Dispositions of Emotional Intelligence in School Principals

Efrain Martinez

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Dispositions of Emotional Intelligence in School Principals

Efraín Martínez, MA, MEd

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements of

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

National College of Education

National Louis University

December, 2020
DISPOSITIONS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Dissertation Hearing

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of
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in the National College of Education

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Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

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Date approved
Abstract

School principals address problems that extend way beyond the classroom. This qualitative study is about dispositions of emotional intelligence in school principals. The participants interviewed were novice school principals or principal coaches. The results showed that principals tend to address the needs of others more than their own. Strategies are shared on how to improve emotional intelligence. Additionally, the study provides recommendations that school districts can implement to ensure the success of school principals.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, school principals, self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, social skill, Daniel Goleman, Dale Carnegie, anticipatory mindset
Preface

The feeling of pride when becoming a principal is not easy to describe. The person honored with that responsibility often has to address problems that extend way beyond the classroom. School principals are expected to master their own emotions when addressing difficult situations without formal professional learning on emotional intelligence. This study addresses the importance of emotional intelligence for school principals and other professions (nursing, armed forces, police). To gather the necessary evidence to conduct this qualitative study, I conducted a purposeful sample strategy with semistructured interviews with key informants. I chose four novice principals (1-5 years of experience) and four principal coaches as participants. They were chosen because of my perception of them as emotionally intelligent. The results showed that principals tend to address the needs of others more than their own. Strategies are shared on how to improve emotional intelligence. Additionally, the study provides recommendations that school districts can implement to ensure the success of school principals.
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“It takes something more than intelligence to act intelligently.”
--Fyodor Dostoyevsky

Pursuing a doctoral program is a journey that involves many individuals. This process of learning is really meant for one to deconstruct oneself in order to renew into a better human being.

I’m very thankful for having the support of the professors at National Louis University. I would like to start thanking my mentor, Dr. Carlos Azcoitia. From the moment I was accepted into the doctoral program, I requested for him to be my advisor; little did I know that I would end up as his mentee and his friend. Thank you, Dr. Angela Elkordy, my dissertation chair, for your kind support along this journey. Thank you, Dr. Harrington Gibson, for always being patient with my uncontrollable enthusiasm. Thank you, Dr. Cheryl Watkins, for being an exemplary public intellectual. Thank you, Dr. Richard Smith, for showing me the entrance door towards emotional intelligence.

I’m very thankful for having the support of so many in Chicago. I would like to thank all the individuals that have supported me along this leadership journey. I would like to particularly thank my Orozco Familia for supporting me even when I was down.

The support of my personal family has been instrumental. Thank you, Barbie, for always guiding me since we were children. The way you love my children is the way we always imagined it! Thank you, Alejo, for being the child that you are. You bring joy to our family and your deep sense of humor and creativity will take you where you want to go! Thank you, Sofia, for being the child that you are. Your pursuit of justice and equity will take you where you want to go! Thank you, Rossi, for giving the world these two precious beings. I still remember the
quote I memorized to say during our wedding: “Para Rubén Darío, la poesía es azul. Para mí, Rosamaría, la poesía eres tú!”

This memory, almost 20 years later, makes more sense than ever!

When I was a child I imagined how awesome life would be when I grew up. That ideal came true because of you!
Dedication

“What is hell? I maintain that it is the suffering of being unable to love.”
---Fyodor Dostoevsky

“Our capacity to love increases progressively, and loving energy has the capacity to heal ourselves as well as others.”
---David Hawkins

“The awareness of the presence of love becomes stronger and stronger. We will feel lighter and lighter. Life becomes progressively more effortless.”
---David Hawkins

To the memory of my father, Agustín, who taught my sister and I all about Dale Carnegie’s *El libro de oro* and “el que persevera, triunfa.”

To ERAS., you are pure joy!

To Alejo & Sofía, because you are the children I wanted to be and way beyond!

To Rossi, the love of my life, my best friend and life’s partner, the mother I wanted to have for our children since I was a kid. The soul I imagined I would spend the better part of my life with. Let’s keep enjoying riding the wave in style!
Section One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

“Begin in a friendly way.” --Dale Carnegie

“We want a director, not a dictator” the sign read. There was a demonstration in front of the school by a dozen of parents stating they wanted a principal and not someone who would dictate orders. As an amateur principal finishing his first year, I was faced with the reality that my approach needed to improve.

This study sought to solve the problem that many principals face: how can they say and do things without sounding like someone who is dictating orders? I wanted to better understand what are the dispositions and inherent qualities of mind and character of emotionally intelligent principals.

During my first year as a principal, I had a terrible time adjusting to my new school community. At first, I thought I had everything I needed to have to be a successful principal. I was a teacher with consistent good-to-great evaluations and I rose through the ranks, from teacher to principal, in six quick years. Receiving a four-year contract at one of the highest performing schools in the area fulfilled my sense of confidence and I thought I was on the right track to becoming one of the shining stars in my large urban school district. I was promptly forced to realize that I had to re-evaluate how I was approaching the principalship.

As an assistant principal, I thought I had read, worked or experienced the challenges that can fully prepare a school leader to guide a school community towards success. I attended professional learning events and read all I could on instructional leadership and on how to address staff effectively. I felt the need to prove a point to myself and others. As a teacher of Spanish (which in my district it is considered an “enrichment class” or a “special class”), my
instructional and leadership skills were not only constantly questioned by others, but I also came into the field with a personal and discreet “deficit model” (Lombardi, 2016). Reflecting on those days, I can honestly state that I was placing all the value on the perspective that what I taught was not important so I was questioning my own sense of worth. With time, I came to believe that the only way to be a better principal is to be the most distinguished teacher in the building. So, I intensified my efforts in further developing my content knowledge in all subjects as I thought I was expected to be above average in all areas as an elementary school principal. There I was, after 3 years as an assistant principal, at the principal interview being asked left and right about guided reading, bilingual education, and discipline. However, the most critical question during the interview, the one that I felt ended up landing me the job, was: “what is your experience with a school budget?”

I was ready for that question because I had read somewhere that the interviewee must have a bank of potential questions, with comprehensive answers, in order to enhance the chances of having the opportunity to sign a 4-year contract. During the interview, the topic of budgets I dreaded came up. I was determined to show that I was a transparent leader and that I was comfortable, in the Socratic spirit, explaining that I was not an expert on everything. I told the interview committee that other than observing my previous principals, that I had little to no experience managing a budget of 5 million dollars; regardless, and here was my authentic response: “at the end of the day, when people remember great principals, they might not necessarily remember their budgetary skills, but they will always remember how they made them feel.”

Days later, I signed that first 4-year contract while people cheered.
Little did I know that at that moment, I was demonstrating some level of self-awareness, which is described as knowing one’s emotions, strengths, weaknesses, drives, values, and goals, and their impact on others (Goleman, 2004). Although I prepared for the type of question I thought principals ought to respond to, by then I had never read anything about emotional intelligence (EI). Since the time of that interview, I participated in a professional learning class titled “The Emotionally Intelligent Principal.” This class gave me an opportunity to go deeper into the subject and apply it to my own practice, and now my own research.

Everyone tells you to prepare a 90-day plan but nobody tells you how it feels on day 1. On day 2, it really went from bad to worse. This comfortless period lasted two years. Although school’s metrics in both academics and social emotional learning improved, the problems that permeated, those beyond instructional leadership, kept arising in quite a dramatic fashion. I truly felt that my career as a principal was going to be over before it even began. I was not connecting with teachers the way I did as an assistant principal. Being a principal was not as pleasant as I thought it was going to be. My message was not connecting with those I was leading. Since I did not have anyone mentoring me at the administrative level, I searched the internet for information on how I could improve as a school leader.

While searching the internet, I found and registered for a class on emotional intelligence (EI). Not only did the class helped me keep my administrative license on good terms, it also introduced me to the topic of EI, which has since highly impacted my life and career. The class helped me to further expand my own emotional intelligence; it also saved my career as a principal. I survived those tumultuous two years as a principal and now the school has the highest ratings my school district designates. It is from my own personal experiences that I came
about the inquiry on how to better equip principals to acknowledge, recognize and improve their own emotional intelligence so they can better serve others.

1.2 Purpose

In Plato’s *Allegory of the Cave* (Heitzman, Deana, 2020), we are invited to imagine humans observing shadows all day long. This metaphor of the pursuit of knowledge has humans enslaved with tied hands, feet and necks and only looking forward to a wall. Humans would entertain themselves in deciphering what the shadows represented. These shadows were ultimately named after animals or even furniture. One day, one of these metaphorical humans is freed and is reluctantly made to look at the fire that was causing those shadows that the humans were observing. The impact of this revelation made the human exit the cave and ultimately understand the truth or the reason for things. With all that knowledge, this human returns to the cave to share what they had learned. This symbolism of Plato’s Cave helps me in perfectly describing the journey of my practice and how I was reluctantly pushed to learn how to do the principalship better. This entire study has the purpose of informing what the research and practice indicates.

About to start my 3 year as a principal, I signed up for a professional development class titled “The Emotionally Intelligent Principal: The Key to Successful School Leadership.” As I read the description, I quickly realized that the content of the course included information that would be quite helpful to me. I believe the idea of conducting this research to save my humanity and career was born on that day. Throughout the class, I often thought that all principals should be coached on emotional intelligence (Bloom, 2004). School principals must have, ideally, a coach during their first year (DeWitt, 2016). Unfortunately, this was not my particular
experience. During my entire first year, I lacked the support of a principal coach. This contributed to a great deal of personal struggle. I realize now that it did not have to be that way.

This dissertation makes an argument that novice principals must be specifically trained on emotional intelligence. Novice principals should be receiving equitable training in both instructional and leadership skills; it is my hope that I can help influence policy that impacts the improvement in principals’ performance. At the end of the day, much support is needed since principals are expected to be the ones driving the culture of success in a school. In fact, when “there is an emotionally skilled principal, there are teachers who are less stressed and more satisfied” (Brackett, 2019). Emotionally intelligent leaders can enter a room and sense the tension of the employees but also know how to address and resolve conflict before it escalates (Landry, 2019). When teachers are less stressed and more satisfied, they can better focus on student learning and achievement. This study connects to solving the critical issue of how to best support the emotionally intelligent principal.

The potential success of better supporting principals directly relates to student learning since “no significant learning occurs without a significant relationship” (Comer, 1995). A principal that has great relationships with their teachers and community can construct and sustain productive relationships that impact student achievement (Jacka, 2018).

1.3 Rationale

Educators are always learning. In the school I lead, teachers are always engaged in continuous professional learning. For example, by the time I applied to a doctoral program in educational leadership, I already had three university degrees, yet, I wanted to further continue my learning journey. I decided to write on dispositions of emotional intelligence in school principals because I was interested in doing my part to influence the policy for principals so they
are able to receive formal professional learning on emotional intelligence. It was not until I was exposed to that one particular professional learning event that I became aware of the concept of EI. From there, I started to learn that the management of others in the field of education is both a science and an art, since the person managing a school needs to have an in-depth knowledge of the human factor (Brinia et al., 2014, p. 29). Emotional intelligence has been a critical issue in my growth as a principal and I feel it is relevant for all new principals and those impacted by them (teachers, parents, community, and of course, students).

1.4 Goals

Being a school principal is a vocation that I take very seriously. My commitment towards the lives of school children is what guides me and thus, perfecting my skills is a priority. As an educator, sharing acquired knowledge with others is an essential aspect of being in a professional learning community as it directly impacts student achievement since every school principal has to manage the emotions of themselves and help manage the emotions of others. In order to make my contributions, I studied and analyzed the concept of emotional intelligence and how it relates to the field of education, the principalship, and how it relates to other action-driven careers (police, air force, nursing). The idea is to acquire knowledge and skills that will improve my own life and professional practice. Only by improving myself I was going to be able to better serve others. The ultimate goal: by identifying dispositions or qualities of emotional intelligence in principals, I would be able to lead in peace and calm, which will in turn positively impact students.

1.5 Research Questions

To gather the necessary evidence to conduct this qualitative study, I conducted a
purposeful sample strategy (Patton, 2008) with semistructured interviews with key informants. Purposeful sampling involves “identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest” (Palinkas et al., 2015, p. 2). I chose four novice principals (1-5 years of experience) and four principal coaches as participants. They were chosen because of my perception of them as emotionally intelligent. The primary question of my research is: How do principals and principal coaches describe emotional intelligence and why is it important? I based my questions off of Daniel Goleman’s five components of EI and merged them within the concept of the principalship. Thus, the related questions are “How principals show examples of emotional intelligence in each of Goleman’s components (2004)?” and “What can be done to improve professional learning within the context of dispositions of EI in principals?”

After gathering the data collected from the qualitative interviews, I completed an analysis and reflected on the responses. I compared the responses to prior research as well as my own experiences. When the reader learns about the research and triangulates that knowledge with the experiences of my interviewees and myself, the hope would be that the reader won’t have to struggle. This is an important topic that deserves to be deeply explored on behalf of the current and future success of school principals and their school communities.

1.6 Conclusion

My purpose in learning more about emotional intelligence and the principalship goes beyond selecting a dissertation topic. This is an important topic that deserves to be deeply explored on behalf of the current and future success of school principals and their school communities. Leaders that implement emotional intelligence produce an increase of organizational satisfaction, commitment and effectiveness (Kumar, 2014). Learning about
emotional intelligence and how to use it is an absolutely essential skill that the education community needs to do much more work on.

In this research study, I conducted purposeful sampling semistructured interviews with experts on the field. The findings on how principals and principal coaches described EI and why it is important was merged with the knowledge gained in the literature review. I provided a policy recommendation that can significantly impact the EI of school leaders. The following chapter contains a literature review on emotional intelligence and how it connects to school principals.
Section Two: Review of Literature

2.1 Introduction

“I don’t want to be at the mercy of my emotions. I want to use them, to enjoy them, and to dominate them.”
- Oscar Wilde

I wish I could go back and avoid the multiplicity of mistakes and assumptions I was responsible for when I started as a school principal. Following Epictetus’s advice of focusing on what I can control, the fact is that there is nothing that I can do other than to reflect and improve. For me, it was a milestone in my life the day I conceptually understood the power of the way we make others feel with what we say or do.

Emotionally intelligent principals are able to check on how they are feeling by monitoring their moods through self-awareness, improving themselves by using strategies to self-regulate, by understanding their impact in society through empathy, and then ardently using that information in ways that boost the moods of others through relationship management (Goleman et al., 2001).

It was evident that I needed to re-educate myself if I was going to succeed as a school leader. If I was going to save my life and career, I needed to visit the place where my greatest discomfort existed because it was also where the largest opportunity lived (Sharma, 2018, p. 9). In the following section, a reflection on what others have said about the selected topics followed by sharing the selected framework for my research.
2.2 Body of Emotional Intelligence

“True wisdom comes to each of us when we realize how little we understand about life, ourselves, and the world around us.” - Socrates

Plato shared with the world Socrates’s declaration, “the unexamined life is not worth living” (*Plato, Apology, Section 38a*, n.d.). Plato, who eventually founded an academy to teach others how to think about the world (History.com Editors, 2009), believed that “all learning has an emotional base” (Brackett, 2019, p. 27). For this philosopher, humans were capable of experiencing and understanding pleasant and unpleasant feelings. Plato’s contemporary, Aristotle, provided the world with a new way to view emotions. He used the term ‘pathos’ to examine different emotional states such as pleasure and pain, fear and daring, and rage and hope (Barrett, 2016, p. 49).

