection, this is an opportunity for development. We're developing this. We don't expect students to come in and already be leaders. It's a process for all of us.

This leader also substantiated her connection to the mission, vision, and core values of the school by considering her relationship with key figures within her school system, including the previous administrator at the school with whom she was able to work for several years in a mentor/mentee relationship before assuming the full-time leadership role at the school. She considered the foundational development of the school as knowledge she needed to be successful in her work.

The charter is unique. Those who developed the charter, our founding board members, our founding principal and things, they know those things, the [founding] method, they know that like the back of their hand. For me, I'm often referencing it or looking it up, or someone will say... check the charter. Or, you might read through this part, or try to stay with that. Not that I've jumped outside of it and have had to be redirected, but just that, my weakness is I wish I had that foundation. I wish I was there at the foundation.

She added that "when I make decisions, I always try to be mindful of the charter and the [founding methodology] and such. I reach out to others."

While waiting to meet with Mr. Stone at Pleasant Valley Charter School, the researcher scanned the cavernous entryway to the school. Above the entryway to one of the hallways to the school, the researcher noted the following words separated by bullet points: Self-Discipline, Compassion, Responsibility, Friendship, Work, Courage, Perseverance, Honesty, and Loyalty. Turning to the entrance of another hallway, the same list of nine character traits adorned the wall above. After sitting down in Mr. Stone's office where the same nine words were printed on the wall, he was asked about their importance. Referring to previous struggles of the school to find operational success, Russell Stone explained,

the mission, vision, and core values are what really turned this building around. That clear vision of the direction that we need to head towards. I think if people know what's going on, it takes away any mystery or confusion. And then we, of course, go forth. As you can see on the wall behind you, we have our core values. They are everywhere [in our building]. Everywhere. We work really hard to make sure that is part of the kids' everyday life. If a kid goes through this school in a day and they aren't recognized or are not acknowledged in some way about a core value, then we didn't do something right. It is a huge deal.

Referencing the core values of the school, Mr. Stone shared that understanding the mission and vision of the school are directly tied to these nine values. As a leader, he described his work as both mission-specific and purpose-specific. He felt that being a visionary leader and looking to others who are the same quantify public charter school leadership.

In leading my building, vision is a big one. When I see the people I am drawn to as excellent leaders... specifically in the charter world, it is those that have that vision of

augmenting, making bigger, stronger. Certain folks augment things; they grow them. It is not a 'we'll weather this', but a 'we will make this'. We will use the rain that is there. We will make it grow. That is the mentality. When I see that, it is inspiring, so that is what I think of when I think of charter administrators.

Another participant was an administrator with a significant role in the founding of her charter school. She offered insight into the development of a school and how the mission, vision, and core values of a school were created. After having worked in the private sector for some time, she shared the reason for developing a charter school.

I got more and more frustrated with how schools were working with our kids. It just was not working. So, I came up with a pilot project. It was a private [school]... I worked with several families and parents and [asked] what they would want to see in a school. I [also had] taught in and was used to a small school, and I really like that. So that's what I wanted to create again. That one-room schoolhouse feel. A small school, even thought it might be a bigger school.

The same leader felt that traditional school systems were not providing adequate inclusion for all students, which became the basis for the mission and vision of her charter school organization, and charter schools in general. She noted that "charter schools are a little different. They're a little unique because we came with a focus". This prompted her to develop a private entity which later was re-envisioned to become a public charter school that served a diverse student population purposefully. Her school had students graduate with as many as 29 college credits and some who've gone on full-ride scholarships to major colleges and universities, while others had endured significant hardships during their academic careers

but still went on to complete their high school diplomas. These students embodied the type of education that the school's mission and vision hoped to provide.

You have a lot of kids with learning differences. Family dynamics that are a little different. That is attractive to [this] particular population. For us, it's the same thing. They are attracted to [our school]. It's exciting to see that we would attract a variety of different people, and I like that.

The ability to have a mission and vision that clearly attract a specific student and family constituency provided further strength and stability for the school. This school leader explained that having a strong mission and vision produced a sense of pride in the school. "I want that for our kids. I want them to identify and to be proud of their school and to connect with that."

Managing the organization beyond the students. Participants in this study shared that the nature of their responsibilities as practicing public charter school leaders were unique, especially when considering the operations and management of their schools. Their management responsibilities went beyond ensuring solid academic outcomes for students. Participants considered their role as different from the role that a traditional public school building administrator would play, even though from the outside, this may be how their roles looked or were perceived. They described their roles as including a variety of operational responsibilities, serving as instructional leaders within their schools, and ensuring the general day-to-day operation of the school beyond the academic needs of students.

Charter schools function independently, even when authorized by the local school district. Participants explained that this meant the school was internally and independently responsible for all aspects of the operation and management of the organization and its

facilities. PSEL Standard 9, “Operations and Management”, Standard 8, “Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community”, and Standard 7, “Professional Community for Teachers and Staff” all contributed to the development of managing the organization beyond the students.

“We started up in this nasty, little old church building,” one participant recalled when recounting the opening of the school she led. As the leader of the school, one of her responsibilities was ensuring there were appropriate facilities for the students of the school. “What’s funny is that we were sort of proud of it! It really was nasty. It was awful!” The first facility for the school was an old church building that was no longer in use. The school leased this church building and accompanied it with several portable classroom spaces. She remembered that “in the beginning when we first opened up, there wasn’t a nurse, there wasn’t a counselor, [and] there wasn’t a VP”. Many of the operational aspects of a school that are expected to be in place in a traditional school are often luxuries for nascent charter schools. As the school planted roots and became more established, the participant recalled the time when her budget could afford some of these charter luxuries when she noted, “if you say, well, I think we can afford this, then we’re thinking, wow! We’re really up-town!”

This leader attributed the development of the operations and management of the school over time, and especially its budget, to several things. “There’s been some really smart moves. I know a lot of stuff now [that I didn’t know before], but some of the stuff I really just honestly attribute it to, you know, being lucky and persevering.” She considered herself a strong manager of the operations of the school which has contributed to its continued success. “I’m a really good manager of finances and pushing the school to success. I hire good people and let them do their job. I don’t try to get in there and micromanage.” When

describing her managerial style and relationship with founding members of the school and school board, she noted,

they wanted me to continue to ask them questions. Well, ‘what do you think about this?’, or, ‘how should I do this?’. And I am kind of a bulldozer, and I was just like, no, this is what I’m going to do and this is what needs to be done, and we need to meet these requirements with the state. So, I didn’t always turn to them and ask them questions. Sometimes it was because I knew what I needed to do. Sometimes it was because of a time issue. I didn’t have time to say, hey, ‘what do you think about this?’. It was like, you hired me for this job. But they were upset if I made any changes that I didn’t get approval for. And I thought, but you hired me to do this job.

This participant shared that her vision for the school and her perceived ability to carry out that vision were essential driving forces for her success as a public charter school leader. She knew that she was nearly solely responsible for the direction and success of the school. “There’s nobody else you can blame. You can’t say, like in a [traditional] district, well, it was the secondary director.”

In sharing this, the participant provided a glimpse into what operating and managing a charter school meant to her. Since her school had been well established for some time, she was beginning to see the fruits of her labors. The path of operating and managing a school led her and her school to a place that was a far cry from its old and “nasty” beginnings. She even recently managed the process of opening a new school building. This included working with bond holders and other vested parties to ensure future fiscal solvency of the developing property. She reflected on her journey from her previous work as a teacher to becoming a school leader by sharing,

when I look back, there's no way that I would think that [over the years] you're going to build a couple of buildings. You're going to do all of these bonds. You're going to do all this stuff. There's no way we would have thought this back then. I was just a teacher...

For another practicing charter school leader, operating and managing a charter school was unique because of its relationship with its authorizer, the local school district. While the district authorized and oversaw the charter school, the school was still on its own in ensuring that it ran independently. She shared, "as you know, because we're a charter school, we're also our own district. Our own business. No one else is taking care of facilities for us. [We have to manage] our own fiscal responsibilities." The charter school led by this participant was able to access the continuum of special education services that the authorizing district provided at the normal cost to the charter school. Beyond this, the authorizer did not offer any other services to the charter school. The participant was quick to note that operating and managing a charter school did not "magically happen". The school was tasked with finding a way to "do it on [its] own *and* find a way to pay for it".

Charter schools often are required to get creative when considering operational strategies. Another participant shared one way that her school thought outside the box to support itself and consider the future of the school in ways that extend beyond student achievement.

