

PROFILE OF THE NEW YORK STATE
CHARTER SCHOOL PRINCIPAL:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CHARTER SCHOOL AND PUBLIC SCHOOL
LEADER DEMOGRAPHICS, EXPERIENCE AND PREPARATION

A Doctoral Research Project
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Abstract

Charter schools have become one of the fastest growing movements in public education. Yet, after thirteen years of existence, very little is known about these school leaders in New York State. This study reported on the profile of the charter school principal in New York including their background, experiences, education, degree held, certification, gender, age, and race/ethnicity. Participants consisted of 70 charter school principals working in the 2010-2011 school year throughout the state, including New York City. The quantitative study centered on descriptive statistics to create and compare the profile of the New York State charter school principal with existing data on New York State public school principals and with charter school leaders in other states. Pearson's correlation was also used to determine the strength of the relationship between the charter school leader's training and experience and their confidence of specific demands of the job. Findings revealed similarities and differences between New York's charter school leaders and public school leaders as well as with charter school principals in other states. Results also showed charter school leaders felt more confident in three areas based on training and experience. These findings and conclusions were needed during times of continued growth of New York's charter schools and increased accountability and responsibility of building school leaders.

Keywords: charter school, principal, demographics, experience, preparation

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	i
ABSTRACT	iii
LIST OF TABLES	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
Research Problem	1
Purpose Statement	2
Research Questions	3
Definition of Terms	4
Significance of the Study	4
Organization of the Study	5
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	7
The Development of Charter Schools in the United States	7
Growth of Charter Schools	11
Principal as Building Leader	13
Profiling the Principal	14
Leadership Challenge in Charter Schools	20
The Changing Role of the Principal	21
Leadership Preparation	22
Preparation of Public School Principals	22
Preparation of Charter School Principals	27
Alternative Preparation Programs	29
Charter School Landscape in New York State	33
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY	37
Research Questions	38
Design	39
Population	39
Instrumentation	40
Reliability and Validity	41
Data Collection	42
Variables	42
Data Analysis	45
Limitations	47
Delimitations	48

CHAPTER IV: DATA ANALYSIS	50
Research Question 1	51
New York State Charter Schools	51
New York State Charter School Leaders	53
Career Path of Charter School Leaders	55
Research Question 2	58
Research Question 3	64
Research Question 4	69
CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, and RECOMMENDATIONS	79
Summary of Findings	81
Conclusions	91
Recommendations for System Leaders	95
Recommendations for Future Research	99
REFERENCES	104
APPENDIX A: Profile of the New York State Charter School Principal Survey	116
APPENDIX B: Invitation to Participate	125
APPENDIX C: Permission to use Survey Instrument by Betheny Gross	126
APPENDIX D: Permission to use Survey Instrument by Dr. Ray O’Connell	127

List of Tables

Table 1	Percentage of Minority and Low-Income Students in Charter Schools vs. Traditional Public Schools in 2008-09	10
Table 2	Growth of the Charter School Movement in the United States	12
Table 3	Characteristics of the National Public School Principal 2007-08	15
Table 4	Profile of the Texas Charter School Principal	17
Table 5	Profile of the North Carolina Charter School Principal	18
Table 6	National Profile of Charter School Leaders	19
Table 7	Profile of the New York State Charter School Principal.	54
Table 8	Comparison of New York State Charter School Principals to New York State Public School Principals	60
Table 9	Comparison of New York State Charter School Principals to National Charter School Principals	65
Table 10	Pearson Correlation Between the Charter School Leader’s Preparation in Area 1: Financial Management and their Confidence to Perform Tasks Effectively.	71
Table 11	Pearson Correlation Between the Charter School Leader’s Preparation in Area 2: Organizational Management and their Confidence to Perform Tasks Effectively	72
Table 12	Pearson Correlation Between the Charter School Leader’s Preparation in Area 3: Curriculum and Instruction and their Confidence to Perform Tasks Effectively	73
Table 13	Pearson Correlation Between the Charter School Leader’s Preparation in Area 4: Non-profit Fundraising and their Confidence to Perform Tasks Effectively	74
Table 14	Pearson Correlation Between the Charter School Leader’s Preparation in Area 5: Local Politics/Community Organizations and their Confidence to Perform Tasks Effectively	74

Table 15	Pearson Correlation Between the Charter School Leader’s Preparation in Area 6: Living in the School’s Community and their Confidence to Perform Tasks Effectively	75
Table 16	Independent T- Test Comparison of Charter School Principals with New York State Certification and Charter School Principals without New York State Certification	76

List of Figures

Figure 1	Frequency of the Number of Charter School Openings by Year in New York State	52
Figure 2	Frequency Distribution of the Number of Charter School Principals Since the School’s Opening	53
Figure 3	Administrative Experiences of the New York State Charter School Principal	56
Figure 4	Teaching Experiences of the New York State Charter School Charter Principal	56
Figure 5	Work Settings Directly Prior to Becoming a Charter School Principal In New York State	57
Figure 6	Age Comparison of New York’s Charter School Principals with New York’s Public School Principals.	62
Figure 7	Age Comparison of New York’s Charter School Principals with Charter School Principals outside of New York State	67
Figure 8	Ranked Areas of Confidence of Charter School Leaders in New York State Based on Preparation and Experience	89

Chapter I. Introduction

Research Problem

Charter schools have become one of the fastest growing movements in public education. Created as an alternative approach to public schools, the charter school movement has grown exponentially since the creation of the first charter in Minnesota in 1991. Over the past 20 years, states have adopted and expanded charter school laws, lifted caps on the number of new schools, and received increased federal funding and support from former presidents Clinton and Bush, along with President Obama and Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, allowing the charter school movement to grow rapidly. In the 2009-2010 school year, charter schools across the United States reached a milestone of 5,042 schools serving over 1.5 million students in 39 states and Washington D.C. (Allen, 2010). Charter schools have become part of the public school landscape.

Compounding this robust and consistent growth, charter schools are facing a leadership challenge. With 71% of charter school leaders expected to leave their current position within the next five years and with new schools opening every year, the demand for quality leaders has never been greater (Campbell & Gross, 2008). Yet very little is known about the charter school leader. Early studies have described the professional profile of the charter school leader in several states including Texas and North Carolina. A six-state study from the National Charter School Research Project (NCSRP) highlighted the training, preparation/experiences, demographics (gender, race and age), demands, and challenges of charter school principals. According to the 2008 six-state study from the National Charter School Research Project (NCSRP), charter school leaders differ from public school leaders in that they are younger and have less

administrative experience (Campbell & Gross, 2008). Although most leaders of charter schools come from the same traditional educational preparation program as public school leaders, many reported they face additional responsibilities and are not prepared for specific demands of the job.

In New York State, roughly 44,000 students attended over 168 operating charter schools and those numbers are expected to multiply quickly (New York State Education Department, 2010). The New York State Board of Regents recently lifted the cap on charter schools allowing the number of new schools to increase from 200 to 460 over the next four years (New York State Education Department, 2010). This legislative change may have a significant impact on the number of new charter schools in New York State. At this time it is too early to know what the actual impact may be, but in a time of high accountability, where charter schools are preparing to educate twice the number of students presently attending these schools, the question was asked, “Who are the leaders of these schools and are they prepared for the demands of educating our students of today?”

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this exploratory study was to gather data and report on the profile of charter school leaders in New York State including their professional background, experiences, education, degree held, certification, gender, age, and race/ethnicity. Participants included the current 166 charter school leaders in New York State including those serving in New York City. These data were compared to existing data on charter school leaders in other states as well as compared to published data on public school principals in New York State.

Research Questions

The following four questions were addressed in the survey that was sent to 166 charter school leaders in New York State. The instrument used was a validated, twenty-nine-question survey that addressed three categories of information on the charter school leader. The categories included:

- professional experiences – education, degree, certification, preparation, training
- demographics– age, gender, race/ethnicity
- school related information– date opened, number of building leaders, size, location in New York State

The research questions that guided this study included:

1. What is the professional background and demographic profile of the charter school building leader in New York State including education, degree held, certification, prior teaching/work experience, gender, race and age?
2. Based on published data on the professional profile of the public school principal, what similarities and differences exist between charter school principals and public school principals in New York State?
3. Based on published data on the background and demographics of charter school leaders in other states, what similarities and differences exist between charter school principals in New York State compared to charter school principals in other states?
4. Is there a relationship between the educational preparation of charter school leaders and their confidence on specific demands of the job?

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms were defined:

Charter School –schools that are publicly funded and open to all students in the state through a nondiscriminatory admissions lottery. A not-for-profit board of trustees, which may include educators, community members, and leaders from the private sector, governs each charter school. Charter schools have the freedom to establish their own policies, design their own educational program, and manage their own human and financial resources. They are held accountable for high student achievement through specified terms listed in their performance contract or “charter” which is not to exceed five years (New York State Education Department, 2010).

Building Leader – a general title to be used synonymous with building principal, director, head of school, or other similar building level leadership position.

Operating Charter School- an approved New York State Charter School with students enrolled in the 2009-2010 school year.

Significance of Study

With charter schools in New York entering their second decade of existence, the growth of these schools has been strong and steady. Yet there is very little information known about the leaders of these schools. Who are the leaders of New York’s charter schools including their professional background and demographic profile? How do charter school principals in New York State compare to charter school principals in other states, and to public school leaders in the same state in the areas of education, degree held, certification, prior teaching/work experiences, gender, age and race?

Criticisms of traditional leadership preparation programs have been voiced repeatedly including the need to provide training in outcome-based accountability and evolving technology through real life, internship experiences (Broad Foundation, 2003; Campbell & Gross, 2008; Levine, 2005; Militello, 2009). Based on the need for high quality leadership, now is the time to understand more about the principals of charter schools and it may also be the time to prepare leaders differently. This study would benefit all public and private educators, state and local policy makers, educational institutions, management companies, charter schools organizations, and education preparation programs. Understanding and defining the New York charter school principal could lead to changes and improvements in order to best meet the needs of these school leaders.

At a time when New York's educational leaders are changing the way building leaders are evaluated and increasing accountability standards, efforts are needed to best prepare candidates to increase the effectiveness of building principals. This exploratory study created a profile of the charter school leader in New York State including professional experiences, demographics, and school-related information. Data was analyzed to determine if a relationship existed between the educational preparation of the charter school leader in New York and their confidence on specific demands of the job.

Organization of the Study

This research report was organized into five chapters. Chapter I introduced the reader to the study and encompassed the four questions that drove the research as well as the definition of terms, significance of the study, and how the study was organized. Chapter II reviewed the literature including a historical overview of the charter school

movement and recent research in the area of school leadership, including preparation of school leaders and challenges of both public and charter school principals. Chapter III described the methodology of how the research was conducted, including the design of the study, population, instrumentation, data collection, variables, data analysis, and limitation and delimitations. Chapter IV reported the analyses of data collected, methods used to analyze the data, and results for each question proposed in the study. Chapter V concluded the study with a summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter II. Review of the Literature

This study involved an in-depth look at the profile and preparation of charter school leaders in New York State. The chapter is divided into three sections covering major theories and research on (a) the development of charter schools in the United States, (b) the principal as building leader, and (c) leadership preparation programs. A fourth section highlights the charter school landscape in New York State including the absence of information known on charter school principals in the state and the need for a high-quality preparation program specifically designed to meet the needs these leaders face today.

Three important focus questions will be explored: As charter schools continue to increase in New York State, who are the leaders of these schools? In times of increased accountability and high standards, are these leaders prepared to meet the demands of the job and the responsibility of educating our youth? What can local, state, and federal leaders learn about the preparation and effectiveness of charter school leaders to best meet the needs of these administrators?

The Development of Charter Schools in the United States

History has shown multiple attempts to create alternative approaches to America's public school system. Since the 1960s, opportunities for parental choice in the public school system expanded to include magnet schools, charter schools, private schools, and homeschooling (Grady & Bielick, 2010; Murphy, 2002). The emergence of charter schools has become one of the most significant developments in public education. Ray Budde, a retired teacher and expert on school reform, first defined the term "charter" to describe a contract arrangement designed to support the efforts of innovative teachers

within the public school system (Murphy, 2002). In this model, teachers were the central players in the process. The charter arrangement would result in a new type of school that would give teachers increased responsibility over curriculum and instruction in exchange for a greater degree of accountability for student achievement.

Although Budde had written about charters since 1975, it was Al Shanker who publically announced and described the “charter” idea during a national speech on March 31, 1988 (Kahlenberg, 2007; Shanker, 1988). This publicity, along with the national report *A nation at risk*, became the catalyst for the development of the charter school movement. The dissatisfaction with America’s public schools, along with the idea of new accountability and decentralization toward on-site management became the debate among parents, teachers, and administrators.

Advocates for charter schools led Minnesota in 1991 to become the first state to adopt charter school legislation (Murphy, 2002). Other states quickly followed Minnesota’s lead, including California, Massachusetts, and Colorado (Vergari, 2002).

Charter schools are designed to provide a choice to traditional public schools, stimulate reform and competition, while providing high educational standards through local governance (Weil, 2000). Charter schools are independent public schools of choice, freed from rules but accountable for results (Murphy, 2002). They are defined by a contract and held accountable for their results at the end of the contract period, usually three-to-five years (Murphy, 2002). As defined by the New York State Education Department, charter schools in New York are:

independent public schools that operate under a five-year charter. A charter school is free to organize around a core mission, curriculum, theme, or innovative

teaching model. A charter school controls its own budget and employs its own teachers and staff. In return for this freedom, a charter school must demonstrate success within five years or risk losing a subsequent five-year renewal of its charter.

(New York State Education Department, 2011)

This new idea of choice in America's public education system came at a time of growing debate in school reform. School improvement has dominated state and national agendas for decades and many attempts have been made over the years to improve the United States public education system. Many politicians, including governors and legislators, saw charter schools as an antidote to failing public schools (Gouwens, 2009; Weil, 2000). The need to improve student achievement and increase high school graduation rates has been a common theme among educators and politicians. Recent international comparisons show U.S. student achievement slipping from global counterparts and the need to improve student achievement in order to be competitive in the world economy (Gouwens, 2009). Charter schools offer programs, services, and teaching formulas that parents want, but can't find in traditional public schools such as an extended school day and calendar year, smaller class size, grade level/department configurations and course offerings (Lake, 2010).

One of the greatest challenges to any school reform is the increasing diversity of the U. S. student population, including race and poverty (Gouwens, 2009). Charter schools tend to have higher student populations of low income and minority children as compared to the public school populations, mainly due to the location of charter schools in urban settings. In 2007, approximately 4,130 charter schools were in operation serving

2% of all public school students (Grady & Bielick, 2010). Of this population, a smaller percentage of charter school students were White (35%) as compared to 57% of students attending other public schools (Grady & Bielick, 2010). When looking at the racial and ethnic distribution of charter school students in 2007, White, Black, and Hispanic students each represent about one third of the population - 36% White, 28% Black, and 30% Hispanic (Grady & Bielick, 2010). In addition, 34% of charter school students were identified as poor, and 19% near poor in 2007 (Grady & Bielick, 2010). In 2009, students attending charter schools were classified as 49% low income/poor and 61% minority as shown in Table 1 (Lake, 2010).

Table 1

Percentages of Minority and Low-Income Students in Charter Schools vs. Traditional Public Schools in 2008-09

Type of School	Percentage of minority students	Percentage of low income students
Charter Schools	61	49
Traditional Public Schools	47	45

As the charter school movement began, so did financial support from the federal level. In 1994, former President Bill Clinton provided charter schools with \$15 million dollars of additional funding through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) specifically for the development of charter schools. In 1998, the Charter School Expansion Act passed, increasing funding from \$15 million to \$100 million. With additional legislation in new states and this increase in funding for the development of new schools, the charter school movement began to grow exponentially.

In 1998, seven years after the nation's first charter school law was adopted, New York became the 34th state to pass charter school legislation. The law allowed for the creation of new charter schools and for local schools districts to convert an existing public school into a charter school subject to the approval by both the Board of Regents and a majority of parents of students enrolled in the school, more commonly known as conversion schools. In New York, three "charter entities" were used to approve a new charter school. These organizations included the New York State Board of Regents (SBR), the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York (SUNY), and the New York City School Chancellor for schools within the New York City School District (Vergari, 2002). With these authoring agencies approving charter schools across New York State, five schools opened in 1999, 23 additional schools in the year 2000, and by July 2001, 42 more had been approved. Just ten years later, in 2009-2010, New York had 154 charter schools in operation educating 44,000 students (Allen, 2010). In 2010, New York amended its charter school law allowing only two authorizers for new schools including the New York State Board of Regents and the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York (New York State Education Department, 2011).

Growth of Charter Schools

In New York State and across the country, the charter school movement has been robust and consistent (Lake, 2010). According to Lake (2010) these schools have become a recent and growing movement in education reform as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Growth of the Charter School Movement in the United States

Charter School Data	2004-2005	2008-2009
Number of charter schools	3,293	4,662
Number of new schools that opened	445	487
Number of schools that closed	65	143
Percentage of all public schools that are charter schools	3.6	4.8
Percentage of all public school students attending charter schools	1.9	2.9

Despite some states having caps limiting the expansion rate of charter schools, the growth of charter schools has become a reality. With many states lifting limitations on the number of new charter schools, it is no longer an era of *when* charter schools will grow, but rather by how much, in what areas, and for what student populations they will serve. Entering the second decade of existence, the average charter school nationwide is 6.2 years old and 77% of all schools are less than ten years old (Lake, 2010). Since 2004, student enrollment increased by 55% to over 1,400,000 students and the number of new charter schools increased 41% to over 4,662 schools nationwide (Lake, 2010; National Center for Education Statistics, 1999). The number of new schools opening outweighed the number of schools that close. For every charter that closes, four new schools have opened (Lake, 2010). In just one year alone from 2008 to 2009, charter schools showed a 21% increase in parental demand. This demand outpaces the supply, with the percentage of students on charter school waiting lists increasing from 59% in 2008 to 65% in 2009 (Lake, 2010).