Inspired by the Aristotelian writings of St. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas wrote about affections and passions. He chose “passiones” to describe active sensual appetites that were accompanied by bodily transformation. With an understanding that “passiones” belonged to the sensitive part of the soul (the “anima”), Aquinas believed that these “passiones” occur naturally and are neither good nor bad. Aquinas also framed basic concepts of how to think about what people felt (Barrett, 2016, p. 49).

Moreover, Descartes thought of passions as “passive perceptions of bodily motions” (James, 1997, p. 94). Still, he thought the soul ideally can have “complete power over emotions” (Barrett, 2016, p. 49). For Descartes, there were “six ‘primitive’ passions of the soul (wonder, love, hatred, desire, joy, and sadness) from which all others derived their origin” (p. 49).

Emotions acquired a universal character, as argued by Charles Darwin in 1872 (Barrett, 2016, p. 49). He explored the idea that emotion, as an innate ability, provides important
information. Consequently, understanding this ability allows people to act in ways that could improve their outcomes (Brackett, 2019). The idea of the functional utility of emotions has been established since Darwin indicated the assertion that individuals might vary in their ability to make use of the information emotions impart (Bracket, 2019). For Darwin, emotions, when managed, have an adaptive value. The scientist “proposed that heart rate and emotions are controlled via one’s intellect and cortical mechanisms, and that instinctive behavior is genetically programmed and inherited” (Ludwig & Welch, 2019).

Thorndike (1920) referred to the use of emotion as “the ability to understand and manage men and women, boys and girls- to act wisely in human relations” (p. 228). Howard Gardner (1992) “proposed a theory of multiple intelligences that informed both scientists and educators to place greater emphasis on abilities beyond verbal and math skills, such as interpersonal (the awareness of one’s own glows and grows) and interpersonal skills (the ability to communicate effectively and empathize with others)” (Brackett, 2019, p. 26).

The doctoral dissertation of Payne (1985) proposed that emotional intelligence could be learned and/or further developed. In academia, others wanted to bring the study of emotions to a place of priority. In an interview, Salovey stated:

I started studying human emotions in a lab in college in the late 1970s. At that time, there wasn’t much interest in emotions in psychology. The cognitive revolution was in full force and people viewed emotions as ‘noise.’ The idea was that we had emotions, but they didn’t predict anything important. I just couldn’t believe that was true, so I got very motivated to study emotions to show they mattered in a positive way. I wanted to show that we had an emotion system for a reason. We had an emotion system that helped us get through life (Brackett 2019, p. 24-25).
Psychologists and scholars Mayer and Salovey (1997) defined emotional intelligence as “the ability to perceive accurately, appraise, and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth” (p. 10). Assessments are important for those involved in what is known as the “ability model”. Performance-based assessments, such as the Mayer, Salovey, Caruso Emotional Intelligence Scale were developed (Bracket, 2019).

It was psychologist and reporter Daniel Goleman’s Emotional Intelligence (1995) that brought the topic to worldwide attention by articulating that people could be smart beyond what standardized intelligence assessments could indicate (Barrett, 2016, p. 513). Goleman (1998) further stated “star performance in all jobs, in every field, emotional competence is twice as important as purely cognitive abilities” (p. 34). Goleman (1995) developed a “mixed model” by designing emotional intelligence competencies from both human abilities and traits, thus demonstrating that EI could be learned through time. Both personality traits and theories of action were considered.

Increased leadership performance has been connected to emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998; Spencer, 2001). Goleman’s components of emotional intelligence, further analyzed in the following subsections are: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill (Goleman, 1995).

“Talked about loosely for decades under a variety of names, from ‘character’ and ‘personality’ to ‘soft skills’ and ‘competence,’ there is at last a more precise understanding of these human talents, and a new name for them: emotional intelligence” (Goleman, 1998, p. 4). The education system “picked up on the term quickly because Goleman’s contributions
highlighted a link between high emotional intelligence and prosocial behavior and demonstrated that emotional intelligence was a powerful, and at times more powerful, than IQ in predicting the success one can have in life (Mayer & Cobb, 2000, pp. 163–164). Policy experts quickly accepted the idea that emotional intelligence predicts success (p. 170).

There is no agreement between all disciplines on the best or most ideal approach one can take when embracing the study of emotional intelligence. At some point, as the researcher, I needed to narrow it down to something manageable for the purposes of this study. Other than the EI theorists already mentioned, other important theorists include Bar-On (2007), who focused in developing models that could be used by organizations, and Petrides and Furnham (2001), who developed a trait model that focused on behavioral dispositions and self-perceived abilities while minimizing the role of the ability models.

Even after years of research, “much about emotional intelligence remains to be learned and refined” (Barrett, 2016, p. 513). In order to perform a granular study of my specific topic of learning (which includes understanding the dispositions of emotional intelligence in principals and how to improve them), I decided to use the mixed model proposed by Goleman (1995). The use of Goleman’s competencies has been widely tested in organizations (Goleman, 1998; Goleman & Boyatzis, 2017; Thach & Thompson, 2007) and they overlap with the strategies used in leadership training (Sadri, 2012).

School principals ought to conceptually understand that “schools are made of people”. Hence, it is vitally important to examine the human underpinnings of the organization (Richardson, 2003, p. 15). Emotionally intelligent leaders have a level of awareness of the external environment or social awareness (Gragg, 2008, p. 248). If principals are to be successful, they need to be in tune with themselves and what surrounds them. Others have
described the task of the principalship as “a rose-thorny but worth the thorns to get to the beauty within” (Linn et al., 2007, p. 166).

Batagiannis (2007) suggests that principals need to instill hope by leading others with wisdom and courage. It is said that “the courageous leader exudes hope” (p. 159). If schools are made of people, it is important to examine what is human in an organization (Richardson, 2003). Emotionally intelligent leaders display higher degrees of empathy (House & Podsakoff, 1994) and it can always be further developed (Goleman, 1998; Goleman & Boyatzis, 2017). In fact, emotionally intelligent competencies on improved leadership can not only be further developed, but they are not necessarily inherent traits (Emmerling & Goleman, 2003). It has also been found that emotional intelligence increases leadership performance (Côté & Miners, 2006).

How do principals understand and improve their emotional intelligence if they have no formal professional learning on it? Imagine supporting school leaders with what not only these theorists have shared with the world, but also with the neuroscience that backs it up. Via the mechanisms of brain plasticity, adults have the extraordinary capacity to understand and improve one’s own emotional intelligence (Davidson et al., 2000). More poetically stated: “inside each one of us is a beautiful symphony. 100 billion neurons firing in concert, constructing this vivid reality that we’re living. An inside each little piece of that neural activity lives a little bit of what makes you, you (Vaughn, 2015).”

In the next subsection, the emotional intelligence competencies according to Goleman (1995) will be explored. Then, in the following sections, I reflected on how scholar-practitioners can triangulate research, empirical data, and their own experiences to enhance their performance will be laid out.
2.2.A Components of Emotional Intelligence

Goleman (1995) defines emotional intelligence as “abilities such as being able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations; to control impulse and delay gratification; to regulate one’s moods and keep distress from swamping the ability to think; to empathize and to hope” (p. 34). He also states that “people with well-developed emotional skills are also more likely to be content and effective in their lives, mastering the habits of mind that foster their own productivity; people who cannot marshal some control over their emotional life fight inner battles that sabotage their ability for focused work and clear thought” (p. 36).

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Five Components of Emotional Intelligence at Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Awareness</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition: the ability to recognize and understand your moods, emotions, and drives, as well as their effect on others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallmarks: self-confidence, realistic self-assessment, self-deprecating sense of humor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Regulation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition: the ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods; the propensity to suspend judgment—to think before acting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallmarks: trustworthiness and integrity, comfort with ambiguity, openness to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motivation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition: a passion to work for reasons that go beyond money or status; a propensity to pursue goals with energy and persistence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallmarks: strong drive to achieve optimism, even in the face of failure, organizational commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Empathy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition: the ability to understand the emotional makeup of other people; skill in treating people according to their emotional reactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallmarks: expertise in building and retaining talent, cross-cultural sensitivity, service to clients and customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Skill</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition: proficiency in managing relationships and building networks; an ability to find common ground and build rapport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hallmarks: effectiveness in leading change, persuasiveness, expertise in building and leading teams</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The Five Components of Emotional Intelligence at Work (Goleman, 2004).

Goleman (2004) studied which personal capabilities drove outstanding performance. He grouped capabilities into categories: technical skills such as accounting and planning, cognitive
abilities like analytical reasoning, and competencies demonstrating emotional intelligence such as the ability to lead. Out of all of these, Goleman stated that EI proved to be twice as important.

Goleman divided emotional intelligence into five competencies (see Table 1) to support in identifying, training, and promoting potential stars in the leadership firmament. Three of the components are considered to be personal skills because they have to do with how we manage ourselves. These three components are self-awareness, self-regulation, and motivation. The last two components, empathy and social skill, are considered social skills as they support us in managing relationships (Goleman, 2004).

To know oneself is where self-awareness begins. One must have a deep understanding of one’s own emotions (what is working, what needs to improve, needs and drives). People with high degrees of self-awareness recognize how feelings affect them, they know when is the right time to accept a promotion, they are able to assess themselves, and they have a thirst for constructive criticism (Goleman, 2004, pp. 4-6). Being self-aware is “knowing one’s internal states, preferences, resources, and intuitions” (Goleman, 1998, p. 25). The self-aware leader has enough self-confidence to recognize their worth and their abilities. Once the leader is empowered with realistic self-assessment and when the leader employs a tactful self-deprecating sense of humor, they are more able to self-regulate.

A person cannot control the biological impulses that drive emotions but with emotional intelligence, a person does not have to be a prisoner to emotions, in other words, humans are able to manage them (Goleman, 2004, p. 6). The emotionally intelligent leader can step back to consider reasons for failure, they are able to create an environment of trust because of their calm approach. Leaders that practice self-regulation are known for being conscientious as they model for others by taking responsibility for their personal performance.
Goleman (1998) declared that motivation is the one trait that effective leaders have. Emotionally intelligent leaders want to succeed for the sake of succeeding by portraying passion for the work, by loving to learn and by always looking for ways to make things better by considering multiple approaches. Leaders that are motivational have tendencies that support in the guiding of others in reaching goals via initiative and optimism. “People with high motivation remain optimistic even when the score is against them. In such cases, self-regulation combines with achievement motivation to overcome frustration and depression that come after a setback or failure” (Goleman, 1998, p. 8).

Leaders with knowledge of self-awareness, self-regulation, and motivation properly employ personal skills. However, the last two competencies, empathy and social skill, are considered to be social skills as they support us in managing relationships (Goleman, 1995, 1998). Furthermore:

It’s important to note that emotionally intelligent managers and leaders need not always be ‘nice’ bosses. Often they need to use emotion skills to perform difficult, delicate tasks. Emotional intelligence in the workplace doesn’t merely mean providing comfort and sympathy; sometimes it requires the ability to deliver difficult feedback to help people build greater self-awareness and skills (Brackett, 2019, pp. 231-232).

Empathy is easily recognizable (like the way we feel the empathy of a sensitive teacher) but rarely praised (e.g. “most empathetic employee”). Empathy is essential as it is consistently employed in teams (Goleman, 2004). In a school setting, a principal might experience anxiety when an educator arrives at the same time that students arrive. Since there might be policies or union-district agreements one might not be able to change, one must adjust to the reality of the daily habit of educator arrival times. Instead, one must employ large quantities of empathy by
understanding the perspective of others and trying to understand why teachers are not arriving early by anticipating potential morning needs. For example, scheduling and/or budgeting for supplemental positions that might cover that potential morning deficit could be a great way to reduce the anxiety of problems.

Social skills, finally, are not as simple as they sound. Social skills are not about being friendly, rather, it is friendliness with a purpose to move people in your desired direction (Goleman, 2004). By persuading people to move in a positive direction, one can employ other facets of emotional intelligence such as motivation. If, by definition, an emotionally intelligent leader motivates themselves and achieves for the sake of achievement, then those skills can be employed by being optimistic in the face of failure thus creating and nurturing instrumental relationships that are conducive to the synergy needed to achieve collective goals (Goleman, 1998, p. 26).

2.3 EI in School Principals

“When the principal sneezes, the whole school catches a cold. This is neither good nor bad; it is just the truth. Our impact is significant; our focus becomes the school’s focus.” (Whitaker, 2013, p. 36)

In an experiment, preschool children were brought in one by one to a room and had a marshmallow put in front of them. They were told they could eat the marshmallow right away or, if they delayed eating it until the researcher came back from running an errand, they could have two or even three marshmallows. The life outcomes of the participants were more likely impacted by their emotional decisions of either eating the candy right away or waiting for a better reward that required patience (Goleman, 1995). Those that grabbed the marshmallow right away were more than likely to become immobilized by stress or resentful for not getting enough,
while the ones who delayed gratification were more than likely able to cope with the frustrations of life as they were able to better embrace challenges (pp. 81-82).

Amazingly, I learned that emotional intelligence is virtually all learned (Goleman, 1996). “Leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives” (Yukl, 2002, p. 8). There are ways for people to acquire emotional intelligence. In the case of the present research, I am seeking to better understand how principals can acquire EI so that they can deal with and manage their own humanity and those of others.

Principals are not failing because of a lack of determination or knowledge of technical or instructional skills, but because of what is considered ‘style’ or people skills (Bloom, 2004). Bloom (2004) quoted reflections from 1st-2nd year principals:

“I came to the realization that if I don’t balance my job and my family, I’ll fail.”

“I’ve learned to take the balcony view, to not be so personally invested in how people react to me.”

“Nobody told me I’d be spending so much time on adult issues.

“I knew what to do when I was teaching; it was x + y = z. Not anymore.”

“I can’t afford to show emotion or to say the wrong thing at the wrong time. I have to control myself, and to live with unfairness.”

In Chicago, 6/10 principals leave before the end of their fifth year while 40%-50% of principals feel unable to organize school resources in ways that advance school goals and...
priorities (The Fund, 2015). Few professions present as many challenges to an individual's emotional intelligence as the principalship.

Principals are to master educational and management issues while building and maintaining relationships with multiple stakeholders. Principals end up leaving the profession more for reasons related to emotional intelligence as opposed to reasons related to their knowledge of budgets or literacy programs (Bloom, 2004). School reform requires leaders to transform schools into autonomous, system-thinking organizations, resolving any and all problems and situations around professional learning (Moore, 2009, p. 20).

