

# Supervisory Practices of Three Female Principals in the Era of No Child Left Behind

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The purpose of this study was to describe the present status of teacher supervision and evaluation in the era of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) as experienced by three female elementary principals and twelve female elementary teachers in a suburban school district in Western Pennsylvania. The study compared the findings from the literature in the areas of supervision and evaluation, leadership, communication style, power orientation, and ethic of care, with the beliefs and reality of present practice. The literature cited focused on the ways that female principals enact the role of an instructional leader when supervising and evaluating teachers.

The study took the form of a case study in order to provide a detailed description of a single school district in Western Pennsylvania. Three elementary schools, each headed by a female principal, were studied in the district. Interview questions were constructed based on the research questions. Each interview was transcribed and content analysis was employed to identify commonalities in the data. Common themes were identified for each research question based on the responses of the principals and teachers.

The study revealed profound consistency between the information cited in the literature and the information reported by the three elementary principals and twelve female elementary teachers in the areas of supervision and evaluation, leadership, communication style, power orientation, and ethic of care. The study also revealed the potential conflicts between the beliefs of the principals and the NCLB legislation and the effects of NCLB on the practices of the principals and teachers.

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## **1. A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

### **1.1. INTRODUCTION**

The passing of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, has cemented the present focus on accountability in education. To comply with the mandates of NCLB, each state has developed its own accountability plan. Pennsylvania's accountability plan (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2003) details the performance indicators and targets, incentives, assistance, and consequences it will use to measure and improve student achievement.

Teacher quality is an important emphasis of the accountability movement. In fact, a key provision of NCLB highlights teacher quality. However, NCLB limits its definition of teacher quality to only include the attaining of state certification and the passing of licensing exams in the teacher's field (*K-12 Principals' Guide to No Child Left Behind*, 2003). Experts agree that teacher quality is the most important factor in determining student achievement (Goodwin, 1999; Wenglinsky, 2000, 2002; Kaplan & Owings, 2001; Collinson, 1999; Reichardt, 2001; Schalock, Schalock, & Myton, 1998; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996, 1997). In contrast to NCLB, these researchers include concepts such as the teacher's knowledge of content and pedagogy, the teacher's skills and classroom practices in delivering the curriculum, and the teacher's relationships with students and other members of the school

community when defining teacher quality (Wenglinsky, 2002; Schalock, Schalock, & Myton, 1998; Collinson, 1999). Kaplan and Owings (2001) note,

Teaching quality refers to what teachers do to promote student learning inside the classroom. Teaching quality includes creating a positive learning climate, selecting appropriate instructional goals and assessments, using the curriculum effectively, and employing varied instructional behaviors that help all students learn at higher levels. (p. 64)

In *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future* (1996), the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future asserts,

What teachers know and can do is the most important influence on what students learn; recruiting, preparing, and retaining good teachers is the central strategy for improving our schools; and school reform cannot succeed unless it focuses on creating the conditions in which teachers can teach, and teach well. (p. 10)

Few can argue that teacher quality does not have a tremendous influence on student achievement, a primary factor in determining the success of schools. Principals influence teacher quality through the supervision and evaluation of teachers.

With this emphasis on teacher quality, the role of the school principal is changing to one that focuses on instructional leadership (Checkley, 2000b; Smith and Andrews, 1989; Leithwood cited in Irwin, 1995). Smith and Andrews (1989) state that as an instructional leader, the principal is viewed as

(1) Providing the necessary resources so that the school's academic goals can be achieved; (2) possessing knowledge and skill in curriculum and instructional matters so that teachers perceive that their interaction with the principal leads to improved instructional practice; (3) being a skilled communicator in one-on-one, small-group, and large-group settings; and (4) being a visionary who is out and around creating a visible presence for the staff, students, and parents at both the physical and philosophical levels concerning what the school is all about. (p. 23)

Hart (1995) concurs, adding that principals determine instructional programs, set goals and standards for achievement, visit classrooms, motivate teachers, and establish policies. The role of the principal continues to evolve from that of manager to one of instructional leader: "School districts have, in large numbers, realized that they need not just a caretaker, a good old boy who follows the rules, but a creative administrator who can add new dimensions of community support, teacher morale, and innovative programs" (Enwall & Fabal, 1998, p. 11). As an instructional leader, a principal can make these needed changes to his or her school via teacher supervision and evaluation:

The outcome of effective teacher evaluation has the potential to raise standards and substantially improve student achievement. The large scale reform initiatives that many, if not most, of American schools are faced with can be enhanced when the principals are committed, consistent, knowledgeable, and skilled evaluators of teachers' pedagogical skills. (Zimmerman & Deckert-Pelton, 2003, p. 35)

However, as the principal becomes increasingly focused on instructional matters, other tasks still demand the principal's energy. Starratt (1997) states that an "unpredictable but incessant flow of events confront administrators in everyday school life, causing them to lurch through a schedule laden with conflicts, crises, and instant problems, interspersed with meetings, paperwork, insistent telephone messages, and veiled threats from a dissatisfied community" (p. 5). The principal of a school has a myriad of tasks to perform. Peterson (2000) identifies these tasks as "organizational head; stabilizer; instructional leader; decision maker; adjudicator; disciplinarian; resource economist; personnel manager; district, community, and parent liaison; local legal authority; team player; and physical plant manager" (p. 342). In their study of principal leadership responsibilities, Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2004a) identify sixty-six leadership practices embedded in twenty-one leadership responsibilities. These responsibilities

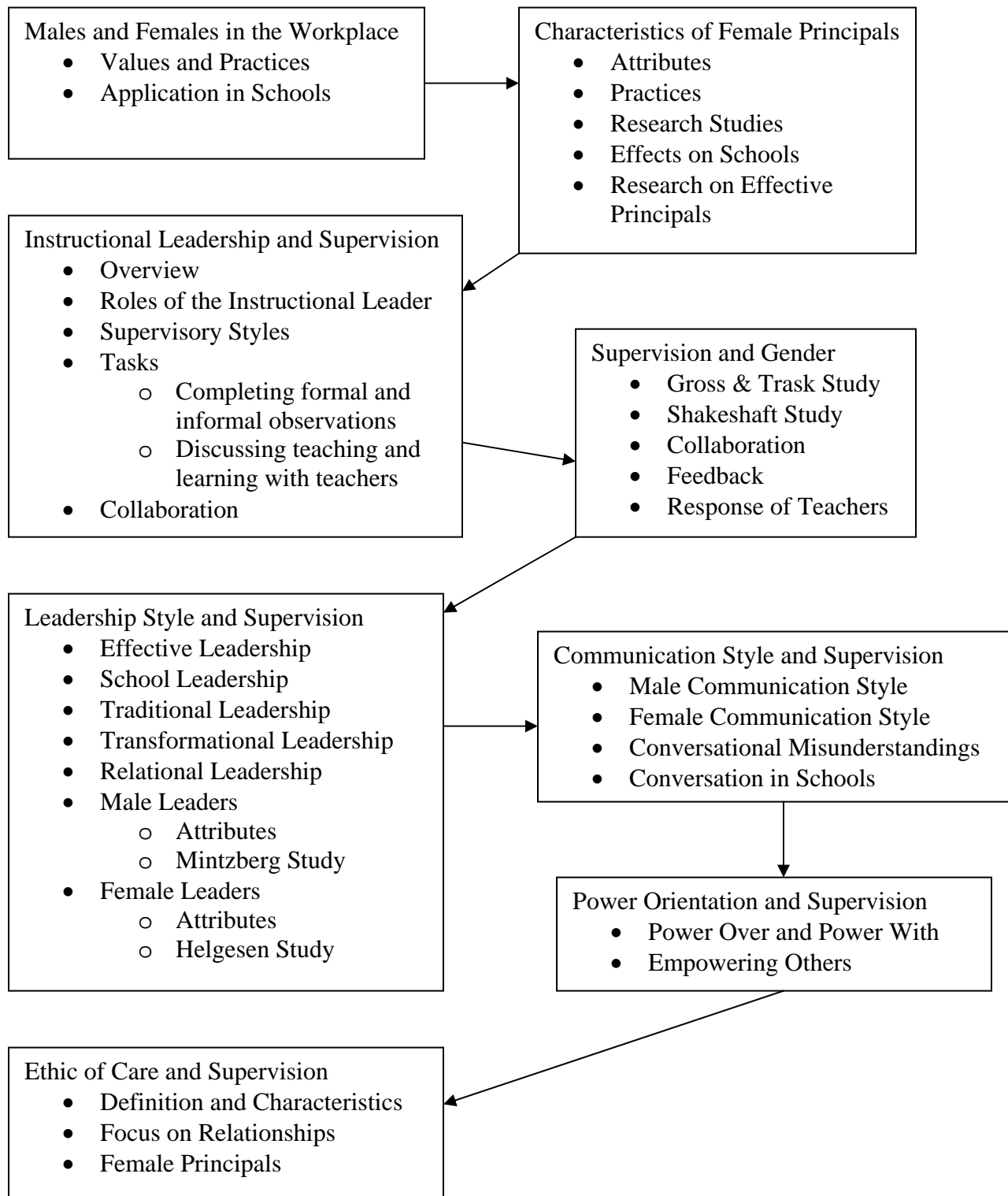
include: culture; order; discipline; resources; curriculum, assessment, and instruction; focus; knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment; visibility; contingent rewards; communication; outreach; input; affirmation; relationship; change agent; optimizer; ideals/beliefs; monitors/evaluates; flexibility; situational awareness; and intellectual stimulation.