These indications show the continuing interest and demand for charter schools and there is reason to believe this trend will continue. President Obama and Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, have repeatedly sent the message through substantial legislative movements that they view charter schools as an essential component of K-12 education reform strategies. Duncan encouraged states to lift caps on new charter schools, increasing the number of schools to be more competitive for the 4.5 billion *Race to the top* Initiative (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). In August, 2010 President Obama included a \$54 million increase in the Charter Schools Program, totaling \$310 million to assist in the planning and implementation of public charter schools, taking another step toward meeting the Administration's commitment to doubling financial support for the program during the President's term (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). This program aims to increase financial support for the start up and expansion of these public schools, build a better national understanding of the public charter school model, and increase the number of high-quality charter schools across the nation (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). From continued support and growth at both the state and national level, charter schools have become part of the public school landscape.

The Principal as Building Leader

The 2000-2001 Occupational Outlook Handbook published by the U.S. Department of Labor defines principals as "those who manage elementary and secondary schools," (U.S. Department of Labor, 2001, p. 36). The principal's role is described in a myriad of ways including instructional leader, building manger, agent of change, disciplinarian, community builder, budget director, personnel supervisor, and cheerleader (Todd, 2001). Regardless of the roles they play, research on the principalship has

consistently found that great principals produce great schools (Dufour & Eaker, 1998). Professional learning communities where staff members hold a shared vision, values, and goals concerning what students must know and be able to show, improved instructional practices resulting in increased student learning and achievement outcomes (Dufour, 1998).

Research has also shown a direct connection of principal leadership with student achievement (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2004). From this study came the opportunity to quantify the general effects of leadership. Specifically, the average correlation between principal leadership behavior and student achievement is .25. This means a one standard deviation increase in principal leadership, is associated with a 10% gain in student achievement (Waters et al., 2004). The study also defined effective leadership as 66 practices grouped into 21 leadership responsibilities that are positively correlated with student achievement including culture, discipline, focus, relationships, change agent and knowledge of curriculum, instruction and assessment (Waters et al., 2004). A third result of this study was on the “differential impact” of leadership. Just as leaders can have a positive impact on achievement, they can also have a marginal or even worse, a negative impact on achievement. When leaders concentrate on the wrong school or classroom practices, they can negatively impact student achievement (Waters et al., 2004).

Profiling the Principal

As important leaders of schools, building principals play a large role in the education and success of their students. As part of the 2007-08 *Schools and staffing survey* (SASS), a national profile of the public school principals was created representing

all public schools (vocational, technical, special education alternative, charter schools, and Bureau of Indian Education schools). From the data of almost 90,000 school administrators, the public school leader can be characterized as a White male or female, having a Master's degree, and obtaining an annual salary between \$80,000-\$99,999 (Battle, 2010). Demographics of the national school principal are summarized in Table 3 (Battle, 2010).

Table 3

Characteristics of the National Public School Principal 2007-08

Characteristic	Percent	
Gender	Males	50
	Females	50
Ethnicity	White	81
	Black	11
	Hispanic	6
	Other	2
Age	Less than 45 years	34
	45-54 years	35
	35 years or more	32
Degree	Bachelor's degree	2
	Master's degree	61
	Educational specialist/prof. diploma	29
	Doctorate or first professional degree	8
Experience	Less than 3 years	26
	3-5 years	22
	6-9 years	22
	10 years or more	30

Note. Data reported from the *Schools and staffing survey* published by Battle (2010).

In 2005, the School Administrators Association of New York State (SAANYS) compiled a professional and demographic profile of the public school building principal in New York. This research was conducted by the University of Albany and titled *Profile*

of the New York State principalship. According to O’Connell, Brown, & Williams (2005), the “average” public school principal in New York was described as:

- A 50-year old, White male
- Earned \$96,706 annually
- Earned a certificate of advanced study
- Held New York State School District Administrator (SDA) Certification
- Classroom teacher for 13 years
- First principalship at age 41

In comparison, very little is known about the educational leaders of charter schools. With the charter school movement itself being relatively new, information is just beginning to emerge on the profile of the charter school leader.

In 2001, demographics on charter school principals in Texas were reported just five years after the birth of these schools. From the opening of the first charter school in 1995, Texas had been a state of rapid and continuous growth for these schools. Results found the average leader to be a White male, between 40-49 years of age, with little administrative experience and no administrative certification required (Jenkins, 2002; Todd, 2001). Demographics on the Texas charter school principal are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4

Profile of the Texas Charter School Principal

Characteristic		Percent
Gender	Males	54
	Females	46
Ethnicity	White	52
	Black	27
	Hispanic	19
	Asian	2
Age	age 40 or older	83
	40-49 years of age	44
Preparation	majored in humanities or social sciences	42
	majored in elementary or secondary education	19
Degree	Master's degree	79
	PhD. or EdD.	14
Certification (not required)	no administrative certification	62
	principal certification	25
	superintendent certification	12
Experience	no administrative experience in private schools	69
	no administrative experience in public schools	44

Note. Data collected from two dissertation studies on the Texas Charter School Principal according to Jenkins (2002) and Todd (2001).

In 2004, a similar profile was created on charter school principals in North Carolina and found the average building leader to be a White female, between 35-39 years of age, with at least a Master's degree and current state certification as shown in Table 5 (Williams-Allen, 2010).

Table 5

Profile of the North Carolina Charter School Principal

Characteristic		Percent
Gender	Males	45
	Females	53
Ethnicity	White	76
	Black	18
	Other	6
Age	35-39 years old	63
Preparation	no data available	---
Degree	Master's degree	53
	PhD. or EdD.	37
Certification	state certification	100
Experience	Previous experiences included work as a classroom teacher, assistant principal, supervisor, coordinator, coach or central or central office administrator (no percentages given).	

Data collected from *A description of the North Carolina charter school principalship* by Williams-Allen, 2004.

In 2007, the National Charter School Research Project profiled the demographics of 401 charter school leaders in six states including Arizona, California, Hawaii, North Carolina, Rhode Island, and Texas. In this study, charter school building principals were described as White females, under the age of 50, and having less administrative experience as compared to public school building leaders (Campbell & Gross, 2008). Table 6 highlights the demographic and professional characteristics of charter school leaders in this national study.

Table 6

National Profile of Charter School Leaders

Characteristic		Percent
Gender	Males	46
	Females	54
Ethnicity	White	68
	Black	11
	Hispanic	10
	Asian	5
	Native American	3
Age	50 years old or younger	48
	51-60 years old	38
	61 years or older	14
Preparation	highest degree from traditional colleges of education	74
Degree	Master's degree	58
	PhD. or EdD.	37
Certification	state certification	60
Experience	5 years or less as charter school leader	54
	6 or more years as charter school leader	46

Data collected from *Working without a safety net: How charter school leaders can best survive on the high wire*, by Campbell & Gross (2008) from the National Charter School Research Project.

When compared to public school leaders, the demographic profile of charter school principals in the areas of race and gender is not much different. However, one main difference is that charter school principals are generally younger and newer to school leadership. Data from this report stated almost 30% of charter school leaders led a school for two years or less, compared to only 16% of traditional public school leaders (Campbell & Gross, 2008). In addition, 12% of charter school leaders were under the age of 35. In the case of the younger charter school leader, almost 40% of those under the

age of 40 came directly to their job from teaching, bypassing the assistant principal position, a common route to the principalship for traditional public school principals (Campbell & Gross, 2008).

On the other hand, some charter leaders are highly experienced. Nineteen percent of charter principals had more than ten years of experience as school leaders, while 28% of public school principals had comparative experience (Campbell & Gross, 2008).

Although many charter school principals have taken a more direct route to becoming a building leader, both charter school leaders and public school leaders have had similar educational preparation (Battle, 2009; Campbell & Gross, 2008; Todd, 2001). Research shows 87% of charter school leaders move into their current position from a job already in education (Campbell & Gross, 2008). Research also reports slightly more females as charter school leaders, more diversity in the principal role, lower salaries, less experience as both administrator and teacher, and less likely to have participated in a principal training program (Luekens, 2004).

Leadership Challenge in Charter Schools

Charter schools in the United States are facing a leadership challenge. Every year, 400 new charter schools open in addition to the existing 4,000 charter schools nationwide that look for new leaders in times of retirement and replacement (Campbell & Gross, 2008). While most states have plenty of credentialed school administrators, many public school districts report having too few highly qualified candidates to fill vacant positions (Fink, 2004; Hess & Kelly, 2005; Militello, 2009; Roza, 2003). In public education, 52% of principals leave their current position within a three-year period (Militello, 2009). According to the 2008-09 Principal Attrition and Mobility study, fewer

charter schools leaders remain on the job (72%) as compared to public school principals (80%) (Battle, 2010). Charter schools also have a higher percentage of principals leaving or moving to other schools (23%) as compared to 20% of public school leaders (Battle, 2010).

Finding the right candidate for either public or charter schools is essential. The shortage of top-notch principals is worrisome in the face of the escalating demands of Federal Legislation, including *No child left behind*, *Race to the top*, and charter accountability. It is not the quantity of leaders, but the quality that matters. There is an insufficient pool of capable, qualified, and prepared replacements (Militello, 2009). This demand is even more complex as the role of the principal continues to change.

The Changing Role of the Principal

The role of the school leader has been transformed by economic, demographic, technological, and global change. Schools are experiencing more demographic changes, including an increase in diversity and becoming more segregated by income and race (Levine, 2005). New and complex skills are needed as leaders define vision, develop strategy, and motivate staff in order to move a building forward. To be more competitive, states have increased learning standards, mandated new testing and demanded higher school accountability (Levine, 2005). The principal no longer serves as a supervisor, but has become responsible for personnel, facilities, financial planning, human resources, management, budgeting, labor relations, organizational development, and above all else, the responsibility for providing a world-class education to every student in every classroom in every school in every district (Broad Foundation, 2003). According to the Broad Foundation (2003), “this is serious, urgent business” (p. 9). In

an era of increased responsibility where school leaders are expected to demonstrate bottom-line results and use data to drive decisions, there is a sense of urgency for highly qualified building leaders (Broad Foundation 2003; Hess & Kelly, 2007; Lazaridou, 2009; Levine, 2005). The role of the building principal continues to change as additional demands challenge school leaders. Through no fault of their own, few of the 250,000 school leaders are prepared for the demands of today's principal position. Simply stated, the job they were trained for and prepared for no longer exists (Levine, 2005).

Leadership Preparation

What principals do and how they do it depends in part on what they know (Goldring, 2009). The more experience and knowledge principals have helps them work through difficulties and work with others to foster school improvement. A recent study has shown principals with more years of experience had higher levels of expertise (Goldring, 2009). These questions remain: What knowledge do principals need to have to improve their schools and how is it acquired and connected to practice?

Preparation of Public School Principals

Superintendents rely on building level leaders for accountability, instructional leadership, teacher quality, and school improvement strategies, and 80% of superintendents report finding a qualified school principal as a moderate to major problem (Roza, 2003). Superintendents are more interested in leadership experience and talent than administrative or management skills (Roza, 2003). Three out of five superintendents reported they were not satisfied with their principal's ability to make tough decisions, engage teachers, manage finances, and delegate responsibility (Broad Foundation, 2003). Sixty-seven percent of superintendents look for a principal's ability

to motivate staff and hold them accountable for results while only one third of all superintendents consider teaching experience as a highly significant qualification, and only one in five cite a curriculum and instruction background as important (Roza, 2003). In addition, 60% of superintendents report, “you take what you can get” when hiring principals (Broad Foundation, 2003).

The problem is that principal preparation programs are deficient and not preparing leaders for the skills needed in the 21st century (Broad Foundation, 2003; Hess & Kelly, 2005, 2007; Lazaridou, 2009; Levine, 2005; Militello, 2009; Westinghouse, 2010). These programs have not kept pace with larger changes in the world including new demands, responsibilities, challenges, and opportunities facing leaders today.

In 1987, the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration issued a report titled *Leaders for America's schools* and found fewer than 200 of the educational graduate programs in educational administration in the United States were capable of meeting necessary standards of excellence. The reputation of school leadership programs declined to a level where critics argued replacing educational leadership programs at the university level with a variety of alternatives developed and managed by schools, districts, and states (Levine, 2005). This position was shared in a 2003 report from the Broad Foundation and the Thomas B. Fordham Institute titled *Better leaders for America's schools: A manifesto*, which blamed the leadership crisis on “useless” educational school courses and misguided state licensure requirements (Broad Foundation, 2003). “For America to have the great schools it needs, those schools must have great leaders and so must their school system” (Broad Foundation, 2003, p. 5). In a wave of leadership crisis where many leaders are retiring and leaving the job earlier, it is

not a shortage of certified candidates, but rather a shortage of qualified candidates (Broad Foundation, 2003; Levine, 2005). “Being certified is simply not the same as being qualified to lead a school or district successfully in an era of results-based accountability” (Broad Foundation, p. 15). Principal demands have escalated and the job has changed profoundly. Skills school leaders need today are not taught in colleges of education (Broad Foundation, 2003).

School leader preparation is a problem. The overall quality of educational administration programs in the United States is poor (Hess & Kelly, 2007; Levine, 2005). According to Hess & Kelly (2007), criticisms of these programs include having

- an unclear mission
- underutilized systematic self-assessment opportunities
- disconnected curriculum
- low admission standards
- ill-equipped teaching staff to prepare future leaders
- lack of mentorship opportunities
- instructional research not connected to real life practices

A greater number of schools are lowering admission standards and “watering down” programs to offer degrees faster (Levine, 2005). Levine (2005) defines the education preparation programs of today as “a race to the bottom” where competition among school leadership programs has created an environment to produce more degrees faster, easier, and more cheaply. Open admission policies and weak faculty add to the concerns. Many colleges of education offer courses that have little implications on the real problems leaders face today (Broad Foundation, 2003). Collegiate programs contain

too much theory and not enough practice, and what practice is included is not related to real-life situations. In a study of school leadership programs Levine (2005) reported

- 89% of leaders stated schools of education failed to adequately prepare graduates for school realities
- 55% of schools are out of step with the times
- 47% of state curriculum is outdated
- 44% of programs lack rigor
- 83% of schools of education are not involved with local school districts

“Typical leadership programs” are outdated and unsuccessfully preparing leaders for running schools today (Broad Foundation, 2003; Hess & Kelly, 2007). Traditional education licensing and preparation programs have failed to train administrators to operate in an environment of outcome-based accountability, evolving technology and heightened expectations (Hess & Kelly, 2005; Westinghouse, 2010). Few connections are made between the curriculum taught and the actual demands and conditions of everyday practice. A study of traditional principal preparation programs by Hess and Kelly (2007), showed only 2% of courses addressed accountability in the context of school management or school improvement and less than 5% included instruction on managing school improvement through technology or empirical research. In another study of courses taught in administrative preparation programs, school accountability was the least cited course (Militello, 2009). Although 70% of graduates took courses in school finance and budget, instructional leadership, teacher supervision and evaluation and school law, only 50% of the students described them as “very helpful” (Militello, 2009). What was found lacking in traditional preparation programs were courses in

- staffing: including recruiting, hiring, retaining, and firing teachers

- providing regular instructional feedback
- leading school change
- developing a shared vision

Instead, principals responded by highlighting the need for a variety of skills to be effective leaders including accountability and internship experiences related to practice (Militello, 2009). A study of textbooks used in leadership preparation programs was found lacking in scholarship and relevance (Hess & Kelly, 2007). Course content and subject offerings matter.

As more demands and expectations are added to the position, it is principals themselves who state they are not effectively prepared for the job. According to Hess and Kelly (2007), 96% of practicing principals report on-the-job experiences and guidance from colleagues were more helpful in job preparation than typical leadership programs in graduate schools of education. More important than course credentials are character attributes of leadership, focus, effective use of data, political savvy, sense of urgency, managerial competence, resourcefulness, and having energy, resilience and dedication (Broad Foundation, 2003). The Broad Foundation (2003) also recommended apprenticeships, residency programs, and mentoring opportunities or leadership academies that blend book training with internships for potential principals without an educational background as well as for experienced leaders.

In addition, graduate school programs are doing a poor job preparing school principals to be the technology leaders needed for the global, digital, and inner-connected 21st century world they will be leading (Westinghouse, 2010). In times when data-driven decision making leads to improved instruction, student achievement, and strategic

planning, leaders need to be able to read and interpret data accurately. Graduates of traditional educational leadership programs become certified school administrators, but are not equipped to shift their role from managers to instructional leaders, because programs are lacking the necessary training of twenty-first-century skills (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe & Meyerson, 2005). Administrators have a general understanding of the importance of technology use in schools, but the development of technology leadership skills has not been stressed in educational leadership programs (Ertmer, Bai, Dong, Khalil, Park, & Wang, 2002). The “one size fits all” model for preparing school leaders is obsolete (Center on Reinventing Public Education, 2009; Westinghouse, 2010). This twenty-year criticism of preparing educational leaders is leading to policy change in New York State. Recognizing the inadequacies, former New York Commissioner of Education David Steiner called for higher education institutions to “retool” their school leader preparation programs to provide richer, more extensive supervised clinical experiences for aspiring principals, along with changes in the evaluation of school leaders and professional development (New York State Education Department, 2009).