Emotionally intelligent principals can handle difficult situations because they are better able to reflect and control their own emotions (Maldonado-Torres, 2012). An effective principal always has emotions in mind when addressing others. This includes the emotions of others and the emotions of the self in order to truly act in a manner that will be conducive to positive outcomes. For school principals, positive outcomes always translate to student achievement (Marzano et al., 2001). To have appropriate results, principals ought to employ effective communication skills. Communication for principals is a main priority since teachers expect their leader to be the facilitator of the dialogue that will result in the improvement of student outcomes (McLaughlin & Hyle, 2001).

In my experience, the average educator is often not knowledgeable about emotional intelligence. “Since the eighteenth century, psychologists have recognized an influential three-part division of the mind into cognition (or thought), affect (including emotion), and motivation (or conation)” (Salovey et al., 2004, p. 30). During the 20th century, psychologists and philosophers still debated whether emotions were associated in any way with logical thought and
intelligent behavior (Gardner, 1992). Others reflected on how to understand the facial and vocal expressions of emotions (Davitz & Beldoch, 1964).

Having an understanding of how emotions interact with our rational decisions is imperative for school principals. When school principals understand the neuroscience behind the power of emotional intelligence, there is no way to return to less than excellence:

“The daily challenge of dealing effectively with emotions is critical to leadership because our brains are hardwired to give emotions the upper hand. Here’s how it works: everything you see, smell, hear, taste, and touch travels through your body in the form of electric signals. These signals pass from cell to cell until they reach their ultimate destination, your brain. They enter your brain at the base near your spinal cord, but must travel across your brain before reaching the place where rational, logical thinking takes place. The trouble is, they pass through your limbic system (the place where emotions are processed) along the way. This journey ensures you experience things emotionally before your reason can kick into gear” (Bradberry & Greaves, 2012, pp. 130–131).

Better articulated:

“Science now confirms that our brains can continue to grow throughout our lives. This beautiful phenomenon is called neuroplasticity. And it speaks to the fact that the human brain, like personal willpower, is a lot more like a muscle than previously understood. It’s plastic in a way. Push it and it’ll expand. Flex it and it’ll extend—and become more potent for your use in the tallest expression of your most radiant gifts. So, you want to make sure you exercise your brain aggressively to make new habits” (Sharma, 2018, pp. 169–170).
The next subsection will explore emotional intelligence in the professional fields of police officers, armed forces, and nursing. The purpose of including other professional fields is to have a better awareness of what others are doing as to inform the practice of the emotionally intelligent principal.

### 2.4 EI in other Professions

Emotional intelligence is an important aspect of other professions. Although the intent of this dissertation study is to support principals in enhancing wellbeing at their schools, it is evident that having an awareness of how emotional intelligence is portrayed in other areas can only be useful. In this section, the emotional intelligence in the professional fields of police officers, armed forces, and nursing will be explored.

Law enforcement, specifically police officers, face an ever-growing list of social issues to work with every day. Lives are often at stake when making and executing decisions (Vincent, 2020, p. 15). The challenges presented can better be addressed by enhancing the role of emotional and social intelligence in policing (Conroy, 2016, p. 53). To protect and serve the people, police officers have a duty to monitor their own and other’s emotions, and to use this knowledge to guide their thinking, actions, and decision-making. Fortunately, they can be operationalized; these competencies can be taught, improved upon and practiced every day (Conroy, 2016; Goleman, 1995). When a person decides to take an oath to protect and serve others, they are also investing in the constituents, and this creates emotional labor. This emotional labor toll increases when the majority of citizens contacted by the police are often at their emotional worst. Police officers must have an awareness of the fact that in order to protect and serve, they must monitor their own and other’s emotions (Conroy, 2016).
Because of its paramount importance, Barath (2016) emphasizes that emotional intelligence skills are to be taught to new police recruits so they can be better examples and mentors to the community while being better team players and leaders for the future (p. 17). Some will become police investigators and, in such cases, they must implement various methods that elicit information about an event. The person being interviewed might be a witness, a victim, a suspect, or the accused. Police officers are to understand that they will deal with individuals at different stages of their lives (Bakker & Heuven, 2006) which might prevent the interviewee from providing an optimal account (Risan et al., 2016, p. 410).

To conduct effective interviews, the police investigator must take the interviewees well-being into consideration in order to generate rapport. To achieve rapport, the investigator ought to be able adapt to the state and expressions of the interviewee through the use of different communication techniques or other relational approaches. Being able to have a rapport with the interviewee will make them feel safer, more comfortable, and more willing to share information. (Risan et al., 2016, p. 410). The process of accommodating the emotional state of the interviewee has the potential to ameliorate negative feelings and promote therapeutic jurisprudence (Fisher & Geiselman, 2010; Holmberg & Madsen, 2014).

Police officers are to listen empathically for emotions; this requires them to be present, compassionate, and sensitive to what is going on from moment to moment (Greenberg, 2014). To perceive emotions requires one to be observant and sensitive to what the body language and body expressions are communicating (Stiegler, 2015). Body language is particularly important, as emotional reactions are not always followed by cognitive representations (p. 414). Schafer and Karlins (2015) listed behaviors that indicate the presence or absence of rapport (Table 2):
**Table 2**

**BEHAVIORS THAT INDICATE THE PRESENCE OR ABSENCE OF RAPPORT**

Here are some of the “tells” you will want to watch for in determining where you are in the rapport-building process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Friend Signals Signifying Rapport</th>
<th>Foe Signals Signifying a Lack of Rapport</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eyebrow flashes</td>
<td>Furrowed eyebrows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head tilt</td>
<td>Eye rolls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent smiles</td>
<td>Cold stares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual gaze</td>
<td>Prolonged eye closure and/or gaze aversion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimate touching</td>
<td>No (or very limited) touching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isopraxism (mirroring behavior)</td>
<td>Asynchronous posture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inward lean (toward another person)</td>
<td>Leaning away (from another person)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whispering</td>
<td>Hair twirling (unless a “habit”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressive gestures</td>
<td>Aggressive stance and/or attack posture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open body posture</td>
<td>Closed body posture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Removal of barriers/obstacles</td>
<td>Creation or use of barriers/obstacles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wide-open eyes</td>
<td>Eye squints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puckering or licking of lips (women)</td>
<td>Fake yawns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent nods</td>
<td>Negative head shakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing food (“food forking”)</td>
<td>Scrunched nose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preening (“grooming”) your partner</td>
<td>Self-preening</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Behaviors that Indicate the Presence or Absence of Rapport; adapted from Schafer and Karlins (2015).*

If an interviewee is experiencing strong and tumultuous emotions that make it difficult to talk about what occurred, the investigator may affirm the experience of the interviewee by
calmly stating they understand it can be difficult to talk about such a situation and that they understand this is unusual (Rogers, 1957). Showing personal concern and demonstrating one has understood the plight of the interviewee is important (Fisher & Geiselman, 2010, p. 210). When the investigator tunes in to the emotional state of the other person, this can lead to interpersonal resonance, which is a way to feel understood while increasing the pursued relational connection (Siegel, 2010). Resonance increases the sense of acceptance and safety in the relationships that can make it easier for the interviewee to communicate what they have experienced (Risan et al., 2016, p. 413-414).

Similarly to police officers, army officers believe resilience to be showing a tendency to recover quickly from setbacks, shock, injuries, adversity, and stress while maintaining a mission and organizational focus (Sewell, 2011, p. 79). The army’s revised leadership doctrine was published in their Field Manual (Army, 2006). This document highlighted attributes and competencies of what leaders need to be, what leaders need to know and what leaders need to do. It was also noted that resilience is a characteristic that is essential during combat (Sewell, 2011, p. 79).

The Air Force has initiated a mission to eliminate toxic leadership. Toxic leadership is a preponderant social topic causing serious harm not only to followers, but to the organizations a leader represents (Heitzman, 2020). Examples of toxic leaders are those that implement abusive and derogatory practices that cause serious long term effects. Rather than forcing discipline within the army recruits, the institution is using technology to properly support officers in their development. In this specific case, the Air Force, using technology, uses virtual empathy and interpersonal communication exercises to simulate the experience. The result of these practices provides all individuals, regardless of their talent and/or leadership skills, with proper support to
handle such a variety of challenging situations. Leaders cannot be successful if they are retaining feelings of anger, sadness, disappointment, resentment, and fear.

The Air Force partnered with a simulation specialist to design a digital tool where a soldier has conversations with avatars in a variety of potential situations. For example, one of the avatars heavy heartedly begs for her spouse to return home. Another addressed concerns about issues around sexuality. This innovative strategy allows participants to feel how a situation would feel in real life. Soldiers are able to communicate with the avatars and even pause to get direct feedback from professors on ways an avatar is reacting (e.g. facial expressions, gestures, etc.). This tool was meant to aid those in the Air Force to be able to practice difficult situations before they go out and become leaders. The goal is that they can demonstrate that they care for the people they lead.

Emotional intelligence has proven an essential tool for those in law and armed forces. It is also important in the field of nursing as it allows the development of therapeutic relationships that are conducted for the care of clients and their families (Cadman & Brewer, 2001; Reeves, 2005, p. 174). Nurses suffer from stress and health problems owing to the characteristics of their work and their contact with patients and death (Augusto Landa et al., 2008). It is proven a misconception that all nurses have sufficient skills in the areas of interpersonal skills and empathy (Reeves, 2005, p. 174). Nurses often provide care for patients and their families who might be in situations of suffering where emotions are heightened; compassion then, is an essential component when educating nurses (Heffernan et al., 2010). In a study of cardiology patients, those that had the care of nurses with a generalized depressed mood were four times more likely to die than those cared for by nurses without depressed moods in similar units (Goleman, 1998; Reeves, 2005, p. 175).
Emotions play an important role in the relationship and communication between nurses, patients, and families. Self-compassion is the ability to be compassionate to oneself, an ability needed in order to be compassionate to patients (Heffernan et al., 2010). For the improvement of emotional intelligence, there are some practical guidelines to further develop the ‘art of nursing’. Self awareness can be developed through journaling, reading, exercise and scheduling personal time. The more emotionally healthy the nurse is, the better they can take on the emotions of every person they encounter (Reeves, 2005, p. 175).

In the case of end-of-life care learning development, emergency nurses who invest their therapeutic self into the nurse-patient relationship are able to manage the emotional labor of caring for the dying and their relatives. These individuals find reward in the practice of end-of-life care as it ultimately creates a more positive experience for patients and their relatives (Bailey et al., 2011).

2.5 Conclusion

This review of literature discussed emotional intelligence within a historical context on how emotions have been viewed through the centuries. This scholar-practitioner is focusing the current research on Goleman’s (1995) mixed method of emotional competencies including self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill. This literature review has discussed emotional intelligence within the context of different professions (police, armed forces, nursing). The next section describes the methodology used to conduct this qualitative research of dispositions of emotional intelligence in school principals.
Section Three: Methodology

3.1 Research Design Overview

The purpose of this qualitative research is to learn how school principals showcase dispositions of emotional intelligence in their schools and how they can continuously work on improving them. A qualitative study was selected for this dissertation as it provides the opportunity to “produce a wealth of detailed information about a much smaller number of people and cases” (Patton, 2002, p. 14). Purposeful sampling was used by selecting four principals and four principal coaches to interview. Purposeful sampling was used because it was believed that the individuals chosen would be good sources of information (Patten & Newhart, 2017).

To conduct this work, I have adopted a scholar-practitioner mindset. When I started this work, my whole intention was to save my career and reputation. Within the years it took me to pursue the knowledge of the conducted research, I realized that the purpose of the study was way beyond me. The purpose was to eradicate the expression of some of the interviewed principals and I heard at some point: “you have to pay your dues”. In my experience, every time I was given professional or evaluative feedback, it was always after I had made a mistake. I was told that I had to learn from my mistakes throughout the journey. Often, leaders try to mentor employees and try to teach resilience skills after there’s been a setback or failure. It’s like teaching first-time skydivers how to land after they’re free-falling (B. Brown, 2018, p. 241). When we tell principals that they got to pay their dues, we are ignoring the facts that by doing so, we are not properly serving our communities. We need to teach failing and failing upfront (p. 242).

If we are authentically running a school system that calls itself “student-centered”, then we should prepare our principals to tackle the multiplicity of daily problems in an informed
manner. Principals have to be much more than practitioners. They ought to be scholar-practitioners. The “linkage, then, between the scholar and the practitioner, is that a scholar-practitioner is someone who uses the skills and the knowledge that comes out of scholarship to inform their practice” (Patton, 2020). School districts ought to benefit in addressing the needs of principals of being aware of multidisciplinary resources that end up empowering teachers and staff; and consequently, all students.

As a scholar-practitioner, the data collection and fieldwork strategy I used is very personal to me. I did not only need the information to fulfill the requirements of this dissertation. I desired knowing more about emotional intelligence so that I could improve my practice, create my own adaptation of these new ideas and concepts, and learn how I could better lead others. I also wanted to learn more about EI so that I could have the capacity to empower my own mindset. “The researcher’s personal experiences and insights are an important part of the inquiry and critical to understanding the phenomenon” (Patton, 2008, p. 9). This is essential for the overall conceptual significance of this study: its intentionality is to serve principals, including those who are already principals or for those that want to become a school leader. Supporting others from the point of view of knowledge on how emotions work is the essence of the next subsection.
3.2 Participants

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (P = principal, PC = Principal Coach)</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Low Income Population?</th>
<th>ES or HS</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P Quenepa</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>ES</td>
<td>Latinx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P Abraham</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>ES</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P Butragueño</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>Latinx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P Riba</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>ES</td>
<td>Latinx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC Maldini</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>HS</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC Yahner</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>False</td>
<td>ES</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC Bustamante</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>ES</td>
<td>Latinx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PC Johnson</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>True</td>
<td>ES</td>
<td>African American</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Participants, Table 3

To gather the knowledge on the dispositions of emotional intelligence in school principals, I interviewed eight individuals that I believe would provide helpful insight (see Table 3). The selected participants are four principals (P) and four principal coaches (PC). The participants of the study are easily identified since their last name is preceded by either the P for principal or PC for principal coach. All participants were given pseudonyms and, in some instances, details of what was shared were edited in order to safeguard their identities.

I interviewed four principals with experiences ranging from 1-5 years. All of them either work or had experience in urban school districts. While three of the selected principals worked or currently work at the elementary level (prek-8th grades), only one of them worked or currently works at the high school level. In addition to interviewing principal peers, I also interviewed four principal coaches on how they describe their experiences and about their thoughts based on the emotional intelligence components. Three out of the four principal coaches are officially retired.
while one had returned to the principalship after coaching for many years. Three out of the four principal coaches have elementary level experience while only one at the high school level. Collectively, seven out of the eight interviewees have experience with students in low income communities. One variant is that I interviewed three female principals but only one female principal coach. Moreover, I interviewed only one male principal and three male principal coaches. Finally, in terms of race and ethnicity, four out of the eight participants identify themselves as Latinx; additionally, two participants were white and two African American.