The supervision and evaluation of teachers is a key task for principals that will become increasingly important under the mandates of NCLB. States are also becoming more involved in the evaluation process. The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), for instance, has recently mandated forms (PDE 426, 427, and 428) and procedures for teacher performance assessment, requiring evaluation in the areas of planning and preparation, classroom environment, instructional delivery, and professionalism. These forms are based on the Danielson (1996) model. While states may mandate standards and procedures for the supervision and evaluation of teachers, they cannot mandate the approach and emphasis of the individual principal.

Due to the increasing demands on the principal's time for both instructional and managerial activities, one wonders if the gender of the principal is a determining factor in his or her successful navigation of the complexities of the role, particularly in the era of NCLB. Mertz and McNeely (1998) observe, "The increasing presence of women in administration has fueled the debate about whether females and males lead differently, see the situations in which they find themselves differently, and/or think differently about the work and the people with whom they work" (cited in White, Martin, & Johnson, 2003, p. 355). This review of literature is based on the assumption that a principal's gender may influence his or her performance as an instructional leader. The literature specifically focuses on the ways that female principals enact the role of an instructional leader when supervising and evaluating teachers. A study of how the gender of the

principal influences the supervision and evaluation process is important since teacher quality is a critical factor in the accountability movement.

This review of literature is divided into the following sections: males and females in the workplace, characteristics of female principals, instructional leadership and supervision, supervision and gender, leadership style and supervision, communication style and supervision, power orientation and supervision, and ethic of care and supervision.



**A Review of the Literature:  
Conceptual Framework**



## 1.2. MALES AND FEMALES IN THE WORKPLACE

Many writers have chronicled the differences between men and women that exist in the business, social, and educational worlds: Men value independence, competition, distance, and autonomy, while women value interdependence, relationships, connection, intimacy, and agreement (Helgesen, 1990; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule, 1997; Gilman cited in Hurty, 1995; McGee Banks, 1995). Gougeon (1991b) notes, "Females tend to show more concern for people and males tend to show more concern for task" (p. 21). Men view their work relationships in terms of a hierarchy and as opportunities to establish power, while women view their work relationships in a cooperative context and as opportunities to establish connections (Deemer and Frederics, 2003; Growe and Montgomery, 2001; Witmer, 1995). According to Gray (2002), men are viewed positively at work because of their competence and skill, while women are considered to be doing an effective job when they show their caring, consideration, and dedication. Helgesen (1990) believes that many of these differences are the result of the differing emphases of childhood play:

Girls' games teach them the importance of preserving and enhancing relationships - a long-term focus - while boys' games teach them to preserve and enhance their own feelings of self-worth at the expense of relationships - a competitive focus that is of necessity short-term. (p. 248)

Porat (1991) concurs, adding that girls place more value on relationships than on winning. These articulated differences function in many settings including schools.

In educational settings, male and female principals hold opposing priorities and task emphasis. Principal behavior is often influenced by gender (White, Martin, & Johnson, 2003). Shakeshaft (1989) states, "Although women and men overall tend to do the same things in

carrying out their work, they may put a different emphasis on the importance of the tasks" (p. 171). She adds, "Some work gets more attention than other work depending on the gender of the administrator" (p.171). According to Sernak (1998), women equate school reform with caring, while men equate it with power. Cioci, Lee, & Smith (1991) add that female principals spend more time with teachers, students, and parents than men do.

Based on these established differences, further explanation of the lives of female principals is warranted. The literature cited will depict the work habits of female principals, their instructional focus, the effects of having a female as principal of a school, and the research on effective principals.

### **1.3. CHARACTERISTICS OF FEMALE PRINCIPALS**

Many researchers have depicted the lives of female principals (Shakeshaft, 1989; Growe and Montgomery, 2001; Dorn, O'Rourke, & Papalewis, n.d.; Stanley, 2002; Adler, Laney, & Packer, 1993; Hurty, 1997; Weiss & Cambone, 1994). These researchers have described female principals as being child and achievement centered, more focused on teaching and learning, motivated by building and maintaining relationships, and more visible in schools.

In her extensive study of female administrators, Shakeshaft (1989) argues that "women possess characteristics that are conducive to good schooling" (p. 200). She found that female principals

- Focus on instructional and educational issues.
- Stress achievement within a supportive environment.

- Stress cooperation.
- Facilitate vision into action.
- Monitor and intervene more than men.
- Evaluate student progress more frequently than men.
- Manage more orderly schools.
- Encourage participation in decision-making.

As a result of her research, Shakeshaft describes schools headed by a female as child centered, small, nonhierarchical, and marked by shared decision making. She also concludes that the style of female principals is motivated by a focus on building community, establishing relationships, and improving teaching and learning. Shakeshaft adds that female principals spend more time interacting with others in order to improve their schools. In describing the female principal's work day, she notes, "Women spend more time with people, communicated more, care more about individual differences, are concerned with teachers and marginal students, and motivated more" (p. 197). Shakeshaft concludes that female principals view their role as master teacher or educational leader.

Witmer (1995) identifies the following as advantages of having a female principal:

- Females have more knowledge of instructional supervision than men.
- Teachers prefer working with women.
- The performance of students and teachers is higher under female principals.
- Teachers and supervisors prefer the problem-solving and decision-making of women.
- Women are more concerned with helping students.
- Women emphasize the technical skills and organizational capabilities of teachers in evaluation.

In their study *Teachers and Principals: Gender-related Perceptions of Leadership and Power in Secondary Schools*, Cioci, Lee, & Smith (1991) reveal that female principals devote more of their workday to activities which connect them to teachers and students including spending more time in classrooms and walking in the hallways, communicating with teachers and students, observing in classrooms, discussing academic content with teachers, and learning about the lives of teachers and students.

Other researchers concur with these findings. In their case study of nine female principals, Dorn, O'Rourke, & Papalewis (n.d.) state that female administrators become educational leaders because of "hard work, persistence, determination, ability to organize, and willingness to accept responsibility and difficult tasks" (p. 5). These tasks most often include a focus on teaching and learning including professional development of teachers, supervision and observation of teachers, and curriculum development (Adler, Laney, & Packer, 1993; Andrews & Basom cited in Stanley, 2002; Weiss & Cambone, 1994; Pavan and Reid cited in Stanley, 2002; Cioci, Lee, & Smith, 1991; Witmer, 1995; Ortiz & Marshall, 1988; McGrath, 1992). Their focus on teaching and learning appears to be what sets female principals apart from their male counterparts. Adler, Laney, & Packer (1993) observe, "Women view their job more as a master-teacher or educational leader in contrast to male views, which derive from a managerial-industrial perspective" (p. 114). Smulyan (2000) agrees with this assessment, adding that female principals "focus more on developing the school as a people-centered community than do male administrators" (p. 22). Other scholars agree that female principals are more likely to encourage participation in decision making, a hallmark of their democratic leadership style (Witmer, 1995; Weiss & Cambone, 1994; Growe & Montgomery, 2001). By encouraging input into the

educational process from all stakeholders, female principals build a community of learners for teachers and students.

In addition to describing the work habits of female principals, other researchers have documented the effects of having a female as principal of a school (Grove and Montgomery, 2001; Dorn, O'Rourke, & Papalewis, n.d.; Stanley, 2002; Shakeshaft, 1989; Gross & Trask, 1976). Schools with a female principal are found to be more superior in student and teacher achievement than those run by men (Grove & Montgomery, 2001; Gross & Trask, 1976; Porat, 1991; Ortiz & Marshall, 1988), most likely because female principals spend more time visiting classrooms and interacting with teachers and students (Gross & Trask, 1976; Grove & Montgomery, 2001; Weiss & Cambone, 1994). Research also suggests that the staffs of female principals feel more satisfied, engaged, and empowered at work (Lee, Smith, & Cioci cited in Stanley, 2002; Shakeshaft, 1989; Dorn, O'Rourke, & Papalewis, n.d.; Heller, Clay, & Perkins cited in Stanley, 2002). Creating feelings of "rapport, trust, and respect" between teachers and principals is important when improving instruction and student achievement (Zimmerman & Deckert-Pelton, 2003).

The research about female principals parallels the research on effective principals. Grove and Montgomery (2001) observe that the "female attributes of nurturing, being sensitive, empathetic, intuitive, compromising, caring, cooperative, and accommodating are increasingly associated with effective administration" (p. 1). According to Blase and Kirby (cited in Smulyan, 2000), effective principals use praise, involve teachers in decision making, offer support and encouragement to teachers, offer feedback and rewards, and minimize formal authority. Regan (1995) offers other qualities of effective principals: collaboration, caring, courage, intuition, and vision. Others agree that effective principals possess the previously stated characteristics and

emphasize the importance of principals talking with and observing teachers (Checkley, 2000b; Hutton & Gougeon, 1993; Cioci, Lee, & Smith, 1991). Teachers have identified the following as characteristics of effective principals: accessibility, knowledge, clear and reasonable expectations, decisiveness, direction, follow through, time management, problem-solving orientation, support, participation, fairness, praise, and willingness to delegate (Blase, 1987). Additionally, Cotton (2003) and Sweeney, cited in Shakeshaft (1989), emphasize the instructional leadership role of effective principals: When student achievement is high, principals emphasize achievement, prescribe instructional strategies, support teachers, monitor student progress, maintain an orderly environment, and develop instructional programs. By sharing decision making and leadership, collaborating, emphasizing professional development, communicating, and deemphasizing the power of authority, principals garner respect and loyalty from their staffs and influence their instructional skills (Zimmerman & Deckert-Pelton, 2003; Bulach, Boothe, & Michael cited in Cotton, 2003). In their study on teacher empowerment, Blase and Blase (2001) note that effective principals facilitate professional development, share professional readings, and discuss teaching with teachers. Portraits of effective principals appear to favor women in these roles (Frasher & Frasher cited in Porat, 1991). Smulyan (2000) concludes, "Women principals may have an advantage trying to implement school change; the leadership style described in the literature on effective school restructuring often parallels those attributed to women administrators" (p.36).