Preparation of Charter School Principals

This deficit in preparation holds true in charter schools as well. The rapid growth and increase in school choice has created new demands for charter school principals. Similar to public school leaders, charter school principals spend their day in a variety of responsibilities from building manager to personnel director to instructional leader. For most charter school leaders, there is no central office to recruit teachers, secure and manage facilities, raise money and manage school finances. With greater accountability and high-stakes testing for charter renewals, these school leaders face the additional

challenges of ensuring sufficient student enrollment to fund operations, finding and managing school facilities, and negotiating relations with their boards, parents, and authorizers.

Seventy-four percent of charter principals earn their highest degree through traditional schools of education, yet they lack the necessary skills in the practical side of running a charter school including facilities management, financing and hiring teachers (Campbell & Gross, 2008). According to their charter, schools are forced to close if they fail to perform. The three main reasons charter schools close are due to lack of financial leadership (41%), management organization (27%), and academic performance (14%) (Allen, 2009). Nationally, most school closures result from the inability to remain financially viable or operate effectively rather than due to academic failure (Campbell & Gross, 2008). Without training and experience it is difficult to obtain necessary leadership skills in facility location and start up demands, hiring qualified staff, and financial backing (Stiles, 2005).

On-the-job experience builds confidence and success, and experience enables charter school leaders to creatively solve problems and maneuver through even the most difficult challenges and obstacles, including moving staff toward a common vision, attracting teachers, implementing school initiatives, developing long-range planning, and establishing high expectations for students (Campbell & Gross, 2008). Charter school principals with experience and training in financial management develop confidence in the financial aspects of leading schools, while prior training from traditional colleges of education build confidence in curriculum and instruction. Principals with prior

experiences in administration (public, private or charter) displayed more confidence in organizational and instructional matters (Campbell & Gross, 2008).

Training, support, and experience matter. Principals who became leaders directly from teaching are less likely to be confident in managing budgets and operations. Likewise, leaders from business or nonprofit organizations are more comfortable with management tasks associated with the job (Campbell & Gross, 2008). With 71% of charter school leaders expected to leave their current position in the next five years and only a few of those leaders (8%) expected to transition to other charter school positions, there will be many new principals with or without leadership experience leading charter schools (Campbell & Gross, 2008). Efforts are needed to better prepare candidates and increase the effectiveness of principals. Educators and experts agree it is time to rethink, reform and rebuild administrative preparation programs (Broad Foundation, 2003; Campbell & Gross, 2008; Levine, 2005; Militello, 2009; Roza, 2003). As traditional programs have been slow to respond, new alternative preparation programs have emerged.

Alternative Preparation Programs

Alternative preparation programs have advantages over traditional programs in areas such as cost, accessibility (flexible scheduling), objectives, internships, size (cohort model), and staffing (highly qualified faculty from public, private and higher education institutions). Reform efforts include

- transforming state standards in order to meet the preparation needs of twenty-first-century principals
- revising and updating coursework and curriculum to become more relevant and challenging to prepare effective leaders

- rigorously evaluating programs where weak programs would be strengthened or closed (Levine, 2005)

In 2003, the New York City Leadership Academy was developed to prepare principals to lead New York City's highest-needs public schools suffering from a persistent shortage in principals due to frequent turnover, a surge in retirements, and the rapid creation of new schools (Corcoran, Schwartz, & Weinstein, 2009). The demand for principals at these New York City schools outpaces the supply of highly qualified leaders. The program is aimed at recruiting, preparing, and supporting the professional development of aspiring and sitting principals. The rigorous 14-month program bridges theory with job-embedded practice through a 10-month residency along with ongoing workshops, coaching and strategic consulting (Corcoran et al, 2009). A recent study examined whether schools with novice principals trained through the Aspiring Principals Program (APP) had higher student achievement than schools led by other novice principals. Controlling for preexisting differences in student demographics and achievement, students led by APP principals at the elementary and middle school levels outscored students in a comparison group in English Language Arts (Corcoran et al, 2009). In mathematics, both APP and comparison schools scores improved over time, although APP schools trended slightly worse in the first year of their new principal. These differences were small. At the high school level, school performance differences were small and mainly inconclusive due to the small sample of high schools principals in the study (Corcoran et al., 2009).

The study also compared the demographic and professional characteristics of APP leaders in relation to the comparison group of leaders. Although APP principals were

similar in age and experience, a larger percentage were Black and fewer had experience as an assistant principal (Corcoran et al., 2009).

In 2007, 13 new programs aimed at training charter school leaders were identified including five full-time charter school principal preparation programs, offering part-time workshops or enrichment courses (Campbell & Gross, 2008). Charter school leadership programs differ from traditional preparation programs in that they are more carefully tailored to the needs of charter school directors by

- offering a wide array of learning (light on lecture, emphasis on field observations)
- targeting the expanded responsibilities required of charter school leaders (finance and operations)
- differentiating programs based on the individual leader's needs and role (principal vs. chief business officer)

These programs may vary in size, cost, duration, and goals (Campbell & Gross, 2008).

Two such programs, New Leaders for New Schools (NLNS) and Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP), have gained national attention from their innovative approaches to training school leaders and their extremely selective admission process. These programs accept only 5-7% of applicants annually for a six-week, seven-day-per week intense summer institute. The curriculum focus is based on transformational leadership, instructional leadership and organizational leadership including change, management, negotiation, and conflict resolution (Hess & Kelly, 2005). In addition, a residency component is included with leaders working directly with teachers to improve student achievement. Course offerings include more content on accountability, field internships, and school equity (Militello, 2009). Other new programs include recently created MBA

programs at Rice University and Notre Dame that will provide rigorous business training for school leaders with a focus on both the launch of successful charter schools and the ability to turn around schools in need (Lake, 2010). Early results show alternative preparation programs are on the rise and participants are more satisfied with these programs as compared to traditional education programs.

New York State is also beginning to change the way its school leaders are prepared and evaluated. The New York State Board of Regents, in conjunction with the Wallace Foundation has responded with a Cohesive Leadership System designed to transform the collegiate educational preparation programs based on the growing body of research that recognizes the strong correlation between school leadership and student learning. The ISLLC standards, first released in 1996 by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), guided the process to establish a common vision and goal for how to improve student achievement through better educational leadership (CCSSO, 1996).

This new system focuses on school leadership as it connects to student learning, including research-based behaviors and practices, and its connection to positively impacting teaching and learning within the leadership continuum (New State Education Department, 2008). According to the New York State Education Department (2008), the Cohesive Leadership System in New York State includes the following four major components

- the transformation of school leadership preparation programs
- the establishment of professional development programs for school leaders focused on teaching and learning

- a new preparation program for aspiring superintendents
- the creation of the school leader's performance evaluation system

In May 2011, New York State enacted historic new legislation to improve the educational outcomes for all students and teachers through a statewide comprehensive evaluation system for all school districts and BOCES. This evaluation system is designed to measure teacher and principal effectiveness based on new, rigorous annual professional performance reviews (APPR) of classroom teachers and building principals. The statute provides for a phase-in of the new evaluation system beginning 2011-2012 for certain teachers and principals. The evaluation would generate a single composite score based on multiple measures of effectiveness and may be used in part for promotion, retention, tenure determination, termination, and supplemental compensation, as well as teacher and principal professional development. Under this new system, 40% of the composite effectiveness score will be based on student achievement. The remaining 60% is still undefined (New York State Education Department, 2010).

Although these new regulations will apply to all public school leaders in the state, charter school principals have their own accountability measure as outlined in their individual charter contracts. Leaders of these schools are held to very high standards through individual academic accountability plans, including absolute and composite proficiency goals based on student achievement from the New York State annual exams. Failure to meet these goals may result in the school's closure.

The Charter School Landscape in New York State

Charter schools are currently the fastest growing public institution (Lake, 2010). As charter schools in New York State enter their second decade of existence, the growth

of these schools has been strong and steady. In the eleven years from 1999-2010, New York State has opened doors to over 177 charter schools statewide. Of those schools chartered, 16 have closed: seven of them because of insufficient academic progress (New York State Education Department, 2011).

This rapid growth and momentum is not ending. In the January 2011 State of the Union Address, President Obama described the need for all schools to be a place with high expectations and high performance. He supports innovative plans to improve teacher quality and student achievement, and is willing to provide financial support to make change happen. In an effort to be competitive for federal *Race to the top* funding, New York State passed new legislation lifting the cap on the number of new charter schools and potentially doubling the number of schools over the next four years.

Chapters 102 and 103 of the New York Charter School Act (A11310 and A11311) describe the cap lift and the increase of charter schools from 200 to 460 (New York State Education Department, 2010). This growth of schools, in combination with the high turnover rates of charter school leaders nationwide, creates a strong demand for charter school leaders in New York State. National data reports 70% of charter school leaders will be leaving their position in the next five years and almost half of charter schools report having no plans for leadership succession (Campbell & Gross, 2008).

In 2009-2010, 44,000 students were enrolled in New York's 168 operating charter schools. For the fourth consecutive year, New York's charter schools outperformed their district peers in math and language arts (Allen, 2009). When compared with their local district, 86% of charter schools outperformed their district peers in math and 66% outperformed district peers in English (Allen, 2009). Since the passing of its charter

laws in 1998, New York State is currently ranked 11 out of the nation's 41 charter laws and earned a "B" in the national rankings (Allen, 2010).

The growth and success of these schools is a result of high standards and increased accountability (Allen, 2010). As New York redefines the preparation and evaluation of public school leaders, charter school principals are also held to increased accountability.

As the charter school movement continues to grow, President Obama calls for a strong supply of quality leaders. Obama supports educational reform not as a top-down mandate, but as the work of local principals, among others. "There is a need for principals to do what is necessary to give every child a chance to succeed" (Obama, 2011). Research has been conducted on public school leaders in New York and charter school leaders in other states, but very little if anything is known about the charter school leader in New York State. There is a clear absence of information on charter school leaders in New York including their background, experiences, and preparation. Based on the need for high quality leadership, the question remains, "Who is leading New York's charter schools?"

To move in the direction of a growth-oriented charter movement, policy makers, management companies, and charter schools themselves need to know more about who is leading charter schools, what kind of training and experience best prepares them, and what challenges still exist for these school leaders. Are their needs being met? Are the leaders in New York similar to charter school leaders nationwide? Does their profile match or differ from public school leaders in New York State? National data shows most charter school leaders come from the same traditional educational preparation

programs as public school leaders taking the same coursework and receiving the same degree. Yet, charter school leaders have additional responsibilities and are not prepared for the increased demands and complexities of the job in specific areas. The need to prepare charter school leaders differently has been defined.

In an era of high accountability, where a majority of New York’s charter school population is defined as “at risk, minority and poor,” it is time to answer the questions to better understand the profile and needs of the charter school principal. For the success of the current 44,000 students currently attending charter schools in New York and thousands more waiting to enter, there is a sense of urgency to define the profile of charter school leaders in New York State and consider their needs as the conversation about improving leadership preparation unfolds.

Chapter III. Methodology

The purpose of this exploratory study was to compile information about and describe the professional profile of the charter school principal in New York State. The charter school movement is entering its second decade of existence in New York and charter schools are growing at exponential rates. New York is currently educating 44,000 students in 168 operating schools (New York State Education Department, 2011). From recent legislation, the number of charter schools may double over the next four years potentially adding another 400 schools and thousands more students to be educated. In times of high standards and increased accountability, it is unsettling that little is known about the leaders of these schools in New York State.

To help these leaders be prepared for the demands of the job, this study was designed to collect information on the profile of the New York charter school principal including age, race, gender, experience, degree, and certification, and to explore whether a relationship existed between the educational preparation of the charter school leader and their confidence on specific demands of the job. Research on charter school leaders outside New York has shown these leaders take the same course work as public school leaders and receive the same degree, but face different demands and complexities on the job. The data collected in this study were compared to preexisting data on New York State public school leaders and compared to published data on charter school leaders from outside of New York State.

Names of building leaders and individual email addresses were obtained through the websites of the New York State Education Department and the New York State

Charter School Institute. As needed, phone calls were made to clarify the correct name and email address of building principals.

In this study, building leaders from all 168 operating charter schools in New York were invited to participate in an online survey describing their professional experiences, demographics, and school-related information. For purposes of clarity in understanding this study, it is important to note that charter school leader is synonymously defined as building principal, director, head of school, or other similar building level leadership position.

Through the use of quantitative methods, survey data were collected on charter school principals using an anonymous electronic survey of 29 questions. The validated survey instrument was administered electronically to all charter school principals in New York through Survey Monkey.

Research Questions

The study was centered on four essential questions:

1. What is the professional background and demographic profile of the charter school building leader in New York State including education, degree held, certification, prior teaching/work experience, gender, race, and age?
2. Based on published data on the professional profile of the public school principal, what similarities and differences exist between charter school principals and public school principals in New York State?
3. Based on published data on the background and demographics of charter school leaders in other states, what similarities and differences exist between

charter school principals in New York State compared to charter school principals in other states?

4. Is there a relationship between the educational preparation of charter school leaders and their confidence on specific demands of the job?

Design

According to Creswell (2009), “A survey design provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population” (p. 145). The design of this study was quantitative and consisted of an electronic survey that asked 29 short-answer and multiple-choice questions used to gather the data.

Population

Authorizing agencies have approved 190 charter schools in New York State (New York State Education Dept., 2011). However, the number of schools asked to participate in this study was reduced to 166 due to 16 school closures, 6 schools operating in a designated planning year (students not yet enrolled), and two schools opting out. Therefore, participants for this study included 166 charter school principals in New York State currently serving as building leader in an operating charter school for the 2010-2011 school year. Charter school leaders were contacted through school email addresses found on public websites including the New York State Education Department, the State University of New York Charter School Institute, and the New York Charter Schools Association. Participation was voluntary and survey responses were anonymous. Names of individual schools were not asked.

The population of this study was also the sample. The population included 166 charter schools throughout New York State including schools in New York City. The response rate was 70 out of 166 or 42%.

Instrumentation

The instrument used for this study was a survey questionnaire titled *Profile of the New York State charter school principal*, which addressed three main categories of information including professional experiences, demographics, and school related information (Appendix A). The survey was developed from a review of two research questionnaires used to obtain similar data on building leaders: one on public school leaders in New York and the other on charter school principals outside of New York State. The national study on charter schools profiled building leaders in six states and was titled, *Survey of charter school leadership*, by Campbell & Gross 2008, from the National Charter School Research Project (NCSRP) of the University of Washington. The second study titled *2005 Profile of the New York State principalship* (O'Connell et al. 2005), profiled public school principals in New York. That research was conducted through the State University of Albany, New York. Permission was granted by both authors, Bethany Gross and Dr. Ray O'Connell, to use and modify their research instrument for purposes of this study (Appendices C, D).

The survey totaled 29 questions including multiple-choice and rating questions. These questions were categorized into three main areas: professional experiences, demographics, and school related information. Specific data focused on the professional profile of the charter school leaders including their educational background, degree held, state certification, preparation, and prior work experiences. Another set of questions

addressed demographic information such as age, gender and race/ethnicity. School-related information was also gathered including the year the school opened, number of building leaders, building size based on student population, and geographic location in New York State.

Survey Monkey, an online survey tool, was used to administer the survey to charter school leaders across the state using the principal's work email address. Information was collected anonymously and compiled on Survey Monkey.

Reliability and Validity

Seeking the input of two experts on charter schools assessed survey reliability. One of the experts was a published researcher/author of the charter school movement in New York and the other helps lead a statewide organization for charter schools as the managing director of the New York Charter School Association. Prior to distribution, these two experts reviewed the survey instrument for understanding and clarity of the questions and answers. Results from their review produced minor revisions to the wording of specific questions in the professional experience section of the survey. By ensuring that the survey questions were easy to understand and clearly worded, the reliability of the instrument was enhanced.

The validity of the survey was established at least in part, by using questions from two preexisting surveys. With permission, specific questions came from previously published research on school leaders. A comprehensive grid was also used to outline which survey questions provided data to answer research questions 1, 2, 3, and 4. In addition, the two charter school experts offered no substantive suggestions for revision of the content of the questions. In order to preserve the validity of the testing since all

charter school leaders were included in the population, this survey was not piloted with any charter school leaders.

Data Collection

Principals of approved charter schools operating in the 2010-2011 school year across New York State were sent an email letter of invitation to participate in this research. Email listings for building principals were found through public websites including the New York State Education Department. Several email addresses contained inaccurate principal information or were schools not yet in operation. Through internet inquiries and phone calls, correct email addresses were identified and principals were invited to participate. Principals were informed that their responses would be confidential and information would not be shared in any individual manner for any reason. The letter included a link to Survey Monkey for the twenty-nine-question survey. Three follow up emails were written thanking those who had participated and requesting participation from those who had not yet responded. Reminders were sent 9 days, 23 days, and 37 days after the initial invitation. In total, 70 surveys were returned. The data collection concluded after a six-week time span.

Data were collected using Survey Monkey and downloaded into a Microsoft Excel file. Results were imported into SPSS 17 for data analyses for each research question.

