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Principal Leadership and Its Perceived Influence on Teacher Morale in Elementary Schools.

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in Elementary Schools

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this qualitative study was to construct a theoretical framework explaining the connection between principal leadership practices and the phenomenon of teacher morale. The study also focused on principal leadership practices and the perceived effects that style has on how teachers feel about themselves and their jobs. First, a review of extant literature defined what constitutes effective leadership in school related environments. Second, the researcher defined teacher morale, both high and low, and how it relates to work performance. Third, the researcher attempted to explore how teacher morale and the leadership style of their principals relate.

This qualitative study was conducted using interviews of teachers from 7 public elementary schools. Post interview journaling was also conducted by the researcher to capture immediate author perspective. The teachers were interviewed to gain their perceptions of leadership practices that motivate them to enjoy their jobs and work beyond status quo. With information gleaned from teachers, the desired outcome of this research was for principals to self-evaluate their leadership strategies and style and to find importance in building high teacher morale for the betterment of everyone.

The researcher coded transcripts into themes, patterns, and the following theoretical constructs: (a) change, (b) leadership practices, (c) mandated testing, (d) stress, (e) communication, (f) acknowledgment, (g) professionalism (h) identifying with teachers, and (i) building community.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the love of my life, my husband, Morgan Littleford. You are everything to me, Morgan. You always have been. I cannot thank you enough for your patience, encouragement, and selflessness while I plodded along toward this personal goal. You never complained one second about the time this degree took away from our time together. Truly, I love and appreciate you more than I can ever express in words. Thank you for making my life so happy! I love you always!

I would also like to dedicate this study to my three sons, Mo, Lee, and Neill. You were always so kind to ask me about my progress, and seemed so concerned with the amount of time the research was taking. I always wanted to be a good example to you of how important hard work and persistence are to accomplishing what is important to you. Thank you for always making me proud to be your mother. I love you all!

Last, but not least, I would like to dedicate this study to my parents, Len and Jackie Runyan. Thank you both for always being enthusiastic about my life. From the smallest to the greatest of my accomplishments, you have always been excited about whatever I was pursuing. Thank you for your perfect example and continued devotion. I feel so grateful to have you as parents. I love you both!

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"If you want to build a ship, don't herd people together to collect wood and don't assign them

tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea"

--Antoine de Saint-Exupery (Vision Quotes, 2007, n.p.).

Principals have a lengthy job description that revolves around parents, students, staff, and

teachers. Vodicka (2006) described the complexity of a principal's job description:

> School leaders are constantly being given direction and suggestions for how to best
> improve their leadership practice, parent and community involvement, staff morale,
> school effectiveness, and student learning--and the sheer number, span, and volume of
> the information can be bewildering. (p. 27)

The responsibilities of the principal are vast and vary from staying up-to-date with educational

trends to mopping up spills in the cafeteria. Budget planning, instructional knowledge, and

teacher evaluations are only a few of the important tasks that elementary school principals

encounter. Keeping teachers motivated and enthusiastic about their job is another important task

for principals (Whitaker, 1999). Thompson (1996), author of *Motivating Others*, stated, "The

principal is not only responsible for self-motivation, but, more importantly, is held accountable

for the motivation of the school staff and even students" (p. 3). Self-motivation is intermittent

and ebbs and flows with each passing day. A true leader is continually lifting up employees

participating in their day-to-day grind in order to help them do the best job possible. Thompson

(1996) pointed out, "Principals who are effective 'motivators' create other conditions which

satisfy the needs of individuals within the school" (p. 5). Principals also celebrate teachers'

achievements knowing that school success depends on the hard work of the teachers employed

there. Rye (1998) said it best in his book, *1001 Ways to Inspire Your Organization, Your Team,*

and Yourself:

> The potential power of motivation is an amazing thing. You can only achieve
> sustained productivity by applying legitimate ongoing motivational techniques. If

you remove the element of motivation, people will lose their drive to do anything
but the bare necessities. (p. 75)

The bare necessities translate to status quo and low teacher morale. Baldoni (2005) wrote,

"Leadership involves people, and people have a multiplicity of needs, physical, emotional, and

spiritual. A compassionate leader understands the complexity of the human psyche as well as the

forces acting upon us from work, family, and community" (p. 33). Teaching is a stressful

profession. Principals who view teachers as part of their school family will work to provide a

positive and communal ambiance for all. Wilson (2005), author of *Quick Ideas to Inspire Your*

Staff, said, "Leadership is about creating the climate or culture where people are inspired from

the inside out" (p. 9). Wilson added, "You can shout you care from the rooftops and you can put

up signs and banners about how much your people matter, but what will inspire them is when

you demonstrate it" (p. 17). Those feel-good emotions seem unimportant when thinking about

test scores and national standards. Nevertheless, inner feelings of happiness and satisfaction can

actually help teachers accomplish more in their day and ultimately work collectively to raise test

scores and achieve state standards. Connors (2000) stated, "The best leaders focus on a climate

where teachers are encouraged to take risks and act as coaches – guiding students through

journeys of success" (p. 13).

Morale was defined in the *American Heritage College Dictionary* (2004) as "the state of

the spirits of a person or group as exhibited by confidence, cheerfulness, discipline, and

willingness to perform assigned tasks" (p. 904). The *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*

(2003) included the following in regards to morale: "a sense of common purpose with respect to

a group; esprit de corps; the level of individual psychological well-being based on such factors as

a sense of purpose and confidence in the future (p. 807). Related stress from workload and

expectations in the *No Child Left Behind* Act of 2001 could lead to low teacher morale (NCLB,

2006). In addition, success among students grows slowly. Teachers often do not see the benefits

of their work until years later, causing them to wonder if the efforts they make are worthwhile.

Low teacher morale can lead to health issues, negativity, and absenteeism. Wood and McCarthy

(2002) reviewed studies by several researchers and reported the following as being early symptoms of teachers' stress and burnout:

> Feelings like not going to work or actually missing days; feeling overwhelmed by the workload and having a related sense of inadequacy to the tasks given to them; having a general feeling of irritation regarding school; experiencing insomnia, digestive disorders, headaches, and heart palpitations. (p. 4)

High teacher morale, on the other hand, occurs when the work environment is optimistic and teachers feel they have a purposeful job. These positive feelings are encouraged and promoted through principals' leadership. When teachers feel enthusiastic about their purpose, they become more productive, set higher standards, and perform better resulting in higher achievement for the students. Absenteeism from work and negativity among colleagues is diminished (Wood & McCarthy, 2002). State mandated testing as required in the federal *No Child Left Behind* Act (NCLB, 2006), signed into law by President Bush in 2002, has put added pressure and stress on teachers to ensure success of their students regardless of limitations of the populations they teach. Principals, too, are affected by published reports of their schools' academic progress. Thus, the importance and urgency of accountability has been causing morale in schools to decline.

Statement of Intent

The intent of this study was to explore the extent to which principal leadership practices influence teacher morale. The intent of the study was to gather data on the topic of morale from a teacher's perspective at seven elementary schools in one school district located in southern Appalachia.

Research Questions

The central research questions addressed in this qualitative study were:

1. From a teacher's perspective, what principal leadership styles have a positive influence on teacher morale?

2. From a teacher's perspective, what principal leadership styles have a negative influence on teacher morale?

3. In what ways does the influence of principal leadership on teacher morale explain teachers' work performance, physical health, and student achievement?

4. What lessons can be learned about the connection between principal leadership and teacher morale from this study?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to construct a theoretical framework explaining the connection between principal leadership practices and the phenomenon of teacher morale. The researcher is a teacher advocate and desires to be an elementary school principal in the near future. Having taught for over 25 years, and under the leadership of five different principals, the researcher has experienced, first-hand, the highs and lows of teacher morale. Principal leadership has been a defining factor in determining the direction of morale. The theory developed in this study provided an explanation of specific leadership behaviors and how they influenced teachers' work performance, physical health, and student achievement as well as the overall climate of the school.

Significance of the Study

Elementary school principals have the daily responsibilities of dealing with discipline, disgruntled parents, and the physical plant in which they work. Their job responsibilities also include strategies to increase test scores and assure parents and the district that all students enrolled are making progress and achieving sound learning. The principal's day is so packed

with incidents that he or she often neglects the very people who bring instruction and learning to the school--the teachers.

The teachers are also under day-to-day pressure to stay motivated about their profession in a time when the teaching profession is at a national low. They know they must not veer away from academics in order for 100% of their students to become proficient in each tested subject for *No Child Left Behind*. Learning disabled students, English Language Learner students, and all children despite their intelligence or socioeconomic status must become proficient in math, reading, language, and eventually social studies and science. Those teachers whose students are nonproficient have their names publicized and their teaching scrutinized because their students are not succeeding. According to test results, pressure to excel is immense and teachers' morale is slowly declining.

Principals' leadership practices can help teachers feel better about the jobs they are doing and decrease the chances of teacher burnout and job related stress. According to Wood and McCarthy (2002), "When work stress results in teacher burnout, it can have serious consequences for the health and happiness of teachers, and also the students, professionals, and families they interact with on a daily basis" (p. 1). A study of this nature might help teachers to remain in their jobs, be more effective in their teaching practices, and find enjoyment within the schools where they are employed. Having active principal support should lead to positive attitudes, less stress, and eventually, happier students.

Perspective of the Researcher

In my 25-year teaching career, I have taught with five principals--each with his or her individual leadership style. All but one succeeded in providing direction, support, encouragement, and intrinsic motivation. In my teaching assignment where the principal leadership was poor, the teachers felt no support from the administration and were often pitted against each other when differing opinions surfaced. This leader was a good person but not a good leader. This principal, if asked, would have thought the leadership exhibited was beyond sufficient and perhaps

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excellent. In reality, the overall climate was negative and stagnant while productivity was status quo. There was no camaraderie and everyone simply did his or her job and went home. The morale was low but the teachers worked very hard to keep their disappointments away from the children and their academic achievement. The school lost two to three teachers per year who transferred for a better job situation in another school. The principals, in my opinion, who succeeded in keeping morale high, were the ones who had high expectations for the school but lead with compassion and communicated concern for stress that teachers experience on a daily basis. Those principals were visible during the day to help defuse small problems and available after school with a listening ear to hear concerns of teachers and parents. They were servant leaders whose priorities were the children, teachers, and families of their learning community. They were selfless, trustworthy, and passionate for education. I would like to conclude my professional career as an elementary school principal; therefore, I feel personally responsible to let other principals know how important their leadership practices are. With a few humanistic considerations from the principal, the teachers can bloom and accomplish great things for the students and the school. By interviewing the teachers about what makes them motivated to do their best, their stories can be told. I worked together with those interviewed to understand the phenomenon of teacher morale. I made every effort, however, not to let my personal feelings be known so that I did not influence those in the research study.

Scope of the Study

In this grounded theory study, the researcher interviewed 14 classroom elementary school teachers to explore the relationship between principal leadership and teacher morale. All teachers interviewed were from seven elementary schools located in one school district in southern Appalachia.

Internal and External Validity

The grounded theory developed in this study has emerged from interviews with a purposeful selection of teachers from seven different elementary schools. Considering the researcher was a teacher in the same school system and was part of the instrumentation, the teachers might have felt reluctant to reveal all feelings about their principal's leadership practices to this researcher. Therefore, to improve the internal and external validity of the study, member checking was used to assure accuracy of participants' viewpoints. In addition, an external auditor who was IRB certified and versed in qualitative research was used to analyze and review this study. Finally, the researcher triangulated the data by interviewing teachers at seven elementary schools.

Definitions of Terms

1. *Principal*: The person who is the administrative head of a school.
2. *Teacher*: A person employed to deliver skills and learning experiences to students in a school setting. This person holds a certificate to teach within the state of Tennessee.
3. *Leadership*: "Leadership is communicating to people their worth and potential so clearly that they come to see it in themselves" (Covey, 2004, p. 98).
4. *Change*: "To make or become different; alter; vary; to exchange or substitute one thing for another" (*Harcourt Brace School Dictionary*, 1972, p. 171).
5. *Climate*: The attitude or atmosphere of an organization.
6. *Culture*: "The complex pattern of norms, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, values, ceremonies, traditions, and myths that are deeply ingrained in the very core of the organization" (Barth, 2001, p. 8).
7. *Morale*: "The state of the spirits of a person or group as exhibited by confidence, cheerfulness, discipline, and willingness to perform assigned tasks" (*American Heritage College Dictionary*, 2004, p. 904).
8. *Burnout*: "Loss of idealism and enthusiasm for work" (Wood & McCarthy, 2002, p.1).

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9. *Motivation*: "Motivation makes it possible to accomplish what you should accomplish" (Maxwell & Parrott, 2005, p. 16).

10. *Organization*: "An organization is made up of individuals who have relationship and shared vision" (Covey, 2004, p. 99).

11. *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*: "A landmark in education reform designed to improve student achievement and change the culture of America's schools. It is built on four common-sense pillars: accountability for results; an emphasis on doing what works based on scientific research; expanded parental options; and expanded local control and flexibility"(U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

12. *Status Quo*: "The existing state of affairs" (*Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 2003, p. 1220).

13. *Synergy*: "The result of interactions that make the whole greater than the sum of its parts. Members of a team accomplish more together than they would separately" (Bruce & Pepitone, 1999, p. 140).

14. *Leadership Style*: "Leaders carry out their roles in a wide variety of styles, e.g., autocratic, democratic, participatory, laissez-faire, etc. Often the leadership style depends on the situation, including the life cycle of the organization" (McNamara, 2007, p. 2).

Organization of the Study

This study contains five chapters. The first chapter included an introduction to the study, statement of intent, research questions, purpose of the study, significance of the study, perspective of the researcher, scope of the study, internal and external validity, and definitions of terms pertinent to the study. Chapter 2 contains a review of the related literature. Chapter 3 introduces the methodology used to examine the phenomenology of perceived leadership influence on teacher morale. Chapter 4 contains the data collection and findings and Chapter 5 provides the conclusion and summarization of this study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Elementary school principals' everyday responsibilities have increased greatly over the past several years. With mandates from the *No Child Left Behind* Act of 2001 and state required standards and testing, the principal must sometimes question his or her decision to be the administrative head of a school. Pierce (2000) stated, "In this year of accountability and high stakes testing, raising achievement scores is just one of the challenges confronting today's 'super principals'" (p. 1). In conjunction with accountability, today's principals are expected to have an open-door policy for any parent, teacher, child, or custodian who seems to have a need. There is no denying that the workload for principals has expanded and deepened. "The typical elementary school principal works between 50 and 70 hours a week, including evenings and weekends" (Pierce, p. 1). In an article written for *Kappan* magazine, former elementary school principal Marshall (2003) described his feelings perfectly concerning his job time constraints as principal of an elementary school:

> I was constantly swamped by over-the-transom demands on my time – a weeping girl with a splinter under her fingernail, a fight in the cafeteria, a teacher going through a personal crisis, a dog sneaking into the school, a parent cursing seizure, the laminating machine grabbing the end of my favorite tie, a call from central office in support of that angry parent, a delivery from a trucker who refused to lift anything, and more. (p. 1)

With all the responsibilities and tasks an elementary school principal must accomplish, he or she sometimes has neglected the backbone and essential element in a child's learning day--the teacher. Effective leaders should applaud, assist, collaborate, communicate with, and appreciate their most valued investment despite their increase in job responsibilities. Rye (1998) stated, "Leadership is not about pretending to have all the answers but about having the courage to search with others to discover solutions" (p. 5). According to Owens (2004), Erving Goffman, in 1959, analyzed the interpersonal behavior of people in organizations and drew a useful analogy between real-life situations and the unfolding of a play on the stage, stating, "Each actor must

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interpret his or her role, and this interpretation depends to some extent on what the individual brings to the role" (p. 125). This role-playing could help those involved better understand organizational behavior and the behavior of each individual involved. Principals might feel role conflict when they "zealously attempt to build trust, confidence, and high morale in the teaching staff and then are required to conduct a formal evaluation or to participate in a grievance procedure that seems to be in conflict with those goals"(Owens, p. 127). Successful principals must play the roles of mentor, confidant, colleague, and overall role model.

Smith and Andrews (1989) suggested, "The principal's leadership behavior is shaped by perceptions of how other people want the leader to behave. A sensitive principal soon learns to recognize and respond to these role expectations" (pp. 5-6). Elementary school principals who operated their schools caringly and compassionately found their teachers had high morale and created an enjoyable atmosphere for all to learn and work. People who feel valued in the work place strive to better the climate and culture of the organization as a whole. Daniels and Daniels (2007) stated:

> All men and women are social creatures who require personal contacts with others to function effectively. When they cannot find meaningful relationships in one person or one group, they seek it in other places. People focus on the relationships that provide meaning to their efforts. Most employee failure is not so much a failure of the individual as a person as it is a failure of the individual to find the necessary support and training from relationships at work. (p. 169)

Elementary school principals who have fallen short in the humanistic side of leadership have shortchanged the overall education that the school is obligated to provide.

Teaching is a unique profession. Teachers have been often isolated in their day-to-day job of instructing students. They have been charged with raising standardized test scores while gaining more and more pupils of varying levels every year. Their job description has been daunting and their responsibilities immense. Without principals' acknowledgment and support, teachers might find the stress of the job outweighs the benefits. Draper (2001) explained, "The keys to success are not necessarily the keys to knowledge and facts and data, but those that open doors of understanding, love, and the passion for teaching" (p. 90). Leaders can help foster that

love of teaching through encouragement, shared decision-making, and support. Draper

expounded from a teacher's perspective:

> As teachers, we tread upon a rocky path. Pebbles of limitations, restrictions, and
> regulations get between our toes, stones of apathy, failure, and futility trip us and make us
> fall, and huge boulders of violence, prejudice, and inequity block the path completely,
> making some of us sit down and give up or turn around and go in the other direction.
> However, the same pebbles and stones that cause one person to fall can be used by
> another to build a great cathedral. (p. 57)

Principals who have exhibited professional openness and interpersonal support found that

support to be reciprocated among individuals in the school causing a depth of connectedness that

leads to success. According to Tracy (1995), "When you express respect or admiration for

another person, he or she feels respect and admiration for you. In human relations, we call this

the Principle of Reciprocity" (p. 261). Maxwell (2002a) stated, "Relationships cause people to

want to be with you, but respect causes them to want to be empowered by you. Mutual respect is

essential to the empowerment process" (p. 88).

Chapter 2 contains a review of the related literature regarding effective principal

leadership practices, teacher morale, and how they interconnect. The chapter is divided into the

following sections: (a) defining principal leadership, (b) principal standards, (c) defining morale,

(d) high and low teacher morale, (e) data on morale, (f) successful leadership practices that

influence teacher morale, (g) change, (h) qualitative research, (i) grounded theory, and (j) a

summary.

Definition of Principal Leadership

According to Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002), the best leadership involves bringing

out the best in those being led:

> The primal leadership model builds on links to neurology. Breakthroughs in brain
> research show why leaders' moods and actions have enormous impact on those they lead,
> and shed fresh light on the power of emotionally intelligent leadership to inspire, arouse
> passion and enthusiasm, and keep people motivated and committed. (pp. ix-x)

Goleman et al. listed competencies to help leaders self-evaluate: (a) emotional self-awareness, (b) accurate self-awareness, (c) self-confidence, (d) self-control, (e) adaptability, (f) achievement, (g) initiative, (h) optimism, (i) empathy, (j) organizational awareness, (k) service, (l) inspiration, (m) influence, (n) developing others, (o) change catalyst, (p) conflict management, (q) teamwork, and (r) collaboration (pp. 253-256). Leaders who self-critique have been better able to help those who follow. They model work behavior they hope to see from their staff. Spitzer (2000) stated:

> Leaders determine whether the organization is capable of rapid change, innovation, reasonable risk-taking, self-motivated quality improvement, and the actualization of opportunity. Leaders who concentrate on the product and process components of quality, but virtually ignore the people component will drive not only work, but people into the ground. They will stifle spirit, common cause, co-participation, individual efficacy, team efficacy, and the actualization of opportunity. (p. 13)

Thus, the beliefs, values, and opinions of those being led help define leadership. Thompson (1996) said, "Leadership traits that consist of trust, friendship, interest, and respect toward teachers is the affective side of leaders' behavior" (p. 150). Daniels and Daniels (2007) added, "Good leaders build relationships such that the followers are willing to confide in them" (p. 171).