Based on the female principal's emphasis on instructional leadership and supervising teachers to improve teacher quality and student achievement, further attention to this role is warranted. The literature cited will discuss the task of supervision and evaluation, supervisory styles, and the roles of an instructional leader.

#### **1.4. INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP AND SUPERVISION**

Most importantly to the issue of improving teacher quality, the principal supervises and evaluates teachers. Supervision and evaluation are separate, but related terms. Walker (2000) states that supervision "includes any activity performed by the principal or supervisor designed to improve instruction" (Supervision Defined section, paragraph 1). Supervision contrasts with evaluation, which focuses on "recognizing existing value and quality" of teaching (Peterson, 2000). According to Saphier (1993), "The boundary line between supervision and evaluation comes when the observer is making decisions with the information from the observation" (p. 9). There are multiple purposes for the supervision of teachers. The most common purposes are quality control to monitor teacher effectiveness, professional development to encourage teacher growth, remediation of weak teachers, validation of teacher strengths, and empowerment to develop teacher autonomy (Zepeda and Ponticell, 1998; Sergiovanni and Starratt, 1988; Beerens, 2000).

Peterson (2000) states, "A key role for principal leadership is that of teacher evaluation. Although it is only one administrator duty and only one part of the whole picture of school operation, teacher evaluation is a central educational function" (p. 339). Principals can improve teacher quality by performing specific activities related to supervision and evaluation in their role as instructional leader: "Effective principals spend large amounts of time in classrooms, observing the teaching of academic units, and provide detailed feedback regarding how teachers' effectiveness can be improved" (The Knowledge Loom, 2003).

As previously stated, Smith and Andrews (1989) identify four roles for an instructional leader: resource provider, instructional resource, communicator, and visible presence. In the role of instructional resource, "the instructional leader supervises the staff, using strategies that focus on the improvement of instruction" (p.14). They add that when a principal displays strong

instructional leadership, "Teacher evaluation is characterized by frequent classroom visitation, clear evaluation criteria, and feedback" (p.8). In addition, Blase and Blase (1998) conclude that positive instructional leadership improves teacher performance and student learning. "Supervision includes any activity performed by the principal or supervisor designed to improve instruction . . . it is helping teachers become better teachers," asserts Walker (2000, Supervision Defined Section, paragraph 1). The primary reason for implementing supervision is to help teachers with instructional practices in their classrooms (McQuarrie & Wood, 1991). Zimmerman & Deckert-Pelton (2003) observe, "The principal can be the catalyst for successful teacher evaluation, leading to a consistent and flourishing system of school improvement" (p. 29).

A principal's supervisory style often affects the interaction between the principal and the teacher. Sergiovanni and Starratt (1988) note that a principal's values, feelings about the competency of the teacher, leadership style, and self - confidence in uncertain situations help to determine his or her supervisory style for a given situation. That style can change depending on the context and parties involved. Glickman (1990, 2002) identifies four supervisory styles: directive-control, directive-informational, collaborative, and nondirective. Using the directive-control approach, the principal determines a plan of action to enable a teacher to meet the standards; this approach is based on the assumption that the principal knows more about teaching and learning than the teacher. The directive- informational approach is similar to the directive-control, but allows for the teacher to determine a course of action based on the principal's recommendations. The teacher and principal work together to create a plan when the principal uses a collaborative approach. When a principal uses a nondirective approach, the teacher determines how to proceed.



Sergiovanni and Starratt (1988) use Reddin's 3-D Theory to offer descriptors for supervisory styles. They describe the dedicated style as emphasizing "organizing, initiating, directing, completing, and evaluating the work of others"; the related style as highlighting "listening, accepting, trusting, advising, and encouraging"; the integrated style as focusing on "interaction, motivation, integration, participation, and innovation"; and the separated style as emphasizing "examining, measuring, administering, controlling, and maintaining" (p. 179). Again, it is important to note that an effective principal determines his or her style based on the situation and the goal of the supervisory interaction.

Although there are many roles involved in instructional leadership, the primary focus of a principal is supervision to improve teaching and learning through completing formal and informal observations and discussing teaching and learning with teachers. These are two important activities in the supervisory process that affect teaching and learning.

By being visible in classrooms via informal and formal observations, the instructional leader can improve teaching and learning through supervision. First, the instructional leader can monitor the curriculum. Wiles and Bondi (2000) believe that "the primary purpose of supervision is to improve classroom teachers' link between the planned curriculum and the learning experienced by the student" (p.234). In order to achieve this purpose, the supervisor must have extensive knowledge of learning and teaching theory so he or she can recognize what he or she is seeing and not seeing in classrooms. The knowledge supervisors hold must include understanding of planning elements, learning activities, and evaluation (Hoy and Forsyth, 1986; Sergiovanni and Starratt, 1988).

Also, by being visible in classrooms, supervisors can use their knowledge of learning and teaching theory to improve instruction. This also requires the principal to stay up to date with the

latest research on teaching and learning. Visibility in classrooms allows supervisors to motivate teachers, monitor instruction, be accessible and provide support, and keep informed (Blase & Blase, 1998). Therefore, being visible in classrooms, an essential component of supervision, can enable supervisors to help improve teaching and learning.

By discussing teaching and learning with teachers through informal conversations and post-observation conferences, principals use their role as supervisor to improve teaching and learning. Mainly, principals share their knowledge of teaching and learning theory. Since "most teachers expand their teaching range only with carefully designed support and assistance," the conference becomes a pivotal element in improving student achievement (Blase & Blase, 1998, p.19). Next, supervisors can accomplish many tasks through conferencing. The conference allows the principal to give feedback, model good instruction, use inquiry, make suggestions, and solicit advice and opinions about instruction (Blase & Blase, 1998; Springer, 1996). Enhancing motivation and morale, improving instruction, and improving school climate are goals for providing feedback to teachers (Blase & Blase, 1998). The principal can also share the data he/she has gathered during the observation. Danielson and McGreal (2000) describe the post-observation conference format: "The purpose of the post-conference is to help the teacher refocus on the observation... Recognition and praise should be given for accomplishments and possible modification could be suggested" (p.109).

Conversations between the teacher and the principal also provide the principal and teacher with an opportunity to think about the craft of instruction. It is important for both the teacher and the principal to listen to each other's view in these conversations (Murphy, 1969; Tannen, 1990, 1994; Gray 2002). Many researchers emphasize the importance of teachers and principals talking with each other to improve teacher performance and student achievement and

to establish trust (Sergiovanni and Starratt, 1988; Glickman, 2002; Rallis cited in Beck, 1994; Ashton and Webb cited in Beck, 1994; Pavan, 1997; Beck, 1994). Glickman (2002) offers the following as effective behaviors for working with teachers in verbal interactions: listening, clarifying, encouraging, reflecting, presenting, problem solving, negotiating, directing, standardizing, and reinforcing. Pavan (1997) advises that "supervisors need to use their communication and change agent skills to develop a supportive environment where teachers know that they can trust supervisors to work with them to improve instruction" (p.140). Thus, through formal and informal conversations about teaching and learning, the principal uses supervision to improve teaching and learning.

In order to use supervision most effectively, many scholars recommend a collaborative approach that emphasizes teacher growth (Shautz, 1995; Pavan, 1997; Beck, 1994; Blase & Blase, 1998; McBride & Skau, 1995; Grimmatt, Rostad, & Ford, 1992; Nolan & Francis, 1992; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1998; Beerens, 2000; Zepeda, 2003). These same scholars have identified the following characteristics of collaborative supervision: teachers and principals work together; problem-solving and negotiating are emphasized; existing practices and alternatives are examined; the relationship is based on equity. The relationship is defined as collegial (Pavan, 1997; Shautz, 1995). Through collaborative supervision, the principal's role shifts from one of authority to one of "professional colleague, co-learner, supportive counselor, and friend . . . [Principals] would seek to be understanding listeners, creative problem solvers, mediators, or advocates" (Beck, 1994, p.93). Collaborative supervision also enables teachers to evaluate their own instructional effectiveness (McBride & Skau, 1995) and to solve instructional problems (Beck, 1994; Nolan & Francis, 1992; Zepeda, 2003). Collaboration places responsibility for teacher learning and growth on the teacher and the principal equally (Grimmett, Rostad, & Ford,

1992). Concludes Beerens (2000), "Faculty growth and development must occur if we are to increase student achievement" (p.9).

Due to the importance of the principal's task of supervising teachers and acting as an instructional leader, further discussion is needed about the impact that gender has on supervision. Supervisory practices of female principals will be depicted as well as collaboration, feedback, and the teacher's reaction to the gender of the principal.

### **1.5. SUPERVISION AND GENDER**

As previously reported, a principal's supervisory activities are paramount in improving teaching and learning. Shakeshaft (1989) notes that while male and female principals may perform the same tasks, their emphasis of the importance of these tasks makes a difference. Shautz (1995) concurs, adding that female principals "experience the day-to-day world of the school differently than do men" (p. 210). In performing their tasks as a principal, women tend to spend more time observing in classrooms and discussing instructional strategies and curricula with teachers (Cioci, Lee, & Smith, 1991; Witmer, 1995; Gross & Trask, 1976; Weiss & Cambone, 1994; Growe & Montgomery, 2001; Smulyan, 2000; Stanley, 2002; Shakeshaft, 1989; Kmetz & Willower cited in Shakeshaft, 1989).

In their study of the supervisory patterns of 189 elementary principals, Gross and Trask (1976) relate the following:

- Teachers demonstrate higher professional standards in schools administered by females.