Variables

Research question number one was addressed using descriptive analysis of specific questions based on professional experiences (education, preparation, degree, certification, and educational experiences) and demographic information (age, gender,

and race). This information was used to create a professional profile of the charter school leader in New York State. Education preparation questions asked responders to choose from a list of choice items such as the field in which they earned their degree, highest degree earned, type of state administrative certification, and previous educational experiences including teaching and administrative roles. In addition, opportunities to write in responses were offered, collected, and analyzed. Demographic questions included multiple-choice responses where candidates selected one specific answer for gender, marital status, and race/ethnicity. Categorical ranges for age were provided in groups of five-year increments such as younger than 30, age 30-35, 36-40, 41-45, etc. Each question and choices of answers was consistent with wording and categorical responses from either the New York State principalship study or the national study on charter school leaders. Type of school district was defined by the New York State Education Department and included the following choices: rural, suburban, small city, and large city. Descriptive statistics included frequency distribution, percentages and number of responders.

Using the data collected in question number one, research question number two was a descriptive analysis comparing the same seven characteristics of the charter school leaders in New York with published data on public school leaders in New York State. The comparative analysis included the seven characteristics of preparation, experience, degree, certification, age, ethnicity, and gender. Information on New York State public school leaders was gathered from the New York State Department of Education for the 2009-2010 school year. Language used in the responses was consistent with the language used in the data collected from the New York State Education Department including age

ranges, administrative certification, and degree. Comparisons were given in percentages and number of individuals.

Research question number three was also a descriptive analysis comparing the seven characteristics of New York State charter school leaders from research question one (preparation, experience, degree, certification, age, ethnicity, and gender), with published data from a national study of charter school leaders in six states. This information was gathered from the National Charter School Research Project out of the University of Washington in a 2008 study conducted by Bethany Gross and Christine Campbell titled *Working without a safety net: How charter school leaders can best survive on the high wire*. Language used in responses was consistent with the language used in the data collected from the national study including age ranges, preparation, certification, and principal experience. Comparisons were given in percentages and number of individuals.

Research question number four asked if a relationship existed between the educational preparation of the charter school leader (training and experience), and his/her confidence to perform specific demands of the job. Questions and descriptors used came from a study titled *Working without a safety net: How charter school leaders can best survive on the high wire* from the National Charter School Research Project out of the University of Washington. Permission to use questions and specific descriptors was granted by author Bethany Gross (Appendix C). Using Pearson's Correlation, analyses were run looking at the school leader's level of confidence on specific demands of the job based on preparation and experience. The correlation determined if any relationship existed and if one did exist, the strength and direction of the relationship. The closer the

coefficients were to 1.0, the greater the strength of the relationship and likewise the closer the value was to zero, the less a relationship existed between the two variables. For purposes of the study and according to Cohen (1988), correlations fell into three identified categories: significant ($r = .50 - 1.0$) moderate ($r = .3 - .49$), or weak ($r =$ below 3.0). Positive, identified correlations were listed in chapter 4, tables 10-15.

Survey questions 13 and 14 were two variables used to measure this relationship and both questions were consistent in language, format and choices with the survey instrument used in the national study on charter school leaders. One variable in the relationship was the principal's perception of how well their prior experiences and training prepared them for their current position in six general areas including financial management, organizational management, curriculum and instruction, nonprofit fundraising, local politics, and community organization, and living in the school's community. Responders used a four point Likert Scale to rate their level of confidence (strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, and strongly disagree).

In the second question, school leaders were asked to rate their level of confidence to perform specific tasks based on their training and experience. This question also used a four point Likert Scale for responders to rate their level of confidence (very confident, mostly confident, slightly confident, or not at all confident).

Data Analysis

Two sets of data were used for analysis. The first set included a descriptive analysis of the professional profile of the New York charter school principal in three main areas of professional experiences, demographics, and school related information. Specific information from each group was compiled in a table highlighting the profile of

the charter school leader specific to education, degree held, certification, prior teaching/work experience, gender, race, and age. Additional school-related information was collected including student enrollment size, age of charter school, number of school leaders since the school opened, and geographic location in the state as defined by the New York State Education Department. This information was used to answer research question number one. All information was collected through a twenty-nine-question email survey that was sent to the 166 current charter school leaders serving in operating New York State schools for the 2010-2011 school year. Data were stored in the Survey Monkey website and descriptive statistics were reported as frequency distributions, percentages, range and mean.

The data on charter school leaders analyzed in research question number one were compared to public school leaders in New York State for the 2009-2010 school year for purposes of answering survey question number two. Statistics on the public school leaders were obtained through the Dataquest email system from the New York State Education Department. Likewise, research question three looked at the similarities and differences between charter school leaders in New York State and charter school leaders outside of New York using data from a national study completed by the National Charter School Research Project out of the University of Washington in 2008. Using percentages and frequency distribution for descriptive analyses, areas of education, degree held, certification, prior teaching/work experience, gender, race, and age were compared in a table format for both research questions two and three.

The second set of data was used to examine the relationship between the New York charter school leader's educational preparation and their confidence on specific

demands of the job. This information was used to answer research question four. Building leaders used a Likert scale to rate their perceptions and responses were run using Pearson's correlation on SPSS v. 17.0 software. All survey data remained confidential though a password protected computer and was analyzed through Survey Monkey.

Limitations

With survey research, results need to be interpreted cautiously. In this study, 70 out of 166 charter school principals in New York State, or 42% responded to the survey. This was a limited number of participants for the research project. Although research experts consider 42% an acceptable response rate, the rest is still unknown. There is no way to comment or know if the views of those who responded were different from those that did not respond.

Another limitation included the number of schools that participated in the study. To date, New York State authorities approved 190 charter school applications. Twenty-four of those schools did not participate in the study. Sixteen of those schools closed and six schools were in their initial planning year and without student enrollment. The remainder left 168 operating charter schools as defined by this study. Two schools opted out from the survey. The remaining 166 operating charter schools comprised the potential pool for this study.

In New York State, charter schools are newer in existence as compared to most public schools. Building leaders from charter schools may not have had much experience in their current school due to the opening of the school. This should be known when comparing the research findings of charter schools to public schools.

With regard to the survey instrument and responses, some school leaders did not answer every question. Slightly more responses were completed at the beginning of the survey as compared to end of the questionnaire. This study did not include descriptors broad enough to capture all educational experiences of responding charter school leaders including previous experience as a school counselor, school psychologist or retired building leader or leaders with private school experience.

Delimitations

National research on charter school leaders has been conducted in several states including Arizona, California, Hawaii, North Carolina, Rhode Island, and Texas. In these studies, many different characteristics of charter school principals were researched including background experiences, educational training, succession planning, goal setting, and division of time spent on daily tasks and challenges associated with the position. With little if any published data on charter school leaders in New York, this study was purposely narrowed to include all charter school principals in the state. It focused on building level leaders (principals) in order to compare them with public school leaders in the same state and with charter school leaders in other states. With the number of 2011 operating charter schools in New York under 200, the study was opened to all schools throughout the state including New York City.

With very little information published on the charter school principal in New York State, this study focused on creating a professional profile of the school leader including background experiences and demographics. Specific research included seven descriptors of gender, ethnicity, age, preparation, highest degree, experience, and certification. This allowed for a parallel comparison of similar data found on public

school principals in New York and published data on charter school leaders in other states. Questions about the individual charter schools were also asked in order to create a more thorough understanding of the charter school leader.

Chapter IV. Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to describe the profile of the charter school leader in New York State. An electronic survey was sent to New York's 2010-2011 charter school principals addressing three main categories of information including professional experiences, demographics and school related information. The study was centered on four essential questions:

1. What is the professional background and demographic profile of the charter school building leader in New York State including education, degree held, certification, prior teaching/work experience, gender, race, and age?
2. Based on published data on the professional profile of the public school principal, what similarities and differences exist between charter school principals and public school principals in New York State?
3. Based on published data on the background and demographics of charter school leaders in other states, what similarities and differences exist between charter school principals in New York State compared to charter school principals in other states?
4. Is there a relationship between the educational preparation of charter school leaders and their confidence on specific demands of the job?

Participants for this study consisted of 168 leaders of charter schools in New York State, including New York City operating in 2009-2010. With two school leaders opting out and seventy participants responding to the survey, the response rate was 42%. The survey results were organized around these four primary research questions.

Research Question 1

What is the professional background and demographic profile of the charter school building leader in New York State including their education, degree held, certification, prior teaching/work experience, gender, age, and race?

To answer this question, descriptive statistics were employed including frequency distribution, percentages, range, and mean. Demographic data was used to describe both the charter schools themselves and the charter school leaders. In order to better understand the data on charter school leaders, it was helpful to know about the schools in which these leaders serve.

New York State Charter Schools

Eighty six percent of the schools in this study were located within large cities, 11% represented charter schools located in small cities and three percent were schools located in rural or suburban communities as defined by the New York State Education Department (NYSED). Ninety three percent of the respondents reported charter schools were newly created schools, rather than conversion schools that were once pre-existing public schools.

Since the opening of the first charter school in 1999, over 190 charter schools have opened their doors to students across New York State. Figure 1 shows the number and year when charter schools opened across New York State from 1999-2010. The table also shows data obtained from survey respondents when their school opened. See Figure 1.

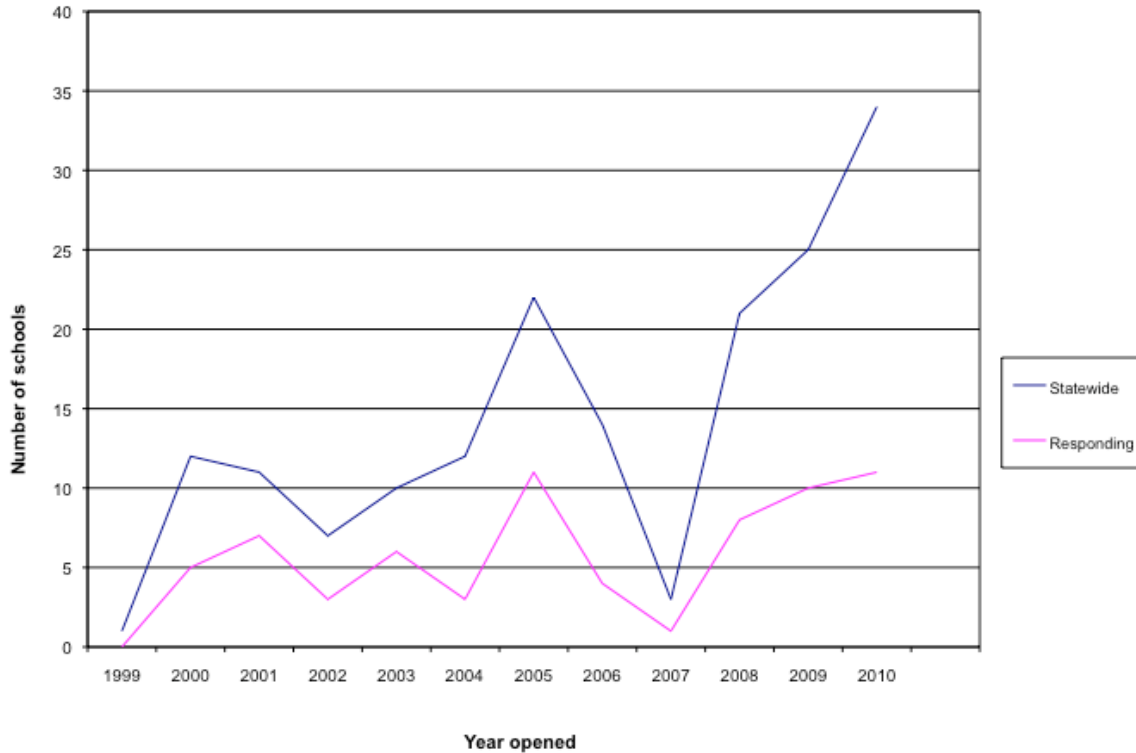


Figure 1. Frequency of the number of charter school openings by year in New York State.

This graph clearly shows how the responding sample paralleled the statewide trends of charter school openings. Two peaks occurred. In 2008-2011, 42% of respondents were from 29 schools that opened out of 80 schools statewide. A previous peak was in 2005 when 22 schools opened statewide. Eleven schools or 16% of those responding opened in 2005. Figure 1 also shows how the state sample closely parallels the responding sample of the study enhancing the reader’s confidence for generalizing purposes. These parallel lines support the contention that a degree of generalizability can be asserted.

Building enrollment of charter schools varied. Twenty-nine percent of respondents led buildings with less than 200 students, 29% had 200-299 students, 15% had 300-399 students and 26% worked in buildings with 400 or more students.

New York State Charter School Leaders

Of the charter school leaders who responded to the survey, 32 were leaders from schools located in New York City (56%) and 25 were leaders in New York State located outside of New York City (44%). This sample represented one fourth or 25% of the total number of charter school leaders in New York City (32 out of 129) and just over half or 53% of the total number of charter school principals located in New York State, outside of New York City (25 out of 47), as defined by the New York State Education Department (New York State Education Department, 2011).

Over half of the leaders responding to the survey have had the same charter school leader since the school's opening. Fifty two percent of leaders who responded were the original principal of the school. Thirty nine percent reported having two or three principals since the school's opening and 9% of schools have had four or five building leaders since opening. See Figure 2.

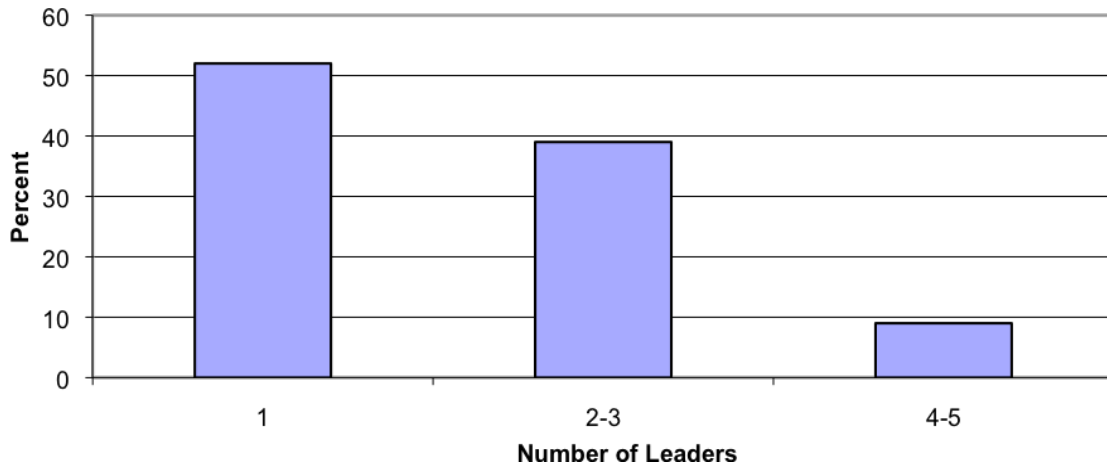


Figure 2. Frequency distribution of the number of charter school principals since the school's opening.

Participants were asked several categorical questions based on background experiences and demographic information. Results are listed in table 7.

Table 7

Profile of the New York State Charter School Principal

Characteristic		Number	Percent
Gender	Males	13	22
	Females	45	78
Ethnicity	White	34	60
	Black	14	25
	Hispanic	8	14
	Asian	1	1
Age	younger than 30 yrs old	3	5
	30-40 years old	26	45
	41-50 years old	9	15
	51-60 years old	8	14
	61 years or older	12	21
Preparation	highest degree from traditional colleges of education	60	92
Degree	Bachelor's degree	1	2
	Master's degree	23	34
	Master's degree +30 hours	36	54
	PhD. or EdD.	7	10
Certification	NYS certification	40	62
	certification from another state	7	11
	no certification	17	27
Experience	five years or less as charter school leader	37	54
	six or more years as charter school leader	31	46

Among the responding leaders, there were three times as many female school leaders (45), as compared to male leaders (13), 78% to 22% respectively. Forty percent of the responding charter school leaders were non-White. Half (50%) were leaders age 40 or younger. Ninety two percent received their highest degree from a college of education. Of the respondents, 38% did not hold current New York State administrative certification.

Most charter leaders were referred to as building principal (69%), while other titles included director (22%) or head of school (9%). Of those that responded, 36% came to their current position as the founder of the school. Responding charter school leaders found the school's mission and types of students they serve to be the two most important factors in accepting their current position, 92% and 83% respectively.

Career Path of Charter School Leaders in New York State

Responding charter school principals came to their current position from experiences in public schools, charter schools and non educational settings. Some respondents had experiences in more than one of these different settings. The data revealed one third (33%) of responding leaders had previous experience in charter school settings as a teacher or administrator. Seventy percent had previous experience in public school settings. One fourth (25%) came from non-educational settings. Responding charter school leaders had experiences in teaching and administration as shown in Figure 3 and Figure 4.