We have an afternoon kindergarten program... and it's all pay-based. That is a definite resource that helps our school. When we moved into this building, it was about two years after we were in the building that we started that program. It is self-sufficient. It supports itself. But it also helps, I know some of the revenues over the

years have helped us pay cash for that property. We bought property next to us and hope to get other lots next to us. Being mindful that prices are going up, we were able to get that at a much lower rate than it probably is even now.

The property that this participant referred to was a piece of land adjacent to the current lot the school sat on. When discussing purchasing the land, she described one specific role in operations and management as compared to what a traditional building principal might experience. Purchasing the land was “a collaboration with the [governing] board”. The participant continued by saying,

I think that [governing] board piece in a charter school is much different than if you were a principal in a public, traditional district. That relationship with your board and the professionals that are on the board is very different.

Working closely with a governing board was an element that study participants felt was unique to their work and important to the operations and management of their schools. This leader described her administrative job as “collaborative work with the board”. It extended beyond her individual work with the board. She explained,

Making sure that I’m representing the staff in the school and the way that we do school. Even though many of [the board members] are volunteering, [I am] helping them to understand that we might need to do something different. How are you as a board going to support that? I think the messaging of all of that, that has been really important. Once the board is on, messaging to the whole [school] community is next. I’m definitely part of that piece.

Perhaps one of the experiences that this leader shared when describing the management of the school was the importance of ensuring that families understood the

purpose of the school. Engaging with families and the community was important. It was noted that often parents and students of a school simply didn't understand what the school was about. She found herself having to educate her own constituents regarding the nature and purpose of not only her own school, but charter schools in general. "I've had to stand up, especially the last two years, especially in the special education arena, where families are like, 'why are [special education students] here?' It's like, hello! We're a public school for all students." As a public charter leader, she explained that this is a role, along with most operational and managerial responsibilities, she has taken on because no one else can. "In a charter school, you don't always have a bunch of people around you getting it all done."

Several participants shared that charter school leaders are often solely responsible for the decision-making associated with the operations and management of the charter school. Compared to the role of a traditional school principal, which Joyce Banks likened to a "wheel in a cog", she called a charter school leader "the wheel *and* the cog". Ms. Banks shared that charter school leaders "really are very often the entire ball of wax, and it has a life." By having such weighty responsibility, this participant felt the operational and managerial decisions of her role helped her ensure buy-in from her school community.

I would like everybody to have buy-in. On that part, I try to help them to understand it and to understand the decisions. Sometimes, the decisions we made have not been so easy. But at the same point, there are just certain things that I can't tell you all of the back-end stories of this or that. You just are going to have to trust me and know that what I do for the school is for the best for the school. What the board and I do together is for the best. So, in that aspect, and that comes back to ethics and trust that I would make the best decisions even though [others] might not know.

While the leadership role of a public charter school leader is broad and often falls on the shoulders of the individual, Ms. Banks noted that it can't be about the individual. "You don't have to be so dogmatic that 'my way is the best way'. It's really not. You have to be able to take in a variety of different perspectives and then come up with something that would meet the needs of most."

Creating a student-centric organization. While several PSEL standards were noted as most important to the day to day work of practicing public charter school leaders, each leader who participated in this study was observably passionate about the importance of putting students and their families first in their organizations. Practicing public charter school leaders were interested in creating a school culture that fomented community concepts which catered to their student populations. This included PSEL Standard 5, "Community of Care and Support for Students", and Standard 3, "Equity and Cultural Responsiveness". Beyond the perceptions of participants, charter documents and student handbooks for each school reflected the importance of these concepts as they related to students as well. Phrases like, "a positive, safe, inclusive, and supportive learning community", "students will participate in schoolwide activities that build community and relationships with all staff members", the school aims "to capitalize on building upon the strengths of each student by [creating] strong connections to community resources for all students", and "provide an additional choice to families...to meet the needs of their children and assist the traditional school district in successfully preparing students to contribute to the community in meaningful ways" were common among such documents. While these phrases are likely found in literature for schools of all types, participants in this study felt a strong connection with this work. As part

of the mission of each school and likely of educational leaders in general, participants took it personally to ensure the success of their students.

As the leader of Centerville Virtual Charter School, Macy Spencer had a mantra: “It’s important because kids are involved”. In other words, the most important part of her decision-making and administrative responsibilities was to ensure that students, and what’s best for students, were at the heart of her work. “That is what we are all here for, is each of those little kids, and big kids.” While the tasks that she was asked to do were varied and far-reaching, she always was working to ensure that her school was providing the best possible opportunity for students to feel a sense of community, care, and support. “It is about the kids. You have to keep that in mind all the time. Sometimes you can lose sight of that when you are in the middle of reports and things.”

One of the ways Ms. Spencer’s school worked to develop this community of care and support, especially as a virtual charter school, was to provide student bonding experiences and outings.

We have to build a good school culture, which we really have put a focus on this last year by the outings we do once a month. Across the state it’s all hands on deck.

There are no classes that day, so we have a great turnout. We try and get an admin at each one. We will have several [locations] around the state in different regional cities, and we will have staff there. We hand out school shirts and hats and get those out to the kids. They love that. We do picnics, we roller skate, we ice skate. It’s all about getting the kids together.

Besides creating an environment of community among students, another way that Macy Spencer prioritized students and created a community of care was through academic support. This was at the heart of the culture of her organization.

We have an entire family academic support team in the school that, when a kid is showing non-engagement, bam! We will put them in there and they have extra support for that. That is important, but it all rolls together to get down to that student.

When considering the importance of creating a community of care and support for students, another participant was quick to share that students are the literal driving force behind decisions made at her school. Her personal philosophy was that educators have a responsibility to “educate all students”. She said that at the school she led, “it’s more like a family here”. She attributed this community of care and support for students to the philosophical underpinnings of the charter school. She shared some of the philosophy behind how she considered creating this community of support to best help students find success.

We’re able, because of how we do school here, to get kids out. Fieldwork. We’re inquiry-based. We’re student-led. The last three to five years, we’ve seen a really different level of engagement in our kids, especially the 6th, 7th, and 8th grade levels. They’re not engaged, then it looks like disrespect. Versus teachers being reflective, and even us administrators being reflective, and saying, ‘what’s missing here?’ We’re saying these kids are [the problem]. [To combat this], we’ve spent some time the last 2 years, and then this next year, as a whole planning year of, what if we had just started out 6th, 7th, and 8th grade junior high, middle school, whatever you want to call it, brand new? What would we do? The board has given us the liberty to do that. So, there’s a lot of unknowns right now. Does that mean that we knock down some walls

and just have a big open space? I don't know. This has to do with societal shifts. There's research showing even how adolescent brains are changing. I ask, 'how is education changing?' As a charter school and with a supportive board and a shared leadership model within our staff, we can make those shifts easier. As a leader, as an educational leader, [I am responsible for] helping staff make these shifts.

Creating a school culture that fostered this community of support for students was important to this leader. "In order to promote learning, and a high level of learning", creating this community is "incredibly important", she said. "What is the culture of our school? The culture, or the environment is important. Highly important." When revisiting the importance of PSEL Standard 5, she reflected by asking, "How are we supporting students? There is a lot in [these standards] that is showing more about what is laying that really rich foundation for learning".

As a leader of a school of choice, another participant was emphatic about the need for the school she led to ensure the choice parents and students could make to attend it was a decision that was easy to make because of the community of care and support provided for them.

My motto is, and I say it every year, and I say it often throughout the year, is that parents and students have a choice to come here. They also have a choice to leave here. So, we have to do something different for kids that they are not getting someplace else, or they're going to leave. Part of that is to cultivate an inclusive, caring and supportive school community. That is important. Our kids have to know that we care about them and that we are going to make sure that they're included, that they're part of our family.

She shared some of the ways that her school worked to provide this type of community for students when she said,

in our school, we do that through a variety of things. We have advisory every day, which is a close group thing. Through advisory, we check with parents and other teachers. We have a time where we have staff meetings on Wednesdays. We ask, 'are there any student concerns?' Teachers are required to make five phone calls home a week. That's all of those parent contacts to get to know their kids. Teachers are required to come to X number of student activities to show that they're supporting kids. When new kids come to our school, [we assign] them a partner; we have a group that shows them around. We call them student ambassadors. That's the one thing we make sure we do. I think a lot of charter schools do that because I think a lot of charter schools know we're in business because of these kids.