- Female principals "derive greater satisfaction from supervising instruction than men do" because they "have a greater interest in teaching," "feel more comfortable in working with teachers on instructional activities," and have "greater classroom experience and knowledge about teaching" (pp. 116-117).
- Females experience more fulfillment than men from performing supervisory tasks.
- Females "are more likely than men to require their teachers to conform to their standards" (p. 138).
- Teachers and students were more successful in schools administered by females.
- Females attribute more emphasis to a teacher's organizational and technical skills.
- Female principals exercised more control over teachers.

The authors of the study attribute its results to the fact that "Women, in comparison with men principals, bring longer teaching experience to work, have greater self-confidence in their ability to direct instructional activities, and have a deeper commitment to the principalship" (p.173). They add, "Many men in the principalship lack the knowledge and skills required to offer professional direction to the instructional programs of their schools" (p. 221). Zimmerman and Deckert-Pelton (2003) emphasize the importance of principals possessing a firm knowledge of instruction and teaching experience in order for them to properly supervise and evaluate teachers.

Shakeshaft (1989) reaches similar findings in her study of female administrators. When supervising and evaluating teachers, females are more concerned with a teacher's technical skills, the academic achievement of students, the teacher's productivity, and his or her commitment and responsibility to the school. Females observe more frequently than men. Females spend more time mentoring new teachers. Shakeshaft, with Nowell and Perry (1991), published additional findings about supervision and evaluation in the article "Gender and Supervision." They

conclude that female authored evaluations of teachers contained information about more items than those written by men and had more references to teaching and learning, emphasized technical skills, and included more facts. In their evaluations, men emphasize organization and try to avoid conflict. In their discussion of supervisory conferences, the authors relate that gender affects what is discussed and how information is communicated as women and men listen for different types of information. Females provide immediate feedback on performance and involve teachers in the decision making when improvement is necessary. The authors conclude, "Gender affects both supervisory style and outcome" (p. 257).

Additionally, female principals tend to be more collaborative when enacting the supervisory role (Irwin, 1995; Shakeshaft, Nowell, & Perry, 1991; Shautz, 1995; Kropiewnicki & Shapiro, 2001). Female principals tend to use supervision to support their staff and encourage them to experiment in their classrooms (McCrea & Ehrich, 2000); they see themselves as "change facilitators" or "role models" (Irwin, 1995, p. 159). By spending more time with their staff, females often discuss curricular issues and are able to push teachers to use alternative teaching methods (Witmer, 1995; Growe & Montgomery, 2001). Witmer believes that female principals are more comfortable and competent with supervision than men because "women come from a background of nurturing and caring," they have a "desire to make the world a better place," and "complementing comes easily" to women (p. 91).

An important factor in the supervision process is the type of feedback teachers receive. Teachers expect constructive and appropriate feedback about their strengths and weaknesses (Zimmerman & Deckert-Pelton, 2003). Female principals tend to provide immediate feedback on performance (Shakeshaft, Nowell, & Perry, 1991; Shautz, 1995; Loden, 1985). In a study of post observation conferences, Perry (1992) finds that females use feedback that is data driven and

specific and points out why and how an action is effective or ineffective. Conferences with female principals have a collegial tone, while conferences with male principals have a hierarchical tone. Females focus on "the maintenance of interpersonal relationships as well as the academic/instructional dimension of a conference" (p. 161). Females approach the conference as a learner, ask questions, include the teacher in decision making, and use "we" instead of "I." Observation reports include more recommendations when written by a female.

An equally important component in the discussion of supervision and gender is the teacher's reaction to the gender of the principal and the supervisory process. Witmer (1995) believes, "The fact that men and women are different and that they cannot view each other the way they view one of their own gender is probably the main reason why being evaluated by a person of the opposite sex so often is viewed as unfair" (p. 92). Female teachers tend to view female principals positively and welcome their support and encouragement, while male teachers view them as intrusive and feel discouraged by what they feel to be a lack of recognition (Cioci, Lee, & Smith, 1991). Male teachers tend to show hostility toward female principals and are less candid with them (Shakeshaft, 1989). In post observation conferences, female teachers tend to listen for the feeling behind the principal's words, while male teachers listen for the facts (Shakeshaft, 1989). Additionally, female principals are perceived by their staffs as better at supervising and evaluating teachers and as having greater educational expertise (Nogay & Beebe cited in Stanley, 2002; Springer, 1996).

Many factors, which are also related to gender, influence the interactions between a teacher and a principal in the supervisory process. These include the principal's leadership style, communication style, power orientation, and ethic of care.

## 1.6. LEADERSHIP STYLE AND SUPERVISION

A principal's leadership style can influence one's supervisory practices as leadership style often determines how the leader interacts with and views others in a school. Before examining the leadership patterns of males and females, a brief summary of effective leadership, with a particular emphasis on school leadership, is necessary to identify the effectiveness of male and female approaches to leadership. To begin, Astin and Leland (1991) define leadership as "a process by which members of a group are empowered to work together synergistically toward a common goal or vision that will create change" (p. 8). Skillfulness, participation, collaboration, team building, collegiality, leadership development, shared decision making, and emphasis on learning are characteristics of an ideal school leader (Sergiovanni, 1992; Beerens, 2000). Restine (1993) adds that effective school leaders "have a passion for compassion and an unyielding integrity that engenders trust" (p. 40). She elaborates on the behavior of these leaders, asserting that they develop and articulate a vision; listen and exchange information, ideas, and feelings; inspire and promote teamwork; and empower others through influence and responsibility.

Gardner (cited in Curry, 2000) identifies fourteen attributes of leaders: physical vitality and stamina; intelligence and judgment in action; willingness to accept responsibility; task competence; understanding followers and their needs; skill in dealing with people; the need to achieve; the capacity to motivate; the capacity to win and hold trust; courage, resolution, and steadiness; the capacity to manage, decide, and set priorities; confidence; ascendancy, dominance, and assertiveness; and adaptability and flexibility of approach. Kouzes and Posner (cited in Curry, 2000) add to this substantial list in describing behaviors they see the best leaders exhibiting: taking risks, experimenting, engaging the school community in fulfilling a shared



vision, sharing power, developing others as leaders, modeling and mentoring, and encouraging the best in others.

Many of these qualities are consistent with the philosophy and actions of female principals (Checkley, 2000a; Deemer & Fredericks, 2003). Sergiovanni (1992) believes, "Values play an important part in constructing an administrator's mindscape and in determining leadership practice" (p. 9). Overall, men tend to value self-assertion, separation, independence, control, and competition, while following a more traditional model of leadership; women tend to value interdependence, cooperation, receptivity, acceptance, and connections, while following transformational and/or relational leadership models (Brown & Irby, 2003).

Aburdene and Naisbitt (1992) describe traditional leadership as being based on control, rank, punishment, and hierarchy. It limits and defines, while demanding respect, and relies on order giving, using a military archetype. They add that there is little time for people in this model. Traditional leadership is based on male characteristics (Book, 2000). The values of traditional leadership "neglect emotions, the importance of group membership, sense and meaning, morality, self-sacrifice, duty, and obligation" (Sergiovanni, 1992, p. xiii).

According to Burns (cited in Gosetti & Rusch, 1995), transformational leadership is a relational concept that occurs when "persons engage with one another in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (p. 21). The transformational leader uses the resources of his or her followers to meet organizational and individual goals, energizes others to reach their potential, gives others credit and praise, and refrains from asserting his or her position (Witmer, 1995; Book, 2000; Burns cited in Loden, 1985). In school settings, transformational leaders maintain a collaborative culture, develop teacher leadership, delegate and share power, and assist teachers in solving problems (Liontos,

1992). These characteristics are consistent with the research on female principals. Gosetti and Rusch (1995) claim, "Transformational leadership encompasses many of the characteristics normally attributed to feminine leadership styles" (p. 22).

Regan and Brooks (1995) use the term relational leadership to describe the work of female leaders. Relational leaders work toward achieving a vision, focus on the quality of product and process in meeting goals, and work collaboratively. They believe in establishing connections with their staff and students. Collaboration, results, vision, intuition, courage, and caring are key concepts in relational leadership. If relational leadership was used extensively in schools, the following would result: curricula would reflect learner interest and experience, space and time would be used flexibly, students would construct learning based on personal meaning, collaborative decision making would be utilized, and assessment would focus on student outcomes.

Males and females handle leadership roles differently and exhibit contrasting styles. Male views of leadership serve here as ways to further show the differences in how male and female principals handle supervisory tasks.

### **1.6.1. Characteristics of Male Leaders**

Male leaders have been found to be focused on completing tasks, achieving goals, winning, organizing, managing, and controlling information (Curry, 2000; Helgesen, 1990; Growe & Montgomery, 2001; Loden, 1985; Gray, 2002; Witmer, 1995). Men wish to acquire and maintain power (Witmer, 1995; Gray, 2002; Helgesen, 1990). Loden (1985) describes a masculine leadership model as having a competitive operating style and a rational problem-solving style.

The model is organized in a hierarchy to achieve the objective of winning. She characterizes it as "high-control, strategic, unemotional, and analytical" (p. 26).

In depicting male leaders, Helgesen (1990) refers to Mintzberg's 1963 study of male managers, which she asserts remains true in her leadership study. He observed the following:

- Men work at an "unrelenting pace, with no breaks in activity during the day" (p. 10).  
Sixty percent of their time was spent in formal, scheduled meetings.
- "Their days were characterized by interruption, discontinuity, and fragmentation" (p. 11).  
They work in a crisis orientation.
- "They spared little time for activities not directly related to their work" (pp. 11-12).
- "They exhibited a preference for live action encounters" (p. 12).
- "They maintained a complex network of relationships with people outside their organizations" (p. 12).
- "Immersed in the day-to-day need to keep the company going, they lacked time for reflection" (p. 13).
- "They identified themselves with their jobs" (p. 13).
- "They had difficulty sharing information" (p. 14).