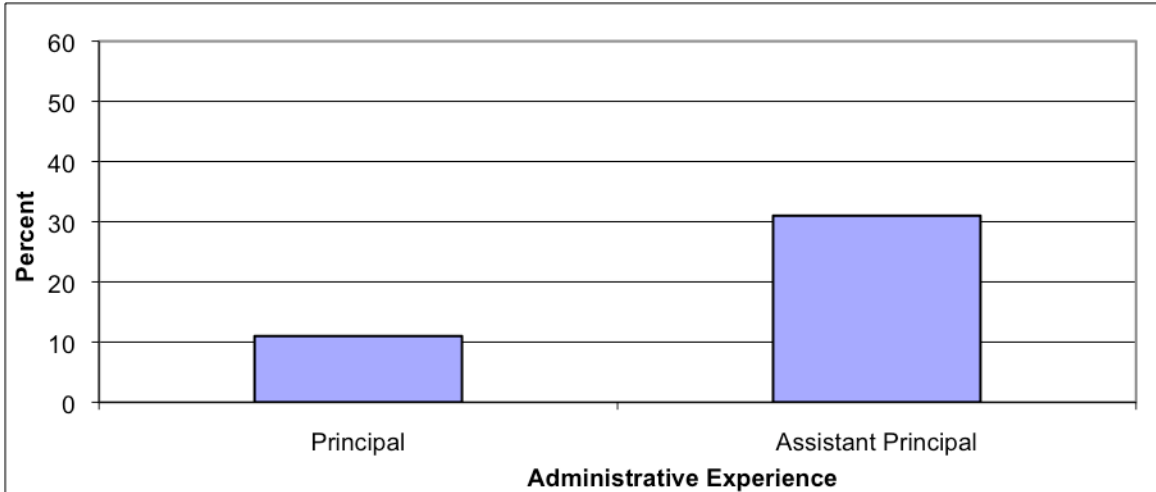


Figure 3. Administrative experiences of the New York State charter school principal.

Forty two percent of the respondents had experiences in administration as assistant principal (31%) or principal (11%).

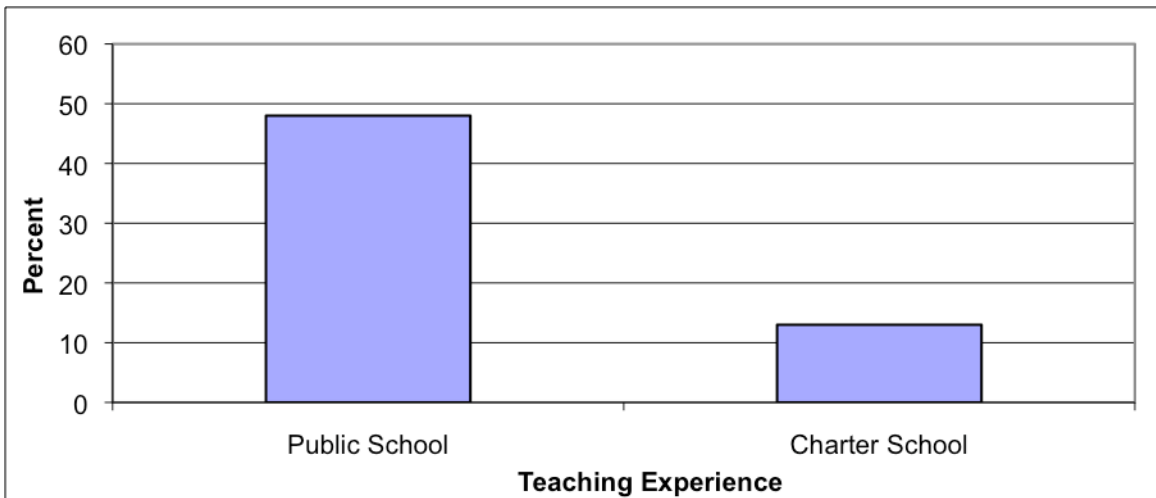


Figure 4. Teaching experiences of the New York State charter school principal.

More than half of the responding leaders (61%) had teaching experience before becoming a building leader. For 48% of the responding charter school leaders this experience teaching was in a public school. Building principals who did not have

educational experiences stated leadership experiences in business, self-employment, community non-profit or consultant roles.

Several questions in the survey addressed the position held by the charter school principal directly prior to becoming a principal. Sixty four percent of respondents entered the charter school principal role directly from the principal or assistant principal position in charter schools or public schools. Thirty nine percent came from a principal or administrative director experience. One fourth, or 25% of responding charter school principals came directly from an experience as an assistant principal. One in ten, (10%) were promoted to principal from within a charter school where they were previously teaching. Directly prior to becoming a charter school leader, 39% worked in a charter school setting (teaching or administrative) and almost half or 47%, worked in a public school setting (teaching or administration). These work settings are highlighted in Figure 5.

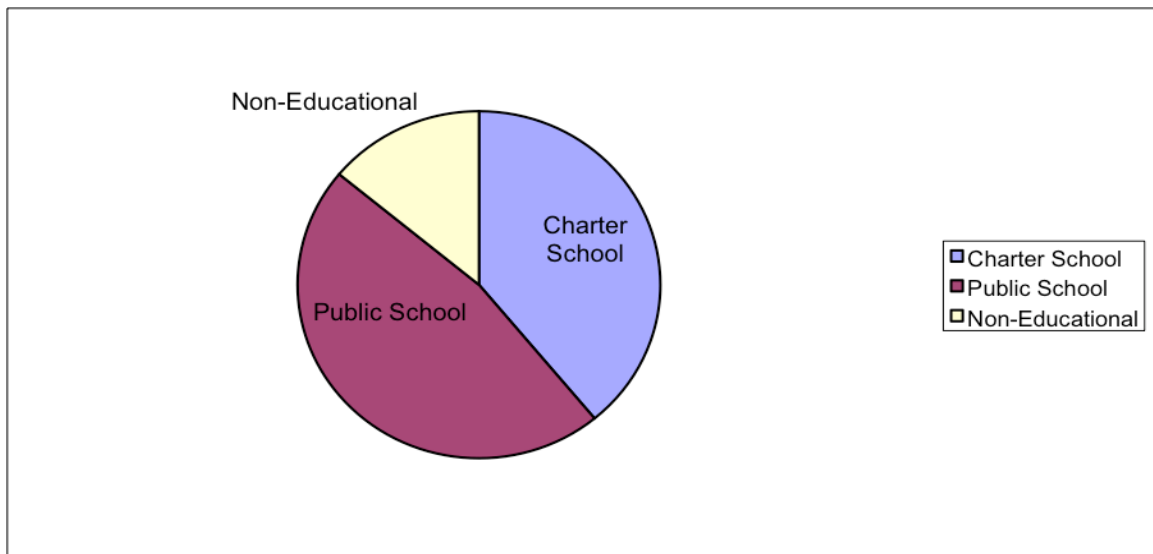


Figure 5. Work settings directly prior to becoming a charter school principal.

Ninety-two percent of charter leaders worked a 12-month contract and 66% of respondents reported collecting an annual salary over \$100,000. Fifty-four percent of leaders reported plans to leave their current position within the next four years primarily for purposes of retirement (44%) or will remain working in the field of education at the district or state level (53%). While 67% of charter school leaders reported being married, 33% were single including divorced or widowed.

To summarize, the 2010-2011 New York charter school leader was described as

- 30-40 years old, White female
- married
- graduated from a traditional college of education
- earned a Master's degree plus 30 credit hours
- held New York State principal certification
- earned over \$100,000
- had experience as classroom teacher
- had experiences in a public school setting
- possessed administrative experience directly before becoming a charter school leader

Research Question 2

Based on published data on the professional profile of the public school principal, what similarities and differences exist between charter school principals and public school principals in New York State?

To answer this question, descriptive statistics were used including frequency distribution, percentages, range, and mean, along with comparison data from the New

York State Education Department on public school principals from the 2009-2010 school year. In 2009-10 there were 4,542 public school principals in New York State (New York State Education Department, 2011). Using these data along with results from the *2005 Profile of the New York State principalship*, similarities and differences between charter school principals and public school principals in New York State were examined. Table 8 summarized these results.

Table 8

Comparison of the NYS Charter School Principals to the NYS Public School Principals

Characteristic		Charter School Principal		Public School Principal	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Gender	Males	13	22	2,003	44
	Females	45	78	2,539	56
Ethnicity	White	34	60	3,450	76
	Black	14	25	677	15
	Hispanic	8	14	344	8
	Asian	1	1	38	1
Age	under 30	3	5	19	0
	30-40 years old	26	45	1,019	22
	41-50 years old	9	15	1,539	34
	51-60 years old	8	14	1,618	36
	61 years or older	12	21	347	8
Preparation	highest degree from traditional colleges of education	60	92	---	---
Degree	Bachelor's degree	1	2	71	2
	Master's degree	23	34	552	12
	Master's degree + 30 hours	36	54	3,569	79
	PhD. or EdD.	7	10	238	5
	not reported	---	---	112	2
Certification	NYS certification	40	62	4,488	99
	certification from another state	7	11	0	0
	no certification	17	27	54	1
Principal experience	five or less years	37	54	2,267	50
	six years or more	31	46	2,275	50

The data on public school leaders were collected and published by the New York State Education Department for the 2009-2010 school year. (New York State Education Department, 2011)

There were nearly 50% more female school leaders in charter schools as compared to public schools, 78% and 56% respectively. Conversely charter schools showed half as many male leaders (22%) as compared to public school leaders (44%). Although public schools had more female leaders, the distribution of females to males in public schools was much closer (56% to 44%) as compared to charter schools (78% to 22%). It was noteworthy that the *2005 Profile of the New York State principalship* reported only 47% of public school leaders were female (O'Connell et al., 2005), suggesting an 8% growth of female public school leaders in five years.

Charter schools had a larger percentage of non-White leaders (40%) as compared to public school leaders in New York (24% non White leaders). Overall charter schools showed more diversity in the ethnicity/race of building leaders by having almost double percentages of Black (25%), Hispanic (14%) and Asian (1%) leaders, as compared to public school leaders.

The participating charter school leaders revealed a bifurcated population with a majority of leaders under the age of 40 (50%), or over the age of 60 (21%). In stark contrast, 70% of public school principals were concentrated between the ages of 41-60. According to the 2009-10 data from the New York State Education Department, the average age of the female public school leader in New York was 50 years and 47 years old for the male public school leader. These numbers were similar with data published in the *2005 New York State Profile of the principalship* when the average age of the responding principal was 50 years old, and the median age was 52 (O'Connell et al., 2005). This data supported national statistics that charter school leaders tend to be younger than public school leaders (Campbell & Gross, 2008). See Figure 6.

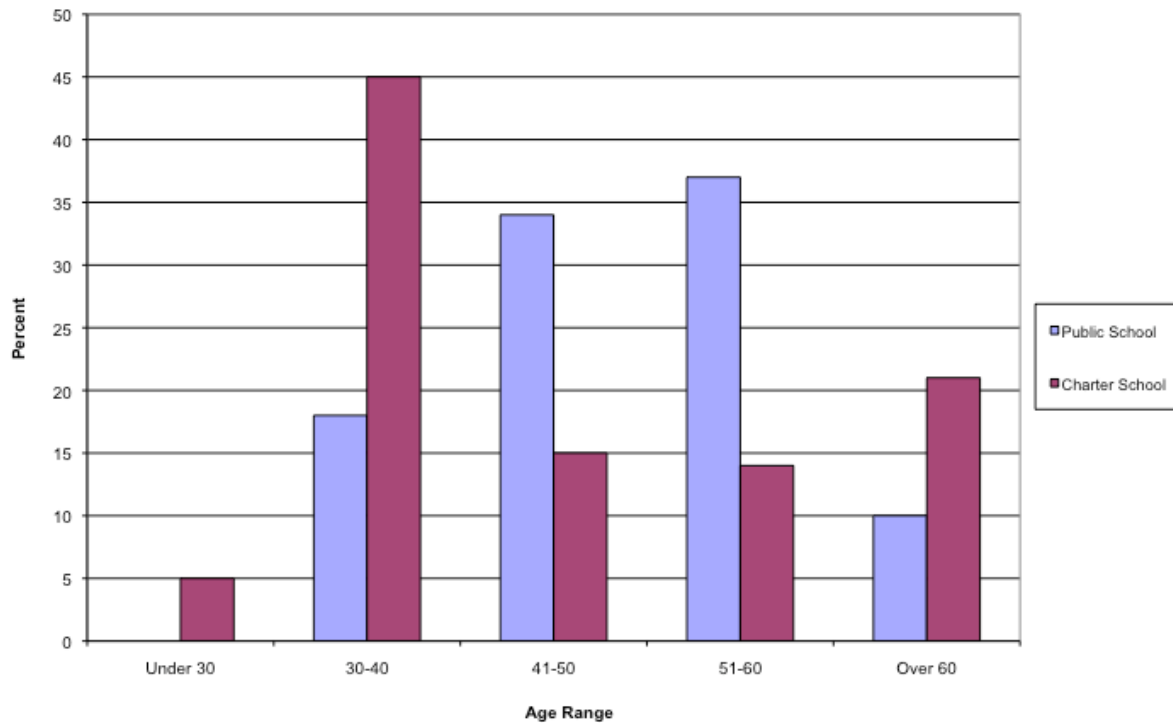


Figure 6. Age comparison of New York’s charter school principals with New York’s Public school principals.

Both groups of building principals had a majority of leaders with Master’s degrees plus 30 credit hours, 54% for charter school leaders and 79% for public school leaders. This number for public school leaders was an increase from 2005 when 59% of principals had an advanced degree (O’Connell et al., 2005). Ninety eight percent of responding charter school leaders held at least a Master’s degree with 10% holding a doctorate degree. Similarly, 96% of public school leaders held at least a Master’s degree with only 5% having a PhD. or EdD. degree. However, the number of public school leaders with a PhD. or EdD. degree decreased from 11% in 2005 to 5% in 2010 (O’Connell et al., 2005).

Certification was another area with differences. In New York, 99% of public school leaders were certified including 93% with permanent certification and 6% with a provisional certificate. In contrast, 73% of charter school leaders were certified, 61% with New York State certification and 11% with certification outside of New York State. Over one-fourth (27%) of charter school leaders possessed no certification.

Administrative experience was similar between New York's charter school principals and public school principals. Fifty four percent of the New York charter school leaders had less than five years experience as building principal and slightly fewer or 46% had six years or more experience. In New York State, public school leaders were equally experienced as 50% of current public school principals had five years or less experience in administration and 50% had six years or more experience (New York State Education Department, 2011).

Both charter school and public school leaders had previous experience teaching and working in the field of education. According to the New York State Education Department, the 2009-10 public school principal in New York averaged 15 years experience in their current district and 22 years of experience in the teaching profession, an increase from 2005 when the average principal had 12 years of classroom teaching experience (O'Connell et al., 2005). Both charter school and public school leaders had experiences as assistant principal with 31% of charter school principals in New York practicing this leadership role, compared to 28% of public school leaders in 2005 (O'Connell et al., 2005).

Research Question 3

Based on published data on the background and demographics of charter school leaders in other states, what similarities and differences exist between charter school principals in New York State compared to charter school principals in other states?

To answer this question, descriptive statistics were employed including frequency distribution, percentages, range, and mean. In 2007, the National Charter School Research Project (NCSRP) out of the University of Washington, conducted a study of 401 charter school leaders in six states (Arizona, California, Hawaii, North Carolina, Rhode Island and Texas). Results were published in a 2008 report titled, *Working without a safety net: How charter school leaders can best survive on the high wire*, profiling the training, preparation, demographics, demands and challenges of charter school leaders. These results were compared with charter school leaders in New York State. Table 9 highlights seven characteristics of New York's charter school principals with the NCSRP charter school principals.

Table 9

Comparison of the New York State Charter School Principals to the National Charter School Principals

Characteristic		NYS Charter School Principal		NCSRP Charter School Principal	
		Number	Percent	Number*	Percent
Gender	Males	13	22	---	46
	Females	45	78	---	54
Ethnicity	White	34	60	---	68
	Black	14	25	---	11
	Hispanic	8	14	---	10
	Asian	1	1	---	5
	Native American	0	0	---	3
Age	under 30	3	5	---	3
	30-40 years old	26	45	---	21
	41-50 years old	9	15	---	34
	51-60 years old	8	14	---	30
	61 years or older	12	21	---	12
Preparation	highest degree from traditional colleges of education	60	92	---	75
Degree	Bachelor's degree	1	2	---	--
	Master's degree	23	34	---	--
	Master's degree + 30 hours	36	54	---	--
	PhD. or EdD.	7	10	---	--
Certification	state certification	40	62	---	60
Principal Experience	two or less years	19	28	---	29

The data on charter school leaders represents a sample from 401 charter school leaders in six states (Arizona, California, Hawaii, North Carolina, Rhode Island and Texas), published in 2008 from the National Charter School Research Project- Center on Reinventing Public Education (NCSRP). *Individual numbers of charter school principals were not collected in this national study.

New York State had more female charter school principals (78% to 54%) as compared to charter schools in the 2008 NCSRP study. In addition, New York had a more diverse group of charter school leaders including higher percentages of Black and Hispanic principals as compared to NCSRP. The age of New York's charter school principals followed the NCSRP trend in that charter school leaders tend to be younger than public school principals. By comparison, the New York State charter school population is younger by far than the charter school leaders in the national 2008 study. Half (50%) of New York's charter principals were under the age of 40, more than twice the number reported by the NCSRP (24%). New York also had a higher percentage of leaders over the age of 60 (21%), which is almost double the NCSRP report of 12%. See Figure 7.