Beyond these activities, the participant also shared that her school had a fall festival and other school-community building activities that she felt contributed to the community of support for students and their families. These activities included family math nights, family reading nights, and family picnics among others. She felt that her burden, as a charter school leader, to provide this family-style school community was higher than that of her traditional public school counterparts.

The biggest difference here with our kids is that sometimes in the traditional public school, [certain activities are] cool, but they're a side thing. The big things are sports and things like that. Here, our kids know that they're the focus. They're the top dogs. This is really important.

Providing the best experiences for students because they have the choice of whether they are going to attend a charter school, or attend some other school was at the forefront for this leader. She viewed the education landscape as competitive, but one that could easily be won by providing the right level of care and support for students.

If you're doing a good job, if you satisfy your customers, if you're there, there's just all of those factors. If it's about the kids and you're passionate about what you're doing and the education you're giving them... I'm very passionate, and so are my teachers about the education these students get. If we're giving them good experiences, they will continue to come.

Summary

Practicing public charter school leaders who participated in this study viewed the NPBEA's PSEL (2015) as both positive and important to their work. While most were generally unfamiliar with the standards before participating in the study, they agreed that the standards were valuable and did generally sum up the work they do. Comments, including those from one participant who said, "these standards are obviously well thought out and necessary", who shared that the standards "give guidance to decisions that are made", and another who explained "these standards are succinct, guiding principles that are the foundation of the work" were consistent with the sentiments of all participants. Of the PSEL standards, Standard 1, Standard 9, and Standard 5 were identified by participants as ranking most relevant, but all of the standards were addressed by participants as important and relevant.

While no participant felt the PSEL were negative, unnecessary, or incorrect in their valuation of the work charter school leaders do, several participants noted that the standards

were perhaps too much work for one person to do or be responsible for. Public charter school leaders are often the sole administrator of their organizations and the burden of leadership is not often shared. When reflecting on the PSEL, Barbara Lewis shared that they were “a lot for one person to do”, and that “you can’t do any of this by yourself”. Macy Spencer also said that the standards are “a lot for one person”, but that “you have to do it, so that is ok”.

Study participants were supportive of the concept of standards as an important checklist for school leaders to consider when completing their work. While several noted that the standards were not evaluative in nature and were not directly tied to their organization or their state’s summative administrative evaluation criteria, that they could serve as a helpful tool for administrators to consider when self-evaluating. Most participants shared that though the PSEL were not evaluative, that they were confident that they adhered to them daily. Barbara Lewis said, “I do all of these things. Even if they weren’t lined out here, you’re doing all of these things without really knowing,” and Russell Stone agreed that the PSEL were “embedded” into his daily work.

Traits of Public Charter School Leaders

The review of literature in chapter two of this study explained many of the traits of public charter school leaders as found by researchers. The model for leading in public charter schools conceptualized by the researcher in the same chapter included the idea that identifying traits of practicing public charter school leaders is an important component of understanding who charter school leaders are. While not a research question of the study, identifying these traits relevant to the participants in this study was imperative to supporting the model for leading in public charter schools presented in chapter two of this study. Common traits among study participants are included in this section of the findings of the study. These

commonalities are supported by data collected from participants during the in-person interview, documents collected and reviewed by the researcher which were pertinent to each case, and observations of participants during in-person interviews.

Practicing public charter school leaders who participated in this study shared many professional traits. When asked to describe their work, all participants were quick to share their perspectives on who they were and how they defined themselves as leaders. Common traits of study participants were grouped into the following themes:

1. Charter school leadership responsibilities are expansive.
2. Feeling a strong sense of ownership.
3. Seeing the glass as half-full.

These traits were common among study participants and were supported by participants' personal perspectives, documents analyzed by the researcher, and observations of participants during in-person interviews.

Charter school leadership responsibilities are expansive. Study participants unanimously suggested that their positions as public charter school leaders led them to fill a variety of roles found in traditional public schools. While being an administrator was their primary role, they felt that this role had a different definition, and thus created a unique trait of needing to be flexible and versatile as a leader. In unsolicited fashion, participants each shared their perspective of the perceived vastness of their work. Many participants likened their work to 'wearing many hats', while another said that there were "lots of buckets we have to fill" as charter leaders.

One principal felt that charter leaders "are spread so thin", noting that she filled the role of Title I director along with her responsibilities as an instructional leader, disciplinarian,

and principal of the school. Another participant shared that the responsibilities of charter leadership included serving as the federal programs director, assessment coordinator, counselor, and administrator of the school. Another leader shared that the “sheer volume of the job” was often immeasurable.

Being multifaceted is a trait that is directly connected to flexibility and versatility as a school leader. Having “a wide-ranging set of skills” was seen by another participant as imperative to the position of public charter school leader. Serving in a role that encompasses the responsibilities of both a building administrator, or principal, and a district-level superintendent was a common view among participants that also prompted the necessity of a professional trait like versatility. By being flexible, one administrator found that it was easier to take on and manage the expectations of the organization that these positions would be filled by the administrator.

Another commonality among study participants was that they perceived that they do more than school leaders who serve in non-charter leadership positions. This included the traits of being “workaholics” as one participant said, and even being “overcommitted” as another shared less positively. Several participants shared specifically that they felt charter school leaders do a lot more than traditional district leaders.

Through observation, the researcher noted that most participants did not show this disposition with the intent of expressing superiority or to compare themselves as better than traditional school leaders. While participants expressed admiration and collegiality towards their traditional school counterparts, they simply viewed their work as different. Instead, this sentiment seemed to be shared in a way that was almost burdensome. “It’s so much more than any other school,” said one participant when discussing the level of accountability that

was required of the school and organization by the authorizing agency, the state department of education, and the stakeholders of the school. Similarly, another participant shared that “we have all the same requirements as regular schools...plus the scrutiny”. The scrutiny this participant was referring to included duplicative reporting required by authorizing agencies, media attention, and public perception, all of which were expected to be dealt with and handled by the school administrator.

Another leader shared that the job of a charter school leader never slept. “Your job, all the time, is ongoing,” she said. Participants felt that even when they were not ‘on the job’, they were still constantly bombarded with phone calls, text messages, emails, and other communication regarding their work. Several shared that they knew traditional school leaders faced similar circumstances, but they still felt that their connection to the school as a charter leader put them in a different position than a traditional school leader. This position was perceived to be more work than that of a leader of a traditional school.

Feeling a strong sense of ownership. Being a public charter school leader was considered to be more than just a job for study participants. Each had unique ties to his or her organization that gave them an extreme sense of ownership of both their professional positions and their organizations as a whole. While their professional titles labeled them as leaders of the school, participants likened their relationship with their professional identity as almost familial in nature. Some participants were founding administrators of their schools, literally making them part of the DNA of the organization. The familial nature of the organizations led participants to feel ownership of both their positions and their organizations. “It’s sort of your little baby that you’ve created,” said one participant who was a founding charter school administrator. Others, while not founding administrators, were long-time

members of their organizations, having served in other professional capacities within their organizations before taking on a schoolwide leadership position. Only one participant had no ties to the organization before accepting an administrative position at the school.

Along with this ownership came the need for an administrator to be a good fit for the school. Being a good fit led to increased dedication and ownership of the mission, vision, and philosophies of the school. “You have to fit; it’s not for everyone,” said one participant. The same participant continued by saying,

if you don’t believe in the philosophy, that is okay, but it’s not the position or the location for you, and you’ve got to be okay with that. I really feel that I believe in the philosophy and the methods. I believe in the charter. I believe in [the founding methodology]. And if I didn’t, or had a concern with that, it wouldn’t be a good fit for me.

Having an administrator that was a good fit for the school promoted buy-in and pride according to study participants. One shared that the administrator’s leadership had to embody the “identity of the school”, instead of the school changing course to embody the identity of the leader. Because the leader was asked to fit the school structure, ownership became inherent, or, as shared by another study participant, leading at the school simply would not be a good fit. Once a leader achieves ownership, one participant shared that only then would the organization be able to fully reach its goals and fulfill its mission.

Seeing the glass as half-full. Another common trait among study participants was a generally positive disposition regarding their work and professional responsibilities. Though some participants shared that their workload was large, and they were spread thin, participants were happy and satisfied with their work. This was apparent both through participants’ own

perspectives they shared, as well as the observations of the researcher when interviewing participants. Participants were determined, steadfast, and happy in their positions. Using words and phrases like “perseverance”, “enjoying the work”, and “positivity”, participants’ perceptions of their professional dispositions were optimistic. One participant noted that charter school leaders must “have a certain disposition to really enjoy the work,” and that disposition was one of seeing the glass as half-full.