These characteristics stand in contrast to portraits of female leaders.

### **1.6.2. Characteristics of Female Leaders**

Female leadership attributes are changing the idea of what effective leadership is in the workplace (Helgesen, 1990). Female leaders have tried to mold themselves into following a traditional, male view of leadership, but Witmer (1995) cautions, "Women do not need to remake themselves because the leadership skills and perspectives they bring to the workplace are

precisely the ones organizations most need" (p. 159). These skills include listening, negotiating, sharing information, involving all participants, caring, being honest and respectful, delegating, focusing on a vision, building relationships, taking risks, nurturing, collaborating, using time and resources effectively, providing forums for discussion, and using feedback to improve performance (Helgesen, 1990; Witmer, 1995; Hill & Ragland, 1995; Regan & Brooks, 1995; Dorn, O'Rourke, & Papalewis, n.d.; Loden, 1985).

Loden (1985) describes a female leadership model as following a cooperative operating style, an intuitive, rational problem-solving style, and a team organizational structure; its goal is to improve quality; and it is characterized by empathy, less control, collaboration, and high performance standards. Female leaders typically are marked by the personal qualities of integrity, positive thinking, patience, hard work, enthusiasm, listening, organization, caring, nurturing, inclusiveness, intuition, and openness (Dorn, O'Rourke, & Papalewis, n.d.). In describing female leaders, Gupton and Slick (1996) state, "They possess the qualities of a change agent with attributes of creativity, flexibility, and orientation toward people rather than things" (p. 110). Additionally, female leaders follow six patterns. They empower, restructure, teach, role model, encourage openness, and stimulate questioning (Grove & Montgomery, 2001; Aburdene & Naisbitt, 1992; Krumm & Gates, 2000).

Females derive many of their leadership qualities from their personal experiences. Interestingly, women's success as leaders may be connected to their experiences as mothers (Loden, 1985; Helgesen, 1990). Motherhood requires women to master multitasking and demands similar skills as leadership: "organization, teaching, monitoring, pacing, guiding, balancing conflicts, imparting information, handling disturbances" (Helgesen, 1990). Balancing the demands of their personal and work lives also gives women an advantage in meeting the

demands of both (Helgesen, 1990). Additionally, childhood games may provide women with important leadership skills: role playing, improvising, being flexible, adapting to situations, cooperating, and networking (Helgesen, 1990).

A significant characteristic of female leaders is their tendency to transform and empower others through influence and collaboration (Loden, 1985; Dorn, O'Rourke, & Papalewis, n.d.; Helgesen, 1990; Tannen, 1990; Book, 2000; Aburdene & Naisbitt, 1992; Grupton & Slick, 1996; Astin & Leland, 1991). By encouraging participation, sharing power and information, enhancing other people's self worth, and getting others excited about their work, "women leaders try to transform people's self-interest into organizational goals" (Aburdene & Naisbitt, 1992, p. 92). When principals share decision making and empower their teachers, the following results: teacher reflection, teacher motivation, a sense of team, ownership, commitment, and a sense of professionalism (Blase and Blase, 2001). Female leaders view developing talent and helping their staff to meet their goals as an important part of their jobs (Book, 2000).

Another important focus of female leaders is building relationships and connections (Gray, 2002; Witmer, 1995; Godfrey cited in Witmer, 1995; Bennis cited in Witmer, 1995; Brown & Irby, 2003; McGovern-Robinett & Ovando, 2003; Sergiovanni, 1992; Book, 2000; Helgesen, 1990; Restine, 1993; Loden, 1985). Miller (cited in Helgesen, 1990) calls this having an affirmative focus. Women experience satisfaction in their work by helping others achieve success through support and validation (Gray, 2002). By remembering that they manage people and not things (Witmer, 1995), women develop relationships that bond the organization (Brown & Irby, 2003). Women use the development of these relationships and the resulting group achievement to judge their own success (Helgesen, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1992). Bennis (cited in Witmer, 1995) notes, "Women are caretakers; this care taking continues in the workplace" (p.

111). Many writers agree that this care taking and focus on relationships is needed in the workplace (Loden, 1985; Helgesen, 1990; Berglas cited in Gupton & Slick, 1996; Book, 2000). Women's emphasis on building relationships and connections also affects their view on authority and the traditional management hierarchy: "Authority comes from connection to the people around rather than distance from those below; this in itself helps to foster a team approach" (Helgesen, 1990, p. 55).

A final characterization of female leaders is derived from Helgesen's (1990) diary study of female executives. She reveals the following:

- "The women worked at a steady pace, but with small breaks scheduled in throughout the day" (pp. 19-20). Stress is kept to a minimum.
- "The women did not view unscheduled tasks and encounters as interruptions" (pp. 20-22). Women spend time with people who are not scheduled in their day to maintain relationships.
- "The women made time for activities not directly related to their work" (p. 24).
- "The women preferred live action encounters, but scheduled time to attend to mail" (p. 24).
- "They maintained a complex network of relationships with people outside their organizations" (p. 24).
- "They focused on the ecology of leadership" (p. 25). Women focus on the long term.
- "They saw their own identities as complex and multifaceted" (p. 26). Women view their careers as just one part of their identity.
- "The women scheduled time for sharing information" (p. 27).

## 1.7. COMMUNICATION STYLE AND SUPERVISION

A principal's communication style can influence his or her supervisory practices as it affects both the written and verbal feedback provided to a teacher. Communication style also affects the outcome and perceptions that result from the daily interactions between teachers and principals. Men and women communicate in different ways, and these differences often affect how messages are sent and received. Since communication plays such an important role in supervision, the effects gender has on this process must be explored.

Men communicate in specific ways. Men view a conversation as a competition (Grove & Montgomery, 2001; Tannen, 1990), in which they present "position statements" in order to maintain control of the dialogue (Heim, Murphy, & Golant, 2001, p. 139). They add little or no information when responding in a dialogue (Evans cited in Wimer, 1995). In a conversation, they listen for facts (Witmer, 1995).

Men also speak to accomplish specific purposes. They speak to solve problems, to complete tasks, to give instructions, to make a point, to show competence and efficiency, or to pass on information (Gray, 2002; Grove & Montgomery, 2001; Heim & Golant, 1993). Their conversational style has been labeled report talk (Heim & Golant, 1993; Power, 1998; Tannen, 1990, 1994). Additionally, men may speak to establish and maintain their authority (Tannen, 1990), or to voice an opposing position merely for the sake of argument (Tannen, 1994). Men also speak to attain and maintain power (Tannen, 1990) and to dominate others and win (Gougeon, 1991b).

Women communicate in specific ways. In conversations, "women seek understanding; they want to support a conversation and use it to connect with another individual" (Grove & Montgomery, 2001, p. 6). Women use words to build relationships and nurture others (Gray,

2002). Therefore, they attend to emotions and feelings when listening and talking (Witmer, 1995; Heim, Murphy, & Golant, 2001). For women, listening is just as important as talking in conversations. They listen to gather information and to make others feel valued (Helgesen, 1990).

Women also speak to accomplish specific purposes. First, they attempt to create a discussion among equals (Heim, Murphy, & Golant, 2001; Tannen, 1990). This has been called rapport talk (Tannen, 1990, 1994; Power, 1998; Heim & Golant, 1993). Also, they use conversation to solve problems, to relieve stress, to share experiences, to make others feel comfortable, to make suggestions, and to generate new ideas (Gray, 2002; Heim & Golant, 1993; Tannen, 1990, 1994; Shakeshaft, 1989).

These differences often lead to conversational misunderstandings between the sexes. Tannen (1990) explains it best:

When men and women work with each other, the problem is that each expects a different kind of response. The men's approach seeks to assuage feelings indirectly by attacking their cause. Since women expect to have their feelings supported, the men's approach makes them feel that they themselves are being attacked. (p. 61)

Because men seek to solve problems, they feel frustrated when women reject their solutions, but the women's rejection is often based on the lack of established rapport between the two (Tannen, 1990; Heim & Golant, 1993). However, men also feel frustrated when women attempt to establish this rapport by discussing personal issues that do not interest men (Heim & Golant, 1993).

Studies have been conducted to explore how communication differences between men and women affect principals and teachers (Gougeon, 1991a; Gougeon, 1991b; Hutton & Gougeon, 1993). Gougeon (1991a) reveals that female teachers feel "discouraged, manipulated,



and isolated" by male principals, while they feel "mentored, supported, and recognized" by female principals (p. 18). Gougeon (1991b) also reports that male teachers feel that male principals use threats, punishments, and negative motivation when explaining expectations; teachers of both genders indicate that female principals use positive communications and rewards more frequently than men; male principals have been found to emphasize rules and regulations in conversation; and teachers of both genders observe female principals "to be more helpful and to show gratitude... to guide, acknowledge, collaborate, and appreciate them" (p. 18). Finally, Hutton & Gougeon (1993) conclude that female principals are more likely to communicate in order to support teachers when they do well, to confront teachers when they do not meet expectations, and to hold teachers accountable and responsible. Their study indicates that female principals are more likely to use written communication to praise and acknowledge.

### **1.8. POWER ORIENTATION AND SUPERVISION**

A principal's use of the power that comes with his or her position can be a determining factor in the supervision process. Often, a principal views power in one of two ways: power over or power with (Witmer, 1995; Hurty, 1995; Sergiovanni, 1992; Astin & Leland, 1991). Power over is "the ability to create intended effects on other people through coercion, inducement, or influence over opinion," while power with is characterized by "showing mutual respect, willingness to listen, developing the capacity of people to act and do together, and allowing for infinite differing" (Witmer, 1995, p. 83). Female principals typically operate in the power with mode as they empower others, share emotion, nurture others, talk with others instead of at them, share decision

making, and collaborate (Hurty, 1995; Witmer, 1995; Growe & Montgomery, 2001). Hurty (1995) remarks, "The vocabulary of connectedness symbolizes, perhaps most distinctly, the uniqueness of women's perspective on power" (p. 395). Hurty also notes, "Effective women principals use and talk about power in ways quite distinct from traditional power perspectives [power over] found in the literature of school administration and organizational theory" (p. 395).