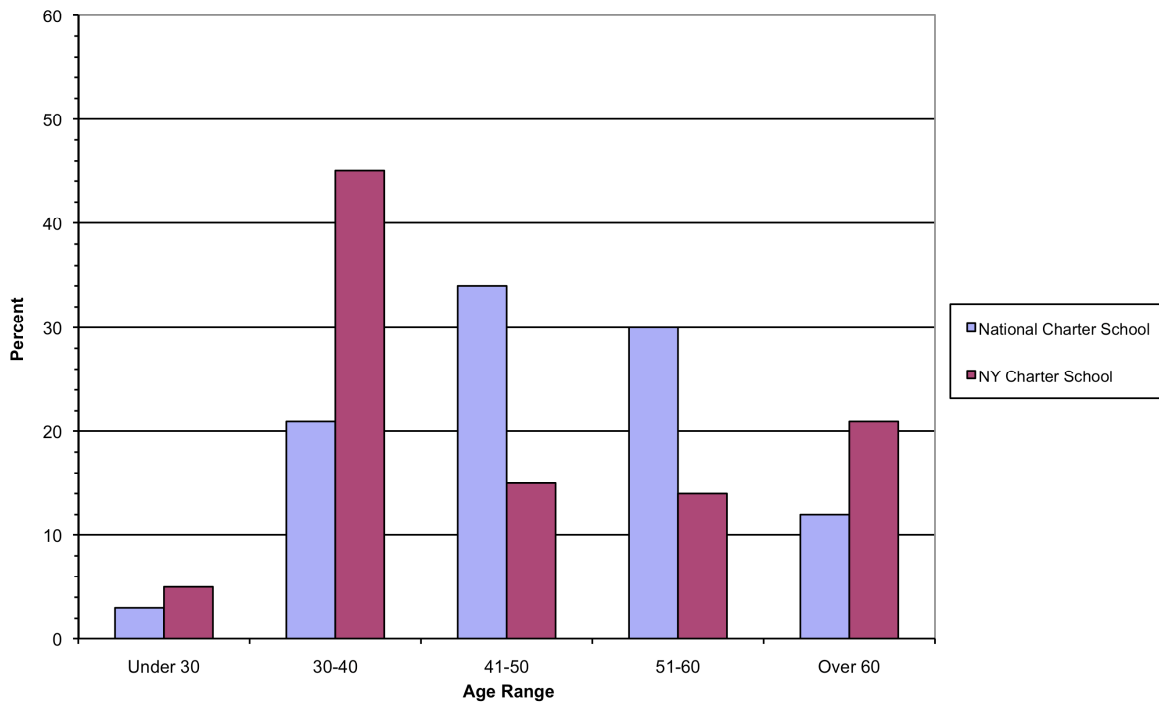


Figure 7. Age comparison of New York’s Charter school principals with charter school principals outside of New York State.

A large majority of charter school leaders received their degree from colleges of education. In the 2008 NCSR study, three out of four principals earned their degree in education (Campbell & Gross, 2008). This number was even higher in New York State as 92% received their highest degree from a traditional college of education.

New York’s charter school principals were more similar to charter school leaders in other states in the areas of experience and length of tenure. The NCSR reported 29% of charter school leaders have led a school for two years or less (Campbell & Gross, 2008). New York was very similar with 28% of principals reporting two years or less of principal experience. In addition, almost half (47%) of the charter school principals in

New York reported two years or less serving as principals of their current school. In the case of younger charter school leaders, the NCSRP reported almost 40% of those under the age of 40 moved directly into their principal position from teaching (Campbell & Gross, 2008). In New York State, this number was less with only 23% of principals reporting teaching experience directly prior to becoming building principal. Instead, almost two thirds (63%) of the current charter school principals in New York reported experience as an assistant principal, director/principal, or other administrative position in either a public or charter school, directly prior to becoming building leader.

Since certification requirements are specific to the individual charter of the school, and not required by New York State, 62% of charter school leaders had current state certification, similar to the NCSRP study, which reported 60% of leaders being state certified.

The data indicated one difference between New York State charter school leaders and charter school principals in the national 2008 NCSRP study. Nationally a much higher anticipated turnover rate was noted. The NCSRP reported 71% of charter school principals are expected to leave their current position in the next 2-5 years, with one third of leaders planning for retirement and half of those leaving reporting to stay in the field of education and working at the district or state level or in a consultant role (Campbell & Gross, 2008). In New York State, the projected turnover rate was lower, but still relatively high as more than half (54%) the number of charter school principals plan to leave their current school within the next four years. Of these leaders, 54% were planning for retirement and 38% were planning to remain in teaching or leading at a different level.

Based on these results, charter school leaders in New York State are most similar to charter school leaders in other states in the areas of gender, ethnicity, and degree from college of education, experience, certification and length of tenure.

Research Question 4

Is there a relationship between the educational preparation of charter school leaders and their confidence on specific demands of the job?

From this study, 92% of charter school leaders in New York State received their highest degree within the field of education. More specifically, 92% of these leaders took college level courses in educational leadership, 83% took courses in curriculum and instruction and 74% took courses in educational law. However, 72% of those that responded reported they did not have specific charter school leadership programs such as those provided by Achievement First, Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP), or Uncommon Schools. Research has shown that experience does matter (Goldering, 2009; Hess & Kelly, 2007; Militello, 2009) and in this study of charter school leaders, it was determined if a relationship existed between the school leader's level of confidence to specific demands of the job based on their training and experience.

Pearson's correlation was run using SPSS v. 17.0 software on survey questions 13 and 14. The NCSR identified six key areas of preparation and experience and 15 specific demands of the job. These research descriptors were utilized with permission from Betheny Gross for purposed of this study (Appendix C). Research question four was derived specifically from those descriptors. The question asked what is the relationship between six key areas of preparation and experience and 15 specific demands of the job. Preparation and experience was broken down into six key areas including

financial management, organizational management, curriculum and instruction, non-profit fundraising, local politics/community organizations and living in the school's community. The fifteen specific demands of the job included,

- engage staff to work toward a common vision
- engage parents to work toward a common vision
- attract talented teachers
- retain talented teachers
- develop a talented faculty
- develop leadership within the school
- delegate or share responsibility
- lead school-wide literacy and math initiatives
- facilitate staff to work toward whole school improvement
- implement a long-range strategic plan
- manage, budget, aligning resources with instructional improvement
- manage school operations effectively
- foster a safe, student centered learning environment
- establish high expectations for students
- seek critical feedback from peers

The data from these two questions represented the relationship between the charter school leader's confidence within a specific key area and defined by a set of descriptors. Responders to the survey used a Likert Scale to rate their level of confidence in these areas. The two variables included the principal's preparation and the principal's confidence of specific demands of the job.

The first correlation examined the charter school principal’s preparation in financial management and their confidence to perform these specific tasks. Table 10 showed a moderate, positive correlation in three areas, “Manage school operations effectively” ($r = .469^{**}$), “Manage budget and align resources with instructional improvement” ($r = .411^{**}$), and “Implement a long-range strategic plan” ($r = .339^{**}$).

Table 10

Pearson Correlations Between the Charter School Leader’s Preparation in Area 1: Financial Management and their Confidence to Perform Tasks Effectively

Descriptors	N	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Managing school operations effectively	63	.469**	.000
Manage budget and align resources with instructional improvement	63	.411**	.001
Implement a long-range strategic plan	63	.339**	.007

Note. **correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

When looking at the preparation in organizational management there was a moderate, positive correlation in three areas including, “Implement a long-range strategic plan” ($r = .403^{**}$), “Manage school operations effectively” ($r = .373^{**}$), and “Foster a safe student centered learning environment” ($r = .356^{**}$). There was a weak, but significant positive correlation in “Facilitate staff to work toward whole school improvement” ($r = .258^*$). See Table 11.

Table 11

Pearson Correlations Between the Charter School Leader's Preparation in Area 2: Organizational Management and their Confidence to Perform Tasks Effectively

Descriptors	N	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Implement a long-range strategic plan	63	.403**	.001
Manage school operations effectively	63	.373**	.003
Foster a safe, student centered learning environment	63	.356**	.004
Facilitate staff to work toward whole school improvement	63	.258*	.042

Note. **correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

In the area of curriculum and instruction preparation, nine characteristics showed a strong to moderate correlation as shown in Table 12. A strong, positive correlation existed in “Lead school wide literacy and math initiatives” ($r = .586^{**}$), while a moderately positive, correlation existed in “Attract talented teachers” ($r = .466^{**}$), “Engage parents to work toward a common vision” ($r = .420^{**}$), “Foster a safe, student centered learning environment” ($r = .418^{**}$) “Develop a talented faculty” ($r = .392^{**}$) “Establish high expectations for students” ($r = .379^{**}$), “Implement a long-range strategic plan” ($r = .377^{**}$), “Facilitate staff to work toward whole school improvement” ($r = .347^{**}$) and “Engage staff to work toward a common vision” ($r = .347^{**}$). There was a slightly moderate positive correlation with “Retain talented teachers” ($r = .318^{*}$) and a weak, but significant positive correlation in “Managing school operations effectively” ($r = .268^{*}$).

Table 12

Pearson Correlations Between the Charter School Leader's Preparation in Area 3: Curriculum and Instruction and their Confidence to Perform Tasks Effectively

Descriptors	N	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Lead school wide literacy and math initiatives	63	.586**	.000
Attract talented teachers	63	.466**	.000
Engage parents to wok toward a common vision	63	.420**	.001
Foster a safe, student centered earning environment	63	.418**	.001
Develop a talented faculty	63	.392**	.001
Establish high expectations for students	63	.379**	.002
Implement a long-range strategic plan	63	.377**	.002
Facilitate staff to work toward whole school improvements	62	.347**	.006
Engage staff to work toward a common vision	63	.347**	.005
Retain talented teachers	63	.318*	.011
Managing school operations effectively	63	.268*	.034

Note. **correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

When considering preparation and confidence in the area of non-profit fundraising there was only one moderate positive correlation in “Manage budget and align resources with instructional improvement” ($r = .351^{**}$) and one weak, but significant positive correlation in “Manage school operations effectively” ($r = .295^{*}$) as shown in Table 13.

Table 13

Pearson Correlations Between the Charter School Leader's Preparations in Area 4: Non-Profit Fundraising and their Confidence to Perform Tasks Effectively

Descriptors	N	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Manage budget and align resources with instructional improvement	62	.351**	.005
Manage school operations effectively	62	.295*	.020

Note. **correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

In the area of preparation of local politics and community organizations, there was one moderate, positive correlation “Manage budget and align resources with the instructional improvement” ($r = .388^{**}$), and three weak, but significant positive correlations in “Manage school operations effectively” ($r = .287^{*}$), “Implement a long-range strategic plan” ($r = .268^{*}$) and “Engage parents to work toward a common vision” ($r = .251^{*}$). Results are listed in Table 14.

Table 14

Pearson Correlations Between the Charter School Leader's Preparations in Area 5: Local Politics/Community Organizations and their Confidence to Perform Tasks Effectively

Descriptors	N	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Manage budget and align resources with instructional improvement	63	.388**	.002
Manage school operations effectively	63	.287*	.023
Implementing long-range strategic plan	63	.268*	.034
Engage parents to work toward a common vision	63	.251*	.047

Note. **correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

One final area of correlation was the principal’s preparation by living in the school’s community and the confidence to perform specific tasks effectively. As defined by the authors of the NSCRP, “living in the school’s community” was designed to mean knowing and understanding the values within the community where the charter school is located. In this area there were two moderate, positive areas of correlation “Engage staff to work toward a common vision” ($r = .407^{**}$) and “Facilitate staff to work toward whole school improvements” ($r = .357^{**}$) and four weak but significant positive correlations including “Develop leadership within the school” ($r = .281^*$), “Foster a safe, student centered learning environment” ($r = .269^*$), “Implement a long-range strategic plan” ($r = .255^*$) and “Seek critical feedback from peers” ($r = .254^*$). Results are listed in Table 15.

Table 15

Pearson Correlations Between the Charter School Leader’s Preparation in Area 6: Living in the School’s Community and their Confidence to Perform Tasks Effectively

Descriptors	N	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Engage staff to work toward a common vision	62	.407**	.001
Facilitate staff to work toward whole school	63	.357**	.004
Develop leadership within the school	63	.281*	.026
Foster a safe, student centered learning environment	63	.269*	.033
Implement a long range strategic plan	63	.255*	.044
Seek critical feedback from peers	62	.254*	.054

Note. **correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Sixty-two percent of responding charter school leaders in New York State held current New York State certification as compared to 99% of public school leaders. Based on this difference, an independent t-test was used to determine if certification made any difference in the level of confidence based on preparation and experience among building leaders to perform specific job related tasks. In the six areas of financial management, organizational management, curriculum and instruction, non-profit fundraising, local politics/community organizations and living in the school’s community, results showed no statistical difference between the level of confidence of charter school principals with state certification as compared to principals without certification. See Table 16.

Table 16

Independent T- Test Comparison of Charter School Principals with New York State Certification and Charter School Principals without New York State Certification

Key Area	NYS Certification	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Significance
Financial management	Yes	38	2.32	1.297	.143
	No	16	3.44	1.413	
Organizational management	Yes	38	1.63	.998	.176
	No	16	2.19	1.377	
Curriculum & instruction	Yes	38	1.45	.602	.955
	No	16	1.88	.719	
Non-profit fundraising	Yes	37	3.41	1.674	.113
	No	16	2.94	1.482	
Local politics/ community organizations	Yes	38	2.61	1.424	.260
	No	16	3.31	1.580	
Living in the school’s community	Yes	38	2.68	1.544	.095
	No	16	2.75	1.844	

Note: correlation is significant at the .05 level (2 tailed).

In conclusion, this chapter addressed the four research questions by creating and examining the profile of the New York State Charter School Principal. This profile included demographic information (age, race, and gender), professional experiences (preparation, degree, and certification) and school related information. The charter school leader in New York can be summarized as a young, White female, (under the age of 40), with a Master's degree plus 30 credit hours who holds current New York State certification. This building leader has had experiences as a teacher and administrator and has worked in public school settings.

Using this profile, the New York State Charter School principal was compared to New York public school principals. Similarities included more female leaders as compared to male leaders. Both groups had a majority of White principals and leaders with a Master's Degree plus 30 credit hours. Differences however, included a greater diversity of charter school leaders as well as principals who were younger or older in age. Fewer charter school leaders had New York State certification, but more charter school principals had a PhD. or EdD. degree as compared to public school principals.

Charter school leaders in New York were also compared to charter school leaders outside of New York State. These findings showed similarities with more female principals than males, majority of White leaders, highest degree earned from a college of education, two thirds of leaders holding state certification, experience as building principal and a high anticipated turnover rate within the next five years. Differences included New York State charter school leaders had many more female leaders than male leaders, more diversity of building principals, and leaders who are younger in age or older as compared to charter school principals outside New York State.

The final research question asked if a relationship existed between the educational preparation of the charter school leader and their confidence on specific demands of the job. Charter school principals in New York felt more confident in the areas of curriculum and instruction, living in the school's community and organizational management. These leaders were less confident in the areas of non-profit fundraising, local politics/community organization, and financial management.

Chapter V. Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to profile the charter school leader in New York State. From the opening of the first charter school in 1999, the charter school movement in New York has been strong and steady. New York is currently educating 44,000 students in over 166 charter schools. This trend is likely to continue as recent legislation will allow the number of charter schools to double over the next four years, potentially adding another 400 schools and thousands more students to enter into this alternative public school system. In times of high standards and increased accountability, little was known about the leaders of these schools in New York State.

To better understand these leaders, this study was designed to profile the New York Charter School Principal including professional experiences, demographics and school related information. Research question one compiled specific information on the building leader including age, race, gender, preparation, experience, degree, and certification. In research question two, the profile of the New York charter school principal was compared to published data on public school principals in New York highlighting similarities and differences. Demographic and background information was collected on the 2009-10 public school principal from the New York State Education Department and used for comparison purposes. Research question three compared the New York charter school leader with national data on charter school leaders in other states. Using data from the 2008 study “*Working without a safety net: How charter school leaders can best survive on the high wire*” from the National Charter School Research Project out of the University of Washington, similarities and differences were described. Research question number four asked if a relationship existed between the

educational preparation of the charter school leader (training and experience), and his/her confidence to perform specific demands of the job. Using Pearson's Correlation, analysis was run looking at the school leader's level of confidence (based on their training and experiences) and specific job related tasks. The correlation determined if any relationship existed and if so, the strength and direction of the relationship.

Through the use of quantitative methods and descriptive statistics, survey data were collected anonymously on charter school principals using an electronic survey of 29 questions. Inferential statistics were also used through Pearson's correlations and SPSS v. 17.0. Building leaders from 166 charter schools in New York were invited to participate in an online survey describing their professional experiences, demographics, and school related information. In total, 70 surveys were returned for a 42% response rate. The study was centered on four essential questions:

1. What is the professional background and demographic profile of the charter school building leader in New York State including education, degree held, certification, prior teaching/work experience, gender, race, and age?
2. Based on published data on the professional profile of the public school principal, what similarities and differences exist between charter school principals and public school principals in New York State?
3. Based on published data on the background and demographics of charter school leaders in other states, what similarities and differences exist between charter school principals in New York State compared to charter school principals in other states?

4. Is there a relationship between the educational preparation of charter school leaders and their confidence on specific demands of the job?

This chapter is divided into three sections covering the summary of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Summary of Findings

Research question one investigated the professional profile of the New York State charter school leader in seven specific areas including gender, ethnicity, age, preparation, degree, certification, and experience. Descriptive statistics were used to answer this question. Results from this profile showed a majority of charter school principals in New York were White females. More specifically, there were three times as many female leaders who responded compared to males (78% females, 22% males). Although New York's charter school leaders represented a variety of ethnicities, a majority of the leaders were White (60%) followed in descending order Black (25%), Hispanic (14%), and Asian (2%). In addition, the charter school leaders in New York were young with 50% of the leaders under the age of 40. Twenty-one percent of leaders were over the age of 61, defining New York's charter school principals as a bifurcated population with a majority of leaders younger in age (under 40) or older (over 60). Sixty-six percent of New York's leaders were married and 34% were single (including divorced, widowed, or separated).