When discussing the beginning of her tenure as a charter school leader, Barbara Lewis recalled being questioned about her vision and plan for the school by stakeholders. When asked what her backup plan was if or when her original plan failed, she simply said, “This is the plan! It’s going to work!”. She was determined to see her plan through and had confidence in herself, her team, and the stakeholders of the school that the plan was solid and would be successful. While she admitted that things haven’t always gone according to plan over the course of her leadership and that there is never any guarantee that a charter school will succeed, she said that “you can’t ever think ‘what if’” once a plan is in motion. Instead, one must stay the course with determination and solve problems as they occur. The disposition of perseverance was essential for her and she felt this trait was essential for anyone who wanted to be a public charter school leader.

Several other participants shared that they simply love what they do. They were passionate and saw their job as more than profession, but as a lifestyle. “You have to enjoy working,” said one leader. Participants were satisfied with their work and enjoyed the challenges that were associated with their leadership positions.

Summary

Practicing public charter school leaders who participated in this study shared that certain traits were essential to their identities. These traits included flexibility, versatility, perseverance, having a tireless work ethic and willingness to work often, taking ownership of their positions and organizations, being a good fit, positivity, determination, and optimism. All participants expressed elements of each of these traits and that data revealed that participants had these traits in common.

Summary of Findings

Chapter four presented the findings of this study, concluded from triangulation of the research data. In-person participant interviews, review of documents relevant to the topics of the research questions, and observations of participants during the interview process were used as sources of data for this multiple case study. The findings were presented topically as they pertained to each research question. Themes were identified and presented to support the investigation and exploration of each research question. Research data from participant interviews, document reviews, and observations were presented to support each theme.

Chapter 5: Summary, Discussion, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to understand the perspectives of practicing public charter school leaders as they considered their leadership philosophies and practices. The study aimed to identify the traits of public charter school leaders, especially as they related to the National Policy Board for Educational Leadership's Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL, 2015), Authentic Leadership Theory and Development, and entrepreneurial thinking. The traits of practicing public charter school leaders were identified by analyzing their perspectives on these ideas. The study aimed to identify and provide information about who practicing charter school leaders are and what they consider to be essential elements of their leadership practices and responsibilities. This study was viewed through the lens of professional standards, with a specific focus on the concepts of Authentic Leadership Theory and entrepreneurial thinking. Chapter one introduced the study, including contextual background on public charter schools. Chapter two presented the theoretical framework for the study along with a review of the literature pertinent to this framework. This review included literature related to charter school leadership, authentic leadership, and entrepreneurship in school leadership. A model for leading in public charter schools was conceptualized by the researcher as a result of the theoretical framework (Figure 1). Chapter three presented the research methodology of the study. Findings of the study were shared in chapter four. Chapter five presents a summary of the findings, a discussion of the finding, including conclusions of the researcher with regards to the theoretical framework of the study, and recommendations for further study.

Summary

The findings in this summary are connected to the study's research questions and theoretical framework, which produced the model for leading in public charter schools (Figure 1) which was conceptualized by the researcher from concepts found in the literature.

Research questions of this study were:

1. What are charter school leaders' perspectives of their identity as authentic leaders?
2. What are charter school leaders' perspectives of themselves as entrepreneurs in education?
3. Which of the National Policy Board for Educational Administration's Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (2015) are most relevant to practicing public charter school leaders?

The theoretical framework of this study provided the background and foundations as presented in the literature surrounding these three questions. This framework was used to support the model conceptualized by the researcher to provide an identity of who practicing public charter school leaders are from both theoretical and practical standpoints. The components of the framework included Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015), Authentic Leadership Theory, and entrepreneurial thinking, as well as a broad view of the traits of practicing charter school leaders as supported by the literature. The model produced by the researcher posited that authentic leadership, entrepreneurial thinking, and a charter leader's traits all work within the confines of widely accepted leadership standards. When considering this model, the point at which these ideas meet was the target outcome of this study.

The research questions guided the study and provided foreshadowing to the overarching themes that emerged during data analysis. The themes that emerged as direct responses to the research questions were:

1. Practicing public charter school leaders identified specific character and performance traits that they felt were representative of themselves as authentic leaders and which defined their true-selves.
2. Practicing public charter school leaders identified specific tasks, skills, and leadership abilities that defined them as entrepreneurial thinkers, or business-minded leaders.
3. Practicing public charter school leaders identified which of the PSEL were most relevant to them in their work.

Discussion

The discussion and conclusions of the data collected in this research include the connections made by the researcher to the literature and to the model conceptualized by the researcher. Each of the research questions is addressed from a comparative perspective by the researcher. The discussion and subsequent conclusions indicate how the findings of this study support or refute the findings of the research detailed in the review of literature. The discussion also considers whether the data support the model for leading in public charter schools developed by the researcher at the onset of the study.

Public charter schools, much like traditional schools, operate as non-profit business-like entities. Whereas traditional public schools function with a district office answering to a state's department and board of education, a public charter school does the same on a micro-level. The findings were not meant to argue the merits or demerits of the existence of charter

schools or their authorizing agencies. The research assumed that, in the region of the study, these groups existed and were a part of the educational landscape. The research also did not discriminate between charters that were operated by for-profit charter management organizations and those that were grassroots operations answering only to their own boards, authorizing agencies, and appropriate state agencies. Both were represented in this study. The findings were intended to better understand practicing public charter school leaders' perspectives on the topics addressed in the research questions. None of the participants of this study earned their income as a public charter school leader from for-profit organizations. All participants were public employees of their schools, and, as an extension, employees of the state in which the research was conducted.

Authentic leadership. For the purpose of this study, authentic leadership was described as “a pattern of leader behavior that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development” (Walumbwa et al., 2008, p. 94). Authentic Leadership Development was the theoretical concept developed by Walumbwa et al. (2008) as a development of Bass's (2000) conceptualization of authentic leadership. The first research question guiding this study sought to better understand the perspectives of practicing public charter school leaders on authenticity in leadership. No guiding or leading information was provided to participants to ensure an unbiased and objective approach to the topic.

Four themes emerged from this study relating to authenticity in leadership, including expressing perseverance and consistency, applying mindfulness in their approach with others,

understanding the benefits and challenges of transparency, and modeling moral and ethical behaviors as leaders. When comparing these themes to the definition of authentic leadership used for the purpose of this study, the findings are broadly consistent with previous research. Of the six concepts outlined by Walumbwa et al. (2008) as important to authenticity in leadership, there was general thematic alignment of the findings of this study with five of them. These included promoting positive psychological capacities, developing a positive ethical climate, fostering greater self-awareness, developing an internalized moral perspective, and exhibiting relational transparency (Walumbwa et al., 2008). The findings of this study did not directly support Walumbwa et al.'s (2008) concept of balanced processing of information, though some ideas relating to this concept were expressed in the theme of perseverance and consistency as a school leader. The other five concepts presented by Walumbwa et al. (2008) were strongly supported by the data collected and analyzed in this study.

George (2015) identified five elements of leadership that were requisite to becoming an authentic leader. These were increasing self-awareness through introspection and feedback, understanding personal values that guide leadership, finding a sweet spot that integrates one's motivations and greatest capabilities, developing a team of individuals to guide and support a leader along the way, and integrating all aspects of life to find personal fulfillment (George, 2015). Consideration of each of these elements could provide a leader with a plan to develop him or herself as an authentic leader. The findings of this study strongly support George's conceptualization of how a leader can be considered authentic. Comparing the themes and data from the findings of this study to George's leadership elements, study participants would all consider themselves to be authentic. Both collectively

and individually, participants were self-aware and expressed a desire to be better both for themselves and for the betterment of their organizations. Participants expressed the importance of personal values, especially moral and ethical behaviors as they related to their professional practice, as imperative to their leadership. Each participant felt they were the 'right fit' for their positions, with several even noting that they would never go back to a traditional public school leadership role. Their jobs were satisfying and motivated them to be their best selves each day. While many study participants frequently noted that they were often the final decision-makers within their organizations, they also each touted at least one individual, in many cases several specific individuals, on whom they relied for advice, wisdom, guidance, and direction. They created support teams to help them be their best selves. Finally, several participants also shared that their personal and professional lives were seamlessly intertwined. They were not either at work or off work, but instead felt their job was constant. They noted they were always available for calls and conversations no matter the time of day or year. This created an integrated life where their professional responsibilities innately connected with their personal life, which was fulfilling and satisfying for study participants.