At a very fundamental level of school leadership, the principal has been described as "an individual in a school who is responsible for the work performance of one or more other persons" (Lunenberg, 1995, p. 3). Lunenberg added, "The principal's job is to help the school achieve a high level of performance through the utilization of its human and material resources" (p. 3). Managerial skills, technical skills, and human skills have been necessary for effective leadership; however, recently, researchers have placed an emphasis on the humanistic side of school leadership. Robbins and Alvy (1995) pointed out, "Displaying effective human relations is a key to leadership on every level. It is a thread that runs throughout the organization and affects the culture, climate, personnel practices, and every individual who has contact with the school" (p. 43). Principals who balance managing the office, stressing achievement while maintaining positive relations with staff, teachers, parents, and children, have been viewed as successful, effective leaders.

According to Owens (2004), James McGregor Burns in 1978 and Bernard Bass in 1981 compared transactional leadership management style to that of the transformational leadership style. Owens stated, "Transactional educational leaders can and do offer jobs, security, tenure, favorable ratings, and more in exchange for the support, cooperation, and compliance of followers" (p. 269). The expertise of transactional leaders has been managerial in nature. Owens described them as organized taskmasters who completed the to-do list without striving to motivate others. They were characteristically doers not motivators. According to Owens, it is a style of leadership that works in completing tasks without the added component of creating more effective people. On the other hand, Owens described, "The transformational leader looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower" (p. 269). Transformational principals are in continuous pursuit of three fundamental goals: (a) maintaining a collaborative culture, (b) fostering teacher development, and (c) improving group problem solving (Lunenburg, 1995, p. 110). Transformational principals have motivated their teachers and helped them believe in themselves. They inspired others to do their best and this caused an impact on the organization as a whole (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) stated, "Successful principals recall the hopes, dreams, frustrations, and aspirations they had when they were teacher leaders and capitalize on the teacher leadership in their schools to accomplish their goals" (p. 83).

Drake and Roe (1986) defined leadership as "a planned process of interaction in a social setting, whereby goals that are mutually satisfying to the school organization and to the individuals in the school are established and means developed to achieve them" (p. 122). Successful, effective leaders have conquered achievement goals for their schools because they took care of the people accountable for learning--the teachers--and all involved in the school performed at higher levels. The goal has been to have successful schools encompass the leader and the individuals involved. The principal must also be honest about personal strengths and weaknesses and possess willingness to compromise when necessary. The effective principal should combine strategies to improve teaching and learning while compassionately nurturing

those employed in the school. In 2003, a study was conducted by a task force of the American Educational Research Association to promote high-quality research in educational leadership (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). The study focused on successful leadership practices and their importance to educational organizations. Leithwood and Riehl, authors of the study, discovered three categories of leadership practices that influenced school success: "setting direction, developing people, and developing the organization" (p. 3). Without high teacher morale, reaching for ambitious goals has been nonexistent. Leithwood and Riehl stated, "Effective school leaders set examples for staff and others to follow that are consistent with the school's values and goals" (p. 4). According to Beck (2004), "Exceptional leadership is about relating to people in such a way as to inspire them to give their best effort – for themselves, their organization, their community, their family and their world" (p. 3). Working hard and modeling enthusiasm for school growth has been shown to inspire others to do the same: "By modeling desired dispositions and actions, leaders enhance others' beliefs about their own capacities and their enthusiasm for change" (Beck, p. 4). Not only did they set direction for those involved in the teaching and learning process, "effective educational leaders [also] influenced the development of human resources in their schools" (Beck, p. 4). Simple actions by the principal such as smiling and asking about family matters could make a teacher feel encouragement and a deeper connection to the school community as a whole. They could become a school family by celebrating successes and working toward a common goal. Successful principals "show respect for staff and concern about their feelings and needs" (Beck, p. 4). When teachers feel support and respect, their desire to please and attain success has been elevated, creating a win-win situation for everyone involved in the school. Barth (2001) agreed, "Through their day-to-day actions, principals build the culture of their schools" (p. l06). The overall culture and climate of the school is positive and productive when the leadership is directional, hard working, and compassionate.

As reported in Owen (2004), theorist Douglas McGregor developed a trait theory that spoke to the culture of an organization based upon the leaders' beliefs about individuals working in that organization. Theory X postulated that a person was naturally lazy and disliked work.

Theory Y assumed that people were self-directed, self-controlled, and committed to the objectives of the organization. When principals practiced Theory X, they indicated behaviors that collaborative, participative decision-making was "a nice ideal in the abstract but not very practical in the real world" (Owen, p. 114). Administrators who held theory Y to be true practiced trusting and respecting employees. When employees felt respect and trust from administrators, they worked independently to make improvements and accomplishments for the entire school.

Principal Performance Standards

ISLLC Standards

According to Leithwood and Riehl (2003), the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards are principles for school leadership developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers (1996) in collaboration with the National Policy Board on Educational Administration. The standards have outlined values and behaviors for administrators to exhibit in order to be successful leaders who accomplish goals for their schools, the students, and the individuals employed there. Leithwood and Riehl explained, "ISLLC standards represent a 'best-practice' approach based on the judgment of experienced practitioners and knowledgeable observers" (p. 3). These standards are guidelines for existing and future principals. There are six standards for administrators to follow with each standard divided into three categories: the knowledge required for the standard, the dispositions or attitudes by the accomplishment of the standard, and the performances observed when an administrator is accomplished in the standard (Leithwood & Riehl, p. 1). The standards are comprehensive and have addressed many of the values that could heighten the culture and climate of a school when the administrator demonstrates these principles. In the Performance section of Standard 2 it was stated, "All individuals are treated with fairness, dignity, and respect" as well as "Student and staff accomplishments are recognized and celebrated" (Leithwood & Riehl, p. 3). Small, respectful acknowledgments have been shown to brighten individuals' attitudes toward work and each

other. Under the Performance section of Standard 3 it was stated, "Stakeholders are involved in decisions affecting schools" and "Responsibility is shared to maximize ownership and accountability" (Leithwood & Riehl, p. 4). When teachers were part of the decision-making process, they seemed to feel valued and needed beyond the goals set for their classrooms. They worked collectively creating a teamwork atmosphere and joined efforts to accomplish the school's goals together. Standard 5 also addressed integrity and fairness principles that called for the administrator to "demonstrate values, beliefs, and attitudes that inspire others to higher levels of performance" (Leithwood & Riehl, p. 6). Principals who personally possessed high expectations inspired others to also set high goals to be accomplished. Periodically reviewing these standards would be a good self-evaluation for principals at any level of education. Although most of the standards related to achievement, supporting and developing the people in the organization could also be viewed as a prerequisite. Successful, effective leaders have conquered achievement goals for their schools because they took care of the people accountable for learning--the teachers; therefore, all involved in the school performed at higher levels (Florida Gulf Coast University, 2006).

NAESP Standards

The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) (2001) also has guidelines and standards for administrators to follow in order to be effective principals. The NAESP merged their standards with "Standards for Quality Elementary and Middle Schools Proficiencies for Principals," into a new guide, *Leading Learning Communities: NAESP: Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able to Do* (National Association of Elementary School Principals, p. 2). They maintained schools could not be first-rate unless the leadership was first-rate. These standards placed principals at the center of the teaching and learning of the school community. For example, Standard 2 stated, "set high expectations for the performance of all students and adults" (National Association of Elementary School Principals, p. 3). Everyone in the school community such as the principal, teachers, students, and parents was

responsible for setting high performance goals. Standard 6 also addressed the commitment of everyone by stating, "Actively engage the community to create shared responsibility for student and school success" (National Association of Elementary School Principals, p. 3). The Leading Learning Communities then suggested strategies for accomplishing these standards.

SREB Standards

The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) (2007) School Leadership Initiative has another set of standards to improve the preparation and development of leaders. According to the Southern Regional Education Board, "The State Leadership Academy Network pulls together the work of school districts and six leadership academies to address how school leaders are tapped, trained, certified, and supported as schools teams work to improve learning and student achievement" (p. 3). They have Critical Success Factors for Leaders such as "understanding self and others, modeling and encouraging creativity, and communicating effectively" (p. 4). When principals have put these standards and the others mentioned into daily practice, all stakeholders, not only the teachers, have worked toward the same goal of improving student learning while supporting all those involved.

Definitions of Teacher Morale

Morale was defined in the *American Heritage College Dictionary* (2004) as "the state of the spirits of a person or group as exhibited by confidence, cheerfulness, discipline, and willingness to perform assigned tasks" (p. 904). Morale has involved qualities such as psychological well being, usefulness, self-confidence, and purpose. When applied to a school setting, an individual's morale has affected the group's feelings of happiness and zeal. Morale has been important for understanding work-related stress and absenteeism when low, and job productivity and collegiality when morale was high. In a school setting, these descriptive words could be used to define teachers and principals alike. Morale involves emotions, feelings (real or imagined), temperament, and mood. There is a passion for education that has been fed by the

morale of the individuals employed. Morale might be defined as "the feeling a worker has about his job based on how the worker perceives himself in the organization and the extent to which the organization is viewed as meeting the worker's own needs and expectations" (Washington & Watson, 1976, p. 3). According to Whittaker (1999), the morale of an individual teacher is fed by the stress of the job and the people with whom he or she comes in contact. The principal feeds the morale of the teachers and the teachers then pass their feelings, emotions, and mood onto the students. Whitaker (1999) explained, "Good staff morale and school climate are essential to a productive and essential school" (p. 8). Goleman (2007) stated:

> When people in an organization feel angry and distressed, a leader can at least listen with empathy, show concern, and make a goodwill effort to change things for the better. Whether or not that effort solves the problem, it does some good emotionally. By attending to someone's feelings, the leader helps metabolize them, so the person can move on rather than continuing to seethe (p. 280).

When teachers feel good about themselves and their purpose, they enjoy work and the people with whom they come in contact most--the students. In addition, morale has been related to self-esteem and self-esteem to motivation. Senge (2000) said, "Every school must have, as part of its core purpose, the promotion and development, the care and security--a recognition of the importance of its teachers" (p. 12). Morale is more than a day-to-day attitude; it is a feeling of negativity and bleakness when the morale of a faculty is low, and energized and enthusiastic when morale is high. Although it is an individual phenomenon, the leadership within controls the morale of the complete organization. The principal influences the group as a whole and thus influences the individual; it is reciprocal in nature. Because of the hierarchical position of principals, it is their responsibility to practice ethical, strong, and caring leadership that will foster high morale and lead to student improvement and successful schools (Senge).

High Teacher Morale

The effective principal should promote a positive, productive school organizational climate by fostering high teacher morale. According to Lumsden (1998):

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Teacher morale is higher in schools where principals create a positive school culture and climate. Principals are the key to improving teachers' morale because they control many of the contingencies in the work environment and are the source of much reinforcement for teachers. (p. 39)

When teacher morale was high, teachers built a network of support among each other allowing them to share ideas, communicate, and find humor and harmony in the workday. As cited in Goleman et al. (2002), "A management that encourages teamwork achieves higher performance because of the teamwork itself and because teamwork elevates the spirit, the motivation, and the enthusiasm of employees" (p. 49). According to Covey (1990), when teachers enjoyed their work and their colleagues, they looked forward to going to work and experiencing purposive teaching and learning; goals were accomplished and standards were raised. That excitement level about work could create an energetic, synergistic climate. Covey (1990) defined synergy:

The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. It means that the relationship that the parts have to each other is a part in and of itself. It is not only a part, but the most catalytic, the most empowering, the most unifying, and the most exciting part. (p. 263)

Gardner (2006) stated:

It has been said that relationships are forged, not formed. They require time and common experience. If you have made the effort to connect with people, then by the time you're ready to empower them, your relationship should be solid enough for you to be able to lead them (p. 88).

When principals have trusted faculty to creatively explore new and exciting ways to deliver instruction, the teachers were empowered and excited about the teaching and learning process. When teachers moved creatively away from the status quo, they were energized and frequently shared with colleagues the changes and successes they had experienced. Effective principals should applaud efforts to be creative and acknowledge those who try. According to Covey (1990), "Valuing the differences is the essence of synergy. And the key to valuing those differences is to realize that all people see the world, not as it is, but as they are" (p. 277). Good principals encourage teachers to be innovative and take initiatives to make improvements where needed.

Communication and sincere listening were also leadership skills that promoted high

teacher morale. Protheroe (2006) stated:

> A principal who listens to teachers is better able to identify both the positives and
> negatives in the school environment. What teachers say in one-on-one talks with the
> principal, what issues they bring up in staff meetings, and even snatches of teacher
> conversation heard in hallways provide valuable data for principals interested in keeping
> staff morale high. (p. 1)

Maxwell (1999) said:

> Effective communicators focus on the people with whom they're communicating. If you
> dump a bunch of information on people, you're not communicating. Every time you
> speak to people, give them something to feel, something to remember, and something to
> do. (pp. 26-27)

Lundin, Paul, and Christiansen (2000) discussed the importance of making work enjoyable, light,

and fun in order to inspire employees to enjoy themselves while working, which eventually

would lead to success. According to Lundin et al. (2000), John Christensen along with his

company, ChartHouse, produced a video of workers at the Pike Place Fish Market in Seattle,

Washington to illustrate what happened when one created an atmosphere of high morale for

employees. Their findings were that "Happy people treat others well. Fun leads to creativity,

and time passes quickly" (p. 88). They also found, "Focusing your attention on ways to make

another person's day provides a constant flow of positive feelings" (p. 66). These positive

feelings set the tone for a positive, productive school culture. In addition, Lundin, Christensen,

and Paul (2002) have written additional *Fish!* books, such as *Fish! Tales,* that focused on

boosting morale in the work place. Lundin et al. (2000) listed four suggestions for managers to

follow in order to maximize the effectiveness and satisfaction of employees:

1. Make their day: When you make someone's day (or moment) through a small
   kindness or unforgettable engagement, you can turn even routine encounters into
   special memories.

2. Be there: The glue in our humanity is in being fully present for one another. Being
   there also is a great way to practice wholeheartedness and fight burnout, for it is those
   halfhearted tasks you perform while juggling other things that wear you out.

3. Play: Work made fun gets done especially when we choose to do serious tasks in a lighthearted, spontaneous way. Play is not just an activity; it is a state of mind that brings new energy to the tasks at hand and sparks creative solutions.

4. Choose your attitude: When you look for the worst, you will find it everywhere. When you learn you have the power to choose your response to what life brings, you can look for the best and find opportunities you never imagined possible. If you find yourself with an attitude that is not what you want it to be, you can choose a new one. (p. 78)

Whitaker (1999) stated, "All principals are aware that the students in their schools have individual needs. Great principals are even more aware that their faculty members vary in their individual abilities. Effective principals focus on the people in their schools" (p. 12). Believing in teachers and expressing confidence in their work could lead a school's organization to work together to help students succeed. Connors (2000) maintained that high morale could also translate to a passion for sharing in a vision of achievement for both the students and the school as a whole. Connors stated:

> Great leaders provide authentic praise and work effortlessly to implement, maintain, and sustain a positive morale. A school with esprit de corps is a school of highly engaged, energized, and performing adults that are there for the students. When morale is high, students benefit greatly. You can feel the electricity of a highly energized and professional faculty within minutes of entering the building. (p. 70)

Ellenburg (as cited in Lumsden, 1998) found that where morale was high, schools showed an increase in student achievement. High teacher morale had far reaching implications that affected the positive culture of a school.

Low Teacher Morale

When educators seem to be dissatisfied, unappreciated, undervalued, and overwhelmed at work, they are experiencing low teacher morale. As observed by Connors (2000), when teacher morale is low in a school setting, negativity filters through the culture stagnating progress and eventually student achievement. Low teacher morale is like a cancer that grows slowly over time

when not replaced by healthy optimism. Low morale can lead to stress, burnout, absenteeism, and eventually lower student achievement. Connors (2000) stated:

> It is estimated that billions of dollars are spent each year for costs relating to absenteeism, turnover, and poor job performance. Ultimately, an increase in burnout and stress negatively impacts our most cherished treasures--children. (p. 95)

According to Connors, "Leaders set the tone for dealing with stress. A stressed-out administrator causes stressed-out staff members, who cause stressed-out students, who often times cause stressed-out parents" (p. 95). Connors pointed out that when stress was high, the general attitude of those involved in the school was negative, defensive, and confrontational. Progress was stagnant and the overall climate was depressing. Carnegie and Carnegie (1985) stated, "It is a well-known fact that your emotional attitude usually has far more to do with producing fatigue than has physical exertion" (p. 37) and "Hard work by itself seldom causes fatigue which cannot be cured by a good sleep or rest. Worry, tenseness, and emotional upsets are three of the biggest causes of fatigue" (p. 39). Continued stress could lead to burnout. Potter (1996) defined burnout as "An impairment of motivation to work, resulting in a growing inability to mobilize interest and abilities" (p. 1). Potter listed six symptoms of job burnout:

1. Negative emotions: People caught in the burnout cycle more and more often until they become chronic.

2. Interpersonal problems: Feeling emotionally drained makes interacting with people on the job and at home more difficult. When inevitable conflicts arise, the burnout victim is likely to overact with an emotional outburst or intense hostility.

3. Health problems: As the person's emotional reserves are depleted and the quality of relationships deteriorates, the burnout victim's physical resilience declines.

4. Declining performance: During the burnout process, the person may become bored and unable to get excited about projects.

5. Substance abuse: To cope with the stress associated with job conflict and declining performance, the person will often consume more alcohol, eat more or eat less, use more drugs, smoke more cigarettes, eat more sweets and drink more coffee.

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6. Feelings of meaninglessness: Feelings of "so what" and "why bother" become more and more predominant. Enthusiasm is replaced by cynicism. (p. 2)

Added responsibilities have been placed on elementary classroom teachers from the federal school reform of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB, 2006). Pressure to have all students proficient and making yearly gains has added to the already high stress responsibility of being accountable for student learning. Knowing that school systems at the district level and principals at the school level have published results of year-end state tests has been enough to make teachers want to quit. Many teachers' classes have been overcrowded, packed with differentiated levels of learning, and sometimes with special-needs students. Because improving student performance is paramount, there has been little room in the students' academic day for creativity or fun. In addition, in order to make student achievement higher, the district office has continually added training in new methodology and teaching strategies while seldom taking away from current teaching responsibilities. According to Fullan (2006):

> In the United States, the overall legislation of *No Child Left Behind* and its associated determination of "adequate yearly progress" errs massively on the too-tight side of the problem. The worse the situation, the more laden you are with standards and tests. It is not that this is bad in and of itself; rather, it is grossly distorted in favor of external accountability while being virtually empty of capacity-building strategies that lead to the intrinsic commitment necessary for continuous improvement. Even with the most beautiful standards in the world, you can end up being all dressed up with somewhere to go but with no means of getting there. (p. 37)

School reform efforts have continued to target the classroom teacher and this focus often leads to low teacher morale. The successes of education come slowly over time, but the negatives associated with teaching can be daily if there are difficult children or parents to deal with. According to Robbins and Alvy (1995):

> One of the difficult aspects of the principal's human relations role is that task and relationship behaviors must be balanced simultaneously. If too much weight is placed on task behaviors as a measure of success, organizational members may feel stressed or pressured. (p. 43)

Goleman et al. (2002) found that people who were stressed produced a hormone called cortisone that interfered with learning, decision-making, and work in general. Effective leaders need to be

cognizant continually of teaching pressures and make efforts, when possible, to lighten the responsibilities and mood.

Data on Morale

In 2005, Sirota, Mischkind, and Meltzer conducted a study on employee enthusiasm and how it affected productivity. With the help of the Sirota Consulting Group, these researchers collected over four million survey responses from employees on their attitudes toward work. According to Sirota et al., "Sirota Consulting's database of responses is extensive and, supplemented by our sources of rich qualitative data, provides insight into what workers want and why smart managers give it to them" (p. xxix). Although this book was written on business leadership practices and employee morale, the correlation to any organization with employees exists. The team collected human research data over a 30-year period to illustrate the effects of employee attitudes on organizational success. Both quantitative and qualitative data were used in this research study. Sirota et al. stated, "Employee morale is a function of the way an organization is led and the way that leadership is translated into daily management practices" (p. 52). According to Goleman et al., their study cited three factors that each individual wants from his or her employment: "equity, achievement, and camaraderie" (p. 9). By equity, they emphasized the importance of "being treated respectfully, having reasonable accommodation made for personal and family needs, having credible and consistent management, and being able to get a fair hearing for complaints" (p. 11). According to Sirota et al., statistical analyses on achievement had six primary sources:

1. challenge of the work itself (the extent to which the job uses an employee's intelligence, abilities, and skills);
2. acquisition of new skills;
3. ability to perform (having the training, direction, resources, authority, Information, and cooperation needed to perform well);

4. perception of job importance (importance to the organization, to the customer, and to society);

5. recognition received for performance; and

6. pride in the workplace. (p. 11)

The third human motivation factor in the Sirota Consulting Group study was camaraderie (Sirota et. al.). Sirota et al. explained, "Human beings are social animals; positive interaction with others is not only gratifying, but essential for mental health" (p. 17). Camaraderie involves teamwork, collegiality, communication, and humor as well as social interactions. A strong leader should encourage and provide opportunities for camaraderie to strengthen the overall culture and climate of the school. Connors (2000) stated, "The best administrators enjoy being around adults and students. They spend an intense amount of time on developing, improving, refining, and investing in relationships" (p. 67). In short, the morale of teachers could have far-reaching implications for students' learning, the health of the organization, and the health of the teacher (Lumsden, 2001).