A hallmark of operating in the power with orientation in schools is empowering others, particularly teachers (Cioci, Lee, & Smith, 1991; Reitzug cited in Blase & Blase, 1998; McBride & Skau, 1995; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1988; Astin & Leland, 1991; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldbeger, & Tarule, 1997). Melenyzer (cited in Blase & Blase, 2001) defines empowerment as,

The opportunity and confidence to act upon one's ideas and to influence the way one performs in one's profession. True empowerment leads to increased professionalism as teachers assume responsibility for and an involvement in the decision making process. (p. 3)

McBride & Skau (1995) recommend that principals "create an environment in which teachers develop a sense of empowerment and connectedness" (p. 1). To accomplish this, principals should give teachers autonomy, responsibility, freedom, feedback, rewards, and opportunities for expression (Astin & Leland, 1991; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1988). Principals should also admit to not having all the answers to problems, listen to others and take suggestions, talk to teachers, and be visible (McBride & Skau, 1995). Promoting professional growth, talking to teachers, and facilitating teacher reflection are principal behaviors that result in empowered teachers (Blase & Blase, 2001). Women are particularly skilled at empowering others (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldbeger, & Tarule, 1997). Both male and female teachers feel more empowered when working for a female principal (Cioci, Lee, & Smith, 1991).

## 1.9. ETHIC OF CARE AND SUPERVISION

Females are known for the value they place on relationships, connections, and caring (Sernak, 1998; Kropiewnicki & Shapiro, 2001; Heim, Murphy, & Golant, 2001; Aburdene & Naisbitt, 1992; Beck, 1994; Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984, 1992). Because of their focus, females are said to act with an ethic of care (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984, 1992). Their ethic of care distinguishes the ways that women interact with and supervise others.

Women act with an ethic of care because they see themselves as having responsibility to and for others (Sernak, 1998; Kropiewnicki & Shapiro, 2001). Tannen (1994) found that "Women frequently refer to themselves or were referred to by others as 'mothers' as if they watched out for those who reported to them" (p. 161). Caring is contextual, so operating with an ethic of care makes women's decision-making dependent on the situation and parties involved rather than rigid rules (Sernak, 1998; Heim, Murphy, & Golant, 2001). Their caring allows them to support and encourage others and involve them in decisions, thus creating connections, collaboration, and relationships (Aburdene & Naisbitt, 1992; Beck cited in Regan & Brooks, 1995; Gilligan, 1982; Sernak, 1998; Heim, Murphy, & Golant, 2001). Women succeed in leadership roles while maintaining their empathy and nurturing (Porat, 1991). DuFour (2004) calls this leading from the heart: "The best way to get results is to engage in an ongoing process of reminding people that their work is important, they are being successful, and their continued success will depend in large part on their willingness to work together to share their knowledge, skills, and insights" (p. 6).

In fact, women often judge professional success in terms of their relationships (Heim, Murphy, & Golant, 2001; Kropiewnicki & Shapiro, 2001; Miller cited in Heim, Murphy, & Golant, 2001). Briles (cited in Heim, Murphy, & Golant, 2001) notes, "The importance of social

interactions in the workplace is the most significant difference between the genders" (p. 23). Women operate with an ethic of care while men follow an ethic of justice (Lyons, 1988). Noddings (1984) states, "There is reason to believe that women are somewhat better equipped for caring than men are" (p. 97). An ethic of care distinguishes women in the workplace.

An ethic of care also distinguishes female principals. A focus on caring and connections is evident in the types of communities female principals establish (McGovern-Robinett & Ovando, 2003; Sernak, 1998). These communities are based on a collective effort that an individual could not sustain alone (Sernak, 1998). When principals follow an ethic of care, they value relationships, communication, respect, and honesty (Witmer, 1995). A caring principal also organizes school systems, promotes a healthy school culture, and focuses on instruction (Beck, 1994). There is a critical link between caring and excellence in teaching; recognition and support of teachers demonstrate caring (Johnson cited in Beck, 1994; Ashton & Webb cited in Beck, 1994; Chapman & Lowther cited in Beck, 1994).

In their study of female leadership style and the ethic of care in schools, Kropiewnicki and Shapiro (2001) share that an ethic of care involved teaching and learning, being child-centered, listening before making decisions, doing the right thing, and empowering others. The female principals in the study show care and responsibility by using their knowledge and experience to develop their faculty. They promote teachers and develop new programs to establish connections with teachers and students. The authors conclude, "[Female principals'] actions were indicative of the value each placed on maintaining human relationships, on recognizing different needs, and in responding with care towards others" (p. 20).

## **1.10. SUMMARY**

The studies and research cited in this literature review were written by men and women. Substantive challenges to the gender differences cited were not found. The research cited in these studies was constructed using different methodologies, both quantitative and qualitative. The research was also conducted in varying contexts and in different time periods.

Several conclusions can be drawn based on the literature previously cited. First, male and female principals hold opposing priorities and emphasize different tasks. Women emphasize caring, while men emphasize power. Women consistently focus on instruction, while men focus on managing the facility. Second, the characteristics and practices of female principals parallel the research on effective principals. Perhaps due to these practices, schools with a female principal have higher teacher and student achievement when compared to schools led by male principals. Third, female principals spend more time working on instructional matters and working directly with teachers. Females are more concerned with improving instruction and teacher quality. They strive to build relationships with teachers. Finally, because of the distinct leadership style, communication style, and power orientation of female principals, as well as their ethic of care, female principals demonstrate an equally distinct supervisory style that merits further exploration, particularly given the parameters of NCLB. These parameters include judging the achievement of schools, teachers, and students by a single test score; basing instruction solely on scientifically based research; and posing sanctions on schools that fail to meet the mandates of achieving adequate yearly progress.

## **2. OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY**

### **2.1. INTRODUCTION**

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has changed the landscape of public education and has especially altered the practice of school administrators. Instead of working to maintain and improve their school's programs, principals now work in prevention mode. They work to prevent their schools from being placed on a warning list or school improvement plan for failing to meet the adequate yearly progress (AYP) that NCLB mandates.

Where once principals had the luxury of time to experiment with innovative programs, now principals are bound by the parameters of scientifically based research when determining what programs to implement. Where once principals could look at the individual strengths and weaknesses of students to gauge their progress in the school's curricula, now they must analyze student progress based on the results of standardized test scores and their contribution to meeting AYP. Additionally, students' reading and mathematical abilities are the only abilities that contribute to a school's AYP, negating the artistic, musical, and technological abilities of students.

NCLB has also impacted how principals work with teachers since schools are now evaluated and possibly punished based on student achievement. Kaplan and Owings (2004) observe,

Improving teacher effectiveness has become the center of educational reform. Increasingly, research confirms that teacher

and teaching quality are the most powerful predictors of student success. The more years that students work with effective teachers, the higher their measured achievement, far outpacing their peers who start with comparable achievement but spend consecutive years studying with less effective teachers. Teacher effectiveness is one of the most decisive factors in student achievement. After nearly 20 years of tinkering with increased graduation requirements, curriculum standards, and high-stakes testing, both educational and political leaders now conclude that unless changes occur inside the classroom with improved teaching and learning, educators cannot prepare all students for proficiency in advanced education and work. In short, principals ensure higher student achievement by assuring better teaching. (p. 1)

Due to the increasing demands on the principal's time for both instructional and managerial activities, as well as the ever present threat of NCLB sanctions, one wonders if the gender of the principal is a determining factor in his or her successful navigation of the complexities of the role.

This study is based on the assumption, as described in the review of literature, that a principal's gender may influence his or her performance as an instructional leader. The literature previously cited focused on the ways that female principals enact the role of an instructional leader when supervising and evaluating teachers. A study of how the gender of the principal influences the supervision and evaluation process is important since teacher quality is a critical factor in the accountability movement.

If, as related by the literature, female principals do in fact have a consistent and unique style of supervising and evaluating teachers, how is that style affected by the mandates of NCLB? Do female principals have the time to build relationships and demonstrate caring while calculating AYP? How do female principals supervise and evaluate teaching, which encompasses multiple variables, when the only variable that NCLB assesses schools by is

student achievement? How do female principals reconcile with their beliefs about how supervision and evaluation should be enacted when faced with the realities of NCLB?

The purpose of this study is to describe the present status of teacher supervision and evaluation in the era of NCLB as experienced by three female elementary principals and twelve female elementary teachers in a suburban school district in Western Pennsylvania. The study compares the findings from the literature in the areas of supervision and evaluation, leadership, communication style, power orientation, and ethic of care, with the beliefs and reality of present practice.

## **2.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

How do three female elementary principals adapt their practices of supervising and evaluating teachers in one school district in the era of No Child Left Behind?

## **2.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS FOR THE CASE STUDY**

1. What does the literature reveal about the supervisory style, leadership style, communication style, power orientation, and ethic of care of female principals?
2. How do female principals construct their roles as supervisors and evaluators of teachers?
3. How do their beliefs about supervision and evaluation compare with the reality of NCLB?



4. How do female teachers describe the role of female principals as supervisors and evaluators of teachers?
5. How does the leadership style of female principals as reported in the literature compare with the reality of female principals in the era of NCLB?
6. How does the communication style of female principals as reported in the literature compare with the reality of female principals in the era of NCLB?
7. How does the power orientation of female principals as reported in the literature compare with the reality of female principals in the era of NCLB?
8. How does the ethic of care displayed by female principals as reported in the literature compare with the reality of female principals in the era of NCLB?