The researcher concluded that all study participants felt they were authentic leaders. Beyond this, participants felt that authenticity was important, if not essential, to their work. While there was no expectation on the part of the researcher that a participant would feel he or she was not authentic, authenticity was found as highly important to each participant that he or she was seen by others as consistently striving to do the right thing for the greater good of the school or organization, as opposed to working for personal gain or satisfaction. This conclusion supported Duignan's (2014) conceptualization of the role of authentic leadership

in promoting high-quality outcomes in educational settings. Duignan (2014) noted that authentic leadership was “more than just an individual’s true self” (p. 157); it required the development of relationships. Study participants often cited the impact of their work on their constituents and stakeholders. They were aware of their positions within their organizations and how their decisions affected others. They worked to ensure these decisions were benefitting both the organization and the individuals that made up the organization. Duignan (2014) also concluded that educational leaders must embrace core values and exhibit ethical, moral, and authentic leadership behaviors. The themes from this study directly support Duignan’s conclusions.

The themes that emerged from the findings of this study with regards to practicing charter school leaders’ perspectives on authentic leadership were connected to the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (NPBEA, 2015) which served as the lens through which this study was viewed. The first theme, expressing perseverance and consistency, connected to a variety of standards. Most notably, perseverance and consistency connected to Standard 1 of the PSEL, which outlined the importance of developing a strong mission, vision, and core values of an organization. Study participants felt that their role was literally to live and model these values that were inherent to the existence of the organization. The second theme, applying mindfulness in their approach with others, was particularly relatable to PSEL Standard 3, Standard 5, Standard 7, and Standard 8. Each of these standards were people-oriented. The people addressed in these standards included students, staff, families, and community. Participants time and again shared the importance of their decisions on those around them. Their authentic nature emerged as they thought not about themselves but were mindful of those they served. The third theme, understanding the

benefits and challenges of transparency, connected primarily to Standard 2, Standard 9, and Standard 10. These standards were both ethical and operational in nature. Being transparent for the sake of practicing in an ethical and moral fashion was important to participants. They also connected transparency to the operations and management of the school which often led to discussions about school improvement and the betterment of the organization. Being transparent was cited often as challenging and rewarding. The fourth theme, modeling moral and ethical behaviors as leaders was supported directly by PSEL Standard 2. This standard noted that “Effective educational leaders act ethically and according to professional norms to promote each student’s academic success and well-being” (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015, p. 10). Participants felt that moral and ethical behavior was not only part of their jobs but was requisite of their individual desire to perform their jobs in the right way.

Data collected from this study support the idea that authentic leadership is an important component of the model for leading in public charter schools conceptualized by the researcher. Understanding the perspectives of practicing charter school leaders provided a better understanding of what authenticity means and looks like in practice. This provided insight into not just if authenticity was important, but how it was important to the work of practicing public charter school leaders. Data provided strength to and support for the component of the model proposed by the researcher which identified authenticity and knowing one’s true-self as a leader as an important element of the identity of a charter school leader.

Entrepreneurial thinking. The model for leading in public charter schools developed by the researcher included the idea that practicing charter school leaders needed to

be entrepreneurial thinkers to be successful in practice. This component of the model was derived from Rigby's (2014) content analysis of the literature, which found that entrepreneurial thinking was an important concept in educational leadership, as it employed solutions to problems in education using processes and procedures typically found outside of the traditional education sector. Borasi and Finnigan (2010) identified ten themes relevant to entrepreneurial attitudes and behaviors of successful change-agents in education. These themes were summarized by the researcher in Table 5. The findings of this research produced four themes. The themes that emerged from the researcher's analysis of the data were pressure to be innovative, likening charter school operation to running a business, fiduciary responsibilities and duties, and staying ahead of the competition. These themes were deeply connected with the professional standards that participants identified as most important to their work.

Rigby (2014) identified how entrepreneurial logic connected to eight different dimensions of educational leadership, including goals of instructional leadership, focus of attention, theory of change, modes of assessment, instructional practices, leadership practices, role of the principal, and role of the teacher. When comparing the themes that emerged from the analysis of the data in this study to Rigby's findings, there are similarities and differences. Similarities include the importance of innovation as the school leader seeks to move the organization as an outcomes-focused decision-maker. Using data to drive the innovative practices of an organization was also similar. The findings of this study strongly supported the idea that "rather than relying on the public sector to ameliorate the problems in public education, the premise of the entrepreneurial logic was that the marketplace could provide more efficient solutions" (Rigby, 2014, p. 623). While charter schools are public schools,

participants shared that they exist in an area somewhere between traditional public schools and private school offerings. In fact, one participant shared that her work as a leader was more similar to that of a private school head than a traditional public school leader. This supports the conceptualization of Rigby's (2014) logic of seeking solutions to the problems of public education by looking outside of it and into the private sector or business world.

The data from this study also differed from Rigby's ideas in some ways, as they provided support for the concept that practicing charter school leaders shared a perspective that they were business people who were focused on the operations of and successful management of more than the instructional component of the school. Some participants noted that while they thought the connection between charter school operation and business operation was valid, there were aspects of school operation that simply could not be compared to running a business because of the nature of schools as non-profit, government-supported, and government-overseen agencies. The findings and themes indicated that practicing charter school leaders were focused on the business decisions of the entire organization while at the same time being concerned about the growth and progress of the students. Student recruitment and retention was a factor that supported the existence and sustainability of the business.

The four themes that emerged from this study with regards to entrepreneurial thinking were found to strongly support the work of Borasi and Finnigan (2010). The entrepreneurial behaviors and attitudes of successful change-agents correlated strongly with the findings of the data analyzed in this study. While terminology varied between the themes that emerged from this study and those derived by Borasi and Finnigan (2010), the conceptual underpinnings of both were similar, and the data from this study could easily be compared to

the findings of their work. Perhaps most importantly the responsibility of the educational leader to “be alert and ready to seize opportunities” (Borasi & Finnigan, 2010, p. 17) was encompassing of the themes of this research. While Borasi and Finnigan (2010) did not directly address the importance of the school organization as business-like, the attitudes and behaviors of leaders as they were described aligned well with the perspectives of participants in this study.

The themes that emerged from the findings of this study with regards to practicing charter school leaders’ perspectives on entrepreneurial thinking were connected to the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (NPBEA, 2015) which served as the lens through which this study was viewed. The first theme, pressure to be innovative, was connected to PSEL Standard 4, Standard 7, Standard 8, Standard 9, and Standard 10. Innovation crossed over a variety of standards for participants because the forward movement of the school as an organization was viewed as an important factor of the existence of the school. The second theme, likening charter school operation to running a business, and the third theme, fiduciary responsibilities and duties, primarily connected to PSEL Standard 9 for participants. This standard is concerned specifically with the operations and management of the school. While other elements of school leadership were business-like for participants, the majority of the data collected indicated that school leaders thought often in an entrepreneurial fashion when making operational and managerial decisions. The fourth theme, staying ahead of the competition, was closely connected to Standard 10 which was described as seeking continuous improvement. While all schools are charged with continual improvement, study participants saw improvement as a means to ensure the stability and future of their organizations as much as keeping up with evolving state and federal requirements.

The findings of this study with regards to the importance of entrepreneurial thinking as a public charter school leader support the model for leading in public charter schools as developed by the researcher. Employing entrepreneurial thinking was found to be an important part of participants' identities as leaders and, beyond this, even individual personality traits for most participants. The use of entrepreneurial thinking defined participants as people as much as it did professionals. Participants shared that they could not be successful or complete the requirements of their positions without thinking about the sustainability and livelihood of the organization. This forced them to think beyond the instructional and educational outcomes that went on in their schools but pushed them to consider the operational needs of the organization.