Another study conducted in North Carolina began with a teachers' working conditions survey originally developed and piloted by the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission in 2001 (Teacher Working Conditions Survey, 2004). The study was commissioned to look at high teacher turnover rates and difficulties retaining teachers. "Turnover comes at a great expense, both in the negative cumulative effect on student achievement, and as a financial drain to the state and districts that repeatedly prepare, recruit, and support teachers for the same position" (p. 1). The Standards Committee and the North Carolina Board of Education conducted research and focus groups to arrive at 30 working conditions standards for schools such as: time, empowerment, professional development, leadership, and facilities and resources. According to the Teacher Working Conditions Survey, "The survey results indicated that the collective perception of principals was far more positive than teachers' collective perception" (p. 2). Documented in the report were findings of the following six primary working conditions:

1. teachers' working conditions are important predictors of student achievement;

2. teachers' working conditions make a difference in teacher retention;

3. teacher's perceptions of working conditions reflect actual school conditions;

4. leadership is critical to improving working conditions, but principals and teachers perceive these conditions very differently;

5. teachers, regardless of their background and experience, view working conditions similarly; and

6. many aspects of working conditions have "ripple effects" (p. 14).

The findings from the study indicated that the teachers were enthusiastic in schools where "the principal is a strong and supportive leader with a clear vision of the central mission of the school (Teacher Working Conditions Survey, 2004). Other findings were that "The principal also used the leadership potential of the teachers" (p. 34). Finally, in the schools where teacher turnover was low, the findings indicated, "There are many avenues available for educators to express their concerns and propose solutions as well as being recognized as educational experts and trusted to make sound professional decisions" (Teacher Working Conditions Survey, p. 34).

Successful Leadership Practices

Oakley and Krug (1993) wrote an insightful book titled, *Enlightened Leadership.* The book was written to provide a foundation by which leaders could get the most out of an organization and the people within that organization. The authors positioned that the intention of leaders must be sincere, nurturing, and supportive in order to have a viable organization:

> Intention shows up in our being, in who we are. It shows up in our walk, not necessarily in our talk. It is important to link intention to leadership, because the intention of leadership speaks louder than any surface actions or words. (p. 240)

Goleman (2007) stated:

> In a survey of employees at 700 companies, the majority said that a caring boss was more important to them than how much they earned. The same survey found that employees' liking for their boss was a prime driver of both productivity and the length of time they stayed at the job. (p. 280)

Research theory on leadership styles has been historical, scientific, and vast in number and these theories often have been applicable from business organizations to schools. Principals might be unaware of their personal leadership styles; but in reality, they could be practicing one or more theories in their day-to-day activities. The principal who enhances organizational skills and helps others be their best has used leadership theory in a practical sense. Blanchard and Hodges (2003) stated:

> Whenever we have an opportunity or responsibility to influence the thinking and the behavior of others, the first choice we are called to make is whether to see the moment through the eyes of self-interest or for the benefit of those we are leading. (p. 15)

Principals must foster a culture that values human relationships. According to Spitzer (2000), "Leaders need to recognize that people are fundamentally interpersonal. Even though this interpersonal dimension requires autonomy, self-appropriation, and independence, most persons' actions arise out of, and go back to, interdependence with others" (p. 192). In addition, principals who recognize teachers' personal lives as being important gained reciprocated respect and appreciation. Spitzer also stated:

> When leaders are supportive of good family relationships and family time, stakeholders not only gain energy and creativity, they willingly help when crunch time comes at work. By facilitating connection and friendship among co-workers, leaders can decrease fear, resentment, and compulsion in the workplace and foster the trust and synergy necessary for adaptability and teaming. (p. 192)

Goleman et al. (2002) studied leadership qualities that affected the climate of an organization and, in turn, the performance of those employed. Following are three leadership styles associated with successful leadership practice. Principals with these styles offer their teachers trust, support, shared-decision making, collegiality, appreciation, respect, and humor.

Leadership Style: Trust and Support

Teachers are the backbone of any school setting. When elementary school communities have been led by caring and compassionate educators, the overall culture of the school improved for everyone. Thompson (1996) pointed out, "Where a team and collegial environment does not

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exist, the principal is the logical person to initiate the movement toward such an environment" (p. 34). When teachers feel the school leadership supports them, they take risks that are more creative in their delivery of teaching and learning. Thompson (1996) added, "Supportive principals are in tune to the needs of teachers and are there to offer the support necessary for teachers to meet their challenges" (p. 150). Where principal-teacher relationships are concerned, there must also be a level of trust. Bennis (2003) suggested four items for leaders to practice that would generate and sustain trust:

1. constancy: Leaders stay the course;

2. congruity: Leaders walk their talk. There is no gap between the theories they espouse and the life they practice;

3. reliability: Leaders are there when it counts; they are ready to support their co-workers in the moments that matter; and

4. integrity: Leaders honor their commitments and promises. (p. 150)

The set-up of an instructional day and the cellular structure of a school building has left teachers isolated from administration. Effective principals trust the teachers to do their jobs without constant supervision and the teachers feel this support and empowerment. Hughes (1994) maintained, "The principal relates in ways that make teachers want to comply: They like their principal and how he or she treats them. Principals set expectations by believing in and assuming the best of teachers" (p. 39). Building trust takes time, but teachers need to feel confident that the principal trusts them to successfully teach the students, act professionally when communicating with parents, and generally do the job they were hired to do. Kemp (2005) stated, "Leaders teach people to be self-managed and to work together toward common goals" (p. 14). Blasé and Blasé (1994) challenged principals to "build a trusting environment by encouraging openness, facilitating effective communication, and modeling understanding, the cornerstone of trust" (p. 20). Where trust is concerned, the principal needs to be approachable. Rifts can occur among teachers and staff creating a tense school climate. An approachable, trustworthy principal can be a discrete, impartial sounding board. The teacher must feel that

confidentiality will prevail and none of what is communicated to the principal will "leak out."

When a barrier of support or favoritism exists, it sabotages the approachability and trust. When

faculties are divided, schools cannot progress toward school improvement. The principal must

communicate impartiality and offer support to all concerned when discord occurs. Tracy (1995)

wrote about the importance of listening, "Listening is the true measure of attention in human

relations. Listening is the way you show how much you value another person and what that

other person is saying" (p. 275).

Spitzer (2000) stated:

Proactive listening requires a sense of common cause, and therefore mutual concern on
the part of both the speaker and listener. This allows for transpositional sympathy-the
ability to put yourself into the shoes of another. This means not merely experiencing the
concerns of another, but also the mental framework and perspective of the other. (pp.
297-298)

The listening must be with sincerity and understanding, however. It is frustrating when it

becomes known that someone simply told you what he or she wanted you to hear. The principal

must trust that the faculty has been doing its best when parents complain. It soon becomes

apparent to the parents when the administration defends the faculty and trusts them to do what is

best for their children.

Democratic Leadership Style: Shared-Decision Making and Collegiality

In recent years, school districts have transferred much of their decision-making to the

individual schools to decide how to accomplish the many organizational and school-related

tasks. When this transfer of responsibilities was made, democratic principals worked to put

together teams of teachers to make decisions that would affect the entire school. In contrast to

that, autocratic leaders took control of all decision-making, telling their teachers what would and

would not be done. Principals involved in democratic leadership practices found that "it creates

favorable conditions for teachers to enhance their personal and collective performance" (Blasé &

Blasé, 1994, p. 9). When principals share their vision with teachers, it creates a community of

educators working toward goals to improve teaching, learning, and the organization as a whole.

Even when success is slow growing, the community is bonding. Bennis (2003) explained, "The first basic ingredient of leadership is a guiding vision. The leader has a clear idea of what he or she wants to do--professionally and personally--and the strength to persist in the face of setbacks, even failures (p. 31). Blanchard and Hodges (2003) stated:

> As a servant leader, the way you serve the vision is by developing people so that they can work on that vision even when you're not around. The ultimate sign of an effective servant leader is what happens when you are not there (p. 68).

The opposite effect can happen when the faculty is not included in decisions that affect them; distrust and resentment toward the decision-making body could occur. According to Drake and Roe (1986):

> Participation and sharing of power does not mean a faculty needs to get together every time a decision is made. This in itself would be poor leadership! It means that procedures are established that provide the opportunity for the faculty to have appropriate input on decisions that may be important to them. (p. 121).

It is difficult for principals to be masters of all instructional areas. Relying on the expertise of the faculty relieves the principal of that responsibility by trusting the classroom experts to make the best decisions. As mentioned earlier, trust has ensued when the principal relinquished some of that responsibility to the faculty. Another positive result of relinquishing some decision-making to the faculty was that it forced them to rely on each other and collaborate efforts. Rosenholtz (1991) provided a framework for thinking collaboratively and sharing instructional information among colleagues. She stated:

> Norms of collaboration don't simply just happen. They do not spring spontaneously out of teachers' mutual respect and concern for each other. Rather, principals seem to structure them in the workplace by offering ongoing invitations for substantive decision-making and faculty interaction. (p. 44)

When principals choose leaders among the faculty, there must be a conscious effort on the part of the principal to include a variety of teachers for the different responsibilities. When only one or two individuals are chosen frequently to be team leaders, favoritism is perceptible and can sabotage the collaboration process (Rosenholtz, 1991). This also fosters burnout for those teacher-leaders who are consistently chosen. When collaboration is done correctly,

however, collegiality grows fostering a positive, cooperative climate. "Thus, where principals encourage helping relationships, that is, where teachers perceive that colleagues depend on them for greater instructional success, they tend to work harder to help their colleagues succeed" (Rosenholtz, p. 61). According to Owens (2004), Vroom and Yetton's contingency model hypothesized, "The central issue in contemporary leadership is participation in the process of making decisions. The problem for leaders is to analyze the contingencies in each situation and then behave in the most effective manner" (p. 293). A principal who is secure in his or her leadership skills will be confident when distributing responsibilities. Owens, in his study of organizational behavior, stressed that healthy organizations should empower people at all levels of the organization; this empowerment might foster leadership and motivation. There must be follow-through, however, so that teachers know the importance of the leadership duties they have been given. When teachers report the progress of their responsibilities to the staff and to the principal, they feel the importance of the assignment, whether it succeeds or not. Barth (2001), educator, author, and leadership expert, wrote *Learning by Heart*, a book dedicated to helping schools make improvements through in-house leadership. In Barth's study, he taught aspiring principals how to be effective leaders through real-school experiences. He asked current principals, those he called distinguished principals, to give a list of essential leadership qualities that would help aspiring principals succeed. The list included:

1. human relations and communication--an exemplary school leader pays attention to the personal;

2. moral courage-an influential principal has the courage to stand alone;

3. vision-an effective school leader must develop and maintain a consistent vision and inspire others to work toward it;

4. flexibility and efficiency-an effective principal is able to juggle many tasks and thoughts at once;

5. lifelong love of learning and leading-a successful principal creates joy around learning; and

6. public support-a strong principal has a gift for public relations. (pp. 138-139)

Barth stated, "When principal and teacher share a foxhole, the outcomes are often collegiality, staff development, safety, trust, and higher morale. Much can be gained from stumbling-- together" (p. 113).

Coaching Leadership Style: Appreciation, Respect, and Humor

When teachers felt appreciated, they were more positive about their work and the people around them. When appreciated for the time and effort they exhibited, they were motivated to work harder to achieve both personally and for the overall goals of the school (Barth, 2001). Appreciation from the principal must be verbalized and sincere, however. Goleman (2007) stated, "The best bosses are people who are trustworthy, empathetic and connected, and who make us feel calm, appreciated, and inspired" (p. 277). Elementary classroom teachers have been expected to do more and more to help students meet or exceed state and federal testing standards. They have been constantly asked to learn new programs and new teaching and learning methods that have proven successful in other school systems. They have been expected to actively participate in PTA and all the after-school and evening efforts to raise money and build school community. Principals who overtly recognize teachers for their time commitment grow and foster a respect for and from the very ones they appreciate. According to Barth, "Good principals are more often hero makers than heroes" (p. 114). In her book, *If You Don't Feed the Teachers, They Eat the Students,* Connors (2000) iterated the importance of teacher appreciation:

> Great leaders know the importance of job satisfaction. Employees want to feel appreciated, respected, empowered, and values. When a leader takes the time to communicate, care, collaborate, and FEED a staff, amazing results occur. A positive leader lets the staff know that efforts are appreciated, failure is not fatal, and recognition through fun is central. (p. 111)

Casual greetings with a smile are simple, nonverbalized ways that principals could show they care. A teacher's day is serious and often full of drama and stress. When principals smile, laugh, and make light of the challenges that are faced everyday, the teachers, in turn, relax and enjoy the school climate. Principals who model humor and light-heartedness while working as

hard as the teachers will foster that in the rest of the staff. There are psychological benefits to humor in the work place. Bruce and Pepitone (1999) said, "There's a direct correlation between fun on the job and employee motivation, productivity, creativity, morale, satisfaction, and retention" (p. 97) and "The idea is to allow people to feel more comfortable and to make the workplace more enjoyable" (p. 91). When teachers enjoy coming to work, they project that in their attitude toward the students as well.

All of these successful leadership styles emphasized the human factor in working relationships. In the *Maxwell Leadership Bible*, Maxwell (2002b) wrote of the importance of leaders building relationships with the people with whom they work. Maxwell (2002b) stated:

> Many leaders commit the error of separating leadership from relationships. This happens when a person steps into a position of leadership and assumes that everyone will follow his or her ideas because of his or her position. Some leaders wrongly believe that their knowledge alone qualifies them to lead others. People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care. Leaders help themselves by developing good relational skills. (p. 1382)

Maxwell (2002b) submitted the following list of advice, based on Romans, Chapter 12, to leaders for building relationships:

1. avoid hypocrisy-be sincere and genuine (verse 9);

2. be loyal to colleagues-treat others like brothers or sisters (verse 10);

3. give preference to others-honor the desires of others above your own (verse 10);

4. be hospitable-look for ways to meet the needs of others (verse 13);

5. return good for evil-act, don't react, when others hurt you (verse 14);

6. identify with others-treat others' needs or victories as your own (verse 15);

7. be open-minded toward others-seek to connect with anyone you speak to (verse 16);

8. treat everyone with respect-this is a compliment to any person (verse 17);

9. do everything possible to keep peace-choose wisely which hills to die on (verse 18);

10. remove revenge from your life-let God judge others; you love them (verses 19-21).

    (p. 1382)

Change

Change is an important but delicate aspect of organizational success. According to Senge (2000), a change in administrative leadership could have dramatic effects on current programs, future endeavors, and whether or not teachers will follow their lead. Senge elaborated:

> Change naturally induces fear in us all: fear of the unknown, of failure, of not being needed in a new order of things. When we obsessively focus only on what needs to be changed, and not on what we intend to conserve, we reinforce these fears. But when we can clarify what we intend to conserve, some of this fear can be released. When leaders consciously apply this principle, they usually discover that people seek to conserve identity and relationships. (p. 335)

Teachers' anxiety toward change can stem from a change in principals or from any transformation, large or small, that affects the normal routine to which they are accustomed. Kotter (2002), an organizational change expert, wrote of an eight-step process that could help organizations find new ways of adapting to large-scale change. Kotter stated:

> In highly successful change efforts, people find ways to help others see the problems or solutions in ways that influence emotions, not just thought. Feelings then alter behavior sufficiently to overcome all the many barriers to sensible large-scale change. (p. x)

He explained, "Evidence overwhelmingly suggests that the most fundamental problem in all of the stages is changing the behavior of people" (p. 6). Most people are cautious at best when it comes to change.

Blanchard and Hodges (2003) listed seven reactions that people have to change and offered advice to leaders in order to successfully implement necessary modifications: These reactions were:

1. People will feel awkward, ill at ease, and self-conscious when confronted by change. Tell people what to expect.

2. People will feel alone even if everyone else is going through the same change-- Structure activities that create involvement. Encourage individual s to share ideas and to work together to help each other through change.

3. People will think first about what they have to give up. Don't try to sell the benefits of the change effort initially. Let people mourn their perceived losses. Listen to them.

4. People will think they can only handle so much change at once. Set priorities on which changes to make, and go for the long run.

5. People will be concerned that they don't have enough resources (time, money, skills, etc.) to implement the change. Encourage creative problem solving.

6. People will be on different levels of readiness for any particular change. Don't label or pick on people. Recognize that some people are risk takers and others take longer to feel secure. Someone who's an eager adapter of one type of change might balk at another type of change.

7. If pressure is taken off, people will revert to old behaviors. Keep people focused on maintaining the change and managing the journey. (pp. 66-67)

Anxious attitudes toward change can be eased when principals gradually introduce the modifications to the faculty. Senge (2000) used an analogy of boiling a frog to the manner in which leaders should approach change:

> If you place a frog in a pot of boiling water, it will immediately try to scramble out. But if you place the frog in room temperature water and don't scare him (sic), he'll stay put. Now, if the pot sits on a heat source, and if you gradually turn up the temperature, something very interesting happens. As the temperatures rise from 70-80 degrees F., the frog will do nothing. In fact, he will show every sign of enjoying himself. As the temperature gradually increases, the frog will become groggier and groggier, until he is unable to climb out of the pot. (p. 22)

When principals are servant leaders and trusted by their faculty, the change efforts are not as painful. Those who are sensitive to an individuals' feelings toward change, temper reactions with their considerations. Blanchard and Hodges (2003) stated:

> As a servant leader, you have to identify which changes are necessary to implement your vision, and then help people move in that direction. Change is rarely easy but understanding the reactions people have to change will make implementation less difficult on everyone. (p. 65)

Qualitative Research

The researcher chose qualitative inquiry as the best methodological approach to this study of principal leadership and teacher morale. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), "Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible" (p. 3). Interviewing teachers at their work environment and recording their perspectives on the principal leadership practices in their schools, helps to understand and interpret how leadership impacts their morale, both individually and collectively. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) explained, "Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 3). As stated in Creswell (2003), "The goal of the research, then, is to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied" (p. 8) and "The researcher's intent, then, is to make sense of (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world, inductively developing a theory or pattern of meaning" (p. 9). Strauss and Corbin (1990) observed:

> Someone may come across a problem in his or her profession or workplace for which there is no known answer. Professional experience frequently leads to the judgment that some feature of the profession or its practice is less than effective, efficient, human, or equitable. (p. 35)

The attempt to understand morale in the workplace allows teachers to voice their experiences and perspectives on leadership practices that seem best. The researcher and the participants discover together through rich description and interpretation.

Grounded Theory

This qualitative researcher used a grounded theory approach to explain the phenomenon of teacher morale and how the participants' perception of principal leadership affected that morale. The grounded theory approach to qualitative research is a "method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an individually derived grounded theory about a

phenomenon" (Strauss & Corbin, 1997, p. 24). Glaser (1978), a sociologist from Columbia University, listed four features needed for grounded theory:

1. A theory must have fit: A grounded theory is faithful to the everyday realities of a substantive area.

2. A theory must have relevance: Grounded theory arrives at relevance because it allows core problems and processes to emerge.

3. A theory must work: A theory should be able to explain what happened, predict what will happen, and interpret what is happening in an area of formal inquiry.

4. A theory must be readily modifiable: The generation is an ever-modifying process and nothing is sacred if the analyst is dedicated to giving priority attention to the date. (p. 1)

Strauss (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), a sociologist from the University of Chicago, contributed the following to grounded theory research:

1. the need to get in the field, if one wants to understand what is going on;

2. the importance of theory grounded in reality, to the development of a discipline;

3. the nature of experience and undergoing as continually evolving;

4. the active role of persons in shaping the worlds they live in;

5. an emphasis on change and process, and the variability and complexity of life; and

6. the interrelationships among conditions, meaning, and action. (p. 25)

Strauss and Corbin (1997) added two other characteristics of grounded theory, "Theories are always traceable to the data that gave rise to them, and grounded theories are very fluid" (p. 1). The coding process of grounded theory is an analysis of data that differs from other types of qualitative research. It uses constant comparison methodology to attain a final emergent theory. In order to build theory, there are three main types of coding: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Strauss and Corbin (1997) explained further:

1. open coding: the data are examined line by line to define actions or events within the data'

2. Axial coding: aimed to make conceptual connections between a category and its subcategories; and

3. Selective coding: an integrative process of selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships by searching for confirming and disconfirming examples, and filling in categories that needed further refinement and development. (p. 1)

Self-reflection is also an important step after each interview so that the researcher might record immediate thoughts enriching the analytical process. From this succinct coding process, descriptive theory should evolve that explains the data collected while explaining the phenomenon of teacher morale.