3.3 Data Gathering Techniques

I conducted the interviews while simultaneously conducting the research on emotional intelligence and its impact on the principalship. The expectations of my doctoral program are to work on the dissertation as we take our classwork. Based on Daniel Goleman’s Components of Emotional Intelligence (Goleman, 2004), I used semi-structured interview questions (see Table 4 for a copy of what interviewees received) that begin in the same style of inquiry but then end up being open-ended. I audio recorded all interviews using “Voice Memos,” an iOS native app on an iPhone. These interviews were then uploaded and transcribed into a document using the “Transcribe” app. Transcribed interviews were then uploaded into a Google Doc where I edited for corrections; I then added my notes and thoughts regarding what I was learning. The thoughts and notes ended up serving as the foundation for this authentic study.
Table 4

1. How would you describe emotional intelligence and why is it important for school principals?

2. Emotional intelligence has five components that I will describe for you. As I describe each one, please tell me how school principals can demonstrate each component:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EI Component</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>How do school principals demonstrate this?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-awareness</td>
<td>Knowing one’s emotions, strengths, weaknesses, drives, values, and goals - -and their impact on others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-regulation</td>
<td>Controlling or redirecting disruptive emotions and impulses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Being driven to achieve for the sake of achievement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Considering others feelings, especially when making decisions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Skill</td>
<td>Managing relationships to move people in desired directions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Adapted from “Components of Emotional Intelligence” (Goleman, 2004), Table 4*

3. After discussing dispositions of emotional intelligence in principals, what can be done to improve professional development within the context of ensuring principals can be more successful earlier in their careers?

4. Is there anything else you would like to share with me?
I met with each person for approximately one hour. Interviews were conducted in person or via Google Hangouts or FaceTime. I also audio-recorded all interviews and transcribed all data to properly analyze and identify trends of opinions in regards to dispositions of emotional intelligence in principals.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Maintaining confidentiality and respect for participants was emphasized as to avoid any anticipated risks for participating in the study. All attempts were made to protect the identity of all participants by avoiding specific details that would identify them. All participants willingly and enthusiastically engaged during the interviews.

3.5 Data Analysis Techniques

Once interviews were transcribed and ready to be coded, I uploaded them in Dedoose, “a web application for managing, analyzing, and presenting qualitative and mixed-method research data” (*Dedoose: 8.3.10*, n.d.). In Dedoose, I carefully analyzed interviews and added codes based on the components of emotional intelligence. “A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (Saldaña, 2015, p. 3). Regarding the specific case of the codes selected based on EI components, I further subdivided those codes into sub-categories (what Dedoose calls “Child Code”). Organizing the multiple points of views into an understandable framework facilitated the study of exploring dispositions of emotional intelligence in school principals.

3.6 Conclusion

This section outlined the methods used to conduct the study. Using a purposeful sampling design strategy, I interviewed four principals and four principal coaches on dispositions
of emotional intelligence in the principalship. By coding interviews, I was able to find patterns that allowed me to reflect on trends based on Goleman’s components of emotional intelligence. Section four will describe the current state (“As Is”) for emotional intelligence and the principalship and will include a systemic view of the overall perceptions and their interrelatedness based on the opinions of eight school leaders with diverse urban school experiences.
Section Four: Results

Table 5

“As Is” 4 C’s Analysis for Emotional Intelligence & the Principalship

Context + Social Skill
- Principals are expected to persuade and inspire multiple stakeholders (students, teachers and staff, leadership and admin teams, parents, superintendent or direct supervisor, board)
- Principals are expected to be emotionally intelligent as they enter the profession

Conditions + Self-Awareness
- Principals are expected to improve their emotional intelligence on their own
- Principals are encouraged to have positive communication with all stakeholders
- Professional learning for principals focuses on instructional leadership and compliance

Professional learning on identifying and developing emotional intelligence is limited

Competencies + Self-Regulation + Motivation
- Principals get to talk about what they do to regulate their emotions
- Principals are expected to keep up with demands
- Principals are expected to be motivators

Culture + Empathy
- Principals are expected to understand everyone’s verbal and non-verbal cues
- Principals are expected to provide feedback meant to increase outcomes
- The role of the principal is understood as the head of every initiative

Note: “As Is” 4 Cs Analysis for Emotional Intelligence and the Principalship, Table 5

In order to engage in the process of analyzing the current state of emotional intelligence and principals, I adapted the As-Is and To-Be frameworks of Wagner et al. (2012). This study is designed to support principals in understanding and enhancing their own emotional intelligence and to help positively influence the emotional intelligence of others (p. 106). In other words, by analyzing the natural interactions between all the parts (Context, Culture, Conditions, and Competencies), a scholar-practitioner principal can dramatically support their school in generating positive outcomes for the entire school community (pp. 98-110). When understanding
what others have to say about the issue being studied, there are more pragmatic methods that employ a systems-thinking framework that is “more ‘ecological’ than logical, simple, linear cause-and-effect explanations sometimes miss the fact that today’s effect may, in turn, be tomorrow’s cause, influencing some other part of the system (p. 98). This is aligned to the limited professional learning experiences shared by the interviewees to further develop their emotional intelligence so they can have better cultures and performance at their schools. All principals interviewed agreed with research: “a successful new principal must be emotionally competent” (Gilio & Dorsey, 2016). I developed the “As Is” chart for emotional intelligence and the principalship taking a systemic view of the overall perceptions and their interrelatedness based on the opinions of eight school leaders with experience in urban school districts in the Chicagoland area.

Note: Results Summary, Table 6

In interviews (see Table 6), I found that principals and principal coaches heavily emphasized issues related to others (empathy and social skill) and then about themselves (self-
awareness, self-regulation, motivation). It is believed that the principal is the most misunderstood person in all education (Rousmaniere, 2013). For example, every morning principals are expected to welcome everyone with a gigantic smile while at the same time juggling all the morning routines (entrance procedures, employees that do not arrive on time, parents who might look for a quick answer to a lengthier issue because they are on their way to work, etc.). Interviewees often shared expressions of reflection, but also of regret and remorse: “I wish I knew how to manage things better” or “I wish somebody had told me so I was prepared” when reflecting about their experiences.

School districts can take advantage of improving the way to do business by emphasizing the process of understanding and managing our own emotions so we can better serve other emotional beings. Emotional intelligence is not the only skill principals need to master. The action steps suggested in this research are to set up the stage for principals, aspiring principals, those who supervise principals, and school districts to facilitate a path of proper support for educational leaders that are running schools. In essence, this research is to be considered as a guide for those principals that want to be successful beyond that 5th year, when usually principals end their tenure (The Fund, 2015).

4.1.a Contexts + Social Skill

When I submitted the principal application for the school I am currently leading, it was clearly stated to me that the expectations were of excellence. I made it clear that excellence was what I wanted to achieve as well. The school community believed that I was qualified to lead the school. Unanimously, I was awarded a 4-year principal contract. My intentionality was authentic; still, my practice was terrible.
I always thought the principalship was going to be a sprinting race towards something beyond. It felt as if the moment you become an assistant principal, everyone starts asking you: “when will you become a principal?” The same thing happened when I became a principal three years later. Everyone kept asking when I was going to move on a promotion by saying something like “when you get promoted and leave us here at the school.” I even started asking myself when I was going to get that promotion that everyone kept talking about rather than focusing on what was in front of me. For two years, I failed in appreciating the principalship and what it represents. I needed to pause, reflect, and to stop worrying about what I wanted to be and start focusing on what I wanted to accomplish. I always wanted to make a difference in children. “To successfully navigate the ebbs and flows, you must have a mindset geared toward accepting change” (Connors, 2020, p. 16). To make this difference a reality, one must embrace all the duties of the principalship. Once this is embraced, principals are able to do their best to inspire teachers so teachers can inspire students.

Principals tend to have a conflict between what is expected from the district and how to adapt it to the needs of the school. Having knowledge of this information, the high principal 5-year turnover rate is not surprising (The Fund, 2015). Understanding the context of the principalship and the social skills needed to get anything done “can shape the work we do to transform the culture, conditions, and competencies” (Wagner et al., 2012, p. 104).

Principal Butragueño considers herself a literacy expert. She came through the leadership ranks after serving as a teacher and coach over a decade. At her school, she was hired for her academic achievements in generating outstanding professional learning events in guided reading. When deciding where to place her priorities, Principal Butragueño stated:
“It’s going to take years because you have to build that culture. You have to build that relationship. You have to build that trust and then eventually those goals will come down the line, but we work in a world where those metrics need to be met on a yearly basis. So, as the instructional leader, you make those changes without taking into account the feelings of people, and then at the end of your tenure, you’re like: why didn’t anything work? And, why didn’t it work? Because you pissed everybody off.”

When Principal Butragueño said that, it hit me. I suddenly understood that a big part of the reason I was failing was because I was upsetting everyone by the way I was making them feel. Just in one interview, Principal Butragueño enlightened me with the awareness that I needed to work on developing my own social skills.

Principal Coach Bustamante recalled the time when, as a principal, he first introduced himself to staff. He said principals need to understand that, although similar, the way a new principal sees their goals can greatly differ from the way the educators, the support staff, the board, the superintendent, and students at that school see theirs. Principal Coach Bustamante stated:

“At the beginning of the year, I think the teachers were overwhelmed by all the things I was laying up in terms of routines and rhythms. And then, like in day three, I gave a presentation about what matters most for me as a leader. Right, this idea that our goal as a school is not to improve test scores. That is not the goal. The goal is to improve teaching, right? How do we get better at what we do every day, not only the teachers but what I do? How do we get better and smarter? Because when we get better and smarter, then our teaching changes, and when teaching changes, the student changes. Right? They become better and smarter.”
The examples of Principal Butragueño and Principal Coach Bustamante indicate the critical need of properly preparing principals for what they are to face. Principal Abraham told a story of a terrifying incident at her school for which she was not prepared for. In essence, a child left the school building, without permission, for about four minutes. The principal responded appropriately causing the child to be located and safely returned to the building within 240 seconds. Unfortunately, the parent went straight to the principal’s office:

“He’s standing in front of me. This is a white male and I’m a woman of color. I’m alone and he’s screaming and every other word is fuck. I thought that he was going to flip over the table in my office. He’s in my face. His face is super red. I’m cool, calm, and collected. I don’t know where this came from. I asked him to please sit down. I said, ‘Sir, can I get you a drink of water, sir? I understand your frustration, sir. I would be as angry as you are right now at this moment, sir. Sir, if you don’t stop, I will need to call the police.’ I was positioned so that I could see the clock and he was standing under the clock. So, I focused on the clock because I didn’t want to escalate him by making direct eye contact or anything, but I wanted to look at him but not be looking, you know, in his eyes.”

Principal Abraham went on to reflect that she had to be present in that moment while receiving his tirade. She stated that she did not have the privilege to go away from the situation and thus, understanding the context of her profession as a principal, was what allowed her to tolerate the situation. It is important for principals to understand and accept that there are external factors that will always be out of their control. Emotionally intelligent principals can master the art of how to support others through the skills and competencies needed for success.

Principal Quenepa and Principal Coach Bustamante reflected on the context they found at their respective schools and the social skills needed for effective change. While Principal
Quenepa had to work through race relations in his school, Principal Coach Bustamante had to convince others that the quality of teaching needed to be a priority. Principal Quenepa found a school where the student group that represented the racial minority was not receiving equitable access to education. For years, African American students at his school represented the majority of the study body but in time, there was a dramatic shift in demographics making Latinx students (like himself) the new majority. This was one of the reasons he opted to hire an African American assistant principal; the goal was to authentically demonstrate to the new majority that equity in education was going to be a priority in his administration.

The leader of the teachers (not to be confused with a teacher-leader) demanded a prompt and urgent meeting with the principal to complain about the new assistant principal, who also was a curriculum specialist. The leader of the teachers wanted to complain to Principal Quenepa about how “outrageously crazy the new demands from that AP are.” The principal responded:

“I’m like, well, it’s like, I agree with the assistant principal (AP). I’m supporting her on equity initiatives because of how it impacts all students in the building. The AP analyzed our data and our data was pretty bad when it comes to African American students, especially our boys, right? Yeah, whether it was discipline, reading, or math, it was bad. And she got all of this together for you so you don’t have to. So, you have to be thankful. She got together with families and asked the tough questions. She sat in meetings and observed. She asked students and teachers. She got all of this together with statements from children and families saying that teachers in the building are racist, and this is how they feel and this is what they are saying. So now we have to deal with it.”

Principal Coach Bustamante reflected on the context that he found at his school. The first thing he noticed was the school rules and how they were printed by his office. He confessed that,
at the time, he did not pay much attention to such rules as nobody had mentioned them during the interview process. He knew that “it was not about the school’s rules, but rather how I engage with the community.” He got to work and quickly noticed that the teachers in the building were not being properly supported. He pleaded, “I want my teachers to better understand feedback and evaluations.” Both Principal Quenepa and Principal Coach Bustamante understood the power of reflecting on those moments and on how they could have done it better. They understood that they needed “to model the behavior they wanted,” as Principal Coach Maldini stated during his interview. While Principal Quenepa considered alternative ways in reinforcing the importance of equity by using better social skills, Principal Coach Bustamante used every opportunity he could (professional learning events, 1:1 coaching sessions, reflection meetings, newsletters, etc.) to ensure his teachers understood what are the principal’s duties at a school. He stated, “My goal is to work on your knowledge, your attitudes, your beliefs. When you believe in this, then we can engage in sustained learning because we are going to learn together. You are going to get smarter. I’m going to get smarter, and as a result, your teaching is going to be better.” What Principal Quenepa could have learned about Principal Coach Bustamante is that when teachers feel respected and safe, principals can persuade their teams to pursue common goals with a common vision.

4.1.b Culture + Empathy

Culture is defined as “the shared values, beliefs, assumptions, expectations, and behaviors related to students and learning, teachers and teaching, instructional leadership, and the quality of relationships within and beyond the school” (Wagner et al., 2012, p. 102). When a person is in the process of searching for principal positions, often all the information you can acquire about a school is accessible online. Some applicants are fortunate to have connections to
a school or school system and have access to what is really going on at the schools they might be applying to.

The state of the culture of the school where I applied to was depicted to me by the hiring board as acceptable. That very first summer before school started, I interviewed almost all teachers and supporting staff (one person was on vacation) and there were clear signs of turbulent distress. Employees had lost all confidence in the previous short-term administration; little did they know they were hiring someone who was not prepared. Nobody had prepared me for the empathy I was going to need to understand the devastating experiences my new team members had to endure. With time I learned that “culture refers to the invisible but powerful meanings and mindset held individually and collectively throughout the system” (Wagner et al., 2012, p. 102). School principals are to be provided with rapturous support in further developing empathy so they could properly serve their communities.

From the start, Principal Coach Maldini fervently declared that, for school principals “empathy is the number one thing people want in their boss.” Fascinated, I thought about asking him about the ways I could enhance my own empathy since he had just stated that it was the most important one of all components of emotional intelligence. Still, I wanted to respect the protocol and allow all interviewees to guide me through the stories of their experience with the principalship.