## **2.4. METHODOLOGY**

### **2.4.1. Rationale**

Qualitative research is appropriate when “there is a lack of theory, or existing theory fails to adequately explain a phenomenon” (Merriam, 1998, p.7). Qualitative researchers describe how people make sense of their world and ascribe meaning to those experiences (Merriam, 1998). Since the few studies that exist on the supervision and evaluation of teachers conducted by female principals are dated, qualitative research is appropriate. Qualitative research is also appropriate for this study because of its intent to describe the meaning female principals and teachers ascribe to their experiences in the supervision / evaluation process.

This study specifically takes the form of a case study. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998), “A case study is a detailed examination of one setting or a single subject . . .” (p.54). Yin (2003) notes that the case study is the best form to use when seeking the answers to “how” and “why” questions. The case study is most appropriate when the researcher seeks to provide a detailed description of a single subject using a variety of sources, such as interviews, observations, and documents (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Yin, 2003; Merriam, 1998; McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). It brings about new discoveries, broadens experiences, and confirms previous knowledge (Merriam, 1998). In education, the case study allows specific problems to be articulated and defined (Merriam, 1998).

#### **2.4.2. Procedures**

One school system was selected to participate in the case study. The criteria for selection of female principals were that the district had at least three female elementary principals and these principals had at least three years of administrative experience. The researcher brainstormed possible sites with the dissertation committee, and then made contact and obtained agreement to participate with one of the sites. The school system included four elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school. Multiple sites, within one school district, were used in constructing the case study. Yin (2003) posits that “the evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust” (p. 46). Children from diverse cultural and economic backgrounds attend the schools in this district. Three of the four elementary schools are headed by a female principal. Although each school is marked by high levels of achievement on state tests, each principal is feeling the constraints of NCLB as she

attempts to make AYP each year. These pressures are compounded because the school district is high performing. As test scores rise, it becomes increasingly difficult to continue getting better. When soliciting teacher participation, consideration was given to teachers who have longer teaching experience for participation in the study. This allowed the teachers to be better informed to describe differences, if any, in style, particularly before and after the adoption of NCLB.

After female principal participants were identified, a letter confirming participation was sent. Interview times and locations were set up. A second letter was sent to all of the female teachers in each school requesting their participation. The teachers were identified using the staff directory on each school's website. After the initial letter was sent, a follow-up phone call or email was made to each teacher to further explain the study and request participation. As a result, twelve teachers volunteered to participate in the study. It was necessary that teachers volunteered so that they would candidly respond to the interview questions. Additionally, in order to maintain their confidentiality, the teachers are grouped together as a unit and not identified by school.

Data for the case study was collected from three sources: the literature, interviews with each principal and teachers from her school, and supporting documents. These documents included classroom observations voluntarily provided by the participants. The documents provided were absent of all identifying features of the teacher observed. Identifying features were removed by the principals or teachers beforehand. The documents were used so that the researcher could examine the narrative descriptions of the teacher being observed. Other documents that were studied included the principal's calendar, the school district's strategic plan and each school's strategic plan, and any other school district policies or procedures relative to teacher supervision and evaluation.

The use of a variety of sources is a strength of the case study as it enables the case study to address a greater range of issues, while appearing more accurate (Yin, 2003). The mixed method approach uses more than one type of inquiry approach in order to collect different types of information to achieve a similar purpose (Greene, 2001). Mixed methods of data collection “extends the breadth and range of the inquiry” (Greene, 2001, p. 253). Examining different types of data will allow the researcher to see consistencies and inconsistencies between data sources that will possibly reveal consistencies and inconsistencies in the principals’ perceived and actual practices.

Interviewing is an appropriate technique when behavior and feelings cannot be observed directly, when past events are being studied, and “when conducting case studies of a few selected individuals” (Merriam, 1998, p. 72). Yin (2003) adds, “Interviews are an essential source of case study evidence because most case studies are about human affairs” (p. 92). One interview took place with each teacher. The purpose of these interviews was to corroborate or dispute the views of the principals. An initial interview occurred with each principal to collect baseline data; a second interview occurred after the researcher reviewed the documents and transcripts; final interviews seeking clarification occurred during the writing of the case study.

The use of documents is also an appropriate form of data when constructing case studies. Documents “corroborate and augment evidence from other sources” (Yin, 2003, p. 87). Background information for each school was collected using the school district’s website and email requests to each principal. This information included the district’s and each school’s strategic plan, district annual reports, district report card, district elementary program guide, district and each school’s mission statement, teacher supervision/evaluation materials, and school and district philosophy statement. This information allowed the researcher to examine

background and context for each school. However, in order to maintain the confidentiality of each school, the researcher has made an ethical choice not to supply the specific context of each school, but rather to discuss the context of the district as a whole.

Interview questions were constructed to answer each research question. However, interviews in qualitative studies are usually more open ended and less structured and flow like conversations (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003). “The largest part of the interview is guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, and neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time,” advises Merriam (1998, p. 74). Four interview protocols were created: initial questions derived from the literature for female principals, initial questions derived from the literature for female teachers, follow-up questions derived from the interview transcripts of the teachers for the principals, and follow-up questions derived from the interview transcripts of the principals for the principals.

Practice interviews were conducted with several female principals and female teachers who were not involved in the study to ensure the appropriateness of the questions. Questions were modified when necessary to become clearer to the audience. Additional probing questions were devised to gain deeper responses.

Interviews were conducted, taped, and transcribed with the participants. The transcripts became a data source for future analysis (Merriam, 1998). Each transcript was sent to the appropriate participant to ensure accuracy. One participant made subtle changes in wording to her transcript.

Each interview, along with related documents from the site, was analyzed after it was

conducted: “The right way to analyze data in a qualitative study is to do it simultaneously with data collection” (Merriam, 1998, p. 162). This process enabled the researcher to pose clarifying questions when needed and helped to develop common and uncommon patterns in the data.

After each interview was transcribed, the data were examined for common patterns and irregularities and coded based on those patterns since “typically, qualitative research findings are in the forms of themes, categories, typologies, and concepts” (Merriam, 1998, pp. 7-8). Content analysis was employed to review the data and categorize it according to the research questions. Content analysis enables large amounts of data to be reduced into smaller chunks to create meaning (Weber, 1990). Merriam (1998) notes,

Devising categories is largely an intuitive process, but it is also systematic and informed by the study’s purpose, the investigator’s orientation and knowledge, and the meanings made explicit by the participants themselves. (p. 179)

The data were initially coded as they related to specific research questions, however new categories emerged from the data (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997; Merriam, 1998). Initial categories were determined by the researcher after a review of the transcripts. Microsoft Word software was also used to find keywords in the transcripts based on the research questions. The search command was also used to determine the frequency of words in order to develop categories.

The information gleaned from the interview transcripts and documents were placed on individual index cards according to categories based on the research questions. This enabled the information to be moved among categories when needed. Data was reported in a section provided for each research question.

## 2.5. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

1. Supervision – “Any activity performed by the principal or supervisor designed to improve instruction” (Walker, 2000, Supervision Defined section, paragraph 1); formative assessment
2. Evaluation – The process of “recognizing [the] existing value and quality” of teaching (Peterson, 2000); summative assessment
3. Leadership – “A process by which members of a group are empowered to work together synergistically toward a common goal or vision that will create change” (Astin & Leland, 1991, p. 8).
4. Communication – The written and verbal feedback provided to a teacher
5. Power over – “The ability to create intended effects on other people through coercion, inducement, or influence over opinion” (Witmer, 1995, p. 83).
6. Power with – “Showing mutual respect, willingness to listen, developing the capacity of people to act and do together, and allowing for infinite differing” (Witmer, 1995, p. 83).
7. Ethic of care – A focus on relationships, connections, and caring
8. Relational leadership – The process of working toward a vision, focusing on the quality of product and process in meeting goals, and working collaboratively (Regan & Brooks, 1995).
9. Planning and preparation- A domain of teaching that focuses on knowledge of content, pedagogy, and students; design of instructional goals, coherent instruction, and assessment; and use of resources (Danielson, 1996).

10. Classroom environment – A domain of teaching that focuses on creating an environment of respect and rapport, establishing a culture for learning, managing classroom procedures and student behavior, and organizing physical space (Danielson, 1996).
11. Instruction – A domain of teaching that focuses on communicating clearly and accurately, using questions, engaging students, providing feedback, and demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness (Danielson, 1996).
12. Professional responsibilities – A domain of teaching that focuses on reflection, record keeping, communication with families, professional growth, and contributions to the school and district (Danielson, 1996).

## **2.6. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Given the case study format, the researcher cannot generalize its findings for all female principals. The findings will be most applicable to female elementary principals in high performing schools. It will also provoke further research for principals in different settings and contexts.

## **2.7. SUMMARY**

This chapter presented background on the development of the problem statement and resulting research questions, described a rationale for the methodology used, delineated research



procedures, and defined terms relevant to the study. The study takes the form of a case study in order to supply rich descriptions in response to the research questions. Several interviews occurred with the principals and one interview occurred with the teachers. The researcher also obtained data from other sources in addition to the interviews. The next chapter will present the findings relative to the research questions, followed by a chapter discussing the conclusions of the study.