Summary

The research and literature reviewed showed a distinct connection between principal leadership practices and school morale. When morale at a school is high, productivity flourishes and students and teachers work toward achieving common goals. When teacher morale is low, it affects the culture and climate of the school environment in negative ways. Because of the hierarchical position of principals, their strong and effective leadership is imperative to building positive esprit de corps and an overall culture of success.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Introduction

The intent of this study was to explore the extent to which principal leadership practices influence teacher morale. According to Thompson (2001), "The staff needs to know that the principal cares about them professionally and personally. A principal demonstrates this care by celebrating their triumphs, consoling them in times of grief, and constantly encouraging them to do their best" (p. 59). The social phenomenon of principal leadership influencing teachers' morale needs exploring. The central research questions addressed in this qualitative study were:

1. From a teacher's perspective, what principal leadership styles have a positive influence on teacher morale?

2. From a teacher's perspective, what principal leadership styles have a negative influence on teacher morale?

3. In what ways does the influence of principal leadership on teacher morale explain teacher work performance, physical health, and student achievement?

4. What lessons can be learned about the connection between principal leadership and teacher morale from this study?

Chapter 3 contains specific details of the research design of the study, the selection of the sample, ethical protocol, the data collection techniques, and data analysis.

Research Design

This study was qualitative in design using the grounded theory tradition. Merriam (1998) defined qualitative as "an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible" (p. 5). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) stated, "Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what

is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry"(p. 8). The focus of this study was to garner data concerning principals' leadership practices and how teachers feel individually and personally about morale in relation to the leadership practices at their schools. Morale can have an effect on work performance, physical health, and student achievement; therefore, an investigation of that phenomenon is important for education and the teaching profession. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) stated, "The social world is always in process, and the lives of the research subjects shift and change as their circumstances and they themselves change" (p. 270) and "A qualitative researcher constructs a picture that draws from, resembles, and renders subjects' lives" (p. 270). According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), therefore, the grounded theory approach is a qualitative methodology that "uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon" (p. 24). Merriam (1998) said:

> Speculation is the key to developing theory in a qualitative study. It permits the investigator to go beyond the data and make guesses about what will happen in the future, based on what has been learned in the past about constructs and linkages among them and on comparisons between that knowledge and what presently is known about the same phenomena. (p. 190)

The researcher chose the qualitative research design to satisfy curiosity about how other teachers spoke in regards to morale at their schools. The qualitative design allowed teachers' voices to be heard and common themes to emerge in the data analysis phase.

Purposeful Sampling

According to Creswell (2003), "The idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants or sites (or documents or visual material) that will help the researcher understand the problem and the research question" (p. 185). Merriam (1998) said, "Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 61). The first criterion in choosing participants for this qualitative study was that the participants had to be teachers from seven of the eight public elementary schools within the same city school system. Because the researcher is a teacher within the eighth elementary school in the system, that

particular school was eliminated from the study. Secondly, the participants were elementary

classroom teachers from grades three through five. Those particular grade levels were important

because of mandatory state-level testing of students in those grades and the added pressure

placed on those teachers to have their students succeed. Thirdly, the teachers were chosen based

on years of teaching experience: 5 to 15 years of experience and those nearing retirement.

Instructors with over 5 years of teaching experience have familiarity with job morale on an

individual and experiential level. Because of their years of experience, they also might have

been under the leadership of more than one principal during their teaching tenure. The

participants were selected with the help of each school's secretary who had knowledge of

classroom grade-level and years of experience for each teacher at that school. Two teachers, one

from each category, were interviewed individually comprising 14 teachers interviewed. Because

the research questions concerned answers relating to principal leadership, a neutral site was

chosen for the interviews rather than the participants' home schools. The teachers were not

chosen based on race or gender. Maximum variation sampling was attempted to cover the

different perspectives of the same research problem. As cited in Merriam:

> Maximum variation sampling was first identified by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in their
> book on grounded theory. A grounded theory, it was reasoned, would be more
> conceptually dense and potentially more useful if it had been "grounded" in widely
> varying instances of the phenomenon. (pp. 62-63)

After obtaining permission from the director of schools for the study, each principal was

contacted to discuss the study and asked permission for interviewing teachers from his or her

school. The principal's approval also was obtained to allow the administrative assistant to give

names and addresses of those teachers who met the criteria needed for the study. After acquiring

the names and addresses of qualified participants from each school, a letter was drafted and

mailed to each possible participant explaining the study and requesting his or her role in the

research (see Appendix A). After hearing by phone from the interested participants and setting

up a time for the interviews, a reminder letter was sent to each interviewee as to the date, time,

and place for the one-on-one interview. When the researcher and interviewee met, the researcher asked each participant to sign a letter of consent (see Appendix B).

Ethical Protocol

The first phase of this research was to receive authorization from the East Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board. After receiving permission from the school system to proceed with the study, each principal was made aware that the interviewees' names would not be revealed to anyone, including the principal and administrative assistant. The identity of the educational institution used and the participants interviewed remained private to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. Pseudonyms were used to conceal identities. The director of schools, school principals, and participants were informed that their specific names would not be used in the study. The researcher conducted the interviews, with permission, at an elementary school not used in the study (see Appendix C). The purpose of this location was to ensure the principals would not see which teachers were interviewed for the research. The teachers entered the school through a back door to assure no one identified them as participants in the study. Most of the interviews were conducted on the weekends or during evening hours. After being chosen by the researcher, each interviewee was asked to sign an informed consent document. Participants were told that their involvement in the research study was strictly voluntary and that their answers would be kept confidential. Permission was also secured to audio-record the interviews and to use quoted material in the final report when necessary. The interviewees were also given access to the final report, if they so wished, before it was published. The interviewees were also informed that a professional transcriptionist would be transcribing all data; once transcribed, the tapes and hard copies would be kept in a bank's safety deposit box until the report was published. After publication, the audiotapes and transcribed notes will be kept in a secure location for 10 years.

Data Collection

After obtaining permission from the East Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board to proceed with the study, the data collection process started. A public school system located in southern Appalachia was chosen for the research study. Within that school system are eight elementary schools, seven of which were specifically chosen to obtain the purposive samples. The researcher conducted 14 interviews during the summer of 2007. Although data collection took place in the summer months, elementary school principals work a 12-month contract in this school system; therefore, getting their permission and access to the qualified teachers' phone numbers was not a problem.

Once the interviews began, open-ended questions were asked to elicit views and opinions of teacher morale and leadership style from each participant. Marshall and Rossman (1989) stated, "The most important aspect of the interviewer's approach concerns conveying the idea that the participant's information is acceptable and valuable" (p. 82). Each interview was audio-recorded and then transcribed. An IRB-certified transcriptionist was hired to transcribe each interview and each participant was allowed to see his or her transcribed quotes. The length of each interview varied from 35 minutes to 1 hour and 15 minutes. In addition, after each individual interview, the researcher journaled thoughts and observances from that particular interview to capture a picture of what the audio could not reveal.

Participants

The participants were comprised of 14 elementary school teachers, 2 selected from each of the seven elementary schools in the study. There were only three teachers with fewer than 10 years of teaching experience, and many of those interviewed had worked for multiple principals. Four of those teachers interviewed were near or at retirement. In fact, two of the teachers were retiring after the current school year. Table 1 presents a summary of information about the participants in the study.

Table 1

Demographics of Teacher Interviewees

Name	Gender	# Years of Teaching Experience	Current Grade Assignment	# of Principals Worked With During Career	# Years Working With Current Principal
Brooke	F	26	5th	3	2
Starr	F	7	3rd	3	3
Beth	F	23	5th	4	6
Pete	M	5	5th	2	1
Marlena	F	23	3rd	3	6
Jerry	M	10	3rd	2	3
Traveler	F	28	5th	3	3
Claire	F	13	4th	3	2.5
Tracy	F	29	3rd	6	3
Anna-Marie	F	14	3rd	11	2.5
Sigmund	M	30	3rd	5	2
Sarah	F	23	4th	6	2
Hannah	F	12	5th	4	1
Ollie	F	31	3rd	7	2

History of School System

Unexpected, but pertinent to the research, was the fact that each of the seven elementary schools used in the study have undergone a principal change in the past few years. With recent restructuring of leadership in all the elementary schools in the study, and three different

superintendents during those changes, a school breakdown of the principalship is provided.

Table 2 illustrates the changes that have occurred.

Table 2

History of Principals at the Elementary Schools

Name of School	# of Principals Participants Had While Teaching at Current School	# of Years Current Principal Has Been at the School
Mo Elementary	2	2
Lee Elementary	4*	1
Hughes Elementary	3	6
Neill Elementary	3	2
Strickland School	2	2.5
Maddox Elementary	2	3
Coulter Elementary	2	3

* 3 within the last 6 years

Interview Guide

The interview guide used by the researcher in this study included four main open-ended questions as well as probing and follow-up questions (see Appendix D). Questions were developed after extensive review of extant literature about principal leadership style as well as research on high and low teacher morale. In addition to the literature, this researcher has taught for 27 years, and through experience, has witnessed the highs and lows of faculty morale. In an attempt to uncover these work realities, questioning was broad and unstructured. To establish trust and credibility, the researcher identified with each interviewee by letting him or her know that we shared the same profession. The researcher then started with an informal chat steering

the conversation toward the direction of teacher morale and leadership style. Marshall and

Rossman (1989) stated, "Typically, qualitative indepth interviews are much more like

conversations than formal, structured interviews. The researcher explores a few general topics to

help uncover the participant's meaning perspective, but otherwise respects how the participant

frames and structures the responses" (p. 82). The materials from the audio-recorded interviews

served as the source for interpreting and analyzing data. The researcher also jotted notes during

each interview and reviewed those immediately after each interview to keep the information

fresh and separate from the other interviews.

Data Analysis

According to Creswell (2003):

The process of data analysis involves making sense out of text and image data. It involves preparing the data for analysis, conducting different analyses, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data, representing the data, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data. (p. 190)

The researcher conducted data analysis using a grounded theory, qualitative design to examine

the social phenomenon of principal leadership and its perceived influence on teacher morale.

Data analysis began after completing the first of 14 interviews moving toward an understanding

of teacher morale and interpreting the data gathered. Field notes taken during the first interview

were immediately analyzed and reflections written in the researcher's personal journal. This

process was completed after each of the 14 interviews and before the coding began. After the

tape had been transcribed, the researcher openly coded it on the hard copy transcript. Coding

"involves taking text data or pictures, segmenting sentences (or paragraphs) or images into

categories, and labeling those categories with a term, often a term based in the actual language of

the participant"(Creswell, 2003, p. 192). Denzin and Lincoln (2003) added, "Coding helps us to

gain a new perspective on our material and to focus further data collection, and may lead us in

unforeseen directions" (p. 258). In the coding stage of analysis, each interview transcript was

read paragraph by paragraph and eventually word by word each time a new idea or concept

emerged. The data were clustered by similar topics and each topic coded. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), "Coding starts the chain of theory development" (p. 258). The data were then divided into smaller categories and put into themes. As the interviewing continued, each transcript was openly coded and compared to the others. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) stated:

> The constant comparative method of grounded theory means (a) comparing different people (such as their views, situations, actions, accounts, and experiences, (b) comparing data from the same individuals with themselves at different points in time, (c) comparing incident with incident, (d) comparing data with category, and (e) comparing a category with other categories. (p. 260)

Theory emerged as the themes and patterns were developed. Morale was investigated on how it affected learning, personal self-esteem, motivation, school roles, and the culture and climate of the school where each participant taught. To check for accuracy of findings, the researcher used member checking by taking the descriptive themes from their personal interviews back to the participants who were concerned with exactness. A doctoral student familiar with qualitative research practices also read the finalized report to enhance internal validity.

In summary, the following steps were used to analyze the qualitative data:

1. after the first of 14 interviews, transcribed data were openly coded on the hard copy transcript;

2. sentences were segmented and put into categories;

3. data were clustered by themes;

4. patterns emerged from the clustered themes;

5. data were continually compared from one transcript to the next;

6. member checking was used to assure accuracy of meaning; and

7. a doctoral student versed in qualitative research read the final product.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to construct a theoretical framework explaining the connection between principal leadership practices and the phenomenon of teacher morale. The theory developed in this study provides an explanation of specific leadership styles and considerations and how they influence teachers' work performance and physical health and student achievement as well as the overall climate of the school. The study involved collecting data through open-ended, one-on-one interviews with 14 elementary school teachers. Purposeful sampling was used by selecting elementary school educators who taught in grades three through five (the grades with mandated achievement tests) and who had from 5 to 15 years of teaching experience or were nearing retirement. The researcher examined teachers' perspectives related to the following research questions:

1. From a teacher's perspective, what principal leadership styles have a positive influence on teacher morale?

2. From a teacher's perspective, what principal leadership styles have a negative influence on teacher morale?

3. In what ways does the influence of principal leadership on teacher morale explain teachers' work performance, physical health, and student achievement?

4. What lessons can be learned about the connection between principal and teacher morale from this study?

Results

The researcher identified nine constructs related to principal leadership and its perceived influence on teacher morale. These nine constructs were: (a) change, (b) leadership practices, (c) mandated testing, (d) stress, (e) communication, (f) acknowledgment, (g) professionalism, (h) identifying with teachers, and (i) building community.

Change

Because of leadership restructuring and retirement, all seven of the elementary schools that were part of the study had new-to-fairly new principals. Findings from the interviews were that affirmative changes took place because of this leadership restructuring. This, combined with the years of teaching experience from each interviewee, provided rich, descriptive comparisons of past leadership with current leadership. Normally, a change in leadership can cause anxiety and stress, but, according to the participants, most of these changes proved to be positive. The leadership decisions these new principals made helped relieve the teachers from stress of the unknown. For example, Hannah has had four principals at the same school in her 12-year career. She talked about the insecurity that the teachers at her school felt from not knowing if a new principal would stay. She explained:

> In our situation, when we were told by a principal "I'm not going anywhere," that would be a boost for those of us who had been there a while. You still have apprehension 'cause the last change was unexpected, and there were some summers we lived in limbo. We feel better about it now.

Starr stated, "We have a strong faculty so the transition from principals was very easy. Some years there, that same faculty had been very unhappy, but you've always got to look for the best." She also recalled:

> When the new principal came on, his effectiveness was right on. He said, "I'm not changing anything, and I'm not changing the teachers around or moving grade levels." He had the ability to come in and totally change everything but he changed nothing. He said, "I want a year to settle in and get to know you and how you work and what's happening." He not only eased us with those words, but he followed through on what he planned.

Ollie, too, found the change in leadership to be encouraging. Her previous principal had lead for many years and had lost respect from some of the faculty. She reflected:

> I think back to the changes that happened before and how scary that was. But the changes that we're going through now are completely different because the principal now does trust us and encourages us. She's going through a lot of change herself, and I find that knowing that, we feel confident that we can do what we need to do, and that feeling comes from superiors who trust us to be professionals. It just kind of perpetuates the notion. That makes me feel more professional, more confident when I know she's

depending upon me to do what I need to do to make this a great school, and I'm working

harder now than I've ever worked.

She added, "We have a new principal and a new chance to start over and a chance to

grow. I think that's why we're all working harder. We're going after it whole hog."

Two of the elementary schools have had more changes than have the others. For

instance, Sarah has had three principals in 6 years, but she reflected that the changes have not

lowered the morale at her school. Sarah commented on the teachers' role in the leadership

change:

> I have never seen our faculty low, low. Even with the transitions. I can't think of a time
> where our morale needed to be redirected. I may have my head up in the clouds. Our
> previous principal was just with us a year and a half, and he was taken out to be athletic
> director. We loved him and now we have another who started. Personalities are so
> varied among those principals that it will take some time to get used to. Discipline has
> been handled differently, too, and we have to get used to that, but I think we're such a
> family. The principal now will say, "Close the door and have a seat." She's got a table;
> so I'm not in front of her desk, and she'll put peanuts out, and she's just approachable.
> She tries to keep both camps happy, 'cause there are so many different personalities.

Jerry stated, "Change is not only important, but it's necessary in education. It's painful

sometimes, and the principal has to lead us through that and let us know that he or she has to go

through the change, too."

Hannah's experience with school leadership was not positive until the school's most

recent change. She explained:

> We've been through many principals and as a new one came in, we wanted to be so
> positive and have a fresh start, but as time passed, it would lower again. But now we're
> finally on the right track, and we're thrilled with that. That in itself gives us motivation
> to keep pushing even harder.

Traveler's experience included a principal who was in that leadership position for many

years; therefore, when the new principal was hired, the teachers were apprehensive about any

changes in tradition that would take place. Sometimes the improvements are slow to recognize

as Traveler admitted:

> We have a new principal and that affected the low morale our faculty was feeling. We
> were rudderless for a while because it takes awhile to see where the leadership is heading.
> Overall, it has improved.

Claire spoke of her difficulties with leadership change:

> We've had a change in administrative staff, and it's been a couple of years. This will be the 3rd year in, I think . . . I think people don't like change to begin with. I mean, it's tough, and when you have two principals who are back to back and have different personalities, which ours were, you tend to ruffle a few feathers and affect morale – whether up or down. Right now, I'm in a good place, personally.

Change not only affects teacher morale, but it can also affect the students and their success. The school system also rezoned a few years ago, and Marlena commented on the attitude adopted by her principal when their elementary school rezoned:

> Our schools restructured and our student population changed drastically. We lost our status, but the principal was able to show that our school was still so important. She went out of her way; she made outward appearances and public announcements. And, it was something that you drove up to and it had gotten pretty run down and yet she was like, "You need to work in something nice."

Marlena continued with descriptive details:

> She'd go in your room and ask, "What do you need to make this successful? It doesn't matter what I have to do, I'll go through anything I can to get you what you need to make it look good, feel good, work well." When you walk into something that's dirty and dingy, it's different to walk into something that's perky and pretty. And I really do think that made a difference. She worked everybody hard, but we made gains. She praised constantly. It made you feel like, well, what I'm doing is worthwhile and somebody cares.

Pete remembered, "The first thing our new principal did was brighten up the whole learning environment. The climate was different from day one."

In general, the teachers' attitudes toward the new leaders were cautious but encouraging. They patiently waited to see the direction that each new principal would lead, and overall it was positive. The new principals who began their leadership role with positive, collegial change, found faculties willing to accept them into their learning communities. De Pree (1992) stated, "Change is essential to organizational survival. Followers are good at change when leaders are good at managing change" (p. 204). He added, "It's important that we focus more on what we need to be than on what we need to do. In so doing, leaders do transform people's lives" (p. 142).

Leadership Practices

Many of the participants had similar opinions of the leadership behaviors that worked well for education--both those practices that raised morale and those practices that lowered morale. All interviewees had taught under more than one principal, so they were able to look back, make comparisons, and choose what they saw, in their opinion, as the leadership behaviors that enhanced or lowered teacher morale.

Sarah had experienced three principals in the past 10 years as she stated, "All of our principals have been my favorite flavor because they have been big-picture people. The principals that I have had have been dreamers." Starr said she wanted a principal who was positive but maintained a certain level of professionalism. She explained:

> I want a principal who is going to expect and demand but be willing to step up to the plate. I want someone who will work side-by-side, who will encourage you and say, "I'm not so sure about this, let's talk about it." I want a principal who is nice and who you can joke around with to some degree, but I don't want them to be my friend. I want to be able to be at a social gathering and enjoy being around them, but I want it to be professional. I don't want to feel like I can't wear shorts if I'm going to clean my classroom, but then again, I want it to be professional. I want to be comfortable in their presence – comfortable enough to talk about any problems I'm having, but I don't want a principal who is so casual that I cannot be sure that they won't go and tell another teacher.

Although most teachers did not express their opinions using educational terms for preferred leadership style, Jerry was the exception. He had just finished his masters of education degree and could name the specific leadership style that he favored. Jerry firmly stated, "I prefer transformational leadership. It inspires teachers to do their best."