The process of supporting principals with EI can be simple. I believe that schools and school districts can take advantage of their own talent. For example, I can see principal meetings where each event is dedicated to one component of emotional intelligence. Imagine February’s meeting is about empathy. Principals can learn about instructional leadership and compliance but lessons and breaks could be infused with emotional intelligence learning. During February’s
meeting, let’s propose, five randomly pre-selected principals are given five minutes to talk about their own experience with empathy. The leader of the learning event clearly and enthusiastically explains how and why the pre-selected principals will talk about their experiences with implementing empathy. A quick definition of the term followed by the regular agenda will leave everyone wondering about who will be the selected ones to talk. Right after the first break, the first pre-selected principal talks about their experience with empathy. Principal meetings could potentially mean a thrilling experience for once.

When principals are better prepared in every single angle of the educational leadership landscape, growth outcomes have unlimited potential. When principals have support for understanding how the culture is, how it works, and how to properly address it, they can avoid aversion and persuade even the most skeptical educators. Principal Butragueño emphasized empathy:

“I think emotional intelligence, especially with empathy, is even more relevant and important to the content of academic intelligence. It’s impossible for one principal to know all grade levels, all content related to the English Language Arts, math, science, social studies, and even more at the high school level. But what you can be really good is to be an expert on exactly that. You need emotional intelligence. You need to have empathy galore. They need to feel that you understand so they can really open up for your support.”

As a principal, I conceptually understand that my number one responsibility with adults is to bring the best out of them. But for that to happen, principals need to have concerted efforts on how to deal with all the traumas that are presented on a daily basis. I could feel the tension in the room when Principal Butragueño, who leads a high school, reflected that empathy is one of the competencies that she struggles with. At her school, she leads a staff of 200 teachers plus staff.
She confessed that she often has to remind herself about who she’s going to support next because of the difficulties of remembering so many names and stories in just a few years. She emphasized that taking copious notes about meetings and properly labeling each section in her journal has truly helped her stay focused with the person she has in front of her or when thinking about best ways to support them. I assume that she meant like a journal but what she ended up showing to me was how she used iOS Apple Notes as they were accessible from any of her devices and in any location. She relayed, “I always give myself 10 minutes before meetings so I can catch my breath and check on my app who’s next. I want to remember what we talked about the last time so I can be there for them. The worst feeling is to know that they know you have no clue who they are or that you don’t remember about something important they shared with you.”

In tears, Principal Riba shared about her struggles with having a meaningful understanding of others and how that impacted her action plans:

“I was like, all right, I have a great idea. You know, I’m going to take part of those professional hours, those contractual hours and make them into learning hours. Like, I mean, teachers are in the business of learning, right? I’m going to send them professional articles and we are going to get together and discuss them. Plus, we are going to do a book study. We are going to read George Couros’s *The Innovator’s Mindset*, it’s going to be fantastic! I’m so excited about this and whatnot. But then, I get the eye-rolling of the entire staff at that meeting, right, like they were looking at me like ‘is not like we have all this time to do this you want us to do.’ At that moment I realized that I could start forgetting about them having empathy for me; I needed to emphasize that I was the one who needed to begin empathizing with them so I ended up opening it up for discussion with representatives from each team and we came to an understanding. With time, I have
learned that the team keeps asking for more learning resources on a consistent basis. If it comes from them, it will be owned.”

Principal Riba’s statement reminds us of the importance placed on the Context and Social Skill addressed in Section 4.1.a. As the school principal, it is abundantly important to use emotionally intelligent skills when persuading others to move the school towards positive outcomes. Principal Butragueño added:

“It’s going to take years because you have to build that culture. You have to build that relationship. You have to build that trust and then, eventually, those goals will come down the line. Nonetheless, in any district, you have metrics to meet on a yearly basis. So, as the instructional leader, you also understand that the time that it takes to build relationships and the time you are given to improve your metrics are not the same.”

To face this ambivalent dilemma, rather than evaluating how to change structural systems, principals must first focus on their own self-development and care. Principal Coach Yahner shared:

“Principals need to understand what is important is to take care of themselves so they can do this profession. Whether it is meditation, journaling, going to therapy, going out with friends, whatever it is, they need to get away from the job. I work with a bunch of principals that want to be there at their schools 24/7. While this might be great for the school in the short term, is not what’s good for the principal in the short term. The more you can work as a principal in the short term, the better the school will be. But the reality is that this is a job for the long term. I’m talking about 3-4 years and you will burn out. You
cannot do this job like that for the rest of your life so finding balance early is really important.”

I was made to believe that one masters the skills of the successful principal with time. I can never forget those passive aggressive words: “you got to pay your dues.” Because of the lack of formal support in EI, trying to solve issues can be mentally and physically exhausting. Principal Riba shared:

“The moment when someone comes and I know they are angry, I let them talk but they don’t listen to me. They don’t want to see my side of the story. They just want to make their demands to be met and whatnot. And then those conversations tend to be more in the rude category. I have been threatened and called every name in the book. And me, you know, I come from a place where I would be like ‘what the fuck did you just say?’; is like they don’t understand I’m human too. But regardless, you have to take it and just be like ‘oh, ok, thank you so much, I will get back to you’.”

In Section 4.1.a, Principal Abraham reflected on the humiliating experience she had to endure when the father of one of her students made her feel fear in her own office. Principal Riba’s story clearly resonates. In fact, I have personally felt fear as a principal and it seems it might be a trend that I hope to help reduce by properly supporting principals in improving their own emotional intelligence so they can properly serve others. If we do not support principals with what they actually need to succeed, these devastating stories will keep happening. Principal Quenepa added:

“Past experiences, right, as a principal, is that everybody’s against the principal. So that’s kind of how I went about it. So, it was very hard for me to trust anyone when I took the job.
Especially when everyone kept telling me at my new school that principals there come and go.

If this is an issue that keeps coming up and we do not address it, what hope can we have for our own humanity! As Principal Coach Yahner stated, “we must prepare principals for the real demands of their time, we must prepare them to face the reality that everyone thinks the principal can solve every question or problem right away.” A way to empower principals is by supporting them in learning how to cope with specific strategies on developing empathy. Learning and professional support are essential for the wellbeing of principals and their school communities.

Although Principal Abraham represented the ideal candidate for her high performing school, she was not at all prepared to deal with the fact that two employees shared their stories about miscarriages within the same week: “Nothing in my academic preparation prepared me for that, and then I’m expected to immediately respond. They are trusting me with their trauma.”

4.1.c Conditions + Self-Awareness

Conditions are the “external architecture surrounding student learning, the tangible arrangements of time, space, and resources (Wagner et al., 2012, p. 101). A great consideration when supporting principals is to guide them in the process of conceptually understanding what moves, inspires, and angers a community. If principal meetings are more about a reunion that only addresses instructional leadership and compliance, it will miss so many areas surrounding the nature of everyone’s humanity. When principal meetings become a time where all areas (instructional leadership, compliance, emotional intelligence) are prioritized, principals are able to lead others into structural wellbeing in their schools.
Some principals were blessed to have the trusting and warm-hearted support of principal coaches during their first year. Principal Quenepa shared: “my mentor was big on EI and helped me identify my weaknesses and strengths. She told me I was great with kids but not with teachers. Like I mean, I had teachers telling me they had grandchildren older me.” Principal Butragueño concluded that her mentor was not serving her nor her school community. Outraged, Principal Butragueño raised her voice when she exclaimed: “I hated the fact that I was serving my superintendent and not my community.”

We must be purposeful in supporting principals in the areas where they need it the most. No new acquired knowledge in bilingual education or in how to interpret data can truly support a principal the next time a parent or community member decides to verbally castigate them. Principal Riba shared that she clearly shows her emotions physically: her neck becomes red. Her principal coach gave her a strategy that made her feel more comfortable and she ended up improving her own performance. Principal Riba learned the habit of carrying with her and having around in her office and her bag, scarves to mask the effect stress on her complexion of her neck. That ability to acknowledge a fact and being able to do something about it is exactly why conditions (those things we can directly impact) and self-awareness (of our glows and grows) are interconnected.

Principal coaches Maldini, Bustamante, and Johnson had something to say about these issues. Principal Coach Maldini slightly raised his voice with his exuberant declaration: “leave your god damn ego out of it and ask yourself: do you know yourself enough?” Principal Coach Bustamante radiantly shared that principals need to have a realistic self-assessment of themselves. He stated that by identifying those areas of need, principals can formulate groups in ways that make sense for the total production of a successful school. Principal Coach Johnson
inquired: “if you don’t know your own feelings, how can you talk about them? If you cannot identify them, how can you help others with their own emotions?”

The experience of Principal Abraham is the epitome of the interconnectivity between conditions and self-awareness as they are needed for competencies and self-regulation and motivation (in 4.1.d). Principal Abraham showcased the humanity of the answer to why principals need support in understanding and further developing their emotional intelligence so they can properly serve others:

“...Unless you are married to a principal — and that often doesn’t work either — there’s nobody to talk about it. I mean, the real talk, not the BS you tell your assistant principal so you can keep the hope going. Nobody understands that, as principals, we can be gone, just like that. This is beyond demanding and then you can’t really talk to anyone. Yet, on a daily basis, people have to trust me with very private information, and then I have to manage my own humanity. When people are living in trauma or experiencing trauma, that definitely impacts you when you are the person that they’re coming to for guidance.”

“I don’t want to be married to a principal. I don’t want to be married to a computer. I go to sleep with the computer and wake up with the computer. What was at the core of that was that I had been living depressed for a year and a half and not confronting it and you don’t realize how your social-emotional well-being and how when you are depressed, how that affects your life. I was falling apart inside but, on the outside, I was always composed and I wanted to take on everybody else’s problems and I wasn’t being attentive to my own needs. I would go to school from day to night and that was not fair for me.”
Mental health issues were also addressed by Principal Abraham and they are the perfect transition to the next subsection:

“My staff is on medication, I am currently on three medications that I’ve talked to other principals about and they are like on the same thing. I’m on an antidepressant. I’m on high blood pressure medication and I’m on acid reflux medication. I didn’t have any of these issues prior to the principalship. But now I go to therapy, my teachers know that Tuesday after school is my therapy day.”

4.1.d Competencies + Self-Regulation + Motivation

There is a process to do everything in life. To make a healthy smoothie, you add spinach and kale, protein powder, frozen fruit, an entire banana, water, ice, and honey. That simple process of how to do something has to be applied to the principalship as well. Competencies are “the repertoire of skills and knowledge that influences” (Wagner et al., 2012, p. 99) the positive outcomes that we are looking for.

While Principal Abraham talked about the trend of using medication to deal with the principalship (and life!) in front of toxic employees, Principal Quenepa admitted he had a really hard time with the way he was saying things and how his facial expressions were communicating other messages:

“I had a situation with a toxic teacher who was a member of my local board. In every community meeting, he would use cuss words and say horrible things about me. Sometimes it was directed at other members and I will see those poor people in tears, ostracized for having an opinion different from his toxic opinions. But then I got feedback from my principal coach and she told me that I just needed to shut my mouth, to
mask the feelings I personally felt about this person, and to remind myself to whom I was serving. She told me that all I needed to do was to thank them for their input and that I always needed to keep my cool and my professionalism. That I needed to be professional with my wording. Like I needed to say stuff like “thank you, sir. Sir, I would appreciate it if you please don’t use that kind of language. Please remember we are in a place for students to learn.”

All the principals interviewed had a defining moment in their professional lives of deeper impact. Principal Quenepa was constantly accused of being a racist. Principals Abraham and Riba told stories of men verbally abusing women. Finally, with over 200 teachers plus supporting staff to get to know, Principal Butragueño realized she was not serving her community, she was serving her superintendent.

Principal Coach Yahner suggested that for self-regulation, principals ought to do things such as journaling or meditation and to never take things personally. Principal Coach Yahner emphasized that principals are not to take anything personally because it is not really about them, it is often about things beyond them. Additionally, Principal Maldini suggested: “if you know what sets you off, go for a walk.”

With no clear focus or direction, principals can easily feel disheartened, as I felt, during my first year as a principal, when I observed 14 school parents with signs labeling me a dictator and asking for my resignation (Lulay, 2016). Of all the classes I took in school, none of them taught me what to do in a crisis other than fire drills. It does make sense to invest in the capital that every educator in the school can share to enhance the possibilities of students. Districts should follow up with formalities on how to carry out such an emotionally intelligent project.
Here is an example of how simple it can be for schools and districts to develop initiatives that can support principals in further developing their emotional intelligence so they can properly serve others. The example provided by Principal Bustamante is ideal to illustrate how anger can never be the solution when thinking that, at the end of the day, as principals, our jobs are to motivate ourselves so we can motivate others:

“I can think of one particular incident when I was very angry that I didn’t mask it. I was with my assistant principal and my dean of curriculum instruction. We had created this very elaborate plan for the annual standardized assessment. I go and tell the teachers about the plan, about how it is going to play, and how everyone was going to love it. I thought everything was going great. So, this one teacher in particular, you know the one who always complains about everything, the toxic one, comes and complains like nothing is ever right. And then I totally lost it. I said something like: ‘you know what, we are not going to change it and I’m tired of you.’”

This is a particularly interesting anecdote and demonstrates the important role EI plays in the daily life of a principal. Principal Coach Bustamante added:

“The room got completely silent after my distasteful speech. I went on for maybe 1 or 2 minutes. But I felt I lasted like two hours. I had lost all control so I excused myself and went to my office. I accidentally cracked the screen of my phone and I was feeling worthless. My assistant principal, at the end of the year party, confessed over drinks how scared everyone got that day. She suggested not to ever allow any other teacher see me like that. She told me I turned bright red and started pacing back and forth as if I was ready to kick someone’s ass.”
Supporting principals with competencies that can enhance motivation can be addressed by focusing on our sense of purpose to make a difference. In order to inspire, leaders need to motivate others to take action (Sinek, 2009). Because teachers need to have a comprehensive understanding of the common mission of the school, Principal Coach Maldini warns aspiring principals to use thoughtful processes when selecting where to apply for principal positions:

“Many of the ones I coach are learning that they cannot motivate themselves and others if they don’t share the same goals with the community. Often, what I see is that they just want a purple job. They just want to be the boss. They just want to make more money without realizing they are running away from happiness. Because let me tell you, more money doesn’t mean happiness. The secret to happiness is finding satisfaction in activities that can get you in the state of flow; you got to watch this Ted Talk about a professor from the University of Chicago. But let me get back to the point I was making of folks just wanting the principal job. They might pick the school community or neighborhood that’s not suited for the things they can bring to the table. Or they pick a school or district like an hour or two away and then during lunch they feel worn out and grouchy while simultaneously simulating a circus act with their emotions as if everything is great. Then, they come into the realization that they hate their jobs. If they lose their why there’s no way they can motivate themselves and others because there’s no common vision.”

4.2 Interpretation

Interpretations “go beyond the data to add context, determine meaning, and tease out substantive significance” (Patton, 2008, p. 478). It is easy to say that emotional intelligence is important for principals. For real and authentic support, principals need to know exactly why
emotional intelligence is important. The findings in my research shed light to some of the specific ways we can support principals.