Many charter school leaders were new to their current building. Almost half, (47%), of the respondents worked as principal in their building for two years or less. Seventy nine percent of the responding leaders worked in their current building less than five years, but that may be reflective of how long the school has been open. Charter

school principals came to their current position from a broad range of experiences including teaching and leadership positions in public schools, charter schools, and non educational settings.

Charter school principals in New York State can be considered a highly prepared and professional group of leaders. A large percentage of these leaders (92%), received their degree from a traditional college of education and 98% held at least a Master's degree. Ten percent of current charter school leaders held a PhD. or EdD. degree. In the area of certification, 61% of responding charter school principals held current New York State certification, leaving 39% without New York State certification. New York State does not require charter school leaders to hold state certification. Charter school leaders are hired based on specific criteria outlined and defined in individual school contracts. If the governing body does not outline state certification as a requirement, it is not mandated for charter school leaders.

One final characteristic was the length of experience as a charter school principal. Just over half (54%), of charter leaders in New York had five years experience or less. Again, this may be reflective of how long the school itself has been open. Forty six percent of responding leaders had been on the job for six years or more. This data is similar to the national statistics that states charter school leaders are younger in age and are newer to the job (Campbell & Gross, 2008). In summary, the New York Charter school leader can be profiled as

- White, female
- married
- under the age of 40
- graduated from a traditional college of education
- Master's degree + 30 credit hours
- New York State certification

- five years or less experience as a charter school leader

Research question two compared the profile of the charter school principal in New York State with public school principals in New York State using the same characteristics of gender, ethnicity, age, preparation, degree, certification, and experience. Descriptive statistics were also used to answer this question. In comparison, results showed both groups had more female building leaders than male leaders, although the percentages in charter schools (78%) was quite higher than in public schools (56%). Although both charter schools and public schools had a majority of White leaders, charter schools showed more diversity with larger percentages of Black, Hispanic and Asian leaders. The age of building principals was quite different. Charter school leaders showed a bifurcated population with half of these leaders being under the age of 40 and one fifth over the age of 60. In comparison, a large majority (70%) of public school principals were concentrated between the ages of 41-60 years.

When looking at highest degree held, public school leaders and charter school leaders were similar in that the majority of principals held a Master's degree plus 30 credit hours. However, there were many more public school leaders (79%) in this group, as compared to charter schools (54%). Although a small percentage for both groups, one major difference between building administrators was charter school leaders had twice as many principals holding a PhD. or EdD. degree (10%) as compared to public school leaders (5%). This was interesting to note since charter school leaders made up a smaller population of principals as compared to public school principals, but had more building leaders with Doctorate degrees (New York State Education Department, 2011).

Certification was another area with large differences. Public schools leaders in New York State are required to hold state certification as a School Building Leader (SBL), School District Leader (SDL), or School Administrator and Supervisor (SAS). It is understandable that 93% were permanently certified and 6% held a provisional certificate. In contrast, charter school leaders were not required to have permanent certification unless it was specified in the school's original charter.

To summarize, charter school leaders and public school leaders were similar in

- more female leaders than males
- majority of White leaders
- Master's degree plus 30 hours
- assistant principal experience
- principal experience (five years or less)

but different in

- age - charter school leaders younger or older in age
- ethnicity- charter schools had more diversity of leaders
- certification – more public school leaders with NYS certification
- highest degree earned - more charter school principals with Master's degree and Doctorate degree

Research question three compared the profile of the charter school principal in New York State with national statistics on charter school principals in other states using the same specific characteristics of gender, ethnicity, age, preparation, degree, certification and experience. Once again descriptive statistics were used. National data were obtained through a 2008 study from the National Charter School Research Project

(NCSR) for the Center on Reinventing Public Education out of the University of Washington. The 2008 study, *Working without a safety net* by Christine Campbell and Betheny Gross, surveyed 401 charter school leaders from six states including Arizona, California, Hawaii, North Carolina, Rhode Island and Texas. New York's charter school leaders paralleled many findings from this national report.

National data showed more female charter school principals than male principals and New York was in agreement with this finding. Charter schools in New York have many more female leaders (78%) as compared to the national study (54%). When looking at ethnicity, the national data showed a higher percentage of White charter school leaders (68%) and smaller populations of Black (11%), Hispanic (10%), Asian (5%), and Native American leaders (3%). New York was similar with the majority of charter school principals being White (59%), but had more diversity of building principals with higher percentages of Black (25%) and Hispanic (14%) leaders compared to the national data. New York showed a smaller percentage of Asian charter school principals (2%) compared to the national study.

National data also stated charter schools have slightly more leaders under the age of 40 and over the age of 60 compared to public schools. This was also true with New York State where one half (50%) of New York's charter school leaders were under the age of 40, and 21% over the age of 60. However, the national sample of charter school leaders had a majority (64%) between the ages of 41-60, resembling a similar profile to the public school leaders in New York State. New York had twice as many leaders under the age of 40 as compared to the national sample of charter school principals 50% to 24%

respectively, and almost twice as many principals over the age of 50, 35% to 42% respectively.

Another similarity was both groups reported a high percentage of building leaders receiving their highest degree from colleges of education, 92% for New York's leaders and 75% from the national study. Both groups reported an almost identical number of principals holding state certification, 61% for New York, and 60% from the national study.

In addition, the national data stated charter school leaders have less experienced than public school leaders. This was confirmed with New York's charter school leaders. In New York, nearly one third (28%) of charter school principals reported less than two years of principal experience, similar to charter school leaders in other states (29%). This statistic was even higher with 47% of New York's charter school principals reporting only 1-2 years experience at their current school. However, some charter school leaders are highly experienced as a building leader. In New York, 31% of charter school leaders have nine years or more serving as building principal compared to 19% of national charter school leaders who report ten years or more experience (Campbell & Gross, 2008).

One additional finding is the high anticipated turnover rate with charter school leaders. Data from the national study stated 71% of charter school leaders plan to leave their current position within the next five years. Although not quite as high, more than half (54%) of New York's charter school principals plan to leave their current position within four years. Nationally, one third plan to retire but in New York the numbers are slightly higher with 44% planning to leave for purposes of retirement. For those leaders

not retiring, both the national and New York data confirm half of the leaders leaving their current position plan to stay in the field of education. Fifty-three percent of New York's leaders state they would like to continue working at the district or state level when they leave their current position.

To summarize, New York charter school leaders were similar to charter school leaders in other states in

- more female principals than males
- majority White leaders
- highest degree earned from a college of education
- two thirds holding state certification
- large majority of principals who move into their current position from a position within the field of education (teaching or administration)
- principals with two years or less of administrative experience or more than 10 years of experience.
- turnover rate- high percentage planning to leave within five years

but different in

- age (bifurcated population of New York charter school leaders)
- higher percentage of female leaders in New York State
- higher percentage of diversity in ethnicity of New York State principals
- more charter school leaders in New York State with administrative experience as building leader (director, principal, assistant principal)
- fewer New York State charter school leaders moving into principal position directly from teaching experience

Research question four asked if a relationship existed between the educational preparation of the charter school leader and their confidence on specific demands of the job. Research showed 92% of charter school leaders in New York State received their highest degree from schools of education and a strong majority took coursework in educational leadership (92%), curriculum and instruction (83%), and educational law (74%). However, 72% reported they did not receive any additional training in any specific charter school programs such as Achievement First, Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP), or Uncommon Schools. National research on charter schools showed confidence can establish a culture of high expectations that is focused and student-centered. This national study showed charter school principals felt less confident in securing facilities, managing finances and leading strategic planning- areas often not faced by public school leaders but serious issues for charter schools (Campbell & Gross, 2008). Was this also true with charter school leaders in New York State?

Pearson's correlation was run using SPSS v. 17.0 looking at the principal's preparation and experience in six areas (financial management, organizational management, curriculum and instruction, non-profit fundraising, local politics and community organization and living in the school's community) and their confidence of specific demands of the job. The descriptor "living in the school's community" was originally defined by the authors at the National Charter School Research Project to mean the actual residency of the building principal within the community of the school. In some cases, energized community members who felt being "one of community" was important, founded the charter school. However, the participants for this study, as well as the national study did not have any formal definition provided and this descriptor may

have been interpreted differently. The main understanding implied was “being an integral part of the community” (Campbell & Gross, 2008).

Major findings for this question showed based on their training and experience, charter school principals in New York felt most confident in the area of curriculum and instruction, living in the school’s community and organizational management. The weakest three areas of confidence included financial management, local politics/community organizations and non-profit fundraising. This ranking was determined by a weighted process that utilized the strength of the relationship and the total number of descriptors in each correlation. Strong or moderate correlations (greater or equal to .31) were weighted as 1.0 and weak, but significant correlations were given a weight of 0.50. Points were added for each descriptor and total. For example, the area of curriculum of instruction had seven moderate or strong correlations, each one receiving a value of 1.0, along with two weak but significant correlations adding values of 0.5 and 0.5 for an equation of $7 + .5 + .5 = 8$ total points. These results are summarized in Figure 8 below.

Most Confident	Curriculum & Instruction
↓	Living in the School Community
↓	Organizational Management
↓	Financial Management
↓	Local Politics/Community Organizations
Least Confident	Non-profit Fundraising

Figure 8. Ranked areas of confidence of charter school leaders in New York State based on preparation and experience.

Charter school leaders felt the most confident in the areas of curriculum and instruction as shown by the high number of job demands and the strength of the correlations. In this area of curriculum and instruction, nine strong to moderate correlations existed including leading school wide literacy and math initiatives, attracting talented teachers, engaging parents to work toward a common vision, fostering a safe, student centered learning environment, developing a talented faculty, establishing high expectations for students, implementing a long-range strategic plan, facilitating staff to work toward whole school improvement and engaging staff to work toward a common vision. Although weaker but still statistically significant, two additional correlations existed including retaining talented teachers, and managing school operations effectively.

In the area of organizational management, the findings showed a moderate positive correlation in three areas of implementing a long-range strategic plan, managing school operations effectively and fostering a safe and student-centered learning environment, along with one weak, but statistically significant correlation in facilitating staff to work toward whole school improvement.

The findings for financial management resulted in three, moderate positive correlations in the areas of managing school operations effectively, managing budget and aligning resources with instructional improvement and implementing a long-range strategic plan.

The area of correlation for living in the school's community and confidence showed two moderate positive areas of correlation in engaging staff to work toward a common vision and facilitating staff to work toward whole school improvements. There were also four weak but statistically significant correlations, including developing

leadership within the school, fostering a safe, student-centered learning environment, implementing a long-range strategic plan and seeking critical feedback from peers.

When looking at preparation in non-profit fundraising, only one moderate correlation existed in managing budget and aligning resources with instructional improvement and one weak but statistically significant correlation in managing school operations effectively.

In the area of local politics and community organizations there was one moderate positive correlation in managing budget and aligning resources with instructional improvement, and three weak, but significant correlations, in managing school operations effectively, implementing a long-range strategic plan and engaging parents to work toward a common vision.

Conclusions

Recent history has shown continued growth and momentum for charter schools in New York State and across the country. Since the opening of the first charter school in 1999, the charter school movement in New York has grown consistently with over 166 operating charter schools educating roughly 44,000 students in an alternative approach to public education (New York State Education Department, 2011). With increased support and funding from President Obama at the national level and new legislation from Governor Cuomo at state level, these schools will continue to provide instruction to the most needy student populations in New York.

This exploratory study created a professional background and demographic profile of the New York State charter school leader in the areas of education, degree held, certification, prior teaching/work experiences, gender, age, and race. This profile was

compared for similarities and differences with published data on New York's public school leaders and with charter school leaders in other states. Information on public school principals was gathered from the New York State Education Department based on the 2009-2010 school year with just over 4,500 public school leaders. Information on public school employees is collected annually through the Basic Education Data System (BEDS). However, the New York State Department has limited historical data such as where school administrators earned their highest degree.

Recent legislation has lifted the cap on charter schools allowing the number of new schools to increase from 200 to a possible 460 over the next four years (New York State Education Department, 2010). To date, no formal studies have been completed on the New York charter school leader, and with the charter school movement in New York State entering its second decade of existence, there has been an absence of data regarding the leaders of these schools. Leading in a time of high accountability, where charter schools are preparing to educate twice the number of students presently attending these schools, the questions remained, "Who are the leaders of these schools?" and "Are they prepared for the demands of educating our students of today?"

In the area of preparation and training, charter school leaders resembled traditional public school principals. Charter school leaders in New York came to their current position graduating from schools of education many with Master's degrees plus certificates of advanced study (30 credit hours). Both groups of leaders have a strong majority holding at least a Master's degree, 98% for charter school principals, and 96% for public school principals. Charter School principals have experiences in the field of education as teachers, principals, and assistant principals. Many have leadership

experiences in public schools, charter schools and non-educational settings. Based on this education, preparation, and experience, charter school principals in New York State are highly professional leaders.

In addition, a question asked if a relationship existed between the educational preparation of the charter school leader and their confidence on specific demands of the job. In New York State, charter school leaders came to their positions from a wide range of experiences including public, private and non-educational settings. From classroom, building and central office experiences, these leaders had confidence in many areas. Charter school leaders in New York felt “very confident” or “mostly confident” of their ability to perform job related tasks based on their training and experience in the areas of financial management, organizational management, curriculum and instruction, local politics/communication organizations, living in the school community and non-profit fundraising. Although these leaders felt confident in all 15 areas, charter school leaders reported strengths to a greater degree in curriculum and instruction, organizational management and living in the school community. They felt less confident in non-profit fundraising, local politics/community organization and financial management. These results paralleled the national data. Based on their training and preparation, charter school leaders in New York were similar to charter school leaders in other states on their confidence of job related tasks.

Certification was an area of difference between New York’s charter school leaders and public school leaders. While these two groups showed a major difference in the number of principals holding state certification (62% for responding charter school leaders as compared to 99% for public school principals), there was no statistically

significant difference between the two groups in their level of confidence to perform job related tasks. In other words, certification was not a factor in their confidence and ability to perform job related tasks. This leads to question the value of state certification.

Both national data and New York State results show a large anticipated turnover of charter school principals in the next few years. Nationally, 71% of charter school leaders plan to leave their current position in the next five years and in New York State, 54% plan to exit within the next four years (Campbell & Gross, 2008). In addition, recent legislation has lifted the cap on the number of newly approved charter schools in New York State allowing the number of schools to potentially double over the next four years. This change has already had an immediate impact on state authorizers. New York State currently has two authorizers of charter schools- the State University of New York Board of Trustees and the New York State Education Department, Board of Regents. In previous years, the New York State Education Department would average 2-3 approved charters per application cycle. However, since the recent change in legislation, the New York State Education Department received 50 responses to requests for proposals from August 2010 to January 2011. As part of the application process, these 50 responses were narrowed to 40 for the prospectus phase of the process, followed by 16 invitations to continue the full application. The result was seven newly approved charter schools by the New York State Board of Regents within a five month time period (New York State Education Department, 2011).

Similarly and more recently according to the New York State Education Department Charter School Office, from January to May 2011, the New York State Education Department received 90 responses to requests for proposals, narrowed slightly

to 80 for the prospectus phase of the process, followed by 33 invitations to continue the full application. Early projections estimate ten schools will become finalists, recommended for approval to the State Board of Regents.

Clearly these two application cycles demonstrate a great interest and expansion in the creation and development of new charter schools in New York State. With an estimated 17 newly approved charter schools in less than twelve months, the number of new charters schools is likely to enter another growth spurt.

With this influx of newly approved charter schools and building principal replacements needed for those leaving charter schools, there is a strong demand for high quality leaders. In New York, this call for effective leadership is even stronger with high levels of accountability becoming part of teacher and principal evaluations.

Recommendations for System Leaders

For building leaders, experience and preparation matters. Research has shown principal leadership has a direct impact on student achievement (Waters et al., 2004). To be the most effective leader for student needs, principals need effective professional development and leadership training. Charter school leaders are no different. These leaders have different needs compared to public school leaders (Lake, 2008). Research has clearly stated the deficits and demise of educational preparation programs for school leaders (Broad Foundation, 2003; Hess & Kelly 2005; Lazaridou, 2009; Levine, 2005; Militello, 2009). Charter school leaders in New York have stated the need for opportunities and training in areas of financial management, non-profit fundraising and local politics/community organizations. Now is the time to rethink, reform and rebuild leadership preparation programs for leaders, especially charter schools principals.

Since charter schools having increased diversity of student populations including minority or economically disadvantaged children, building principals must be prepared to lead teachers and schools in the right direction resulting in improved student achievement for all children. If students are to do well, the school leader must be prepared. A leadership challenge has been created by state and federal authorities with newly defined learning standards, mandated student assessments, and increased demands for higher school accountability. With more students being educated in this alternative public school setting, charter schools need effective leaders. New skills are needed for charter school building leaders.

National research states the demands and challenges of charter school principals are different from public school principals (Campbell & Gross, 2008). Yet most charter school administrators are trained in the same type of educational preparation programs taking the same coursework as public school administrators. These charter school principals are well educated with advanced degrees and have training in many important elements of organizational leadership. However, this training and experience does not translate into the field. It is possible that field-based approaches such as on-going mentorship or internships would be beneficial for the complex and context-relevant issues like fundraising. Having charter leaders participate in specifically designed internships with specific content as a focus, would allow problem-solving skills to be applied to real-life experiences prior to becoming a building leader.