Many teachers stressed the importance of the principal being visible during the day when the children were present. Traveler stated her perception briefly by saying, "The principal must be a presence in the classroom." Marlena agreed, "I think a principal needs to make sure they're (sic) a seen presence and that they're not just someone who's sitting in their office." Starr described an ideal principal:

> I really appreciate a principal who is visible in the buildings, in the classroom, and in a non-threatening way, just comes around – not because they're trying to catch you at something or because they have to make a quota or something, but because they

genuinely want to be around in the classrooms. They genuinely care about the kids and the teachers and are available to the teachers.

She continued by giving details about her current school:

At the school that I'm at now, I've had two principals and the morale at the school is awesome. A lot of it has to do with both principals being good principals. Their communication styles are different. The first principal was at the latter stage of her career and you saw a lot more rigid ness, but there were still a lot of positives and the faculty worked together very well. This is a testament to the umpteen years of her leadership before getting to that point.

Being good decision-makers was another reoccurring theme when participants discussed leadership styles. Traveler maintained, "When the principals include the teachers in the decision-making, it boosts morale." Claire put herself in the principal's "shoes" and described the dilemma that principals must experience:

It's impossible to make everybody happy, so I think principals have to struggle with what's the right decision. Am I here for the teachers or am I here for the children? And in reality, in the long run, we're all here for the children. So, we need to make decisions that are best for them and that may not make everybody happy.

Hannah said she preferred "a principal who is goal-oriented, organized, straight forward, and not afraid to make changes--someone who can look past the personal relationships and make changes that are best for the students and the school." When asked to discuss leadership styles, Beth was candid with her quick answer:

The two most important qualities a principal must have are honesty and humor. Education would be a field where it would be really, really easy to be miserable all the time--if you were prone to that. If you can't find something to smile about then I think it's all for naught.

Hannah said she also believed humor was a leadership quality that affected morale. She detailed:

The principal has got to keep that morale going and that's got to be tough. I will say that most given days you can hear laughter after school up and down our halls. We've got to find some humor or it's absolutely going to break us.

Micromanagement, dictatorship, and intimidation were common themes found objectionable by the participants when discussing leadership practices. Jerry stated, "When a principal is a manager and not a principal who has vision, it can lower the school's morale. The

principal needs to have vision, be visible, and be approachable." Sarah said she preferred to know what would be happening ahead of time so that she could plan. She clarified, "When a principal changes his mind frequently, it lowers morale." Hannah said her previous principal was more autocratic in her leadership style. Hannah stated, "When principals aren't open to teachers' suggestions it lowers morale. There was a point where it was more of a controlling, power thing, and nothing we said or did was acceptable."

Lack of shared-decision making and not having vision were themes the participants repeatedly described as lowering morale. Brooke reflected how micromanagement could cause teachers to retreat:

> I least like the principal who will not make decisions, and is the "manual principal." They go to central office; they get their manual and they find out everything they can and cannot do. That is strictly what they will and will not do. They will not step outside of that box because central office hasn't approved it. So, if central office doesn't approve it, then we can't try it. And, I am not going to step up to the plate for that person because that kind of person is not willing to realize that we deal with real live constituents. Our products are living human beings, and what we do affects this world in a great, tremendous way. It can't all be about black ink.

Ollie agreed, "Micromanaging and distrust of employees lowers teachers' morale. Distrust that they can't do the job you want them to." Tracy was forthright in her statement:

> Dictatorship never works. The principal who tells you to do the work, but doesn't do it with you, doesn't work. Not being treated as a professional doesn't work either. A principal needs to be eye-to-eye with the teacher.

Anna-Marie said she would like "some middle road between a dictator and a servant leader." She continued, saying, "Some principals feel like they have to scare someone to get them to work." Sigmund contributed a unique perspective by observing:

> Good principals are servants – the greatest is the least. The mindset of a good principal should be: "I'm not here to Lord over you. I'm here to serve; not to let people walk all over me, but rather to be consistently respectful and earn respect in return." I think a good principal, as well as a good teacher is a servant to those he or she is serving.

The participants maintained that character and respect of the individual also played a role in leadership style preference. Traveler shared, "The leadership I prefer is when I can look up to

that person as an individual. I like it when I feel comfortable with the principal, and I know they are in charge." Starr described her preference:

> … a principal who is going to expect and demand but be willing to step up to the plate. I want someone who will work side-by-side with me, encourage me, and say, "Uh, I'm not sure about this. Let's talk about it."

A leader's lack of self-confidence could cause him or her to distrust the faculty and the decisions they make. Sigmund declared:

> Principals who are insecure in their own selves and their image, lower morale. They feel they have to tell teachers what to do, control everything, and use teachers as a puppet of their own will. Their schools become no stronger than their own individual weaknesses.

> Ollie described:

> I think when there is an understanding of trust and confidentiality, morale is raised. It helps when the principal is open to new ideas and has (sic) his own sense of character and worth--that plays into it, too.

> Beth spoke of her least favorite leadership style, saying:

> My least favorite leadership style is when the principal is pompous. I think of the ones that are in the office on their throne without being down into it or having their hands in it. I don't expect them to know everybody's name but maybe 9 out of 10 of the students' names.

> Pete offered his perspective as to a least preferred leadership style concerning morale.

He conveyed:

> I least prefer the one who is completely closed-minded, or maybe even a principal who only listens to two or three people. They make their own decisions anyway and that doesn't work. They blame everything wrong on someone else.

The teachers who were interviewed found it important to be able to disagree with their principals without threat of retaliation. Claire described the dilemma and explained, "A principal who is not approachable affects a person in a negative way. I don't want to talk to this person. I feel I can't talk to this person; so, who can I talk to?"

Many of the teachers agreed on the leadership practices considered as increasing morale. They said they wanted to feel valued as professionals and to share in the decision-making process when it affected their teaching. Goleman et al. (2002) described this leadership style as

coaching. "Coaching boosts not just employees' capabilities but also their self-confidence, helping them function both more autonomously and at a higher performance level" (p. 62).

The teachers also were clear with their perspective on leadership styles that lowered morale. Micromanaging was a reoccurring style that the teachers disliked. Most wanted to see leaders working as hard as teachers do while having confidence in them to make professional decisions.

Mandated Testing

State mandated testing as required in the federal law *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001 (NCLB, 2006) has put added pressure and stress on teachers and principals as well. The importance and urgency of accountability has potential to lower morale and cause added anxiety. The teachers in the required testing grades said they felt the burden of the accountability. They also maintained that some principals were good about letting every grade level know that they, too, were responsible for the learning outcomes. Within the testing grades alone, there has been pressure to excel.

Traveler described the pressure added to all the participants by descriptively stating:

The fifth-grade teachers have the brunt of the fourth-grade gains. So, if the fourth graders make gains the fifth-grade teachers have to work that much harder to ensure that those scores will not drop. If students' scores are already high, it makes progress more difficult.

Marlena offered her perspective on this responsibility by saying, "Principal leadership can affect student achievement. It all depends on how determined they are and what programs they implement. Depending on your students, you may need a lot more."

Marlena then talked about the extra work her school did to ensure the students made gains. She elaborated:

At my school, we offer after school work until 5:00, 4 days a week. My students are not going to get it at home. They're not going to be able to go home and have a parent that can help them with their homework – not a parent who can help them read. A lot of the kids are above their parents. So, we provide a tutoring and a homework time. It also provides some socialization skills and it's all to help the kids and the scores, I mean,

that's the bottom line. So, the bad part is you're directly encouraged to work in the afternoons to provide these programs. The upper grade teachers and the test scores are the driving force.

The testing dates are set by the state's education system, with Tennessee tests in April each year. After Christmas vacation, third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade teachers said they began to feel the pressure of the calendar and time to teach skills students are expected to possess. According to the Tennessee Department of Education (2007):

> *Under No Child Left Behind*, schools and school districts are measured on whether the students meet performance benchmarks in math, reading and attendance for grades 3-8 and math, English, and graduation rate for high schools. Schools that do not meet the achievement standards for 2 years are deemed high priority. Tennessee elects to alert schools and districts that are at-risk of becoming a high priority school under *NCLB*. These schools receive additional support and assistance from the state in order to avoid the *NCLB* high priority list. (p. 1)

Anna-Marie admitted, "We definitely feel the testing pressure. It's *No Child Left Behind.* Everyone's afraid of getting on the list." Pete added, "Some of our teachers are stressed to the point that you can see them get frazzled about the middle of February into the whole month of March. It wasn't because they hadn't done their job either." Claire agreed, "There's more stress with *No Child Left Behind*, and you tend to beat yourself up a little bit more. You just don't want your name on the list. Ollie's frustration surfaced when she stated:

> This is baloney that in 2014 100% of the children will be on grade level. Do they think that if they keep their thumb on us, that if they scare us, that that is going to make us work harder? I don't feel that from our system; I feel that from the federal government. I think that the people at central office feel that, and it filters down. By the time it gets to the teacher, you know, it's important, but we're working with kids, and we're reminded of that every day. The principals see it, but as you go up higher and the more people are away from the children, those are the ones who are making the decisions.

She paused to reflect and then added an apt analogy:

> That's like trying to tell a doctor he has to have a 95% cure rate, or he's not going to get any money from the government from Medicare or something. There's nothing wrong with assessment and there's nothing wrong with evaluations and looking at where your weak spots are, your strong spots are. It's very important, and I'm all for that--but to hold something like that over your head? 100% is impossible.

Beth shared a similar view yet ended her perspective with optimism:

I think we went over the cliff; we hit the bottom, and I think we're just about up to the top--back up to the top now. All the mystique behind *No Child Left Behind*, and the threats. You always look at the worst part of it. And there were definite problems at first. I didn't personally trust a government made up of people who weren't educators to try to tell me how to teach without being in my shoes. Things have mellowed on both parts, I think. Our principal helped us find our way, to take baby steps forward, and helped us find our place on the scale.

Brooke's frustrations went beyond mandated testing as she recognized:

It's not just *No Child Left Behind*. There's just no way every child is going to learn to read by third grade, and I think a part of that has to do with today's society. Now, everything is kind of dropped on the shoulders of the teachers. The teacher is held accountable for just about everything – manners, health issues, and safety. Things parents used to do. I just go with an open mind that I'm going to do the best that I can do and that's what I've always done. That's all I can do. I know our principals are getting a lot of pressure because of *No Child Left Behind*, but I feel like in a couple of years when we get a new president, the pendulum will change in a different direction.

Schools receive state test results during the summer months. Most principals disaggregate the scores at that time so that teachers can see the results when school begins again. According to the participants, principals, in their exasperation, sometimes have made poor decisions regarding what to do with the state data. One of the teachers stated:

We had our second meeting with our principal, and we got hit again during our planning time. The first meeting was about lesson plans, and walk through evaluations with the threat that we had better be doing what we're supposed to at the time we're supposed to be doing it. This time we got the low down on the new special education rules, but the real kick in the head--when we were already down--came when the principal gave us a list of students who had gone through our school from third through fifth. He showed us how those kids were failing in third and fourth grades, but jumped up in fifth grade. He said it had to do with high expectations. I asked if the principal was saying the fifth-grade teachers are miracle workers, and we weren't doing a good job. I wondered if one of those kids [identified by initials only] was a child I had in third grade. He got a new stepmother the year after I had him, and she became very involved with him. However, that possibility was never mentioned. I also wondered about the other 80 or so fifth graders. We were purposely left to feel that we had been bad. I have never felt so much like quitting. I used to think I was a good teacher, and that I actually made a positive difference for my students. I feel like a weak-link exposed as a failure.

Claire also described what she considered poor judgment on the part of one of her past principals:

With my first principal, many, many years ago, we had our sit-down with TCAP scores that weren't great. It was third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade teachers in the room with the

administrator. The principal said, "I think these scores are low because of the quality of teaching." He was very lucky that I just didn't get up and leave. I didn't appreciate that.

She continued by sharing her fears and anxieties:

Every year that the scores would come back, we'd be saying, "I don't want to see him. I don't want to see him." So, when you have another TCAP for third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade teachers, you'd sit there going – okay here we go. He never gave me any specifics to try to raise the scores. And then it was at the point that our building started purchasing lots and lots of test prep materials – it's like, do this, do this, fill in the bubble, fill in the bubble-from August to April.

When test scores are low, the teachers said they wanted to be given strategies and assistance to help them improve the teaching and learning process. The consensus among the participants was that belittling teachers whose scores were low would not help them improve those scores. Jerry stated:

Principal leadership is the second leading factor that influences student achievement with the classroom teacher being first. The principal is in charge of finding what the schools needs are and finding ways to help the teachers achieve them. We have a seasoned faculty so that helps.

At least one participant related that a principals' desperation to make improvements in learning, and ultimately the scores, could sometimes have adverse effects. Sigmund stated:

I think a principal's leadership can have an adverse affect on student achievement and probably when they're doing the most, they're actually doing the worst for student improvement. The stuff that makes administration look good is often most detrimental to a teacher's ability to teach effectively. I think everyone wants to do well. The trick is trusting teachers to use their own unique skills to teach the way they know best.

Jerry gave a well-thought out response, saying:

When a principal shares TCAP results in a faculty meeting in front of everyone so that everyone sees the dips in scores, it puts extra pressure on people. Anytime it lends itself to pointing fingers, it lowers morale and puts the faculty under stress – added stress. Now, when we get our reports back, our principal meets with us as a grade group to discuss the results.

It became apparent that school systems and principals could sometime overload classroom teachers in a quest of finding ways to help them succeed. Hannah talked about a former principal who tried too hard to raise scores and improve work performance. She shared:

In the past, there was no consistency with discipline and every new educational bandwagon, every new program coming and going, we were expected to do. We

couldn't get comfortable. We couldn't master anything and within time, we became very frustrated, and we felt like we became defeated.

The Tennessee Department of Education (2007) stated, "AYP status is also calculated each year for the following student subgroups: White, Hispanic, African American, Native American, Asian-Pacific Islander, Economically Disadvantaged, Students with Disabilities, and English Language Learners" (p. 1). This means that all subgroups are held to the same standards. Traveler was considerate of the special education teacher regarding the mandates of *No Child Left Behind.* She stated, "There's added stress on the resource teacher since *No Child Left Behind.* There's stress on the teacher also because there's no pull-out program, and we don't have enough teacher assistants to help with the various levels." Often, special education students, such as those with reading and math deficiencies, travel to the resource teacher's room for small group or one-on-one instruction, and students with limited English ability get instruction from a teacher trained in that area. Tracy was thinking of disadvantaged children in regard to testing when she said:

> A child who hasn't had breakfast or a child whose dad was drunk all night will not do as well as what I call the hair-bow children. You cannot take a child who cannot academically perform in the classroom and expect him [or her] to perform on a timed test.

The participants shared that some principals, both new and veteran, instinctively knew the pressures teachers felt where testing and test results were concerned. They used the data to help guide the curriculum and share strategies that could bring improvements. Starr acknowledged:

> The way our principal before this one we have now looked at achievement was good in that she truly wanted us to continually improve. This principal is very in tune with our scores; and they are very high, but it's hard to keep getting higher and higher. So, he is very much aware of that and so, for example, if fourth grade has a great gain and fifth grade doesn't, as long as they're not having major negatives, he's okay with that. He's very, very proactive and says, "Let's check these things out; let's try this, or let's do this."

Beth said her principal made sure everyone in the school knew that each class was accountable for the learning at their school, not just the testing grades. Beth explained:

There was a time when the testing expectations were really bumped up through the ceiling, and when we got our test scores back and things were good, we had a celebration. She makes it known that it's not just a third-, fourth-, or fifth-grade thing--it's a school thing. She's done a really good job of having everyone buy into it. It's got to be the whole gang thing for it to work.

The teachers with new principals said most had succeeded in helping relieve test stress for the classroom teachers. The manner in which test data were presented correlated to the level of stress the teachers were feeling.

Schmoker (2006) stated:

Our best plan is for teachers to analyze their achievement data, set goals, and then meet at least twice a month-for 45 minutes or so. That way, they can help one another ensure that they're teaching essential standards and using assessment results to improve the quality of their lessons. (p. 34)

Most of the teachers interviewed said they liked the freedom of working collaboratively within their grade groups to make improvements where needed.

Stress

In addition to the pressure of *No Child Left Behind*, teachers experience other areas of job stress and pressure. From the results, three major themes were found within the construct of teacher related stress: physical health, absenteeism, and work performance.

Beth contributed some personal details regarding teachers' stress:

As a population, I think educators are typically more emotionally involved in our jobs than a lot of the jobs, but I don't think that we could do it any other way. I think you have to learn to balance there. I think you have to work real hard not to fall into that negative downward kind of thing. Because I think very definitely they affect one another. I think what affects me most is fatigue. So, the more stressed things are at school, probably the more sleep I require; this makes me a little bit crabbier at home.

The relationship between principal and teacher must be sincere and caring for the teacher to feel the need to go the extra mile for that leader. Starr explained her relationship with a prior principal:

My first principal, at the middle school level, I thought was very good, but really it was all a front. When it came down to it, it was all about bleeding the faculty dry and getting them to do as much as they could without giving them any support.

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Teachers' personal stress can also bleed into the workday, making it more difficult for principals to lead. Engstrom (1988) stated, "We model concern for others in our day-to-day efforts to take time for them and to help with their personal concerns" (p. 298).

Beth shared her viewpoint from a principal's perspective:

I think the most difficult aspect of being a principal is the fact that you have to get to know each person individually. You have to try to pull from them their greatest and highest potential no matter where they're from or where they started or what kind of stress they have going on personally. The principal has to wear so many hats.

The educators said that getting ready for school to begin and closing the school year out were times of greater stress for educators. Sarah stated:

At the beginning of the year, I would be inclined to say there is a correlation between personal and work morale, but I have been blessed to have always had principals who are very cognizant that the beginning and the end of the year are very stressful.

Researchers have recognized that absenteeism from work increases when there is added stress. As Sigmund stated, "When do you want to leave for a vacation the most? When you're feeling stressed or unappreciated."

Starr commented on absenteeism policies at a previous school:

At another school I was at, it was really rigid about when you could take off and when you couldn't take off. It affected the morale because of the rigid ness of the policy and how much control the principals can have over enforcements. This new principal is not afraid to approach teachers who abuse it, but he understands that sometimes you have to be off.

According to Tracy, the principals she had in the past did have an influence on teachers' attendance. She claimed, "The second principal I had, everyone stressed, so absenteeism was worse. Our current principal plays everything so fairly that I don't think faculty absenteeism is a problem."

Beth commented:

Apparently, we have a problem with absenteeism on some level at our school because we've discussed it at faculty meetings. I definitely think the leadership influences that, and I think it's part of that trust thing. If there's been a conflict, then I think it would be interesting to chart that with the absentees, or if they felt like the trust had been betrayed or if their morale was low.

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She then summed it up uniquely, saying, "If you don't feel the love, then you're more likely to be sick."

Claire referred back to her discussion about the former principal she had who drilled test scores when she said:

> After those terrible things were said, it would definitely make you dread going to work some days. I haven't had a problem, but if you're feeling very frustrated and the principal is just beating you down and saying that you're not good enough, --man, that's tiring. That takes from you. You start thinking: I guess I'm not as great as I thought I was.

Hannah said one of her former principals did not like the teachers to be absent for any reason, and because of that, teachers worried about missing school even when they were sick. Hannah added:

> We had one principal who preached being there; who said there is no way the students can accomplish from someone else. That was made very well aware. I can say I do know for a fact that you heard more teachers speaking of Prozac. You try to get there for the children's sake but sometimes you need a little help. It became a common word at some point.

Sometimes principals can make decisions that teachers have difficulty forgetting. Their tone of voice and lack of concern for the individual's needs can lead teachers to resent decisions principals make. Marlena shared:

> We have very little absenteeism, and it's frowned upon for any reason. With my other principals, there was more understanding. The philosophy then was that teachers do have a personal base, also. Sometimes you need that day off just to pull yourself together – health issues.

Marlena then shared details of her personal experiences:

> I brought up the point to my principal that my parents are aging and there are responsibilities. I'm the girl in the family and I'm also the closest. I'm the one who has to be there. Also, I admitted to the principal that I would have to be late for an in-service at the beginning of the year because my husband had a bad EKG and would have to have a stress test that morning. She said she could not excuse me from the inservice. I was furious and it hurt, you know. I don't know if I was more hurt or mad at the time.

Teachers expressed a desire to feel that their personal life matters to their principals. Good principals should recognize that teachers' outside pressures and stress could affect their classroom performance and their physical health. As relayed by the participants, teachers need

to be respected for the complete individuals they are, not just the teachers who work in the schools.