In terms of self-awareness, there has to be an official acknowledgment that many principals are agonizing with mental health issues that are not being addressed (DeWitt, 2020). These emotional problems then are repressed and might come out at a later time as in the case of Principal Coach Bustamante when he was a principal. It is clear that principals deal with constant trauma and to support them in any sense of improvement, there must be an intellectual investment in supporting them in knowing themselves. The support given to Principal Riba (advice with scarves) and the suggestions provided by Principal Coach Bustamante are examples to be discussed during principal learning events.

In terms of self-regulation, there is clear evidence that principals are struggling with the demands of running a school. The fact that some principals are regulating themselves with medication has to be alarming and, as a society, we must do more to support school leaders. Specific strategies on mindfulness and meditation were suggested by all interviewees. One can empathize with Principals Riba and Abraham and the need of learning negotiation skills when being yelled at by an abusive parent.

In terms of motivation, all eight interviewees had surface-level knowledge of what motivation entails. All eight talked more about how to motivate others and very little about than motivating themselves. Only Principal Coach Maldini was the one who stressed the fact that principals need to have a common goal so all those engaged can embrace a state of flow with the utmost optimism. Principal Coach Maldini suggested that principals ought to anticipate problems before they arise.
In terms of empathy, principals are to be coached in having a better awareness of how they react to their own emotions and those of others. Two of the principals, Principals Quenepa and Riba had the fortune to be advised on how to improve the way to connect with others by walking in other’s shoes. Principal coaches Johnson, Yahner, and Maldini referred to the need for principals to learn more about mirroring and attunement.

In terms of social skill findings, I learned that principals are yelled at quite often for things that are out of their control. Interviewees talked about strategies to keep up with the work while developing emotionally intelligent skills such as better ways to address others. When principals become emotionally intelligent leaders, as Principal Coach Maldini suggested, they become experts in Emotional Judo. Incorporating the knowledge of PC Maldini, Connors (2020) goes even deeper: “we’re to truly master our emotions, we have to be aware of how to accentuate the positive and manage the negative so it doesn’t destroy us (p. 35).”

4.3 Judgments

When I began this study back in 2017, I was feeling that I was not getting anywhere. A principal colleague made a sarcastic, and perhaps derogatory comment on how I was going to change my school culture with emotional intelligence. At two formal principal meetings, when I suggested the learning of emotional intelligence to further improve principal practices, I was laughed at or ignored. But as I have learned with time: “should critics make fun of me, I’ll take the rocks they throw at me and make them into monuments of mastery” (Sharma, 2018, p. 275). I proceeded then, with three research questions:

1) How do principals and principal coaches describe emotional intelligence and why is it important?

2) How can principals improve their emotional intelligence?
3) What can school districts do to support principals in improving their emotional intelligence?

I believe the data I was able to gather answered my three questions. That cheerfulness is based on the fact that when I look back at when I started all this process, I can confidently state that I am at a better place because of the EI knowledge I have acquired. This knowledge I gained started with all I could possibly read and comprehend about emotional intelligence and principals. Then, I interviewed eight individuals who I thought I could gain knowledge from. I felt very pleased and invigorated after every single interview because each one of those principals and principal coaches is smart, efficient, and productive.

But I also feel shocked at how simple it could be for any school district to implement some of these recommendations into their professional learning events. Activities like going over facial expressions and gestures can aid principals when encountering the next difficult situation. Finally, school districts do not have to feel puzzled or skeptical about initiatives of adapting and infusing emotional intelligence into everything principals do. In the next subsection, the reader will learn about some of the proposals on how we can make justice for the school principals that endure time not knowing how to properly practice the principalship. The anticipatory mindset strategy I am proposing is one that principals may find essential.

4.4 Recommendations

Plato’s Allegory of the Cave has been adapted by this researcher to explain what the process of becoming an emotionally intelligent principal can look like. All principals go through different experiences and sharing my own can only contribute to the value of this study as “the researcher’s personal experiences and insights are an important part of the inquiry and critical to understanding the phenomenon” (Patton, 2008, p. 9). In May 2018, I was driving to my principal job when suddenly I noticed a man coming out of a landscaping truck on fire. That event was
shared on the local news and I was deeply honored when the daughter of the victim described my actions to the reporter as “it was like all of the sudden this angel out of nowhere came to help him” (Martinez, 2018).

I am of the belief that we must stay away from viewing principals as heroes. The real heroes are the teachers while principals are hero makers (Johnson et al., 2017). Yet, the actions taken on that day deeply impacted me, and I ended up in the hospital and was forced to be away from my school community for a month (FitzPatrick, 2018). Because I happened to be researching emotional intelligence during this time, I was able to directly apply them to my professional and personal life. Rather than ignoring my emotions, I strategically reflected on them with self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and social skill. I was able to embrace emotional intelligence and it ended up improving the quality of my performance and personal/professional life.

As Principal Yahner mentioned, relationships are essential as they are “the turbocharger that lead to new opportunities, success, and the achievement of our long-term goals” (Connors, 2020, p. 63). And having enduring relationships involves understanding emotions. Emotionally intelligent leaders understand that we are emotional beings, and when something hard happens to us, emotion drives. Cognition or thinking is not sitting shotgun next to behavior in the cab of the truck (B. Brown, 2018).

To properly address emotions without allowing them to take control, one must have the proper vocabulary and understanding. In fact, “individuals who experience their emotions with more granularity are less likely to resort to maladaptive self-regulatory strategies such as binge drinking, aggression, and self-injurious behavior; show less neural reactivity to rejection, and experience less severe anxiety and depressive disorders” (Kashdan et al., 2015).
My research provides evidence that principals are spending considerable efforts in solving problems that go beyond instructional leadership. For this reason, school districts are to actively support these best practices. Here is one example as to how districts can support principals (in this case, it is about improving the principal’s instructional leadership):

“The central office has stated that improving instruction is the priority. The district leadership supports the principals in this instructional leadership role by encouraging principals to delegate more of their managerial responsibilities to other administrators so that they can spend more of their time in classrooms. They even designated an ombudsman position for each school and gained individuals in these roles to handle complaints and minor disciplinary cases (Wagner et al., 2012, p. 102).”

When a principal is properly supported in conducting their school in an emotionally intelligent way, there are systems and structures in place. There is an existence of a culture where everyone understands the role of the principal is never to be the best teacher in the building, but the most supportive employee. If teachers and other educators are the ones in charge of their classrooms and instruction, the emotionally intelligent principal can be there to support them. A recommendation is to divide the school based on a priorities framework. This serves as the foundation of how things are done by the school. An assistant principal can be the head of academics and promote within a teacher that is able to have familial relations with other members of the staff. Separating the roles of the administrator (the assistant principal) and the teacher-leader (as the director of the student experience) to lead how the culture of the school represents an emotionally intelligent approach of addressing priorities. This would give way for principals to be able to spend quality time with stakeholders. Doing this clears the path of the
principal who has to ensure that all issues are being addressed by the experts in the school building and district.

4.5 Conclusion

In this section, I reflected on the interviews and the learning process of dispositions of emotional intelligence in school principals. I explained that principals and principal coaches heavily emphasized issues related to others (empathy and social skill) and then about themselves (self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation). Merging Wagner et al. (2012) and the components of emotional intelligence of Goleman (1995), I was able to deconstruct the dispositions of emotional intelligence in school principals. I further explained how to infuse EI in the learning development of school principals. In Section Five, I will propose a To-Be Framework showcasing what can be done to improve the chances of success in principals and their schools.
Section Five: To-Be Framework

5.1 Introduction

“Unexpressed emotions will never die. They are buried alive and will come forth later in uglier ways.” -Sigmund Freud

To succeed in this new post-pandemic century, principals will require much more than credentials; principals will need to continuously improve in polishing their professional competencies. Merging and adapting Wagner et al. (2012) with Goleman (1995) has been rejuvenating as they complement each other for use with systemic lenses. While the reader will be able to implement most of the strategies on their own, I argue that these recommendations improve the outcomes of any school in any district. Better yet, school districts will be excited to learn how they can incorporate the principles of EI in their schools without making budget amendments.
5.2 Envisioning the Success TO-BE

Note: “To Be” 4 C’s Analysis for Emotional Intelligence and the Principalship, Table 7

The world of To-Be can be a reality today. In terms of Context and Social Skill competency, principals ought to be properly supported in emotional intelligence so they can properly persuade and inspire the multiple stakeholders they lead. More specifically, merging emotional intelligence knowledge with Dale Carnegie principles is a great example on how to maximize content and knowledge for the benefit of principals and those who they serve. For all of this to happen, there has to be formal encouragement and support by superintendents and other supervisors.

In terms of the Culture and Empathy competency, principals are authentically supported in how to understand and properly address verbal and non-verbal cues by their school district.
Basic principal coaching would support this, including innovating ways such as in the example presented about the Air Force using virtual simulators to coach their soldiers in not only their expressions but in the way they provide feedback. School districts can make partnerships with their local universities while those institutions can mutually benefit as schools could host their student-teachers.

Another example on how empathy can be improved through learning is having an activity for principals to have others assess them. Principals can create a simple Google Form with the following questions that their employees can rank on a scale of 1-10 (1 being the lowest and 10 the highest):

1. How well do I listen?
2. Do I take the time to understand others’ positions?
3. Do you feel I have invested in others’ personal and professional development?
4. Do I listen without trying to fix the problem?
5. Am I sensitive, compassionate, and caring toward the people I lead? (Connors, 2020, p. 110)

Considering that emotionally intelligent principals are to invigorate educators with their positive feedback, there is no doubt that formal support is required. Finally, efforts will take place to redefine the role of the principal. In some schools, people expect the principal to be the one able to solve any and all problems and to have all the solutions. A principal that has the formal, authentic and ethical support in leading their schools will undoubtedly lever the power of relationships that create better results that end up benefiting students and families.

In terms of the Conditions and Self-Awareness competency, professional learning on identifying and developing emotional intelligence is actively encouraged and supported. For
example, during principal meetings, randomly selected principals, using a learning protocols rubric, could address one aspect of EI in their practice. Principals will be able to access, view, and read real-life examples of ways to address issues where positive communication is a must. Superintendents and other supervisors will infuse emotional intelligence in all contexts of what is being learned as principals are expected to do the same at their school buildings.

Being self-aware allows us to use that knowledge to regulate ourselves. A strategy used to better know ourselves is mindful meditation. “Short periods of meditation help develop resistance to the flawed decision process and encourage people to make more rational decisions by considering more of the information available in the present moment” (Platt, 2020).

Finally, in terms of the Competencies plus Self-Regulation plus Motivation, principals can learn with formal EI modules. Principals in these modules will learn strategies to use when communicating with others (the art of negotiation) while adapting productivity tools such as Todoist or Tasks, and notetakers (either digital such as Apple Notes and/or journals and/or planners). For example, principals can be taught about mirroring language and how it works in negotiations. “When words, voice tone, and body movements are in sync, people feel less threatened and are more willing to open up” (MasterClass, n.d.; Platt, 2020). More specifically, principals can “practice repeating one of the three keywords in the last sentence spoken by the other person during a negotiation, describing the technique as one of the quickest ways to establish rapport” (Platt, 2020).

These strategies can energize principals and overall positive school outcomes are to follow. Finally, strategies to use to improve and heal relationships will be collectively researched during principal meetings so they could be practiced and perhaps implemented.
5.3 Conclusion

Winston Churchill encouraged us to create our own universe as we go along (Churchill, 2010). The emotionally intelligent principal is able to be at ease during a stressful situation, encouraging at any moment while providing an appropriate smile that provides comfort to the people they serve. In this section, the reader learned about how different a school could be if principals were properly supported in developing and further enhancing their own emotional intelligence skills. In Section 6, this research provides additional simple strategies principals can implement along with ideas on how districts can implement such measures that will greatly enhance the experience of all stakeholders.
Section Six: Strategies and Actions

6.1 Introduction

“Take the first step in faith. You don’t have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.”
-Martin Luther King

Principals, especially emotionally intelligent principals, succeed in environments where relationships are essential. “Relationships refer to the quality of attitudes, feelings, and behaviors of various individuals and groups toward one another as they engage in the work of helping all students learn” (Wagner et al., 2012, p. 135). When thinking about the best way to approach strategies and actions for uplifting and profound professional learning, one can easily get lost in the EI ecosystem. There are many theories and many more good ideas to adapt. The recommendation of this scholar-practitioner is to become well-read on the topics of EI, psychology, neuroscience, and human relations in order to develop best practices.

As principals prepare to metamorphize as emotionally intelligent principals (and this goes for progressive school districts who want to implement EI into their learning), one ought to keep in mind that “less is more when it comes to establishing a culture of professional learning” (Nelsen & Cudeiro, 2009, p. 33). While principals can start by working in any of the competencies on their own, school districts can create opportunities to infuse EI training in principal meetings. Districts can show their commitment by prioritizing an initiative as part of larger school reform (Darling-Hammond, 2015, p. 104).

The next subsection will describe several strategies that could be adapted based on the adaptation of Wagner’s arenas and Goleman’s competencies towards the well-rounded and emotionally intelligent principal.
6.2 Strategies and Actions

Principals need to be supported in the habits and skills needed to inspire and persuade others. Social skills are needed to manage relationships, build networks, and to find common ground and build rapport (Goleman, 1998, p. 4). Emotionally intelligent leaders are able to build bonds by nurturing instrumental relationships (p. 206). When those relationships are sincere and authentic, employees feel gratitude and when this occurs, workers tend to work harder and be more productive (Platt, 2020, p. 158).

The emotionally intelligent principal “may at times appear not to be working while at work. They seem to be idly schmoozing—chatting in the hallways with colleagues or joking around with people who are not even connected to their ‘real’ jobs (Goleman, 2004, p. 10). These constant eloquent, cordial and kind conversations are essential for the emotionally intelligent principal as they are able then to demonstrate the empathy needed when developing others.

The emotional exchange between the principal and each one of the stakeholders constitutes an invisible interpersonal economy of human interactions. Principals familiar with EI are to know that the mood of the most expressive person in the room is the mood that others in the room acquire, whether it is happy, bored, angry, or anxious (Goleman, 1998, pp. 164–165). When emotionally intelligent principals fully implement their social skills, they use the knowledge acquired from emotions as hyperefficient modes of communication (Goleman, 1998). The most effective people use their emotional radar to sense how others are realigned, and they fine-tune their own response to push the interaction in the best direction (Goleman, 1998). When leaders take advantage of positive emotional contagion, employees experience improved cooperation, decreased conflict, and increased perceived task performance” (Barsade, 2002).
The strategies and recommendations that will follow, address the sense of context and social skill and are an adaptation of Dale Carnegie’s *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (1936). The emotionally intelligent principal does not criticize or complain as they might hurt a person’s pride and sense of importance. They know it takes character to understand and forgive. When a teacher makes a mistake, the principal encourages them to rise to their standards of excellence. Those words are backed up with actual support such as coaching.

Employees at this school are appreciated with genuine interest as it arouses enthusiasm. As the principal, think of every person as superior to you in some way; find out what it is and learn from them. Learn to appreciate others sincerely as they will know if you are not being honest. For this reason, you must sincerely care for those that you serve.