While each charter school leader discussed his or her work in the context of entrepreneurial thinking, different participants expressed varying degrees of the use of entrepreneurial thinking, or even the need to consider entrepreneurial concepts, depending on several criteria: their job description, their longevity in their position, and their position relative to the founding of the school. First, several participants in the study had job titles and descriptions that did not put them in a position to regularly consider elements necessary for running the business of the school. Some participants had job descriptions that more closely linked them to the educational performance of staff and students than they did ensuring the health of the business elements of the school. In these cases, other administrative personnel within their organizations were more responsible for, and assigned specific duties relating to these business elements than the participants themselves. Though this is the case, all participants did consider their jobs to include a need for entrepreneurial thinking. Second, longevity in the position showed to have an effect on the need for a participant to consider

themselves responsible to be entrepreneurial. To increase participant confidentiality, no specific number of years of service in an administrative position has been associated with each participant. Though this is true, the data conclude that participants who had served in their current roles at their current schools were much more likely to consider the business-running elements of charter school leadership than those participants who had served for less time. Participants with fewer years of service were either less familiar with their work as entrepreneurs or were not responsible to consider this aspect of their work. Third, a participant's position relative to the founding of his or her school showed a contrast in entrepreneurial thinking among participants. This concept is linked to the amount of time in a position, but not exclusively, as some participants had not been long-serving, but were deeply connected to the founding of their schools. Some participants were founding administrators of their schools. This means they were hired by a governing board at the onset of the school, usually at least a year before the school's opening, to serve as the school's principal or administrator and to immediately begin establishing the needed elements for a successful school opening. While all participants agreed that their professional responsibilities expected them to be entrepreneurially-minded, those participants that were serving as administrators at the founding of their schools expressed more depth and complexity in their responsibilities as entrepreneurial thinkers.

Professional Standards for Educational Leaders. Professional standards served as the backdrop of this study. Findings from the first two research questions have already been connected to the professional standards. In this section, a brief discussion will continue with regards to the importance of the PSEL in the work of study participants. The research intended to explore the roles and responsibilities of practicing charter school leaders as they

related to the NPBEA's Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (2015). The researcher expected the roles and responsibilities of participants to be congruent with the PSEL. Participants were asked which of the PSEL were most relevant to their work. Three themes identified in the study were supported by participants' views of the PSEL, including leading with a focus on the mission, vision, and core values of the organization, managing the organization beyond the students, and creating a student-centric organization. Beyond these themes, which were supported by several PSEL standards each, three standards were ranked as most important for participants. These were Standard 1: Mission, Vision, and Core Values; Standard 9: Operations and Management; and Standard 5: Community of Care and Support for Students.

While all the standards were found to be important and relevant to the work of practicing public charter school leaders, participant data strongly supported the themes identified as the most pertinent to their work. As leaders of organizations that find themselves making significant, organization-altering decisions, placing the strongest focus on the mission, vision, and core values of the school was found to be the most important standard for study participants. This supported the findings of Finn et al. (2016) when they described the role of a charter school leader as similar to that of an independent-school head with wide-ranging authority and significant responsibility within their organizations. Participants were unanimous in describing the heavy weight of their jobs with regards to operations and management, mostly because there was no one else in their organizational structure to take these jobs on as well as limited funding to support auxiliary administrative roles to aid in this work. All participants noted the importance of students as the driving force behind every aspect of their work.

Standard 6, which focused on the idea of developing the professional capacity and practice of school personnel was the least supported standard of the ten. While some participants shared briefly about this, the data did not produce strong support for the importance of this standard in the practice of public charter school leaders. This is not interpreted or concluded by the researcher that Standard 6 is irrelevant, but there was not data to positively represent this standard in the findings.

Participants were asked to share what they felt was missing from the PSEL standards to get a better understanding of how their job may deviate from the expectations of the standards. While participants shared some ideas that were broad in nature, even explaining that they felt the standards were “too broad”, participants were not able to offer specific roles or responsibilities that fell squarely outside of the context or definition of one of the ten PSEL. This led the researcher to find that the PSEL did provide a sound foundation to explain the nature and work of practicing public charter school leaders. This finding aligned with the researcher’s model for leading in public charter schools. Having a firm grasp of and the ability to perform all of the responsibilities outlined in the PSEL was essential to practicing public charter school leaders.

Participants felt strongly that the PSEL were positive and applicable. This supported the ideas of Murphy (2017) when he concluded that the PSEL were not limited to use by professional preparation programs. Participants felt strongly that the standards were to be used as guides and “checklists” of their work, also supporting the idea that the PSEL are directionable, not measurable (Murphy, 2017). The findings of this study support the need for guiding concepts to be available for practicing charter school leaders to help them navigate the sometimes-unchartered waters or isolationist nature of their leadership positions.

Applying the findings to the conceptualized model. The findings of this dissertation addressed the need that precipitated the study. The problem addressed by the study was the lack of understanding, as presented in the literature, of what skillset, mindset, and profile public charter school leaders needed in order to perform their jobs (Carpenter II & Kafer, 2010, Carpenter II & Peak, 2013). The aim of this study was to fill the gap in the literature of understanding who public charter school leaders are, what they do, and how they perceive their responsibilities. A model was developed by the researcher (Figure 1) as a result of the theoretical framework of the study which proposed that Authentic Leadership Theory, entrepreneurial thinking, and traits of charter school leaders work within the confines of professional leadership standards to provide an identity of who public charter school leaders were and what their perspectives of their roles and responsibilities were. The themes that emerged in response to each of the research questions that guided this study supported this model. None of the key components were found to be irrelevant or nonessential. While the trajectory of each participant as authentic, entrepreneurial, and unique in terms of his or her traits were slightly different for each leader, all were firm in their support and need for professional standards to drive and direct their work. This supports the model in that all leaders work within the confines of the standards, but each brings a unique approach to the other three components of the model to identify who they are. Each participant could be placed in the center of the model.

Implications. Participants in the study strongly supported the existence, use, and continued development of the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). Authentic leadership, entrepreneurial thinking, and traits of charter school leaders were important and essential to each participant.

While participants may have taken slightly different approaches to putting each of these elements into practice, each agreed to their essential nature. There are many ways for charter school leaders to do their jobs, but there are commonalities among their roles and responsibilities that help define the work that practicing leaders collectively must do and accomplish.

Several implications emerged as important considerations of the findings of this research. First, authenticity in leadership is not black and white. Leaders who participated in this study all felt they were authentic most of the time, but that they could continue to work to become more authentic in their interactions with others. By focusing on the themes that emerged from this study regarding authentic leadership, along with continued leadership development as noted in the work of Baron (2016), leaders can become more authentic. Second, entrepreneurial thinking was an important component of practicing public charter school leaders' work. For existing and future charter school leaders, increasing awareness regarding the entrepreneurial processes that contribute to successful leadership practices was found to be important. The themes that resulted from this study worked to support the concept of the use of entrepreneurial logic in educational leadership as conceptualized by Rigby (2014), but also support a broader application beyond Rigby's (2014) focus on instructional leadership. The data of this study supported the expanded application to other leadership responsibilities; in this case, entrepreneurial thinking was found to be a component of practicing public charter school leaders' work. Third, several traits were found to be common among study participants. These traits supported the work of Carpenter and Peak (2013), but also added breadth to the array of traits that were important to practicing public charter school leaders. These traits supported the need for authenticity in leadership as well

as entrepreneurial thinking, but they also went beyond these two concepts to create a unique identity for charter school leaders that was found to be different from leaders of other types of schools. Finally, the PSEL (2015) were found to be important to practicing public charter school leaders. One implication from this study regarding the PSEL (2015) was that these standards were not well known. Most participants had never heard of these standards before the researcher introduced them. Study participants liked the concept, structure, and function of the PSEL (2015), but wished they could be applied in a more uniform fashion across their profession.

Through their reflections on authentic leadership, entrepreneurial thinking, traits of charter school leaders, and the PSEL (2015), study participants discussed the importance of being prepared for any leadership role in education. For example, one participant shared that one never knows where they might end up working. Participants discussed the importance of having a stronger preparatory foundation for leadership that could span the variety of leadership roles in public education. Participants felt the need to call for change in educational leadership preparation programs, which included better understanding the needs of educational leaders in schools of choice (Dressler, 2001). While all participants felt their formal leadership preparation programs were generally positive in aiding their individual development as leaders, they also unanimously agreed that the programs lacked in preparing them for their current positions. Some participants felt their programs did “the best they could”, understanding that a one-size-fits-all approach was necessary. Nonetheless, they also shared how they thought these programs could better prepare charter school leaders.

When considering a connection between authentic leadership and entrepreneurial thinking, findings supported the idea that authentic leadership was an overarching philosophy

of leading, while entrepreneurial thinking was an element of one's leadership style and a trait of leadership. For study participants, both were relevant in their work. Participants saw themselves as leaders who sought to be authentic through their leadership behaviors and the development of their leadership traits. Entrepreneurial thinking was a trait that most study participants found to be important to either have or develop as part of their professional practice as charter school leaders.