Communication

There were three reoccurring themes in the construct of communication: listening to teachers, sincerity, and directness. Some of the teachers interviewed found that communication with their new principals was more professional and more frequent than it was with their previous principals. Hannah stated, "We're at a point where we know things ahead of time – it's all consistent. It's in e-mail form, written form, and verbal form. It never changes and never waivers. We're all on the same page at all given times." Jerry agreed, saying, "Our new principal puts a "chat" page in our boxes each week that gives the week's events, announcements, birthdays or something to pray about. If something additional comes up, she sends us a memo."

> Beth shared excellent details as to how communication worked in her school:
>
> Communication is huge; it's the biggest-- from relationships to jobs--in any thing--religion. We have weekly notes on a sheet that we get every Monday morning. We have boards where we post announcements. We have our mailboxes. We do just about everything that's possible there. Our principal gives us, every Monday morning, a weekly note that tells us what's going to happen that week. She tries to give us a little bit of advance notice when something's coming up in a few weeks too, like, "I'm going to be needing this so start thinking about that". Every now and then, on the back of it, there's a little tip about something or a little humor that would help us or make us smile or kind of keep things going in the right direction. She's very thoughtful, and she spends a lot of time making a document that is worth our reading.

Each elementary school in this school system had a decision-making board called "Site-Base" with representatives from each of the different grade levels, staff, parents, and even the school community. This has allowed schools to be somewhat autonomous. Each school's Site-Base team was operated a little differently from the others, but Starr said she liked the way her new principal handled Site-Base and communication, in general. She elaborated:

> I will tell you a few things that I appreciate about our principal - his e-mails – updated e-mails, and faculty meetings with meaning. Also, he gives committee results to the whole faculty and not just to Site-Base. For example, there's someone from each grade level

and each discipline on Site-Base, and we go back to our teammates and say okay this is what we discussed at Site-Base so what's your opinion. The person would bring it back to Site-Base and then that committee makes a recommendation. Then it goes to the faculty. We get feedback. He gets feedback from the whole faculty and by doing that your faculty has input. He utilizes committees, and makes sure they have an agenda and they stick to it.

Starr also stated:

Principals need to possess good communication skills. To me that is the number one quality for a principal. They need to be able to communicate clearly, often, and effectively. When they need to critique, they need to do so in a manner that's not like a parent fussing at a child, but more like colleagues working together.

Claire, too, said she liked the way her new principal communicated. She said she appreciated the value of having someone you can say anything to. She explained the difference between two principals:

I did not have a principal with an open-door policy. At least if there was one, you felt like you could not go and speak openly and freely. Now I do, and it's much better- much, much better. I feel very comfortable going to my principal right now. We sit down, and we talk like adults. It's not like he's going to hold that against me. So, it's huge.

The participants agreed that students also benefit when the principal communicates expectations. Beth said:

Where I am, every student knows the principal's expectations, for reading in particular, and even though I am a math teacher, I understand that. If you get to fifth-grade level and you can't read, you can't do math either. I really would say that 99% of the students in my school could quote our principal on what they should be doing, they should have a book in their backpack, and they should be spending 10-15 minutes every night reading. She'll say, "Show me what you're reading." When someone takes the time to look you in the eye and ask you that, you're going to think it's important.

The second theme in the construct of communication was sincerity. Marlena declared, "Just say what you mean and mean what you say, so we're not always wondering if it's really going to happen." Starr outlined the value of keeping one's word by sharing a personal story:

When the previous principal at the school left, there was a huge breech in trust. She had made this big statement saying, "I'm not even applying for another job. I'm going to be here for you all or you'll be the first to know." Then, we find out in an inservice from another principal that she was leaving. Not an e-mail, not even a letter, not even a note. So, now, what do we remember the most about her legacy? The morale was seriously affected because here's somebody who we thought was a very good principal, a comrade.

This was someone that we loyally worked for, followed, and respected. We trusted her and then this happened.

Pete told of an incident when there was a breech of trust with a former principal:

A couple of years ago where a faculty member had gone to our principal and said they (sic) couldn't do lunch duty because they have a problem with their hearing. All the special area teachers were having to do lunch duty then, you know, and this teacher had a medical issue. Well, at a faculty meeting the principal brings up the issue saying, "You all are trying to get out of everything you're supposed to be doing and I'm getting tired of hearing, "Oh, my ears hurt. So, if you can't hear, well, then it shouldn't bother you to be in the cafeteria." Then another teacher who was going through some marital problems had addressed that to the principal, and at the same faculty meeting, the principal said, "Some of you need to leave your problems at home. I don't care if your husband doesn't love you, and I don't care if your husband doesn't want to be with you."

Brooke said she wanted to be taken seriously and to feel that her opinion mattered. She stated:

I feel that principals need to listen to their teachers. I think that teachers should be able to be very open with their principals about things. When the principal asks you questions, and really wants feedback, to respect that opinion. I've dealt with principals before who just ask your opinion but for no sincere value. They feel like they have to ask your opinion, but they don't sincerely want your input.

Hannah gave a similar opinion, "When consistency doesn't exist, it lowers morale. You could ask the same question and within 10 minutes get two different answers depending on who was asking the question. It brought such a negative feel." Traveler agreed, saying, "This new principal we have is very supportive and consistent. Previously, we were told one thing and something else happened." Marlena admitted, "One of the principals I've had said what you wanted to hear, but I wasn't always sure it was going to really happen."

Ollie discussed a time when her principal refused to communicate with the faculty and that decision caused the faculty to eventually bond without the inclusion of the principal. She shared the details:

There were some transitions being made and the faculty was not on sure footing. We were iffy about several things because a lot of changes had been made. The faculty supported each other, and we tried really hard to figure out what was wrong or what we could do to make things better. We approached the principal as our supervisor and the attitude was more like, "Well, talk about it and let me know what you think" – not wanting to be a part of it. That kind of snowballed. There was no follow up - no real action, and no leadership. We started feeling like we were on our own and that led to

micromanaging and distrust and I don't know that we ever recovered. It was a very sad 2 or 3 years. It caused some friction among the faculty and that turned out to be something positive. We bonded better and that's what gave us what we needed to get through, and we started depending on ourselves.

The final theme in the construct of communication was directness. Many of the teachers interviewed wanted to be spoken to straightforwardly, honestly, and with respect when there was a problem. Starr stated:

It's all about the communication skills, really and truly, but it's about their perceived method of trying to get people to do the right thing but not by intimidation. Being up front and honest is the best policy. If you say you're going to do something, do it. Do not placate people with pretty words and flowers and then just sit on your laurels.

Anna-Marie pointed out what, to her, was obvious, "A principal has to be a master of diplomacy. Once you find them in a lie, it spreads like wild fire." Some of the elementary schools had adopted a new teaching program titled "Learning Focused." Marlena expressed frustration with her principal where this new program was concerned. She explained:

There's a specific way that our Learning Focused lesson plan is suppose to be written. My struggle comes from am I writing it down the right way? And that's where the communication doesn't always come through to the right people. The principal doesn't always go to individual and say, "Yours is right, or you need to work on this." Instead, it's an overall statement in a faculty meeting like, "Some of you are doing well and some of yours are awful." If you have a problem with someone, I feel like the principal should go directly to that person. It's just like nothing is ever right--the nit-picky things. If I'm doing something wrong or ineffective, then I want to be told. Guide me in a way that's going to help me be a better teacher.

Brooke agreed, saying, "I think it lowers morale when the principal preaches to the entire faculty when only a couple of people haven't been doing their job. Those teachers should have been talked to individually instead of everyone."

Effectively communicating to all stakeholders is imperative to having successful schools, but the teachers interviewed expressed that knowing what is happening and why it is happening could relieve the stress of ambiguity and the unknown. At the same time, teachers must be able to trust the principal to be truthful, direct, and sincere so that two-way trust can be built.

Acknowledgment

The next construct was acknowledgment. Acknowledgment included the following

themes: appreciation, support, and taking responsibility for the school. Whitaker (2003) said:

> I want the leaders to understand that getting a faculty to go along with a particular understanding has a limited value. Rather, the key is to develop and establish a school-wide environment that supports everyone's effort to do what is right. If we create an environment where each person does what is best for the students and for the school, we will seldom make a wrong decision. Getting people to do the current thing is fine. Getting people to do the right thing is essential. (p. 90)

Many of the teachers expressed feeling pleasure and pride when the principals

acknowledged their work. Claire elaborated:

> Our principal has said, "I wouldn't be where I am today if I didn't have good staff members like you." Oh, gosh, if that's not going to boost morale, I don't know what is. It's just nice to hear your administrator say, "Hey, I appreciate all the hard work that you're doing."

Beth also said she liked getting verbal affirmations but did not always get them. She

acknowledged:

> Principals who verbally tell people they appreciate them raise morale. Some people are better at it than others are. No matter how trite that might seem, that's really important. You have to verbalize to someone that you appreciate what they're (sic) doing.

Hannah agreed, saying, "Principals raise morale when they continually show

appreciation." Brooke, who has had more than one principal, said she preferred a female

principal because she believes a female does a better job at outwardly showing appreciation. She

shared reasons for her perspective:

> A few years ago we had a woman take over as principal, and she thought of the little things that would help our faculty know we were appreciated. We had a long faculty meeting the first day of school with, you know, 50 things on the agenda. We took a break, and she brought in smoothies for everyone. I think it makes you want to do a better job when you know you're appreciated.

Marlena, on the other hand, stated, "I think a woman can be too driven. I think

sometimes there are too many hormones. And I think some of it is an aspect that I bring in that I

shouldn't."

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Some interviewees mentioned the support they received from their principals when parents and students made the job difficult. Marlena conveyed:

> I think the leadership quality that boosts morale is when the principal is showing support, especially when there's a conflict between a parent and teacher – knowing your principal is going to be there. Now they may not agree with you, but behind closed doors, they're going to say they support what you do. There's just that pat on the back.

There are times when a teacher's emotion rises above his or her reasoning. When this happened to Starr, her new principal handled the situation professionally. She shared the details:

> I had a very large parent problem last year with a student that truly deserved to be tested and serviced and the parents were adamant against it. The child was struggling so much he started misbehaving. The parent accused me of failing her child, I was at my limit, and I lost it. I was saying, "Help the child," and he did qualify for services on two levels. They refused to allow him services but expected me to tutor him.

Starr continued with her story:

> I didn't handle it well. The mother and I were having a heated discussion in the lounge, and finally in the principal's office and basically the principal defused it. He asked me to leave as he communicated with the parent and his sister. After I got home, I cooled down but I was so stupid because I let this woman get to me. I later sent the principal an e-mail and apologized and he said that was all he needed to hear. He never berated me like I was a child, but he also never said, "Well, I understand why you did what you did." He just said, "Okay, let's not let it happen again." For my personal growth, it was unbelievable and he has always been supportive, always willing to listen, and before he would ever talk to a parent, he would talk to the teacher. It's so refreshing to have him for a principal.

Ollie told a similar story where a former principal continually supported the faculty:

> A former principal I had was like, "You WILL respect everyone." The first time there was an issue with a child, you were to make the contact home. Next, you were to send the child to him, he made the contact home, and the issue would be resolved before they could come back to school. He said we were not a day care, and we were not going to baby-sit. He backed us 100%. It was largely a minority and low socioeconomic school, and those parents supported him. They wanted this for their children, and it was an unbelievable 2 years.

Brooke admitted that the dynamics of students in a class could make the teaching profession very difficult at times. She said,

> I had a very, very stressful year last year. It was the worst class that I had ever had in my 25 years of teaching. I knew my principal was on my side. She supported me, and she knew that I was doing the best I could.

According to the participants, principal's can ease the stress burden teachers have by providing verbal and sometimes physical support when they feel overwhelmed. Beth shared some frustration:

> Sometimes, in order to be effective, you have to pull a little chunk of that off and work a little bit at a time. I think I get really down when I feel the expectations are too global and not specific enough. When you get overwhelmed, you have a tendency to say, "Oh, forget the whole thing; there's no way I can get there, so why should I even try." As a principal, you're constantly mentoring your faculty making sure they are comfortable in what they do and what you expect of them.

> Marlena spoke of the value of recognition and feeling appreciated:

> I think sometimes praise in a faculty meeting can boost morale like saying, look what we did, look what we've accomplished. I know test scores are important, but there are other things that go on within the day that can have attention brought to us. It means a lot when the principal says, "You're doing such a good job of keeping everyone happy," recognizing that sometimes it isn't easy.

> Traveler stated, "Our new principal lets us know how proud he is and how well we're doing. He knows the students by name and how well they're doing, too." The participants conceded that the support has to be sincere; the motives behind false smiles have a tendency to surface eventually.

The final theme that emerged in the construct of acknowledgment was taking responsibility for all that occurs during the school day. The teachers said they wanted to know that they were supported and that their principal was up-to-date on current trends relating to school instruction and organization. Jerry answered from an aspiring principal's perspective:

> I am an aspiring principal, and I would see the greatest challenge as answering everyone but not pleasing everyone. I also see safety as being a principal's great challenge. A teacher is responsible for a classroom full of kids, but a principal is responsible for all the students.

Beth discussed a time when she was a special education teacher and confided that she would expect the principal to be up-to-date in that area as well as other academic areas in the school. She elaborated:

> My background is special education, and I have worked with different principals, and directors-- and actually a principal that turned into a director. But special education can be so controversial, and there's always a lot of tension there. The principals sometimes

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just block it out. But the ones who are really effective are the ones who really try to get in there and understand. I think it's the same kind of thing with a problem, and you can say, "Okay, let's just go over there and wait for it to pass" -- cause it will pass; or, you can get in there and solve it. I think it's important that you're visible and that you come in at least from some point and say, "This is how I stand and this is the way that it will be." That validates a teacher and what they're trying to do.

The participants said one problem with accountability came when school systems tried various programs and strategies in order to help scores improve. Pete, too, said he wanted the principal to take responsibility for everything a school encompasses. He acknowledged:

As a principal, I think you have to take responsibility for everything that goes on inside the walls. Whether it be good or bad and you may not even have had anything to do with it, but it's inside your walls. You just don't go around throwing people under the bus.

The participants agreed that the principal should be accountable for finding new teaching strategies that help teachers and students improve. Beth suggested:

I think it's the principal's responsibility to provide us with whatever resources and leadership that we need to make sure that if this is the expectation, that we are well-versed in that and that we feel comfortable with that. That's their job.

On the other hand, some teachers said they recognized that this responsibility included all stakeholders of the learning community. Sarah maintained:

The most challenging job for principals is walking that fine line between the community and the teachers - being that person who is supportive of the teachers and the families as well. I have always felt comfortable being totally honest with my principals. I never felt like I couldn't reveal exactly how I feel.

Treating teachers with respect and appreciation for their hard work were common themes that surfaced during the interview process. Generally, the participants said they wanted the principal to take some of the responsibility for the teaching and learning process by helping to find best practices and learning them along with the teacher. They wanted to be supported as professionals and thanked for their hard work.

Professionalism

Many participants acknowledged that having controlling administrators caused them to feel as if the principals did not trust them to make professional decisions. Brooke seemed frustrated as she related:

> The leadership that I think lowers morale is when someone is a micro-manager- someone who doesn't let you make decisions. They don't give you the leadership role, respect that you are a professional, and you always have to make sure before you make a decision that you go and have it approved by them.

Anna-Marie declared, "Let the teachers teach. Trust that they are going to do what they're trained to do." This distrust caused insecurities in some of those interviewed. It made them question their teaching ability. Sarah summed it for the group by saying, "We need a principal who will say, 'You can do it. You're smart. And if you're weak in an area, I will help you.'"

There is no place for moodiness in education whether it is from the teacher to the student or from the principal to the teacher. Ollie spoke of the need for consistency:

> I want the consistency there. I don't want a hot and cold personality. If you're going to get upset with us about something, then make sure that it's every time that somebody has that idea. That flip-flopping stuff – I can't do that. I've worked under principals who were very tough, but I knew what the expectations were and I knew what I had to do to accomplish that, and I knew I was on safe ground. On the other end, when I don't feel trusted, and I don't feel like the principal knows that I'm going to do what I need to do to get things done, that self-doubt, then you start thinking about all the little things that don't matter. The little things that don't make a good teacher and then you start losing sight and you start losing focus. So then you say, "Well, this is what I'm going to do and he's with me or he's not," and I feel better about what I'm doing, but I don't feel good that somebody doesn't understand. I do want that line drawn to know the principal is my supervisor, and I'm to respect that individual. But at the same time, I still want the trust to know that I'm professional enough to do what I'm suppose to do, and I can make decisions for myself.

Apparently, principals sometimes make broad curriculum decisions without consulting the teachers as to their opinions. Sigmund shared:

> The stuff that makes administration look good is sometimes the most detrimental to the teacher. I think everyone wants to do well, and the trick is allowing them (sic) to use their (sic) own skills to do it the way they can do it best.

Starr said she believed her new principal did a better job than her previous one of accepting different teaching styles that could lead to success. First, she expressed her frustration:

> Our new principal is very respectful of our individual teaching styles. With our other principal, we had to use these thinking maps. It drove me nuts because everybody was supposed to use thinking maps and that was it. You're supposed to teach the idea behind why you're using thinking maps and that to me is what a good principal will do.

She then described the value of diverse teaching styles:

> Unless you're going to clone teachers, every teacher is going to be different. There will be very compatible teachers and some teachers who are not compatible. There'll be teachers who teach one way and are successful and teachers who teach on the whole opposite end of the spectrum and are still successful. Because people are different – kids are different. We don't expect any two students to be alike. If you can't say that what and how you're teaching is for the betterment of the student, then you shouldn't teach it. Why wouldn't you use every trick in the book to get kids to learn? They're all going to be different; they're all going to be different learners. That's where our principal comes in. He is good about understanding different approaches.

In the eyes of the teachers, many attributes contributed to successful principals who were supportive toward teachers. In Anna-Marie's opinion, "Principals must be compassionate, understanding, intelligent, and sensitive, fair, empathetic, and have a sense of belief in the teachers and their abilities." Brooke noted, "I feel that principals should let you make decisions on your own. They should give you control of your classroom." Sigmund pointed out:

> A good principal not only allows mistakes but also expects mistakes. That's the only way you're going to encourage growth. If you don't encourage teachers to take risks, then they will do the same safe activities, like teaching out of the basal for the rest of their careers.

Starr was very complimentary concerning her new principal, stating, "One thing that I like about the principal is that he does not let the parents run the school. They have a voice, and they are respected, but the teachers are the professionals and he acknowledges that."

The participants revealed that when a belief in teachers' ability exists, they have the confidence to perform at their best level for the betterment of the children. Ollie shared the bonuses that came from knowing someone was confident in her abilities:

> I think that because we feel confident, we can do what we need to do, and that feeling comes from superiors who trust us to be professional. It just kind of perpetuates the motion. That makes me feel more professional, which makes me feel more confident.

Just knowing she's depending upon me to do what I need to do to make this a great school, and I'm working harder now than I've ever worked.

Starr agreed that faith in a teacher's ability could lead to reciprocated respect from the teacher. She illustrated:

This new principal at our school earned our trust in the first year, because he did exactly what he said he was going to do. He respected us; he respected our opinions; he listened; he observed. He made very good decisions based on, not emotions, but sound reasoning and he followed through. He does what he says, so the trust is there.

Treating the faculty like children was a concern for some of those interviewed. According to the participants, some principals have difficulty drawing the line between the professionals and the schools' constituents. Starr gave an example:

I had a principal who did not like one-on-one confrontation and so, as a result, because of one or two people who might have done something wrong or inappropriate, she would make a blanket statement that everyone in the school was doing it. I knew they weren't directed at me because the things that were being said, I knew I hadn't done. I felt sorry, though, for the other teachers. Who wants to sit there and listens to that?

She also shared details regarding her school:

So, what lowers morale to me is when a principal is not involved in anything except meetings and evaluations and when at faculty meetings can only tout the negatives and treats you like you're a child. We're all professional adults, and we deserve to be treated that way. I've been at my current school for the last 5 years and had a really good principal, but she did have her negative side. She had a really good rapport with the kids, though. She knew their names, and she tried hard to keep discipline. Sometimes though, the discipline bled into the faculty so the morale was shaky at times.

Marlena, too, said it made her feel unprofessional when the principal made reprimands to the entire faculty instead of addressing negative issues with individuals. She elaborated with a humorous example:

One day, the principal was sitting there blasting the faculty because somebody was coming in late. I mean it went on and on and on, and she got red in the face and was really mad. So you know what? Next time I'm in the office I say, "I am so sorry for being here late" and she says, "You're here by 7:30 everyday." Which is true, but I'm the one who's going to sit in any faculty meeting and think you're talking to me – it's just my personality.