The emotionally intelligent principal understands that the only way to get anyone to do anything is to make the other person want to do it. Before speaking, pause and ask yourself: what the other person wants. Do not talk about the performance of the employee as just an evaluation; talk about their legacy in the history books of each one of their students.

Social skills include smiling, greeting others with animation and enthusiasm to enhance trust and commitment. The emotionally intelligent principal pictures the type of person they want to be and then they direct all their efforts to fulfill that desire. For example, they could have a one-year plan with what they would like to accomplish in both their professional and personal lives. The following questions, adapted from Connors (2020) could guide the thinking process:

1. What professional learning courses would you like to take?
2. What conferences would you like to attend?
3. What certification would you like to obtain?
The activity mentioned above can also be adapted to a vision board. This is an activity that encourages visualization as one can see it every day. This educational leader will then be able to truly listen and encourage as they are interested in those that they serve. When an employee feels that you are listening to their struggles and how they overcome them, the supportive administrator gives sincere praise and animation. When leaders inspire employees by connecting their work with the positive impact it has on others, employees tend to be happier and more productive (Grant & Hofmann, 2011).

How the principal makes the employee feel is so important. Having conversations on the interest of others and making them realize their importance as this will also make your teacher more comfortable to share their goals and how the principal will help them get closer to those goals.

One thing that can take a principal away from their goals is when they lose their temper. The educational leader needs to avoid heated arguments by always having a friendly approach. They must be calm and collected especially when addressing parents in the heat of the moment. When hearing a complaint, the principal kindly explains that they are not there to make mistakes but to learn how the school can make it better. An easy way to empathize with the person is by starting with what you agree on. Common agreements build layers of understanding by asking simple questions. This will make the other person feel the idea is theirs as you are not pushing them towards your idea.

In terms of culture and empathy, the emotionally intelligent principal understands and properly addresses verbal and non-verbal cues from their stakeholders. One of the areas where principals struggle the most are when providing feedback to educators. Here are some
suggestions that have been adapted from Dale Carnegie’s *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (1936).

When the emotionally intelligent principal addresses a teacher, they always begin with praise. Rather than presenting an argument, notice something that needs improvement, inquire, and listen as often the teacher will end up giving themselves the best advice.

Keeping in mind that the opposite invites resistance, point out problems indirectly. For example, rather than saying “your first class of the day is the worst because you arrive at the same time that students do”, the emotionally intelligent principal would say: “Imagine for a moment how pleasant it would be to greet your students, all cheerful and relaxed. Can we agree arriving 5 minutes early could bring positive results for all?”

When the emotionally intelligent principal asks questions instead of giving orders, it allows the other person to come to their own conclusions as people prefer their own ideas better. New and better ideas will materialize and flourish by stimulating the creativity of the person being guided. The pride of all individuals is to be preserved or the employee being led will resent their principal making it impossible to be influenced. These leaders acknowledge their mistakes and are forgiving of the mistakes of others. Given the reality that principals must offer feedback with consistency, they can make improvement easy. An example of connecting feedback with something positive is: “I remember how great you handled that tough situation with student A; this new situation is right up your alley.” The emotionally intelligent principal appeals to the employee’s pride by pointing out how much better it can be for them by providing feedback as praise.

In terms of conditions and self-awareness, the emotionally intelligent principal knows themselves as well as what moves, inspires, and angers a community. They study how to
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improve their habits by connecting core values with actions. Recommendations for principals on self-awareness include reflection activities to recognize their own emotions and how they impact others. The following professional learning questions for self-awareness have been adapted from Goleman’s *Working with Emotional Intelligence* (1998):

1. What are my strengths and weaknesses?
2. What emotions did you feel during the conversation with that parent?
3. How can the principal recognize the link between their own feelings and what they think, do, and say?
4. How my feelings affect my performance?
5. How do I know if I have a guiding awareness of my values and goals?
6. Am I aware of my own blind spots (i.e. unrealistic goals, power hungry, blind ambition)?

To give to others, one has to know themselves and what they can give. When the principal is aware of personal areas of deficiency, they can support others to avoid their own lack of self-awareness, since by knowing themselves, they would have to admit to failings they cannot bear to acknowledge. A teacher may feel more comfortable knowing that a principal has areas of themselves they are working on too.

In terms of Competencies + Self-Regulation + Motivation, there are multiple available methods to support the emotionally intelligent principal in knowing how to regulate themselves. In addition, supporting principals with competencies that can enhance motivation can be addressed by focusing on their purpose and goals. In order to inspire others, leaders need to inspire others to take action (Sinek, 2009).

One example is for principals to practice mindfulness, which means having presence of mind (K. W. Brown et al., 2007, p. 212). Emotionally intelligent principals can hide somewhere
in their buildings for a few minutes to find themselves again. Nourishing the mind can cause a positive impact on the actions leaders take (Davidson, 2019). These principals can motivate others because of their consistent demeanor attained by mindful self-reflection and actions. They can be receptive to others as they are aware of surrounding events and experiences.

To focus, the emotionally intelligent principal is mindful of time and presence. Keeping in mind the emotions of stakeholders, this educational leader is able to guide others towards common goals by enhancing empathy where it is needed the most.

To decrease levels of stress and anxiety, some of the best historical figures cooled off their strong emotions with walks in nature. The emotionally intelligent leader visits classrooms and walks all over the building while implementing social skills. For example, inviting teachers to reflect while walking can build positive relationships but also motivation might be enhanced because of the leader’s influence.

Finally, lists and reminders are of the essence for mainstreaming success. Principals receive so many requests during the day that it is hard to keep up. The emotionally intelligent principal understands that the brain is great to generate ideas but not to keep them (Allen, 2015). This educational leader always has a journal or electronic tool (for example: Todoist or Apple Reminders) to collect all tasks for eventual execution. If the brain of the principal is juggling the many tasks they need to do in any given day, there is little chance they would also be able to motivate themselves or others. The brain needs to be free of tasks and flowing with ideas on how to best support those that they serve.

6.3 Conclusion

Emotionally intelligent principals know their profession is about serving others. In order to serve others, principals must care for themselves first. This section detailed strategies and
actions regarding how to incorporate and further develop the emotional intelligence of principals.

In the next section, proposals for policy and implementation will be discussed.
Section Seven: Implications and Policy Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

“One ought to hold on to one’s heart; for if one lets it go, one soon loses control of the head too.”
-Friedrich Nietzsche

When I began the research section of my journey, my primary purpose was to rescue my professional career and reputation. After two years as a principal, I was feeling devastated and defeated following two parent demonstrations demanding my license to be revoked. To facilitate improving my mental health, I first researched emotional intelligence (EI), what it is and how it is used by effective professionals.

The objective was to uncover the secrets on how to be a better leader so I could be the best principal I could be. I knew I was not failing because neglecting policies or implementing systems and structures. My principal preparation program prepared me for those challenges very well. What I was missing was the personal connections with the people that were entrusted to me. I was missing the essential awareness of the day-to-day realities of interactions with others in the school building. It’s about leading through empathy, acknowledging what I signed up for, to serve others, to solve daily, minute-to-minute problems. The principal understands the trust given to is for the purpose of empowering others. Principals ought to focus on oneself so that they can serve others the way they deserve to be served.

In my study, I interviewed four principals and four principal coaches to gain their input about emotional intelligence. I used semi-structured questions to give the freedom and liberty of the participants to relay what they were thinking or feeling about EI and the challenges of being a principal. In my research, I found that everyone I interviewed had heard about emotional intelligence and knew it was important. Moreover, what I learned was that every one of us lacked
formal professional learning and support in the study of emotional intelligence and in how to understand and manage it in oneself and others.

It was then that the purpose of my study evolved from only saving my career and reputation. The lack of specific awareness and implementation in practice prompted me to pursue the goal of not only supporting my own case, but the case of everyone who wants to make a difference as a principal. In the words of Daniel Goleman (1995):

“On the positive side, imagine the benefits for work of being skilled in the basic emotional competencies — being attuned to the feelings of those we deal with, being able to handle disagreements so they do not escalate, having the ability to get into flow states while doing our work. Leadership is not domination, but the art of persuading people to work towards a common goal” (p. 149).

Infusing EI into any district’s policies and procedures can only be beneficial for school districts. The idea transformed into supporting every type of principal in acquiring enlightening knowledge of understanding how to sincerely persuade others (Carnegie, 1936). A district can only benefit from having principals that can understand and manage their own emotions while empathizing and collaboratively succeeding with others. Practicing mindfulness at work reduces emotional exhaustion and even improves job satisfaction (Hülsheger et al., 2013). Implementing these modifications to the principalship can increase productivity in an environment of peace and calm. This can be transformational for any district if at least implemented in basic ways. Principals can better serve their schools and effectively handle challenges when supporting students, faculty, staff, families, communities, and supervisors.
7.2 Policy Statement

School principals in any district have to face an amalgam of problems that extend way beyond the classroom. For this reason, the topic of emotional intelligence can influence all the conversations and professional learning that involves principals. The five components of EI that principals ought to enhance are:

1. Self-awareness: Superintendents and other leaders in the district will incorporate the process of identifying principals’ strengths and areas of growth. When principals are able to identify and manage their own emotions, they are more willing to deal with the emotions of others (faculty, staff, students, community, families, supervisors, etc.)

2. Self-regulation: Superintendents and other leaders in the district will facilitate “acting scenarios” to situate principals in different high-intensity situations to learn the best practices to identify our emotions and how to regulate them. Rather than “open-scripts”, EI scripts must be specific as the purpose is to show how to do it correctly rather than going into philosophical conversations into the many ways we can do something wrong.

3. Motivation: Like in any environment, motivating oneself and others are essential for school principals. Strategies on how to strengthen the commitment to improve yourself and others will result in greater achievements and more fulfilling accomplishments.

4. Empathy: If principals are servants, they need to serve others, and serve them well. For this reason, it’s essential that principals can walk in the shoes of the people they serve. When principals get to truly understand the feelings and the thinking of others, this allows them to lead with proper decisions that can positively impact all.

5. Social skill: If principals are having conversations for significant portions of their day, what type of supports do they receive to ensure what they are saying and doing will be
conducive to positive outcomes? Conversations scenarios and best practices ought to be taught and supported.

Rather than creating an Office for Emotional Intelligence, districts ought to use the power of professional learning communities to have EI professional learning communities (EI-PLCs) that could potentially be in charge of re-evaluating areas that could certainly include the support of the field. For example, creating structures and systems that aspiring principals could benefit from in order to lead their schools is one way to shield the district from financial and social chaos caused by inexperienced educational leaders. For example, the Office of Bilingual Education can implement professional learning activities for teachers in enhancing empathy for newcomers. In the same way, the Office of Equity could evaluate and improve the way principals can better communicate what equity stands for in a way that could easily integrate individuals from different social backgrounds and experiences. Principals often receive criticism from irate individuals because there is a difference of opinions regarding what equity stands for and there is a social tendency to be defensive when someone has a different opinion. In a post-pandemic world, the skills of understanding one’s emotions and the emotions of others can only enhance the experience of educators and students in all school districts.

7.3 Analysis of Needs

Not being aware of the power of emotional intelligence made me almost lose my principal position, twice, in a matter of two years. It felt as if the school and I were running two different marathons; as if we were cheering for different teams. Every time I had made a move, there was already an accusation of something else. As PC Johnson expressed: “it feels as if you are constantly walking on eggshells.”
This is certainly not the way any district wants their principals to feel. This is an area that needs to be explored in a learning community. We are literally placing human beings into principal positions that they are not prepared for. We are placing principals in schools that they cannot lead. Districts should not wait until graduate programs of education decide how to fix the problem. School districts can assume that novice principals have never had formal training in emotional intelligence and therefore should include EI training at the district level. Some examples by which principals can be supported when designing communication strategies across cultures and communities. It begins by admitting that when the education system in the United States was created, it was never founded as a right that would be included in the Constitution, but a system that decided who would get privileges based on racism and on serving the economic and war needs of the time (Aguilar, 2020). It is for this reason that it is imperative that principals reach out across different cultures, languages, and customs. It is important to know the community well in order to serve them.

The following subsection includes areas for analysis and their implications on the immersion of emotional intelligence into districts’ efforts.

**7.3.a Educational Analysis**

School districts entrust principals with the reigns of their school communities. In many ways, school leaders are mayors of a small-to-large city. The principal is accountable for anything and everything that occurs in the buildings and beyond. Why would any district not invest in the development of emotional intelligence for school principals? Emotionally intelligent principals tend to lead schools where teachers perform at higher levels given their job satisfaction (Singh & Manser, 2009). When principals are able to manage themselves and the
ones they lead, school employees tend to be more open to suggestions; consequently, creating positive advancements towards student achievement (Reed, 2005).

A school adopting this Emotionally Intelligent Policy will follow these steps:

1. Do an inventory of the leadership (central office and schools) within the district. Identify leaders with evident dispositions in emotional intelligence (for example, for this committee, principals who continuously demonstrate high teacher satisfaction in their schools proven by formal satisfaction assessments).

2. Unpack the district’s Principal Competencies: crafting professional learning opportunities to comprehensively understand them. An exploratory committee is to backward design a long-term plan. Once this is done, professional learning for principals must be embedded, naturally, with the appropriate competencies.

3. Create a 1-week institute where the foundations of each department are discussed and revamped. For instance, the mission and vision of the district can be analyzed with EI lenses in order to bring theory into practice. For example, if a principal is entrusted with leading a school, they need to motivate their teachers to improve. If principals as leaders cannot get along with the educators they lead, they are less likely to improve their efforts of transformational leadership (Kumar, 2014).

4. Once a preliminary plan has been drafted, it is to be shared within the schools in the district in order to generate feedback. This can be done over a simple digital survey tool such as Google Forms. Once principals provide their thoughts on the plan there ought to be formal professional learning for principals and gradually to the rest of the individuals in the district.
5. A summer institute is to bring a speaker that can address the emotional intelligence needs of leaders and the ones they lead. This speaker might not necessarily be an educator. In fact, speakers should be either a psychologist or a neuroscientist since much is to be learned about how the brain impacts our emotions and performance as humans.

6. Every professional learning event for principals, models mindfulness by beginning with a short meditation and creating an environment of peace and calm.

7.3.b Economic Analysis

Districts with schools where families are upset at their principals or perhaps angry at teachers costs financial and human capital burden. My perspective is that often funds are in places where they should not be. For example, the fascination with standardized assessments has cost way too many financial losses and major headaches and it has been proven to be a failure (Ravitch, 2013). Funds should be invested in supporting principals on how to be transparent with their communities in a way that is conducive to open dialogue and communication. There are principals with different backgrounds and experiences (for example, I was a Spanish teacher and I have worked under principals that were teachers of English, arts, and religion). Districts are to support principals in learning communication strategies when delivering messages that are aligned with the values and mission of the district.

I want to briefly illuminate the economic impact of not supporting principals with emotional intelligence. When a principal is replaced, it is like re-starting the history of the school all over again. Principals with no formal support in EI run the risk of becoming less effective and, more than likely to leave (Grissom & Bartanen, 2018). When there is a systemic distribution of core practices in an effective school district, students tend to have higher achievement (Odden,
2009). These minor financial investments of the district will provide positive outcomes. But just like mindfulness meditation, it takes time, practice and patience.