Participants suggested that formal leadership preparation programs should incorporate awareness of leadership needs beyond those of traditional public school roles. Study participants, while positive and supportive of the opportunities provided them during their time as graduate students in educational leadership, felt that their programs did not do enough to expose them to concepts they would need to know as charter school leaders. As the findings of this study have already indicated, practicing public charter school leaders saw themselves as different from traditional public school leaders. They felt that their responsibilities and the weight of their responsibilities were greater. They shared that the decision-making power was potentially more influential. They noted that their role was more than a building-level administrator, even bordering on district superintendency. Because of this difference in self-perception, a difference in preparation needs was expressed by participants.

Participants also hoped formal university-based leadership preparation programs could develop a more robust internship experience for future leaders. To promote practical knowledge of educational leadership, university preparation programs often require graduate students to complete a practical experience. This includes job shadowing, practicum experiences, internships, and even paid, on-the-job training in some instances. Participants in

this study each had practical experiences as part of their leadership preparation programs, coming all of the forms mentioned. Most participants felt that these experiences were positive and productive, but not often practical, as they were sometimes confined to menial tasks to complete their requirements instead of participating in the ‘real’ work of their mentors, or they lacked the time due to an already full-time teaching position to dedicate a meaningful amount of time to practical leadership situations. Study participants strongly supported the need for practical leadership development, as most mentioned the importance of “on-the-job training” being the best teacher. Participants shared that most of their knowledge was not acquired in the classroom, but once they were already doing the job. Some participants benefitted from having been hired as either assistant or interim administrators while still completing their graduate degrees. They felt that these experiences were more beneficial than their graduate coursework. Participants shared that this knowledge and practice would have helped them begin their charter leadership tenures on more firm footing.

Recommendations

While charter schools are often studied, charter school leadership is not well-researched (Carpenter II & Peak, 2013). Though different states have different charter school laws and regulations, leadership of public charter schools is similar from region to region, and state to state. While this study was limited to a specific geographic region, the results of this study are likely transferable. While there may be less of a need to perform the same study in different states to consider the transferability of the results, replicating this study in other states or regions could serve to support the findings of this study. The findings of this study lead to several recommendations for lawmakers, higher education representatives, and charter school authorizing agencies.

Lawmakers could benefit from the following general observations from participants. Participants shared the importance of professional standards (PSEL, 2015) as foundational to their professional practice. They shared that the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (2015) included concepts that they hoped could be reflected in the leadership standards adopted by their state department of education. These concepts were supported by the themes that emerged in response to each of the research questions of this study. The findings of this study supported leadership standards and concepts that were not part of the leadership standards adopted by the state in which participants practiced. Standards from the PSEL (2015) that were unrepresented or underrepresented in the state's standards as supported by the findings of this study included: Standard 1: Mission, Vision, and Core Values; Standard 2: Ethics and Professional Norms; Standard 5: Community of Care and Support for Students; Standard 7: Professional Community for Teachers and Staff; and, Standard 9: Operations and Management. Lawmakers could consider developing and revising the state educational leadership standards to include concepts from these specific standards found in the PSEL (2015) that were supported by themes identified in the findings of this study.

Higher education representatives could benefit from several participant observations as well. Insights provided by participants may help higher education faculty members better prepare public charter school leaders. First, while participants felt prepared to serve as educational leaders, they felt under-prepared for their work specifically as charter school leaders. When considering the PSEL (2015), many participants shared that, during their graduate studies in educational leadership, they created portfolios of artifacts showing that they had relevant experience with a variety of state-mandated leadership standards. While

this was true, they shared that providing more information on how leadership may look different in different school settings would have been of extreme value to their work. They shared that this could be achieved through a broader internship program. They felt that current internships are often done in parallel with a student's regular job in education which can be limiting in scope of responsibility, understanding of leadership styles, and understanding of different leadership needs. Allowing students the opportunity to observe and work with a variety of leaders across a variety of settings was shared as an ideal solution for them.

Another observation of participants that higher education representatives could benefit from was the view of participants that their work was business-like. Rigby's (2014) conceptualization of entrepreneurial logic in leadership was the catalyst for this discussion among study participants. Participating charter school leaders felt underprepared to seek solutions to problems in education using processes and procedures typically found outside of the traditional education sector (Rigby, 2014). Cross-curricular development at the post-secondary education level could provide tremendous benefit to future school leaders. Participants shared the importance of marketing, budgeting, interpersonal relationships, and innovation as key concepts of their work as practicing public charter school leaders. While emphasis is placed on educational leadership and the breadth of content necessary to prepare leaders well, participants shared that entrepreneurialism and business-mindedness was imperative to their work. Requiring educational leaders to add non-education-specific business fundamentals coursework to the leadership training process could be beneficial to all educational leaders.

Higher education representatives and college personnel may also consider participants' comments regarding their perspectives of their work being more than that of a building-level leader, even bordering on district-level and superintendent-style leading. One concern of study participants was their lack of preparation in the realm of school finance. Discussions could be had among higher education representatives to encourage potential charter school leaders to add more education in education finance beyond the coursework required for a standard K-12 principal certificate.

Charter school authorizing agencies, including local school districts and state-sanctioned charter school commissions could also benefit from the findings of this study. First, participants, while satisfied with the support teams they developed within their organizations, shared that there could never be enough resources available to them to ensure successful operation. Participants felt that thematically driven resources tied to each of the PSEL (2015) could be beneficial to them. They sought opportunities to network with other charter school leaders, which they shared only happened on their own accord. They hoped to see an annual or biannual gathering where charter leaders could share experiences, resources, and opportunities to better themselves and their schools. Second, participants noted that site visits and other oversight practices of authorizers often felt punitive and negative. They hoped to improve the already good relationships with their authorizers by making these visits and oversight practices more positive and productive.

Summary

Chapter five presented a discussion of the research and the conclusions of the researcher in answering the research questions and comparing the results of this study to the work outlined in the review of literature. Themes which supported the findings of each

guiding research question were revisited and compared to the model for leading in public charter schools that was conceptualized by the researcher. Implications of the study were presented, and recommendations were shared.

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Appendix A: Participation Inquiry Email

INITIAL PARTICIPATION INQUIRY EMAIL

Authentic Leadership and Entrepreneurial Thinking in the Context of Professional Standards for Educational Leaders: Perspectives of Practicing Charter School Leaders

Subject Line: Dissertation Research: Charter School Leadership

Dear _____,

Hello! My name is Matthew McDaniel. I am a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Idaho and a charter school administrator in Nampa. I am writing a dissertation on the perspectives of public charter school leaders on several leadership concepts and how they relate to practice. The purpose of this research is to produce a dissertation that shares the profiles of a variety of charter school leaders to better understand the work they do.

I would like to invite you to participate in my research. Participation includes an in-person interview with open-ended questions which will allow you to share your experiences as a charter school leader. Questions will ask about your experiences in educational leadership, your perceptions of being an authentic leader, your perceptions of being an entrepreneurial leader, and your leadership as it relates to the National Policy Board for Educational Administration's Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (http://npbea.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Professional-Standards-for-Educational-Leaders_2015.pdf). I also hope to review documents related to leadership at your institution to learn more about what is expected of you as a leader. All names of people, places, and institutions will be assigned a pseudonym in the research to ensure that participation is anonymous.

Please reply to this email to let me know if you would be willing to participate in my study and we can arrange to get board/administrative approval of my involvement at your school as well as set up a date and time for me to visit you.

I am the primary investigator of this study and can answer questions you may have about the research. I am conducting this study under the direction of my major professor, Dr. Penny Tenuto, in the College of Education, Health, and Human Sciences at the University of Idaho. I am excited to meet you and learn more about your work and your experiences!

Kind Regards,

Matthew McDaniel, M.Ed.
(208) 571-1481
mcda6168@vandals.uidaho.edu

Appendix B: Informed Participant Consent

INFORMED PARTICIPANT CONSENT

Authentic Leadership and Entrepreneurial Thinking in the Context of Professional Standards for Educational Leaders: Perspectives of Practicing Charter School Leaders

Project Title: Authentic Leadership and Entrepreneurial Thinking in the Context of Professional Standards for Educational Leaders: Perspectives of Practicing Charter School Leaders

Principal Investigator: Matthew M. McDaniel

Nature and Purpose of the Project: This study is being conducted to better understand the traits of public charter school leaders. The data collected will be used as a primary source for a doctoral dissertation. It may also be used in the future in the publication of a book, scholarly journal articles, and/or presented at national conferences.

Procedures: Should you choose to participate in this study, you agree to:

- A. Take part in an open-ended interview with the primary investigator while being observed in your professional environment. The interview will be audio recorded, transcribed verbatim, and returned to you for review, editing, and changes you deem necessary.
- B. Allow the investigator access to public-record documents pertaining to school leadership at your institution.