The teachers said they did not treat their students the way some of their former principals treated their faculty. Starr related:

We used to get threatened by our previous principal, "Well, if you don't want car duty, then I guess you're just going to have to do lunch duty." This principal would never do that. There's no power play. There was another time when I was late getting my kids to lunch, and I was fussed at in front of my students. I was told that I was going to have to eat with my students for the rest of the week. I was late because the clocks in my building were different from the clocks in that building, by only a couple of minutes. When those little things happen, you want to be supported and treated like the professional you are, not punished.

Starr then remembered another time she was humiliated by the same principal:

And then there was another time when I was embarrassed. There was an assembly and my students were acing like wild bucks. I was not taking them to that assembly until they settled down. I was going to get control of the class, or we weren't going to the assembly. Our class was the last one to the assembly, and I wasn't late, necessarily, I mean, it hadn't started, but mine was the last class. I was chewed out right there in front of the presenters. I had another teacher watch my class, and I walked out and went to the bathroom. I was so mortified. She said, "Don't come to an assembly late. You get your kids together and get them here on time."

She continued:

So, it's those kinds of things that will stick with a teacher. When those little things happen, you want to be supported not punished--because you want them to see the other part. I'm the teacher who is always there around 7:30 and I never go before 4:00. This principal, however, he notices. He notices if you're on the weekend and you send him an email. He looks at the date and time you sent the e-mail.

Anna-Marie gave an example of a principal whose behavior was unprofessional and

childish:

My principal stands at the door to see who's late. My good buddy came in on time but forgot something in the car. When she came back into the building, the principal had locked the door and was standing there staring at her. She wasn't late, but you can tell someone nicely if they (sic) are late.

Sarah's disappointment surfaced when she gave an example of teachers not being

supported:

Three principals ago we revamped the report card because the one we still have didn't fit with our multi-age program. I think it was a Board approved decision, and we started the school year with it. However, a parent complained and called lots of people about it, and I felt like the principal did not support us. He said, "I'm changing it back to the old way." And that was that. We felt hung out to dry. We spent lots of time and effort trying to make it better. And stuff happens like that sometimes.

The teachers interviewed expressed the need to be treated fairly and like professionals. Sometimes, however, principals in their stressful state treat the faculty like children and nothing is more demeaning. However, it was stated that many of the new principals valued the teachers and their professionalism.

Identifying With Teachers

Some of those interviewed voiced a concern over principals not remembering how difficult it was to be a classroom teacher. In addition, with new accountability standards and publicity of testing results, many of the teachers said they felt the principals had never experienced that level of personal stress. Beth stated, "Principals need to be aware of all the current demands that are placed on teachers." Marlena contended:

> I think they need to be able to read their teachers, to understand what their needs are. I think some of the best principals have come from the classroom, and they don't forget what it was like to be there.

Ollie said her principal was the newest administrator and closer to the classroom experience. She presented the advantages and disadvantages of working with a previous colleague who became her principal:

> I think it's an incredible advantage to know these principals have been in the classroom and went through with you some of the same strategies and situations and times that you've struggled, and they know what that feels like. And I think that's what's made such a difference for me to work for my peer. I know she knows what I do, and I know she knows what I am doing and what my opinions are and how hard she worked at what she did. Therefore, that makes me want to please her more. Because I want her to be proud of us, I want her to know that we would never slack off just because she's a colleague. And, on the flip side of that, when there is something that makes them unhappy, it hurts a little more because you feel like you've really let them down. Before it was like, okay, I'll fix it. But now, I don't want to let her down; I don't want to disappoint her.

Brooke said she also related to a principal with previous classroom experience. She summarized:

> I think my principal is trying to be very helpful and use our time as wisely as we can and tries to do things and use strategies that make our job easier. Our principal is very encouraging to our students as well as to the faculty. I think it makes a difference when

you have a principal who has been in the classroom in the last few years. Principals sometimes forget how overwhelming and stressful teaching can be-especially the tested grades. Sometimes, I think they forget that some things are just not realistic.

Beth's sentiments were similar to those of Brooke. She stated:

Personally, I work best with someone who I think exhibits the same symptoms as a teacher. Most principals were teachers once, and I tend to feel more comfortable with the ones who aren't far removed from that. I think principals who are in the classroom show me that they are involved, and that they want to know what's going on, so they can help you.

Some of the teachers said they viewed the principal's visibility in the school as a factor in

having a positive educational climate. Claire explained:

I prefer the principal who is there all the time. I don't like it when an administrator walks into a room and you as the teacher or the children go "gasp" thinking, what have we done? Why are you here? I want that principal who is there all the time. Come on in. Have a seat - that kind of thing.

How can the principal know what is being taught and how it is being delivered if he or

she never comes into the classroom? Sarah described the importance of having a good model:

It's hard to achieve more than your immediate supervisor. If you see your immediate supervisor as energetic, happy, active, organized and disciplined, you will model that. But if you see your leader not visible, and you don't see them in the hall or in the classroom and you only see them a few days a week, it's hard to exceed what's being modeled.

Starr added:

When a principal is visible, they're more aware about what we do. They are able to help us grow and learn and get better at the same time. It also allows us to feel we're valued. I like them to walk around and be a part of the discussion. I like it when they talk to the students and find out how the students feel instead of just observing with no expression, no communication what so ever – when you don't know whether they think it's good or bad, or indifferent and they may or may not get back to you.

She then gave reasons for the success of her current principal:

I think our principal is successful because he does the work, too. He does do car duty, everyday, and the previous principal never did. He does do cafeteria duty, and he tries to respect our academic time; he tries to respect our afternoons. If he has a meeting scheduled and there is nothing that needs to be discussed, he might just say, "I'm canceling the meeting today. Check your e-mail for a list of things you need to look at and make sure you're aware of. If it's just a matter of giving us dates, and making us aware, we won't meet. He's very conscious of the time we spend outside of this

administration, which is awesome. That alleviates the stress. He works really hard to do that.

The teachers said they felt that paperwork required by the principal should be completed after the children go home. They also said they liked a principal who stayed at work as long as they did. Pete pointed out, "The teachers don't want to feel like they're working that much harder than the principal. I think if you're the leader of the school, you need to put in more time and effort than anybody else."

Tracy said she believed principals must have the same work ethic as teachers:

> The principal should be able to do any task they're (sic) asking someone else to do, be able to step in and help out, and not just watch everybody else do the work. Do any task they're asking someone else to do.

In addition to classroom instruction, teachers also must attend central office workshops, PTA meetings and school social functions and be members of various professional committees. Some teachers interviewed voiced concern for principals who did not value their time, both personal time and work time. When administrators did not give significance to teachers' time, the teachers said they did not feel valued as individuals. Starr explained:

> It's really about interpersonal skills, too, and not making the teacher feel valued – never asking their opinion. As teachers, we're encouraged to get our students involved in class management, in group skill, working together, and sharing ideas, but sometimes you have a leader who doesn't follow that.

Traveler praised her principal for his consideration of teachers' time. She shared, "There are no called faculty meetings, if it can be helped. The principal values our time. He's constantly communicating to us via e-mail and schedules only one faculty meeting a month. He does not intrude on our time."

According to the participants, teachers love to have extra time to go out to eat. That is a privilege other professions have that teachers do not have. Jerry shared details about a novel idea his new principal initiated:

> Our new principal held a lottery, once a month, where she would draw a teacher's name and if your name was drawn, you could have an hour off for lunch, and you could even leave campus. She would pick up your class from lunch, and she would teach them the second half-hour.

Teachers are required to join many committees; however, each principal handles the teacher selection for those committees differently. Beth explained how a principal's approach to committee work could make a huge difference:

> The last two principals I had, approached committee work totally differently. The first one said everybody has to be on a committee and you've got to meet 3 hours minimum and everything has to be documented and when you're finished, you should have a pretty poster board that shows exactly what you did. Now I work for someone who says, "Okay, this is what we're going to do. I'm going to work this up and you guys are going to come in, and I'll give you a copy of it. You're going to read through this on your own time and make suggestions. I'll tweak it, and then I'm going to have it in this little document right here ready to present." No poster board. "I really don't care if it's pretty as long as they can read it." And because you're the leader, you know what it is basically that you want. You know the expectations. And you want input but to take documents just cold like that and to expect people to sit down and do hours' worth of work, so that you can just manipulate it the way you want, I mean is ridiculous. She gets our input but she doesn't expect us to spend hours' worth of work.

Tracy said her principal also valued teachers' extra time, stating, "All our committees are voluntary at our school. You have to sign up for something but you get to choose what you sign up for. At some schools, you're told what to be on. We don't have principal dictatorship."

Time is valuable to teachers. When a principal values teachers, he or she recognizes the amount of time needed to accomplish everything that is expected of them. Some of the teachers interviewed said they believe that "the further away a principal got from the classroom experience, the less considerate that principal became." This lack of consideration could cause undue stress and lower teacher morale.

Building Community

Principals must work very hard to build a positive learning community that has teachers wanting to come to work. The participants conveyed that when teachers feel a part of their school community, they enjoy the camaraderie, and they share that feeling with other stakeholders. In addition, faculties who pull together like families have a desire to work not only for self-improvement but also for the school as a whole. Anna-Marie said, "If a principal can kind of build a sense of family that is sincere-- that boosts morale."

Beth shared her great insight regarding camaraderie:

Our leader decides that occasionally we are going to do things together as a group. Sometimes you have to pull some people screaming and yelling, but once we are there, and we share that time, things seem to be better. I think it's important as a leader to just allocate some time for us to spend together. Some teachers are more hesitant than others, and some of them feel the stress, like, "Oh, I've got to go right home to my child," or "I've got to…" Some of them even have second jobs and things like that. But I think you have to force their hand sometimes just to keep that camaraderie and that spirit built. It's important for a principal to facilitate those personal and social things to keep everyone on the same page.

Pete added:

There's no better feeling whether it's a team, a family, or a work setting but feeling that you're a part of something bigger. I mean it's the best feeling you can have. When the kids are happy, the parents are happy. As a principal, you really do have to be able to read every single teacher and student in that whole school.

Starr recognized the efforts on behalf of her new principal. She stated, "The new principal at my school has worked very hard to make sure that it's cohesive and to make sure everyone is a team player." Anna-Marie stated:

I had a principal during the September 11th terrorist attacks that personally came around to each classroom to explain what had happened. Central Office gave a directive to all the schools saying we couldn't turn on the televisions, but he thought it was important for the students and teachers to be informed. When he came around, you could tell he was touched, and I have always admired him for that.

Hannah said she recognized the massive effort it must take for an administrator to build a family unit at a school:

I see the greatest principal challenge to be camaraderie among the faculty. You've got so many different people there with different views and when I went in, those who were called mentors didn't necessarily want to share everything, but I think all that has changed. I think it's system-wide--talking about team meetings, sharing, and planning together.

Starr said she perceived principals have the same struggles with teachers that the faculty has with students. Starr compared a principal's responsibility to a juggling act:

Keeping such diverse people happy would be a challenge for principals. I mean when you've got 18 faculty members and no 2 of them are alike. Some of them have been there for years and years and some are brand new. You've got some hands-on kinds of teachers and some who are pretty drill sergeant like – sit with your feet on the floor kinds. The principal has to get these people to work together and come together for the

betterment of the school. So being able to maintain morale with so many different personalities involved would be a juggling act. So the principal has to think, who the constituents are, and they are not only the faculty but the students and their parents. It can't be easy.

In fact, according to the participants, building community has not always worked well at some of the schools in the past. Ollie related a story that concluded with her questioning the need for a school principal:

When our school struggles were staring me in the face, and I asked the principal to come to the meeting and somewhat offended he said, "If I show up they won't talk" and I said now, why would that be? You're just as involved as we, are and we've always done things together. However, that was his stand. If he went, people would not say what they really felt. He was stressed just like we were, but he wasn't letting us help him. He started multi-tasking and being a micromanager. He wasn't willing to be part of that and because it was the whole faculty, he took that as him against us. We are not fourth graders. We are adults, and if something's not working, then we need to sit down and talk about it. That was the philosophy we developed, and I think that's what made us so strong. But pulling him outside of that bond and that family was difficult. It really took a nose-dive after that. The faculty came to a place where we just had to realize that this is just the way it's going to be. And I tended to get more and more independent about everything I did. I no longer needed him.

Anna-Marie said she found collegiality in a co-worker when the principal was not working to build community among them. She stated, "There was a new teacher who was hired last year and even though I had the worst class I ever had, she made it all bearable."

Community is built when teachers rely on each other for academic support. Beth explained:

We have school-wide programs that we're all expected to do, using the same practices, and I find that's really helpful because we can go to one another for help or to get ideas. I think a school that has common goals and everyone knows up front that those are their emphasis, then everybody is on the same page and everybody is working together, and I think that makes for a lot of high morale.

The participants agreed that connections could be made if the principal is visible and accessible. Claire added to that opinion by saying:

I think if the principal is known in the building, if they're around, and if they're accessible to the children, it's just like the teachers the children like to please. And if the teachers feel connected to the principal, they're going to want to please the principal as well, so they do their very, very best.

A good principal must also recognize that teachers have other responsibilities outside their teaching day. For instance, Sarah said, "A principal who is empathetic boosts morale. My job is not everything. They allow me to be a mother, wife, best friend, or church member. That allows me to be a whole person.

Marlena agreed:

I'm a mother then a teacher. I want my kids to do their very best within the classroom, and I give it 100%. But I'm a mother first – that's my life. Sometimes principals think it should be school first, then family. I started with a principal who said family did matter and it was important that you keep your family going and now I have one that thinks family is not as important as your job and I struggle with that.

Tracy said, "If a teacher doesn't take care of [his or] her own family, I don't want my child to have [him or] her. Family should be first." Some teachers interviewed discussed how the school community could be destroyed when principals chose favorites among them. Tracy shared an example:

When principals have favorites, it creates an atmosphere of animosity if you're not the chosen one. When there's a favorite in every grade level, their rooms always got the good kids. They got to go to inservice. We loved the former principal but he had favorites. This new principal treats everyone professionally. Once a principal shows favoritism, they can never get it back. Once favoritism is shown to a particular family or to a faculty member, the trust is lost. It's hard to build community when there's distrust.

The participants mentioned that some principals might think they lose control if there is too much camaraderie among faculty members. Marlena gave a description of this practice:

The first principal I had bonded the faculty. He really worked to have it as a whole. The second principal I had was just there for a couple of years and it never meshed. I think part of it was she was on the downhill slide of her career, and there was a lot going on. It was during the merger of all the schools, and I just think it was going to take a lot of effort and it just wasn't there. The principal we have now doesn't want too much bonding. She wants the faculty to work together, but she really doesn't want a lot of friendships within the faculty. The discussion among the faculty is that we really feel like she wants us to work together as a whole, but she's afraid of cliques.

Anna-Marie mentioned that working for a paranoid principal could be stressful. She related a friend's experience:

A principal she had was so insecure he pitted teachers against each other. It was found out and the principal was reprimanded by the superintendent, but the principal ended up taking it out on the teachers involved.

Beth talked about problems that arise when you're not working to stay together as a unit. She described the process:

> I think what kind of happens is that people splinter off, and they'll go and try to bring other people with them and these little subgroups start forming and other little subgroups start. If you can't be together as a team, the whole school suffers and that causes other problems.

Building community takes time and many of these principals were fairly new to their schools. In addition to their new positions, it takes extra time together, not under the pressures of work, to build a fun-loving, close community, especially when no one has extra time to devote to outside activities. Preferential treatment, however, will destroy a positive culture and cause dissention among many. To maximize efforts, principals need to focus on building a caring, passionate, and enjoyable climate and culture.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to construct a theoretical framework explaining the connection between principal leadership practices and the phenomenon of teacher morale. The theory developed in this study provides an explanation of specific leadership styles and how they influence teachers and the overall climate of the school. The theoretical framework included the following constructs: (a) change, (b) leadership style, (c) mandated testing, (d) stress, (e) communication, (f) acknowledgment, (g) professionalism, (h) identifying with teachers, and (i) building community. Many of the patterns and themes related to each of these constructs addressed valuing the individual, recognizing the teachers' efforts, partnering with them to help the students succeed, and treating them as professionals.

Research Questions

Research Question #1

What principal leadership practices have a positive influence on teacher morale?

Smith and Andrews (1989) suggested, "The principal's leadership behavior is shaped by perceptions of how other people want the leader to behave. A sensitive principal soon learns to recognize and respond to these role expectations" (pp. 5-6). With regard to the first research question, the findings of this study were consistent from teacher to teacher, with 12 of the 14 interviewed currently reporting high teacher morale. The findings strongly suggest that there are specific leadership qualities that boost morale among the teachers. Although only two specific leadership styles were mentioned in the interviews, transformational and servant leadership, the participants' descriptions of preferences led to those behaviors and others as well. Adjectives used by the participants to describe leadership that promotes high morale were: "active, happy, organized, disciplined, hard-working, compassionate, honest, courageous, energetic,

encoraging, supportive, humorous, and inspiring." Throughout the interview process, four reoccurring themes answered the research question regarding positive morale. These were: communication, acknowledgment, visibility, and building community.

Communication. "If you don't believe in the messenger, you won't believe the message" (Kouzes & Posner, 2006, p. 47).

Effective and consistent communication was a theme that raised morale when it was good and lowered it when it was ineffective. Many of those interviewed said they would like communication to be consistent, effective, efficient, and, most of all, sincere, so that there is no question as to expectations and occurrences at the school. Communication must also be honest and straightforward; indeed, many of those interviewed said they would like their principals to have open-door policies without threat of retaliation. In addition, principals must be good listeners with a sincere spirit to hear what the teacher is truly communicating. Confidentiality was an added theme to communication; many of the interviewees said they trusted their current principals. Communication can be light, humorous, or serious, but it all needs to be honest and sincere.

Acknowledgment. "Not expressing appreciation to others is like making them invisible" (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p.40).

The next construct from this research study that raises morale was acknowledgment. Many expressed a desire to work harder to please a principal when they acknowledge the teacher's efforts. Principals who verbally show appreciation help raise morale among those working in the school. Many of those interviewed said they would like to be treated with respect and dignity. Sometimes a simple smile or a pat on the back suffices to let the teacher know someone cares. Acts of kindness are often reciprocated, making for a grateful, pleasant climate. Morale is raised when the principal shows appreciation for the hard work and long hours teachers put in. Many of those interviewed said they would like to see an administrator with a

considerate, compassionate side--one who cares about the individuals involved in instructing the children. They said they would like a servant leader who understands the rigors of teaching daily and the demands placed on them by mandated testing. They would like a principal with a willingness to assist where needed. They would like a leader who remembers how difficult it is to be a classroom teacher. Some of the teachers interviewed find that support from the principal when there are conflicts with students or parents will help raise morale. Principal mentoring was also mentioned as a way that can make teachers feel appreciated and supported.

Visibility. "A leader is the one who climbs the tallest tree, surveys the entire situation, and yells, 'wrong jungle!'" (Covey, as cited in Toler, 2002, p. 62).

Many of the teachers interviewed expressed a desire for principals to be a presence in the schools. Many of them said they want the principals to come into the teachers' classrooms often and relate to the students and what they are learning. Many complimented their current principals for doing that already; many said the principals even knew all the children's names. Some interviewed said they would prefer their principal to be visible during the day in the hallways, cafeteria, library, and bus line. The consensus from the participants was that when a principal is an active participant in the school's environment, it allows the teachers and students to feel that they are all in this together. Effective principals know what occurs on a day-to day-basis. They know which students excel, which ones have personal problems, which teachers are master deliverers, and which ones struggle with classroom management. When principals are visible, they help the school and all individuals involved succeed.

Building Community. The ties needed to develop the "we" of community come from practicing leadership by bonding and binding. "Both depend upon the emergence of a community of mind-a set of shared values, ideas, and ideals that define the school as a purposeful community and teachers as a professional community" (Sergiovanni, 1994, p. 198).

The teachers interviewed said they want their school to have "esprit de corps" modeled by the principal, not just for the teachers themselves, but for the student body and the parent community as well. The principal is ultimately responsible for all that occurs at the school, both good and bad, and for setting the climate of the entire school. Some of those interviewed said they want their principals to build a family community by having social functions and fun activities that allows teachers to get together outside of the school without the pressure of testing and committee work. Fostering strong relationships leads to community building.

Research Question #2

What principal leadership practices have a negative influence on teacher morale?