7.3.c Social Analysis

It is imperative that principals have collegial relationships with their teachers, staff, students, parents, community, and beyond. Principals are to be supported with professional learning on emotional intelligence as it is associated with job performance (Côté & Miners, 2006) and job satisfaction (Miao et al., 2017). Overall satisfaction in the organization is possible by emphasizing to principals that leading with positive emotions can broaden the scope of attention and thought-action in others (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005).

A school district ought to support principals by empowering them with the tools they will need to address EI needs. When principals learn about emotional intelligence, human relations, and how to get along with others, schools can thrive. In order to diversify the complexity of professional learning that principals have to undertake every year, professional learning should include theories and examples in self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill. An astounding addendum of support for these areas are Dale Carnegie principles of human relations (Carnegie, 1936).

7.3.d Political Analysis

School principals often have to persuade elected officials in order to attract funds and opportunities for their schools. In my case, I remember begging my local elected official for a marquee for the school. For three years, the elected official did not respond to my wishes. The last time we met, we talked about the reasons why the individual was still working on trying to get the desired school marquee; as a consolation prize, one of my students received a certificate and we took a photo that his chief of staff quickly posted on social media. Little did I know that
my conversation with that elected official was more than likely wiretapped by the FBI (Keefe, 2019) as the meeting concurred with their corruption investigation. The elected official I was talking to, in my private office, was wearing a wire so my conversation with him must be archived somewhere in the FBI’s database.

This made me think of the times when I said something indecent or inappropriate when nobody was around. What if I would have said something inappropriate and then it was heard by others? What if it was heard by my students? Certainly, this could only lead to the destruction of the reputation of any principal. Principals are expected to be role models. They must imagine everyone is recording from different angles. The emotionally intelligent principal is consistent with both their professional and personal lives. If elected officials are supported by their advisors on the political risks they can take by speaking without a script or by a simple tweet, why wouldn’t districts do the same for principals?

7.3.e Legal Analysis

When I was a first- and second-year principal, I had a terrible time getting along with my school community. I had to go to the Office of the Inspector General twice to defend myself against outrageous accusations that were tossed out because they were baseless. Still, there are the financial costs of the lawyers, but also the institutional structures that support them. What about the cost of emotional and financial losses for principals that have to maneuver themselves in systems that they cannot handle? It is imperative then, that principals understand the law and policies and bring them to the schools they lead. In fact, school districts, no matter how small or large, they always have at least one lawyer that supports them. Individuals on the field of jurisprudence can support principals in how to interpret and execute laws in a way that is conducive towards peace and calm. In other words, lawyers can pre-record a message that can be
used in principal meetings with professional learning that could be titled “the Legal EI Tip of the Month.” Issues with transfers, student records, proper management of the evaluation and discipline system with staff; all of these are topics that principals rarely talk about outside of professional learning events. These are the “hot topics” that principals need to get formal professional learning as those in the fields of police, army, and nursing consistently receive.

7.3.f Moral and Ethical Analysis

What is right and what is wrong? Is that not the question we must always respond to? Let us say a parent is upset because their child earned a C in physical education class. This particular family prides itself on excellence and they expect from their children nothing lower than an A. The parent is outraged and comes into the office and demands a meeting with both the teacher and the principal. In essence, the parent states that they did not send their child to school to become an NBA player.

Is the parent necessarily wrong? In my personal experience, for example, with a lot of patience and dedication, we were able to “tame the argument” by pointing out that the teacher had a rubric and there was clear evidence that the child had plenty of opportunities to showcase their talents because of differentiation, extra time and support to complete activities. But still, that uncomfortable feeling between all parties stayed there for the remainder of the year. By the summer, the family had transferred their children out of the school.

The question is then, is that the only way we could have responded to such a demand? Could there have been a better way to satisfy both their needs and the equitable and measurable needs of an academic institution? These are the questions that we still need answers to. For this reason, it is morally and ethically appropriate for school districts to promptly start supporting their school leaders on how to perform the principalship in an emotionally intelligent way. As we
have seen in this study, in professions such as nursing, law enforcement, and the armed forces, individuals are supported in how to interpret and manage the emotions of themselves and others. Why not do the same with principals? Only then can principals properly support teachers in a way that is backed up by the district. This can only positively impact an environment of peace and calm in schools. Evidently, when you do good things, good things happen.

7.4 Implications for Staff and Community Relationships

During my first two years as a principal, I was not able to genuinely focus on students. Most of my problems were with adults in and out of the building. I had to take a step back and conceptually analyze the situation. I needed to remove my ego from each instance and deeply analyze how to address each situation. I learned that principals need to start with themselves. I noticed that I could say things in better ways and I could start sounding friendlier, consequently empathizing with others.

Principals are to be supported in being able to develop contextualized and personalized professional learning activities for teachers. For example, employees at a high performing school could learn volumes on how to better manage their own stress in an era of uncertainty. But for principals being able to lead those efforts, they need to get the buy-in of their employees. If not, it just becomes another mandate that everyone hates. For true immersion, starting an emotional intelligence committee or perhaps a cohort of classrooms that implement it could be marvelous in the process of getting everyone jumping into the bus of peace and calm.

7.5 Conclusion

In a speech at the United Nations (Fernández, 2019), a psychologist that emerged from Google stated the positive impact of emotional intelligence in organizations:

- enhances leadership
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- sustains performance
- enables well-being
- builds trust
- increases empathy and compassion
- increase ability to solve conflicts
- increase ability to be responsive and agile
- increase ability to direct your own attention and sustain it
- increase in productivity and collaboration, conducive to innovation as leaders become better listeners

An idea for innovation is the possibility of expanding the benefits of current partnerships. For example, many school districts have long term business relationships with tech giants such as Google, Apple and Microsoft. Why not maximize the district-corporation partnership by kindly requesting for support and training on emotional intelligence, not only for principals, but for entire school districts? School leaders can even employ the talent of high school students to come up with avatars of emotion for principals to practice their empathy and other social skills like the Air Force did (Heitzman, 2020). These potential partnerships could be beneficial the other way around too. Educators all around the world are coming up with innovative ways to change it for the better. For example, a teacher in Chicago created better face masks that could potentially save millions of lives during the COVID-19 pandemic (Unruh, 2020). It is my hope that school districts and principal preparation programs will incorporate the understanding on how emotions influence outcomes so the destination of this world could be changed for the better.
This section outlined a formal proposal to a district. This proposal can be improved with the collaboration of the many great minds in any school district. The last section of this paper will conclude with leadership lessons related to becoming an emotionally intelligent principal.
Section Eight: Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

“Learn the rules like a pro so you can break them like an artist”
-Pablo Picasso

I learned “the reason many of us don't improve much despite our hard work is that we tend to spend almost all of our time in the performance zone. This hinders our growth, and ironically, over the long term, also our performance” (Briceño, 2016). With this research, I am here to enthusiastically share with my colleagues that when one unplugs from the school, one can learn any skill because of the neuroplasticity of our brains (Goleman 1995). By using our brains, we can literally enlarge our social brain network and make the connection between neurons more dense; this being a key factor in how well we manage our interactions with others (Platt, 2020). With the learning acquired, I also started visiting stellar emotionally intelligent so I could learn the insight secrets and strategies of the best.

While I was conducting the research, things at the school changed dramatically. I took advantage of my personal tragedy with a real fire and went back to my past and sincerely forgave all of those that hurt me since before I was born. I also forgave myself for my own failures and mistakes. I immersed myself in the five components of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill (Goleman, 1995) and immediately became aware of how uncontrolled I was of my emotions and emotional health. The case of Principal Abraham and my own personal story is unfortunately not uncommon and we must do more. What is reflected in the research is the type of support “that is not happening in the preparation of aspiring and veteran principals --that is, the development of the social, emotional, and cognitive skills that school leaders must include in adult professional development as they set a
course to improve the social, emotional, and academics skills of young people” (Patti et al., n.d., p. 442). Emotionally intelligent professional learning “needs to focus on fostering actionable self-reflection, building generative relationships, enabling meaningful conversations, and thinking systematically. This learning, what some refer to as soft skills, the way we think, the way we perceive and interact with all stakeholders, the way we listen, and our ability to maneuver the daily challenges of the principalship with professionalism and grace are foundational to adult performance and success (Brungardt, 2011; Patti et al., n.d., p. 442).

The situation at the school dramatically changed. The school was honored for social-emotional initiatives and earned the highest distinction the school district offers. Towards the conclusion of this study, the school was honored with the *Elementary School Principal of the Year Award* by the local subdivision of the association of principals of the state. This prize was a reflection of the great educators that I have the honor to lead. That collective prize was shared with an honorary student. The school named her *Student of the Year* and it became a collective win. The emotionally intelligent school district understands that “the personal and professional development of principals is a key element in creating a caring school in which adults and children feel welcomed, cared for, and challenged” (Mahfouz et al., 2019, p. 2). Based on an arsenal of acquired knowledge, both academic and empirical, this scholar-practitioner argues for principals and leaders to have an *anticipatory mindset*. With an anticipatory mindset, one anticipates the emotions of self and others before reacting. But what exactly does the Anticipatory Mindset look like? Nobel Prize Winner in Physics Richard Feynman challenged educators to formulate their ideas in a way that young students (as young as six years old) could understand or face the reality of one not even understanding what you are talking about (Otto Magee, n.d.). I took upon that challenge as I was crafting the graduation speech for the 8th
grade class of 2020. Here is how I defined what is to have an *anticipatory mindset* in a student-friendly way:

**Principal’s 8th Grade Graduation Speech for the Class of 2020**

*Familia,* 8th grade students, faculty, staff, and community: I would like to welcome you to the Class of 2020’s 8th Grade Graduation. What a powerful moment for all of you, students. You are graduating in the middle of something that nobody expected. We all expected to spend more time in the classroom with friends, teachers, staff. You expected to go to recess, to make friends, perhaps visit New York, to fall in love.

And this was removed from our hands. It was taken away.

But life teaches us that we, as humans, can endure much more. We have come a long way and there’s so much more for inquiry and discovery. As graduates from middle school, and soon from high school, you will face a very different world from what you see right now. It will be a post-pandemic world that will bring social and economic changes that will deeply impact our future. For this reason, you are not just getting an education to go to college, and then a degree to get a job.

You have to set up a path by having a vision and work ethic. And for that, I’m going to share with you two examples:

**Vision:** You must have a vision of what you want to accomplish. Think big! As big as this: “Developing ultra-high bandwidth, brain-machine interfaces to connect humans and computers.” This is Neuralink’s vision, a company founded by Elon Musk, perhaps better known as the founder of SpaceX, and Tesla. This technology consists of a diminutive implant that accesses neurons that trigger bodily movements and even emotions. With this, someone that lost movement in an arm might regain it again or, perhaps a disable person could have a more independent life. Under all of this, they are figuring out how to make humans live forever with the advancements of artificial intelligence.

With this, what I’m trying to share with you is that your vision must not be just saying “I just want to be happy”. You will not be happy by just wishing it. You will be happy when you know your purpose in life and then you implement a long-term vision that will make an impact not only in you as a person, but in the rest of the world so you can actually improve it. But for this to happen, you need to have a strong work ethic.
Work ethic: To make your wildest dreams come true, you must implement the strongest work ethic. You need to be disciplined with your studies, your health, your social media life, etc. All the precautions you take today will be additional guarantees that will keep accumulating, resulting in making you a happy and productive member of society. Let’s take the example of Kobe Bryant and Michael Jordan. After a game, Jordan told Bryant: “you could wear the shoes, but never fill them.” How would you feel if your idol told you something like that? It happens all the time, right? People tell us the smallest thing and we tend to get all worked up, we have tantrums, some even punch walls, and then we want to burn the city because we are so mad and people need to understand “that I’m like that, and that’s that.”

Mr. Rogers taught us that it’s okay to get mad, but the key of life is what to do with the mad that you feel. Think of this for a second. It’s about what you do with the mad.

Did Kobe Bryant quit after Jordan told him that? No. In fact, the next time they met in court, Kobe scored 55 points. With time, Jordan and Bryant became friends. The dreamer had gained the respect of the master by becoming a master himself, a Jedi. Jordan said that the only other NBA player that repeatedly inquired about work ethic and self-improvement was Kobe. If you apply work ethic to your life, you will accomplish your dreams.

Class of 2020, go and change the world with a long-term vision and a strong work ethic. Just as Jordan suggested about Kobe, he was never waiting for the game or opportunities to come to him. He just went out there and took them.

Orozco Academy, go out and take it! We believe in you!

Peace and calm,

Efraín Martínez
Principal
8.2 Discussion

When I started this doctoral journey, I was in a time of crisis in my professional life and, as a consequence, in my personal life too. I went outside Plato’s metaphorical cave and I immersed myself in the body of emotional intelligence and decided to base my research off Goleman’s (1995) five components of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill. As I was conducting this qualitative study, I interviewed four principals and four principal coaches using semi structured interviews that allowed me to appreciate all the lessons transmitted by other principals. The purpose of my study became larger than life: from only about me to about all. By merging Wagner et al (2012) and the components of emotional intelligence of Goleman (1995), I was able to deconstruct the state of dispositions of emotional intelligence in school principals and how it can be developed with specific strategies and recommendations for both principals and school districts.

8.3 Leadership Lesson

The research conducted and the learning acquired has been an incredible journey. I always remember the analogy a basketball coach told me back when I was in middle school. He was trying to coach me on how to better pass the ball. “Like Voltron”, he said, “if you don’t have one of the lions, it doesn’t work.” Emotionally intelligent principals consistently work in further developing their skills and habits in all five components (self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill). With what I have learned, I have started to work on my own version of my better-self so I can bring it to the school. I’m calling my own adaptation an Anticipatory Mindset, which is composed of having a vision and work ethic. “The ability to anticipate is the hallmark of cognition” (Sharot, 2011). As a scholar-practitioner, now perhaps with some degree of Emotional Judo, I can declare that the biggest leadership lesson is so
simple: one starts to heal when going back to re-examine situations or the actual emotion that they are feeling. “When we have the courage to walk into our story and own it, we get to write the ending” (B. Brown, 2018, p. 249). In essence, if this dissertation has proven anything, is that when you do good things, good things happen.

8.4 Conclusion

My last message is to not take the principalship so seriously. Smile at those that you serve. Really pay attention and have a sense of humor. Highly encourage and celebrate your teachers and staff. Encourage group synchrony through storytelling. That meeting where you recap a job well done does much more than simply boost morale -- you’re actually syncing your team and preparing them for the next win (Platt, 2020). Emotionally intelligent principals are mindful of themselves and those they serve. I will leave the reader with this quote:

“Lincoln possessed an uncanny understanding of his shifting moods, a profound self-awareness that enabled him to find constructive ways to alleviate sadness and stress. Indeed, when he is compared with his colleagues, it is clear that he possessed the most even-tempered disposition of them all. Time and again, he was the one who dispelled his colleagues’ anxiety and sustained their spirits with his gift for storytelling and his life-affirming sense of humor” (Goodwin, 2006).
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