Discomfort and Risks: No discomfort or risk is anticipated during the interview or observation period. If you do experience discomfort, you may withdraw your participation at any time. If it is found that you are experiencing stress or emotional discomfort, the investigator will stop the interview.

Benefits: Your participation in this study will help contribute to the body of literature and knowledge about charter school leadership traits. This study seeks to enrich both the educational community and the community at large about the traits of public charter school leaders.

Confidentiality: All responses to interview questions as well as documents contributed to the research process will remain strictly confidential. All participant names, institution names, and place names, as well as any other identifier will be assigned a pseudonym for the purposes of this research. All documents, both digital and hard copy, will be securely stored in a locked cabinet and under password protected digital security to which only the principal investigator and the faculty sponsor will have access.

Refusal & Withdrawal: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may refuse or withdraw your participation at any time without penalty or prejudice by informing the principal investigator.

I acknowledge that Matthew McDaniel has fully explained to me the purposes and procedures, and the risks of this research. He has informed me that I may withdraw from participation at any time without penalty or prejudice. I understand that I will be given a copy of this consent form. I freely and voluntarily consent to my participation in this research project.

Any questions you have about the study can be asked before, during, or after the interview and will be answered either at the time of the questions or at a later date.

I am 18 years old or older and have reviewed this consent form and understand and agree to its contents.

Participant Signature:

Principal Investigator Signature:

Date:

Contact Information:

Primary Investigator
Matthew McDaniel, M.Ed., Ph.D. Candidate
University of Idaho
College of Education, Health and Human Sciences
Sciences
Department of Leadership and Counseling
Ph. (208) 571-1481
mcda6168@vandals.uidaho.edu

Faculty Sponsor
Penny Tenuto, Ph.D.
University of Idaho
College of Education, Health and Human
Sciences
Department of Leadership and Counseling
Boise, ID 83702
Ph. (208) 364-4015

Appendix C: Participant Demographics Questionnaire

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS QUESTIONNAIRE

Authentic Leadership and Entrepreneurial Thinking in the Context of Professional Standards for Educational Leaders: Perspectives of Practicing Charter School Leaders

In anticipation of our upcoming interview, please complete the form below to the best of your knowledge.

1. Which term best describes your current position as an educator? You may choose more than one.

Principal

Vice or Assistant Principal

Administrator

Charter Management Organization Administrator

(Other, please define) _____

(Other, please define) _____

(Other, please define) _____

2. Please provide a brief description of your work responsibilities.

3. In what area(s) are you currently certificated?

4. What is your highest level of education achieved?

5. How many years have you worked in education and what types of positions have you held?

6. Please indicate the gender you identify with: Male Female

7. Please describe your nationality or ethnic background.

8. Please select the following that best describes your age group:
 Under 30
 30-39
 40-49
 50-59
 60-69
 70 and over

9. Please feel free to share any previous employment or types of professional experiences you have had outside of education that have influenced your work as a charter school leader.

10. Please attach your resume to this document or as a separate attachment in an email response.

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Authentic Leadership and Entrepreneurial Thinking in the Context of Professional Standards for Educational Leaders: Perspectives of Practicing Charter School Leaders

1. Please give me a brief history of your professional journey as an educator that has led you to where you are today.

The first topic I'd like to ask you about is professional standards for educational leaders.

2. Describe the role you think professional standards play or should play in public school leadership.
3. I'm interested in your perceptions of the National Policy Board for Educational Administration's Professional Standards for Educational Leaders.
 - a. What do you feel are the positive and negative aspects of these standards?
 - b. How do they align with your work as a charter school leader?
 - c. As these standards are written for all school leaders, is anything missing from these standards from your perspective specifically relating to charter school leadership? If so, what?
4. If you had to choose, which of the NPBEA's PSEL standards stand out as most relevant to your work and practice as a public charter school leader? Why?

I'd like to talk for a bit about some specific leadership styles and traits as they pertain to your work as a charter school leader.

5. What does it mean to you to be authentic as a leader?
 - a. Does anything keep you from being authentic, and if so, what?
 - b. Please think of five words or phrases that best describe your identity as an authentic leader.
 - c. How do you think others see you as a leader?
 - d. What is a weakness you feel you have as a leader?
 - e. What is the role of transparency in your leadership practice (openness with others that provides them with the opportunity to be forthcoming with their ideas, challenges, and opinions)?
 - f. What is the role of ethical and moral conduct in your leadership practice?
 - g. How do the opinions of others factor into your decision-making as a leader?
6. What does it mean to you to be entrepreneurial or business-minded as a leader?
 - a. What is the role of entrepreneurship as it relates to your leadership practice as a charter school leader?
 - b. Does anything hinder you from being entrepreneurial, and if so, what?
 - c. Please think of five words or phrases that best describe duties you perform in your practice that you would consider entrepreneurial.

- d. Can you provide a specific example of a time when you feel you were required to lead from an entrepreneurial perspective?
- e. What is the most important thing you have learned over the course of your time as a charter school administrator with regards to entrepreneurial leading?

7. I've asked you about both authenticity and entrepreneurship in your work.
- a. How do you feel these concepts relate to one another?
 - b. Is one more important than the other to you? If so, why?

I'd like to ask you a few questions about charter school leadership in general.

8. Have you led in both traditional and charter schools?
- a. (YES) Can you describe for me your perceptions of the differences and similarities between leading in traditional public schools and charter schools?
 - b. (NO) What is your perspective on the differences in leading both?
9. What do you wish you had known about charter school leadership before you became a charter school leader?
10. What does it take to be a good charter school leader?
11. What advice would you give to someone who would like to become a charter school leader?
12. Describe how you feel formal university-based administrator preparation programs prepare future charter school leaders.
13. Describe your level of preparation from your formal university-based administrator preparation program for the job you do today.
14. Is there something specific that you feel these programs should consider with regards to training future charter school leaders?
15. I've asked you questions about professional leadership standards, authenticity in leadership, entrepreneurship, and charter leadership in general. Is there anything about any of these topics or your job in general as a charter school leader that you want people to know?
16. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your work?

Appendix E: Data Collection Checklist

DATA COLLECTION CHECKLIST

Authentic Leadership and Entrepreneurial Thinking in the Context of Professional Standards for Educational Leaders: Perspectives of Practicing Charter School Leaders

The researcher will seek to collect as many of the following documents and data from each participant as possible.

| Document or Data Source | Collected (X) |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Informed consent NOTES: | |
| Interview NOTES: | |
| Resume NOTES: | |
| Demographic questionnaire NOTES: | |
| School policies on administrative responsibilities NOTES: | |
| Continuous improvement plan, Staff and Student Handbooks NOTES: | |
| Administrator job description NOTES: | |
| Charter document NOTES: | |

Appendix F: Letter of Exempt Certification

University of Idaho

Office of Research Assurances
Institutional Review Board

875 Perimeter Drive, MS 3010

Moscow ID 83844-3010

Phone: 208-885-6162

Fax: 208-885-5752

irb@uidaho.edu

To: Penny Lee Tenuto
Cc: Matthew McDaniel
From: Jennifer Walker, IRB Coordinator

Approval Date: May 09, 2018

Title: Leadership Styles and Traits of Public Charter School Leaders

Project: 18-095

Certified: Certified as exempt under category 2,4 at 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2,4).

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board at the University of Idaho, I am pleased to inform you that the protocol for the research project Leadership Styles and Traits of Public Charter School Leaders has been certified as exempt under the category and reference number listed above.

This certification is valid only for the study protocol as it was submitted. Studies certified as Exempt are not subject to continuing review and this certification does not expire. However, if changes are made to the study protocol, you must submit the changes through VERAS for review before implementing the changes. Amendments may include but are not limited to, changes in study population, study personnel, study instruments, consent documents, recruitment materials, sites of research, etc. If you have any additional questions, please contact me through the VERAS messaging system by clicking the 'Reply' button.

As Principal Investigator, you are responsible for ensuring compliance with all applicable FERPA regulations, University of Idaho policies, state and federal regulations. Every effort should be made to ensure that the project is conducted in a manner consistent with the three fundamental principles identified in the Belmont Report: respect for persons; beneficence; and justice. The Principal Investigator is responsible for ensuring that all study personnel have completed the online human subjects training requirement.

You are required to timely notify the IRB if any unanticipated or adverse events occur during the study, if you experience and increased risk to the participants, or if you have participants withdraw or register complaints about the study.