The data gathered from the interviews suggest there are specific leadership behaviors that are non-productive for teachers and schools as a whole community of learners. Most mentioned dictatorship as being a leadership practice that causes anxiety and stress. Another leadership practice mentioned that lowers morale was that of the micromanager--not allowing the teachers to do what they are trained to do. Adjectives used by the interviewees to describe leadership that lowers morale were: "dishonest, clock-watchers, disorganized, insecure, lazy, dictators, poor planners, laissez-faire, moody, inconsistent, paranoid, and unethical."

According to Robbins and Alvy (1995):

One of the difficult aspects of the principals' human relations role is that task and relationship behaviors must be balanced simultaneously. If too much weight is placed on task behaviors as a measure of success, organizational members may feel stressed or pressured. (p. 43)

Mandated Testing. "The best principals spend their human resources carefully, aware of the limited value of many mandates from on high" (Whitaker, 2003, p. 52).

Only two of the study's participants reported currently feeling low teacher morale, but all of the participants said they have experienced that feeling sometime in their careers as educators.

Interestingly, low morale was mentioned only when discussing *No Child Left Behind*--on a federal level. The majority of those interviewed said the *No Child Left Behind* goal of having 100% of third graders reading on grade level by 2014 was absurd and unattainable. When government officials and non-educators write teaching and learning mandates, the realism is absent. As Brooke intelligently put it, "I know our principals are getting a lot of pressure because of *No Child Left Behind,* but I feel like in a couple of years when we get a new president, the pendulum will change in a different direction." Although many of the teachers expressed that mandated testing could be stressful, many also realized it is part of the job and they do the best they can. The lowering of teachers' morale comes from principals who unprofessionally handle the test data that come from the state. When principals share test data with the entire faculty, instead of in grade group meetings, it lowers teachers' morale. When principals place blame on individual teachers or entire grade levels when scores are low, it lowers morale. When principals move teachers to other grade levels because of low test scores, without discussing it with the teachers first, it lowers morale. They need the support of the principals to help them through the stress of achievement tests. According to the participants, many principals were discrete with the test results but others flashed scores during faculty meetings for all to see. Some principals met with grade groups, but the intimidation factor of raising scores was evident.

   Dictators and Micromanagers. "Effective leaders are neither micromanagers who maintain control nor gamblers trying to beat the odds. Rather, their strong sense of control enables them to share power and control-after they have designed the situation for success" (Sashkin & Sashkin, 2003, p. 88).

   Many of the research participants voiced disdain for principals who are dictators. Many of them said they understood the professional, hierarchical division between an administrator and teacher but would like to be asked, politely, to do certain tasks. Demanding action causes teachers to retaliate or retreat. Similar to the dictatorship style is the micromanager.

Micromanaging was a reoccurring theme when the participants were asked about leadership styles that lower morale. When every action is scrutinized by the principal, there is little room left for joy and creativity at work. Many of the participants shared stories of principals who were extremely controlling and did not trust them to teach in their preferred style. Some of the participants said they felt low morale when they were not treated as professionals. Some even told stories of being scolded like children in front of others. When teachers are not trusted to do what they think is best, it lowers morale and makes them question their methodology. Another reoccurring story from the participants that leads to low teacher morale is when principals "blast" the entire faculty when particular individuals break the rules. Making blanket statements or reprimands to everyone in a faculty meeting lowered the morale of those who were following the rules.

Principals' Pets. "From a leader's perspective, the most serious betrayal has to do with thwarting human potential, with quenching the spirit, with failing to deal equitable with each other as human beings"(De Pree, 1992, p. 34).

Some of the interviewees expressed feeling low morale when principals had faculty favorites. Some teachers even said they have had principals who pitted them against each other. There is no team building when that type of leadership exists. Even the perception of favoritism should be guarded against by the leader of the school. Some of those interviewed told stories of principals who had favorites; they granted privileges to some and not to others. Dissention and resentment toward the preferred ones was a result of that type of ineffective leadership decision.

Relating to the Teachers. "Not only do leaders understand their own function--their role-- they also know the roles of the other members on their team" (Toler, 2002, p. l05).

When principals forget what it was like to be a teacher, they lower teachers' morale. The evidence showed that many of the teachers interviewed were overwhelmed with new curriculum strategies and methods to help improve learning; when principals keep adding to that workload,

as if they "don't care," it lowers teachers' morale. All teachers are required to do committee work, but those principals who formed committees for every school decision and expected the results to be presented in a time-consuming way caused the participants to get to "burn-out" quicker.

Time. "Extraordinary achievements never bloom in barren and unappreciative settings" (Kouzes & Posner, 2006, p.44).

Some teachers complimented their principals who value their after school time and recognize that when they are not teaching, they are planning, grading, and creating. When principals take that planning time away for unnecessary meetings or when they schedule faculty meetings for announcements only, it lowers morale and makes the teachers feel undervalued. Some participants said morale was also lowered when they felt their personal family life was not valued by the principal. Work is important, but a teacher's own family should come first. All participants wanted to be treated professionally and fairly.

Research Question #3

In what ways does the influence of principal leadership on teacher morale explain teachers' work performance, physical health, and student achievement?

Connors (2000) stated:

Great leaders provide authentic praise and work effortlessly to implement, maintain, and sustain a positive morale. A school with esprit de corps is a school of highly engaged, energized, and performing adults that *(sic)* are there for the students. When morale is high, students benefit greatly. You can feel the electricity of a highly energized and professional faculty within minutes of entering the building. (p. 70)

Work Performance. "Good leaders never ask people to function in ways they're not equipped to serve" (Toler, 2002, p. 105).

Some of the interviewees acknowledged wanting to please their administrator, much as a child wants to please his or her teacher. Conversely, other interviewees said when the leadership

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was demanding and negative, it made them want to become independent and teach without any guidance or interaction with the leadership. Many of the interviewees admitted they worked harder when the principals recognized the amount of time they put into teaching. Those principals who expected hard work without voicing appreciation for it caused the morale of teachers to fall. Many voiced that they want to see the principal working as hard as the teachers do. Some of those interviewed praised their principals for doing duties that teachers are required to do such as car duty, bus duty, and cafeteria duty. Some of those interviewed also spoke about principals who jump on every new curriculum bandwagon in desperation to make achievement gains. They agreed that it was hard to be masters of anything with so much given to them. There are certain times in the school year that are more difficult for classroom teachers, but when a principal is cognizant of those busy times, it raises morale and gives the teachers the push to continue.

Absenteeism. "When people are satisfied in their work environment, they do not like to be absent. Great leaders create a climate where people want to be" (Connors, 2000, p. 30).

Many of the participants said they did not feel that teacher absenteeism was a problem at their schools. They had been in schools, however, under poor leadership, when absenteeism was an issue. Most credited the leadership with not obsessing over absenteeism. Even the two teachers who were currently experiencing low morale tried not to miss school--not necessarily because of the leadership but because they loved teaching and knew they must be there for the children. Stress was experienced by each participant at some time in his or her career. Not all stress was the direct result of principal leadership, however. Some of the stress was caused by the nature of the job and was self-inflicted. The teachers acknowledged some principals who were aware of those who came early and left late and when they voiced recognition, it raised the teachers' spirits and self-esteem.

Physical Health. "There's a direct correlation between fun on the job and employee motivation, productivity, creativity, morale, satisfaction, and retention" (Bruce & Pepitone, 1999, p. 97).

Paraphrasing one participant, the profession of education is an emotional one and you need strong, caring leadership to help combat the stress. Many of the teachers mentioned stress as being "a given in their jobs," but they said they were used to it. Some mentioned fatigue as being the worst physical ailment they experienced that could alter the way they treat the students. Many stated they believed principals' relaxed attitude toward testing and achievement gains helped them feel more at ease. One interviewee did refer to medication taken by teachers to combat stress. She mentioned that teachers could not be absent because the students did not learn as much with a substitute, so they took anti-depressants to help with the stress.

Student Achievement. "School principals can affect student success by helping teachers be the best they can be (Robbins & Alvy, 2004, p. 89).

Some of those interviewed said they felt that student achievement was rising because of the mandated testing and the focus on accountability. Most stated they felt the principal's role in raising that achievement level was to alleviate the already stressful pressure placed on the schools to make gains and to guide the teachers through the anxiety of it all. Many of those interviewed claimed the principal was responsible for providing all the resources necessary to make those improvements. When principals offer additional resources and provide helpful strategies, the teachers said they felt they were all in it together. Principals who get to know the children and become involved in their learning become part of the formula that helps students achieve.

Research Question #4

What lessons can be learned about the connection between principal leadership and teacher morale from this study?

Connors (2000) stated:

Great leaders know the importance of job satisfaction. Employees want to feel appreciated, respected, empowered, and valued. When a leader takes the time to communicate, care, collaborate, and feed a staff, amazing results occur. A positive leader lets the staff know that efforts are appreciated, failure is not fatal, and recognition through fun is central. (p. 111)

Principals must be leaders not managers. They must be visible and have vision in order to have followers. Teachers want to be respected and recognized for the jobs they are doing, even when their test scores are not great. The teachers want to see the principals interact with the children and other staff making those relationship connections that help the community as a whole. They want to see principals work as hard as they do. They do not want to be doing tasks that the principal is above doing. Unfortunately, the daily demands on principals leave little time for nurturing, advising, consoling, and motivation. Each action needs a reaction and that reaction can be a positive one or it can be construed as negative. This positive reaction is what the teachers said they would like to see. Many of the participants' stories related to tone of voice and treatment from the principals to the teachers. The consensus among the participants was, "It's all about interpersonal skills and being treated with respect."

Researcher's Job Change

An interesting change took place while the data were being collected and analyzed. The researcher attained an assistant principal's position in the same school system as the research study but not at one of the schools used for the research. The new position in no way altered the data collection, data analysis, or the results of the research. In reality, it gave the researcher a dual perspective--that of both teacher and administrator.

Restructuring of Schools

An additional theme that emerged from the data collected and analyzed pertained to the leadership changes at each of the elementary schools in the research study. In every interview, the teachers referred to past principals' leadership and the different ways the schools are being

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operated now. Each school used in the study had new- to fairly-new principals with the longest being tenured there for 6 years. Because of having three different superintendents, retirement of principals, and school zone restructuring in the city, the leadership at the elementary schools has experienced quite a bit of fluctuation. The teachers in the study were the constant in the history of these elementary schools. Many of the interviewees had been at their respective schools for many years and had witnessed volumes of change because of leadership adjustments. When entering into this study, the researcher was concerned with ways to raise morale for elementary teachers who are under much pressure because of mandated testing and curriculum changes. The researcher also had career goals of being an administrator; thus, the topic was formed: *Principal Leadership and its Perceived Influence on Teacher Morale.* The restructuring of the schools was never anticipated; yet, as each person was interviewed, it became a very important piece of the puzzle. The many years of teaching experience from the participants combined with the changes in school leadership have provided amazing stories of relationships, differences, and comparisons to leadership that works to help everyone succeed.

Recommendations

Based on this study, the following recommendations for practice in the area of principal leadership are made. As stated by Kouzes and Posner (2006), "Leadership is a relationship. It's a relationship between those who aspire to lead and those who choose to follow. Whether the relationship is with one or many, leadership requires engaging others" (p. 48).

Recommendations for Principals

Teachers in this study made the following recommendations for principals based on their experiences and what they desire in a school leader:

1. Communication must be consistent and thorough: Use every means possible to make sure everyone knows what is happening.

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2. Include teachers in the decision-making so that all can work together to accomplish school goals.

3. Be visible during the day so that the students see you taking an active role in their learning.

4. Recognize teachers' efforts verbally or with a note so they know they are appreciated.

5. In public, support the teachers over the parents and then privately tell them what they need to work on.

6. Be upfront and honest so that improvements can be made: If someone is doing something wrong, tell him or her in person.

7. Be ready to do any task that you expect the teachers to do.

8. Treat teachers like professionals and trust the teachers to do what they do best – teach.

9. Value a teacher's time.

10. Smile more; laugh more.

11. Do not play favorites.

12. Do not flash state test scores for the entire faculty to see; instead, go to teachers individually and give strategies if there is an area of weakness.

13. Remember your own classroom teaching years, and do not overwhelm the teachers with unnecessary work.

Recommendations for Future Research

It is only fair to now hear from elementary school principals. If teachers draw their morale, energy, and validation from the principal's leadership, from whom do principals draw theirs? If schools are to build communities based on family principles and values, the principals' perspectives must be included; therefore, one recommendation for a future study would be to interview principals to garner their perspectives as to how teachers can help them maintain high morale. Another recommendation for a future study would be to interview students to obtain

their perspectives on what, in their opinion, principals can do to help them learn better, enjoy the learning process, and feel a part of their school community.

An interesting discovery from this research study was the positive effect the new principals had on those who were interviewed. Is it difficult for principals to remain effective when they have been in the position for many years? The above recommendations for future research should prove to be interesting studies.

Summary

Most of the teachers in the study were currently experiencing high teacher morale. Of those interviewed, 100% said they loved their teaching job and the schools in which they were employed. For the most part, the leadership changes had been successful and the participants were working with their current principal to create a family bond that fosters a positive climate for everyone. The participants agreed it was "all about interpersonal skills and relating" to those individuals involved in the daily grind of education. The daily demands on teachers leave little time for camaraderie and making relationship connections except with the children. There has to be effort made on the part of both principals and teachers in order to raise morale and build an educational culture and climate that is pleasant, successful, and enjoyable for everyone.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Letter to Participants

Anne Runyan Littleford
XXX Any Drive
Any City, ST XXXXX

Date:

Dear Teacher,

I am a student at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City working toward a doctoral degree in School Leadership. I am currently writing my dissertation on Principal Leadership and Its Perceived Influence on Teacher Morale, and I would like to know if you would be interested in being part of the study.

The intent of this study is to examine principal leadership practices and the principal's perceived influence on morale from a teacher's perspective. As a willing participant, I will ask you questions pertaining to your views of principal leadership practices that raise or lower morale and how, in your opinion, morale influences work performance, teacher health, student achievement, and the climate of your school. Persons participating in this study can expect to spend about one hour being interviewed and recorded by an audio-recording device. Participants may withdraw their data at the end of their participation if they decide that they did not want to participate after all.

Participants' identity and personal information will be kept confidential and will be destroyed as soon as the study is completed. By participating in this, you will be giving me permission to quote you. Your name will not be used in any form when quoting. The results will be published in a dissertation document and possibly a qualitative journal or higher education journal.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary, and you may withdraw your participation at any time. If you are interested in learning more, please call me at XXX-xxx-xxxx or XXX-xxx-xxxx. You may also e-mail me at lil4d@charter.net or littleforda@jcschools.org.

Sincerely yours,

Anne Runyan Littleford
Graduate Student
Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis
East Tennessee State University

APPENDIX B

Informed Consent Form

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
East Tennessee State University
Veterans Affair Medical Center

INFORMED CONSENT

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Anne Runyan Littleford

TITLE OF PROJECT: *Principal Leadership and Its Perceived Influence on Teacher Morale*

This Informed Consent will explain about being a research subject in a study. It is important that you read this material and then decide if you wish to be a volunteer.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this research is to provide an explanation of specific leadership styles and how they influence teachers' work performance, physical health, and student achievement as well as the overall climate of the school.

DURATION: The participant will be asked to share their information in one face-to-face interview lasting approximately 60 minutes. Should the participant wish to continue the interview, it will be accommodated at their request at a mutually convenient time. Any additional information that is needed for clarification and accuracy will be taken over the telephone. The duration of the data collection and analysis phases of this study will be from May, 2007 to May, 2008.

PROCEDURES: The procedures used will consist of face-to-face audio-recorded interviews of the participants. Information gained will be analyzed using the NIV07 computer program. This program will allow comparison of information so that conclusions may be drawn concerning principal leadership and teacher morale.

POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS: There will be minimal to no risk to individuals participating in this study. The participant may decline to answer any question at any time for any reason. They may also terminate the interview at any point in the process if they choose and may withdraw from further participation in the study of their own choice. They may withdraw their data once transcribed and read. Interviews will be conducted off-campus.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS and/or COMPENSATION: The information from this study will be shared with schools and other parties interested in promoting high morale for teachers. Some satisfaction may be taken from the interview knowing the teachers are allowed to express their opinion and concerns regarding principal leadership and teacher morale.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Anne Runyan Littleford

TITLE OF PROJECT: *Principal Leadership and Its Perceived Influence on Teacher Morale*

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS: If you have any questions or research-related problems at any time, you may contact Anne R. Littleford at XXX-xxx-xxxx or Dr. Kathy Franklin at XXX-xxx-xxxx. You may call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board for any questions you may have about your rights as a research participant.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Each participant's right to privacy will be maintained. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming you as a participant. The work may be used in a final research report but no identity will be given to quoted material, protecting confidentiality. The research information will only be available for inspection by personnel for the East Tennessee State University Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis in collaboration with the researcher and East Tennessee State University Campus Institutional Review Board.

COMPENSATION FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT: East Tennessee State University (ETSU) will pay the cost of emergency first aid for any injury that may happen as a result of your being in this study. They will not pay for any other medical treatment. Claims against ETSU or any of its agents or employees may be submitted to the Tennessee Claims Commission. These claims will be settled to the extent allowable as provided under TCA Section 9-8-307. For more information about claims, call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board of ETSU at 423-439-6053

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION: The purpose, risks, and benefits of the project have been explained to me as well as are known and available. I understand what my participation involves. Furthermore, I understand that I am free to ask questions and withdraw from the project at any time, without penalty. I have read, or have had read to me, and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A signed copy has been given to me. Your study record will be maintained in strictest confidence according to current legal requirements and will not be revealed unless required by law or as noted above.

_____
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT   DATE

_____
SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR   DATE

APPENDIX C

Letter to Principal

Principal [Name]
xxxx Avenue
Any City, Tn 37xxx

April 30, 2007

Dear Mr. [Name],

      I am a student at East Tennessee State University working on my doctoral dissertation. In my research study, I will be interviewing teachers from different elementary schools regarding principal leadership practices and its perceived influence on teacher morale. Conducting the personal interviews at the participants' home schools might make the participating teachers feel uncomfortable and unwilling to be open with their responses. Since [Name of School] is not involved in the study, I am asking your permission to conduct the face-to-face interviews at your school. Using a neutral site will allow the participants to feel free to converse openly.   Please feel free to contact me by phone or through e-mail to let me know your response.

Sincerely,

Anne Runyan Littleford
Doctoral Candidate
Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis
East Tennessee State University

Interview Guide

1. What qualities do you believe principals need to possess in order to be effective leaders?
2. In your opinion, what specific leadership qualities boost your morale?
3. In your opinion, what specific leadership qualities lower your morale?
4. Do you feel your personal work morale is an example of the school's morale as a whole?
5. What specific actions can be taken by the principal to boost morale?
6. What changes have occurred in the past few years that affected morale at your school?
7. Can you give a specific example when a principal's leadership helped the faculty's morale improve?
8. Can you give a specific example when a principal's actions lowered the school's morale?
9. In your opinion, describe the communication at your school.
10. Do you see communication as being an important leadership quality in influencing teacher morale? Please describe.
11. Do you see trust as being an important leadership quality in influencing teacher morale? Can you give an example?
12. To what extent, if any, do you think principal leadership influences student achievement?
13. To what extent, if any, do you think principal leadership influences teacher absenteeism and is there a problem with that at your school?
14. In your opinion, do you feel work stress affects your personal and work morale?
15. Can you think of specific ways a principal could alleviate work stress?
16. What do you see as the greatest challenge a principal must have where the faculty is concerned?
17. How would you describe teacher morale at your school since No Child Left Behind? Has there been a change in morale?
18. If you've had more than one principal while being a teacher, describe, in your opinion, the leadership style that you preferred and why.
19. If you have had more than one principal while being a teacher, describe, in your opinion, the leadership style that you least liked and why.

VITA

ANNE RUNYAN LITTLEFORD

Personal Data:	Date of Birth: December 24, 1956
	Place of Birth: Springfield, Ohio
	Marital Status: Married

Education:	University of Tennessee
	French, B.A.
	1979
	East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee
	Supervision and Administration, M.Ed.
	1985
	East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee
	Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, Ed.S
	2002
	East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee;
	Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, Ed.D.;
	2007

Professional Experience:	Classroom Teacher, Towne Acres Elementary School, Johnson City Schools
	1980-1981
	French Teacher, Science Hill High School, Johnson City Schools
	1981-1994
	Classroom Teacher, Liberty Bell Middle School, Johnson City Schools
	1994-1995
	French Teacher, Fairmont Elementary School, Johnson City Schools
	1995-1996
	French Teacher, Lake Ridge Elementary School, Johnson City Schools
	1998-2007
	Assistant Principal, Lake Ridge Elementary School, Johnson City Schools
	2007-present