New educational preparation programs are beginning to emerge across the country and in New York State. Preparation programs for charter leaders should be carefully tailored to the needs of successfully leading a charter school. The responding

leaders stated the need for more opportunities and training with programs in financial management and non-profit fundraising. Based on these results there is a need for continued professional development and leadership preparation in the three areas of financial management, non-profit fundraising and understanding local politics/community organizations. One solution may be to expand fledging charter leadership programs that successfully prepare leaders for both managerial and instructional challenges. Course offering should include more content on accountability and finances.

Programs with a residency component and small cohort model are recommended for individual success and authentic, day-to-day opportunities. New options are beginning to emerge for charter school administrators such as the New Leaders for New Schools, Knowledge is Power Program, and recently created MBA programs at Rice University and Notre Dame. School and university leaders have the opportunity to be creative and forward thinkers in a time when new preparation programs for charter school leaders are necessary. Learning what is needed, and knowing what works is necessary.

Another recommendation includes creating more local mentoring and problem-solving opportunities for leaders from different types of schools. As in many fields, the best practical advice and support often comes from those engaged in the same work and charters school leadership is not any different. These leaders should have opportunities to experience a support system with various stakeholders to foster a positive and successful working relationship. Many public school leaders have the support of building colleagues at the district level. Yet, charter school leaders are more isolated and without this type of peer support. Mentoring is important for new leaders and expanding or

creating peer-mentoring opportunities for leaders is an easy and effective way for new principals to learn and gain support from more experienced peers.

With the high turnover rate expected by New York's charter school principals, and the research presented by the national study, charter schools would benefit from succession planning. Nationally, 71% of charter school leaders plan to leave their current position in the next five years. Although not quite as high, 55% of New York's current charter school leaders plan to leave their position within the next four years. Succession planning happens when organizational leaders look toward the future and identify what areas will need oversight and guidance for the organization to be successful. Instead of filling openings from a random pool of candidates, current leadership identifies, grooms and recruits the talent needed. Planning through managed change in leadership guides current decision-making toward a desired future state. Succession planning can be the key to long-term sustainability as well as an effective reform for risk management.

In New York, 44% of these leaders are planning for purposes of retirement, but from the remaining leaders not retiring, 53% plan to remain in the field of education working or leading at the district or state level. Very few will leave education entirely. This is good news because it suggests an ongoing commitment to the K-12 education system and an explanation that the departure of charter school leaders from the current position has more to do with the demands of their current job or personal career expectations than a lack of interest in the field itself. Mitigating those demands and challenges could have an effect on how soon a principal decides to leave or extend their stay at their current post. Conducting exit interviews on departing leaders can help schools learn from past principals in order to build on knowledge for future leaders. A

thorough understanding of why building leaders leave charter schools may improve the longevity of future leaders and support a successful transition plan during times of change.

Recommendations for Future Research

With very little literature published on the New York Charter School principal this exploratory study was needed especially during a time of growth and accountability. Learning about the profile of the charter school leader is only a starting point. This window of information has opened the door to many more questions and defined new areas of need.

Educational leaders in New York State are in the midst of a perfect storm. New York State has recently appointed a new State Commissioner of Education who comes with real experiences and leadership from charter schools. The New York State Education Department has adopted new Common Core State Standards for all public school students in grades K-12 that will begin in the year 2012. In addition, the state governor has advocating loudly and clearly for a tax cap for public school districts across New York State while supporting charter schools as alternative approaches to the public schools system. With these three measures already defined, it is clear educational leaders are facing times of difficult change. Leaders are being asked to do more with less, and prepare for the future with high levels of accountability. As charter school principals require different skill sets as compared to public school leaders now more than ever, charter school principals must be ready to meet the demands of today and best prepare for the challenges ahead, while keeping the focus on quality instructional programs and school sustainability.

After thirteen years of charter schools opening across the state, what trends can we learn about charter schools and the leaders needed for these schools? Changes have been made in state mandates, charter school contracts, and student populations across the state, but have our schools changed to meet these needs? Learning from charter schools that have remained opened and from those that closed will help ensure the success of current and future leaders. After thirteen years in existence, there is an opportunity to review and learn from the charter school alternative approach to education.

Future studies on building leadership may include an in depth look at the recruitment process of school leaders. It may be helpful to learn about regional trends and statewide characteristics of charter schools including building principals, and what governing boards are looking for when selecting these leaders. Has the pool of candidates changed over the past 13 years? Are charter school boards looking at a higher educated pool of leaders as compared to public school leaders? Is there an increased need for charter school principals to have a PhD or EdD or to be bilingual?

Likewise, on the other end of the career path, a large number of charter school principals plan to leave their current position but as the findings state, remain in the field of education. A majority of leaders are planning to remain in educational leadership at the district or state level, but where do they go? Exiting charter school leaders bring valuable experiences and knowledge to their next position. How can educators tap into this resource and best utilize their talents and expertise?

Another area of interest includes defining the career path of charter school principals. With 36% of responding principals being the founder of the school and 24% being personally contacted by the governing board, how are positions posted and the pool

of candidates defined? Research has shown building principals of charter schools have experience as teachers and principals in both charter schools and public schools. Knowing the background, experiences, and career path of current building principals may help define the pool of future leaders.

In addition, this pool of future charter school leaders may be changing. As public schools continue consolidation efforts during times of difficult budgets and scarce resources, public school leaders may need to broaden their scope of leading schools outside the public arena. Traditionally educated public school leaders may need to expand their knowledge and vision to include charter schools as a career choice in educational leadership.

Preparation programs for charter school leaders are also recommended for future studies. To best prepare these leaders for the demands and challenges of today, there is a need to evaluate the coursework and success of preparation programs using multiple measures including feedback from graduates.

One unanticipated finding from this study was the dramatically high percentage of female leaders in New York's charter schools. New York State had many more female building leaders in charter schools as compared to public schools and compared to the national data on charter school leaders. The role of female leadership is certainly an area worthy of further exploration.

From challenges in this study accessing information on public school leaders, a recommendation is suggested for the New York State Education Department on maximizing access and ease to data collected on school leaders.

This exploratory study was just the beginning to understanding the charter school principal in New York State. More research is needed in order to truly understand their role, the challenges they face, and how to support these important leaders. Future studies on charter school leadership may include the following:

- job description of the charter school leader
- time spent on tasks of the charter school leader to better understand needs and challenges principals face on a daily basis
- trend of increased diversity of the charter school leader, including a closer look at urban areas
- qualifications/hiring process at both the state and local level
- succession planning for the building leader
- attitudes of public school leaders towards charter school leaders
- career path of charter school principals to include a broader range of experiences in public, private, charter school, and non-educational settings. Educational experiences to include additional positions such as school counselor, psychologist, and retired.
- comparison of the charter school principal to the public school superintendent including responsibilities to Board and staff

Beyond the lens of charter school leadership, there is also a need to learn more about these schools through additional research on charter school students, teachers, governing boards and academic programs. Suggested areas for further studies include:

- history of individual charter schools in New York State including application process, state approval, opening dates, and longevity of school
- profiling the charter school student including demographics, academic growth and educational K-12 path including transitions before or after the charter school
- profiling the charter school teacher including demographics, career path and longevity

- academic success of charter schools and how success is defined and measured
- academic programs of charter schools in comparison with public schools
- governing boards of charter schools in comparison to public schools including selection process, membership roles, and local politics
- charter school improvement plans and closures, including why schools close
- impact of charter schools on their local district including areas of financing/budget, local politics, transportation, student enrollment, transition planning, and accountability

Over the past 13 years, charter schools have made a footprint in the landscape of public education in New York State. From recent legislation and support at both the national and state level these schools are likely to increase and multiply. With the building leader being the catalyst for school success, sustainability and student achievement, information is needed to better understand this important and valuable role. It is time to understand and support the needs of these school leaders for the thousands of children who will be educated through this alternative approach to education.

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Appendix A

The Profile of the New York State Charter School Principal
Survey Questions

School and Director's Background

1. In what year did this school start providing instruction as a public charter school?

1999		2005	
2000		2006	
2001		2007	
2002		2008	
2003		2009	
2004		2010	

2. Is this charter school a newly created school or was it a type of pre-existing school?

Check all that apply

A newly created school	
A pre-existing public school	
A pre-existing private school	
Don't know	
Other (List):	

3. Since this school opened or converted to a charter school how many principals/directors has it had, including you?

Total Number of Number of Principals/Directors	Select one
1	
2 - 3	
4 - 5	
6 or more	

4. What is your formal title in your school (e.g., Director, Head of School, Principal, etc)?

Title	Select one
Principal	
Director	
Head of School	
Other: (Please list)	

5. Including this school year, (2010-2011), how many years have you served as the principal for THIS school?

Years of service at current school	select one
1-2	
3-5	
6-8	
9 or more	

6. Including this school year (2010-2011), how many years have you served as the director for THIS OR ANY OTHER school (including charter, public or private schools)?

Total years of service for all schools	select one
1-2	
3-5	
6-8	
9 or more	

7. In Column A indicate your most recent professional position prior to your current position. In Column B indicate all other professional positions you have held.

	A Most recent position (select one)	B All other positions (check all that apply)
Principal of traditional public school		
Principal/Director of another charter school		
Assistant principal or other administrator in a traditional public school		
Assistant principal/director or other administrator in THIS charter school		
Assistant principal/director or other administrator in another charter school		
Teacher in a traditional public school		
Teacher in THIS charter school		
Teacher in another charter school		
Worked in or led a community-based non-profit		
Worked in or led a business		
Self-employed		
Other (List):		

8. What is the highest degree you have earned?

Select one

High school diploma	
Associate Degree	
Bachelor's Degree	
Master's Degree	
Master's Degree + 30 credits	
PhD	
EdD	
Law Degree (JD)	
Other (List):	

9. In what field did you earn this highest degree?

Select one

Education	
Business	
Humanities (e.g. History, English, Fine Arts)	
Social Science (e.g. Economics, Political Science, Psychology)	
Science (e.g. Biology, Chemistry, Medicine)	
Other (List):	

10. What New York State administrative certificate do you hold?

Check one

School Building Leader (SBL)	
School District Leader (SDL)	
School Administrator and Supervisor (SAS)	
School District Administrator (SDA)	
School Business Administrator (SBA)	
None of the above, certification is from another state	
No certification held	
Other:	

11. Have you ever taken any university or college courses in the following areas?

Check all that apply

Education Leadership	
Curriculum and Instruction	
Education Law	
Non-Profit Management	
Business Management	
Child Development	
Other (List):	

12. Have you ever taken any courses from the following leadership programs?

Check all that apply

Achievement First	
Uncommon Schools	
KIPP Leadership Training	
Edison Leadership Training	
Arizona University- LEE Program	
Other (list name of program):	

13. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about how your prior experience and training prepared you for your current position?

Statements about prior experience and training	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Experience
Your experience or training in financial management prepared you for your current position.					
Your experience or training in organizational management prepared you for your current position.					
Your experience or training in curriculum and instruction prepared you for your current position.					
Your experience or training in non-profit fundraising prepared you for your current position.					
Your experience or training in local politics or community organizations prepared you for your current position.					
Your experience living in this school's community prepared you for your current position.					

14. (Based on your experience and training) How confident do you feel in the your ability to perform each of the following tasks effectively?

Your confidence in your ability to perform tasks:	Very Confident	Mostly Confident	Slightly Confident	Not at all Confident	Does Not Apply
Engage staff to work toward a common vision					
Engage parents to work toward a common vision					
Attract talented teachers					
Retrain talented teachers					
Develop a talented faculty					
Develop leadership within the school					
Delegate or share responsibility					
Lead school-wide literacy and math initiatives					
Facilitate staff to work toward whole school improvement					
Implement a long-range strategic plan					
Manage budget, aligning resources with instructional improvement					
Manage school operations effectively					
Foster a safe, student centered learning environment					
Establish high expectations for students					
Seek critical feedback from peers					

15. How did you find out about your current position at your school?

Check all that apply

Read a classified advertisement	
Worked in the school when the position became available	
Personally contacted by the board or former director	
Personally contacted by other charter school staff	
Personally contacted by community members	
Contacted by a recruiter	
Founded the school	
Other (Describe):	

16. Have you ever received training specific to this school's education programs?

Yes (Continue with question 15a)	
No (Go to question 16)	

16a. Were you:

Check all that apply

Trained by an Educational Management Organization (EMO) or Charter Management Organization (CMO)?	
Trained by a national or regional network such as a Comprehensive School Reform model?	
Trained by the charter school authorizer	
Trained by a non-profit partner or community-based organization	
Other (Describe):	

17. How important was each of the following factors in your decision to accept your current position at THIS school?

Factors	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
School mission			
Wanted to lead a charter school			
Type of students served			
Pay and benefits			
Location			
Career advancement within the school			
Seeking a challenge			
Other (List):			

18. What most satisfies you about being principal of this school?

Select one

Your passion for the school mission	
The autonomy you get by leading a charter school	
A commitment to educating the kinds of students served by the school	
The collegiality you experience with school staff	
The location of the school is attractive	
The chance to grow an organization	
Other (Describe):	

19. What is your 2010-2011 salary (excluding benefits)?

Select one

Under \$70,000	
\$70,000- \$75,000	
\$75,000- \$80,000	
\$80,000- \$85,000	
\$85,000 - \$90,000	
\$90,000- \$95,000	
\$95,000- \$100,000	
\$ Over 100,000	

20. Which best describes your contractual work year?

Check one

Ten month employee	
Eleven month employee	
Twelve month employee	

21. How many more years do you hope to be principal at this school?

Select one

0-1 year	
2-4 years	
5-7 years	
8 or more	

22. If/when you leave your current position, what do you expect to do?

Select one

Work as a director in another charter school	
Work as a principal in a traditional public school	
Work as a teacher in this or another school	
Work in education administration at the district or state level	
Continue to work, but leave the field of education	
Retire	
Other (Describe):	

Demographic Information

23. What is your age?

Younger than 30	
31-35	
36-40	
41-45	
46-50	
51-55	
56-60	
Older than 60	

24. Are you a male or female?

Check one

Male	
Female	

25. Which best describes you?

Check all that apply

White	
Black or African American	
Asian	
American Indian or Alaska Native	
Hispanic or Latino	
Other (List):	

26. What is your building enrollment?

Check one

Less than 200 students	
200-250 students	
250-300 students	
300-350 students	
350-400 students	
400 or more students	

27. What is your current marital status?

Check one

Single	
Married	
Divorced/ Separated	
Widowed	

28. In what type of district (NYSED designation) are you a principal?

Check one

Rural	
Suburban	
Small city	
Large city	

29. Where is your school located in New York?

Check one

New York City	
New York State, excluding New York City	

Appendix B

Invitation to Participate

Dear Participant,

You are being asked to participate in a research project entitled: **Profile of the New York State Charter School Principal: Demographics, Education, and Experience.**

My name is Beth Bini and I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership Program at the Sage Colleges in Albany, New York. I am currently conducting a study on the demographic and background characteristics of charter school principals in New York State. This study is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Ann Myers, Assistant Professor in Educational Leadership at The Sage Colleges, Graduate School in Albany, New York.

Your contribution to the research will create a descriptive picture of the charter school leader. This information will serve as a baseline for increasing our understanding of those serving in this position. Your responses will be compared with public school leaders in New York as well as with charter school leaders in other states. It will serve as a historical foundation for future studies on the charter school leader in New York. It will also inform preparation programs designed to serve the growing population of charter school leaders.

The research will be conducted through a twenty nine-question survey and should take less than 15 minutes to complete. Please note that your participation in this study is voluntary and all responses in the survey will be anonymous. No names or identifying information will be associated with the data. Participants may withdraw at any time. A password protected search engine will protect anonymity.

By completing the and returning the survey you will be giving informed consent to voluntarily participate in the study. Any questions may be directed to the researcher's attention at binib@sage.edu.

This research has received the approval of The Sage Colleges Institutional Review Board, which functions to insure the protection of the rights of human participants. If you, as a participant, have any complaints about this study, please contact:

Dr. Esther Haskvitz, Interim Dean
Sage Graduate Schools
School of Health Sciences
45 Ferry Street
Troy, New York 12180
518-244-2264
haskve@sage.edu

Appendix C

Permission to use Survey Instrument from Betheny Gross



August 17, 2010

To Whom It May Concern:

I give permission for Beth Bini to use the survey instrument from the 2003-04 and 2007 survey of charter school leaders, which was originally designed and administered by the Center on Reinventing Public Education at the University of Washington. She is free to use individual items or the instrument in its entirety for her own research purposes.

Sincerely,

Betheny Gross
Senior Researcher
Center on Reinventing Public Education

Appendix D

Permission to use Survey Instrument from Dr. Ray O'Connell

From: Ray O'Connell
Date: August 28, 2010
To: Beth Bini
Subject: Permission

Beth,

I am happy to give you permission to use that instrument and any questions from it.

Ray O'Connell

Original E-mail

From: Beth Bini <binib@sage.edu>
Date: 08/28/2010 08:44 AM
To: Raymond O'Connell <oconnr@sage.edu>
Subject: permission to use survey instrument

My name is Beth Bini and I am a doctoral student in the Educational Leadership program at Sage College. My research and study is looking at the professional profile of charter school leaders in New York State. I am writing to ask permission to use the survey instrument, including individual questions, from the 2005 Profile of the New York State Principalship study. My purpose is to compare data on NYS charter school leaders with the data published from your report. Thank you for your time and consideration.