### **3. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

#### **3.1. INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this study is to describe the present status of teacher supervision and evaluation in the era of No Child Left Behind as experienced by three female elementary principals and twelve female elementary teachers in a suburban school district in Western Pennsylvania. The study compares the findings from the literature in the areas of supervision and evaluation, leadership, communication style, power orientation, and ethic of care, with the beliefs and reality of present practice. The study takes the form of a case study because the researcher seeks to provide a detailed description of a single subject using a variety of resources (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Yin, 2003; Merriam, 1998; McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). This particular case takes place in a single setting, a suburban Western Pennsylvania school district. What follows in this chapter is a description of the context of the case study, followed by examinations of each research question. In these examinations, the researcher connects the practices experienced by the principals and teachers involved in the study with discoveries from the related literature to demonstrate similarities and differences between current practice and the practices of female principals as described in the literature. Common themes are identified for each research question based on the responses of the principals and teachers. Sample responses are included where appropriate.

### **3.2. CONTEXT OF THE CASE STUDY**

Approximately 6,500 students attend the four elementary schools, middle school, and high school located in this suburban Western Pennsylvania school district. The district serves a diverse population of students from various social, economic, cultural, and religious backgrounds. The district describes itself as offering a rigorous educational program to help each child maximize his or her potential to achieve success. The district has won many awards and is characterized by high achievement. Eighty percent of their students attend a four year college after high school and their average Scholastic Aptitude Test scores are markedly above national averages. The district's Pennsylvania System of School Assessment scores are also well above state averages. The district's dedication to high achievement is directed by its Strategic Plan, which addresses goal areas in learning, curriculum and instruction, citizenship, well-being, technology, global competence, collaborative leadership, and communication/resource management. These areas have influenced the district's focus on site-based management, dedication to various forms of professional development, and its development of a teacher supervision and evaluation model. The principals participating in this study have at least five years of administrative experience and are former teachers. The teachers participating in this study have at least three years of teaching experience.

### **3.3. THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

**3.3.1. How do female principals construct their roles as supervisors and evaluators of teachers?**

The specific interview questions posed to the principals to acquire data to answer this research question were:

1. Describe your approach to supervising teachers.
2. What do you expect to see in classrooms?
3. The new forms developed by PDE address four areas. Describe what you look for in a teacher's planning and preparation, classroom environment, instructional delivery, and professionalism.
4. What are your goals when you conduct formal observations of teachers?
5. How do you define teacher quality?
6. How do you promote teacher growth?
7. What connection is there between what you do or do not observe in classrooms and professional development?
8. How do you deal with the marginal or unsatisfactory teacher?
9. Describe the methods you use to improve teaching and learning.
10. What is your approach to providing feedback on teacher performance?
11. Describe your approach to evaluating teachers.
12. Provide examples of how you do the following as an instructional leader:
  - a. Provide resources so that a school's academic goals can be achieved
  - b. Use your knowledge and skills in curricular and instructional matters to improve teachers' instructional practice
  - c. Communicate in various situations
  - d. Create a visible presence in the school
13. Describe a typical workday. How do you spend your time?

14. What are the functions of the learning team?
15. What are the functions of the resource management team?
16. How do you utilize the committee structure to supervise and work with teachers? What is your function in the committee structure?
17. How do you determine what to focus on in an observation?
18. What are some examples of the types of projects and goals teachers do in their cohorts?

**3.3.1.1. Purposes of Supervision** Walker (2000) states that supervision “includes any activity performed by the principal or supervisor designed to improve instruction” (Supervision Defined section, paragraph 1). The most common purposes of supervising teachers are quality control to monitor teacher effectiveness, professional development to encourage teacher growth, remediation of weak teachers, validation of teacher strengths, and empowerment to develop teacher autonomy (Zepeda & Ponticell, 1998; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1988; Beerens, 2000). The principals in this study identify practices from their supervisory repertoire that are consistent with these purposes. They supervise teachers in a variety of ways including utilizing the district’s site-based management structure to promote teaching and learning through the implementation of a Learning Team, devoting staff meetings to professional development, sharing resources and their own educational expertise, visiting and observing in classrooms, being visible in the school, and meeting with teachers about educational issues. The principals employ these many ways to supervise in order to view their teachers in their entirety, as opposed to seeing them only in isolated classroom episodes. The principals believe that the goal of supervision is to promote effective teaching and learning, and this goal cannot be achieved solely through classroom

observations. To these principals, classroom observations are just one facet of their supervisory practice, which includes many other aspects of their role as instructional leader.

**3.3.1.2. The School District’s Model of Supervision and Evaluation** The school district’s teacher supervision and evaluation model, based on the work of Charlotte Danielson (1996), enables these principals to consider many areas when supervising and evaluating teachers. The district’s model is consistent with the areas that the new teacher evaluation forms, 426, 427, and 428, developed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, require. The district’s model delineates what the principal should look for when supervising and evaluating teachers in the domains of planning and preparation, the learning environment, instructional practice, and professional reflection and responsibilities. According to the district’s “Professional Assessment Form,” the domain of planning and preparation includes the teacher demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy, demonstrating knowledge of students, selecting instructional objectives, designing lessons, and assessing student learning; the domain of the learning environment includes the teacher creating an environment of respect and rapport, establishing a culture of learning, managing classroom procedures, clearly establishing expectations for student behavior, and organizing physical space; the domain of instructional practices includes the teacher communicating clearly and accurately, using questioning and discussion techniques, engaging students in learning, providing feedback to students, and demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness; and the domain of professional reflection and responsibilities includes the teacher reflecting on teaching, maintaining accurate records, communicating with family and community, contributing to the school district, growing and developing professionally, and showing professionalism. The district also supplies rubrics to the teachers that describe a

teacher's performance for each component on the "Professional Assessment Form" for the ratings of does not meet expectations, meets expectations, and exceeds expectations. The accompanying observation form that the district created allows the principals to record observations, comments, and recommendations in any or all of the four domains for any situation in which they are supervising teachers. These events are not limited to classroom observations but may also be completed when examining lesson plans or observing a teacher in a parent conference or professional development activity.

When asked about their use of the school district's supervision and evaluation model, the principals express their approval of it because it is consistent with their beliefs about teacher supervision and evaluation and models what they hope to see in classrooms. For instance, the model provides rubrics for what the teachers need to do to achieve a certain rating. The model also takes a photo album, or portfolio, approach to assessment, as opposed to assessing only a single snapshot. In other words, principals use this model to examine a variety of aspects of a teacher's performance instead of only a single moment in time. This portfolio approach occurs over a three year cycle that includes assessment and action planning, collegial and peer support, and reflection and assessment. As a teacher progresses through the cycle, he or she sets performance goals, collects data, works collaboratively with peers and the principal, self evaluates, participates in observations, attends professional development, reflects, and completes and submits a portfolio.

#### Sample Responses:

Principal Three: "I love this model because I think it really meets teacher needs. They do a self-evaluation based on a rubric, and they talk with me. I find that they're much harder on themselves than I would be on them."

Principal Two: “Our observation form is just a blank sheet of paper with the four squares [domains] on top, which is wonderful. They use the same form to observe each other and give each other feedback. I think it gives them some structure, some clear ideas about where they should be going with their classroom in those four areas of importance.”

Principal One: “It helps me focus on what’s important for teachers to be doing on a daily basis. I think it helps them to know what my expectations are, what the district’s expectations are, and what the state’s expectations are.”

Principal Two: “Just like the rubrics for the children, this is the rubric for the teachers, and it gives them a guide of what is expected. ‘What is good teaching?’ They know that there are four areas that we’re going to look at and they’re all equally important.”

The supervision model that the district has adopted requires the principals to frequently observe in classrooms and interact with teachers to improve teaching and learning. Visibility in classrooms allows supervisors to motivate teachers, monitor instruction, be accessible and provide support, and keep informed (Blase & Blase, 1998). The four domains of teaching in which the district evaluates teachers encourage the principals to frequently interact with and observe teachers in a variety of settings in order to offer a fair and comprehensive evaluation. They observe the teachers not only in classroom settings, but in their interactions with parents and in professional development and committee work settings. They also supervise teachers by reviewing lesson plans and providing feedback to the teachers on these documents. Smith and Andrews (1989) explain that when a principal displays strong instructional leadership, “Teacher evaluation is characterized by frequent classroom visitation, clear evaluation criteria, and feedback” (p. 8).



### Sample Responses:

Principal Three: “I’m in and out [of classrooms] frequently in order to see what’s going on. I may only stay ten minutes. I focus on a different area during different parts, and I try to align it with their goals.”

Principal One: “Most of my time is with the teachers, talking to them about issues when I’m walking around. If I feed and water the teachers, then they’ll feed and water the kids.”

Principal Three: “With this model, I am in and out of the teachers’ rooms. We rarely have a set time for me to come and observe.”

**3.3.1.3. Classroom Expectations** The principals base what they expect to see teachers and students doing in classrooms on their belief in a student centered, constructivist learning environment and approach to curriculum. Although each principal was interviewed separately, their responses were remarkably similar when describing what they expect to see in classrooms. The common themes include interaction (between teacher and student, between student and student, and among the class), movement, use of a variety of resources, integration of subjects, focus on inquiry, engagement, and emphasis on the whole child (social, academic, and emotional aspects). The principals also examine the learning environment to see that classrooms are bright and inviting and that standards and student work are posted on the walls. By emphasizing the whole child, the principals believe that a teacher’s instructional delivery and the classroom learning environment should allow students to be happy to be in the class and to see learning as fun.

In addition to identifying what they expect to see in classrooms, the principals also detail what they hoped not to see. They do not want to see a lot of teacher talk or a majority of the class

devoted to direct instruction. Instead, they prefer the teacher to act as facilitator and the children to view each other as experts, equally with the teacher. They also want the students to know the goals of the lesson, why they are learning what they are learning, and how they will be assessed.

#### Sample Responses:

Principal One: “The classroom should not look the same at the beginning of the lesson as it does at the end of the lesson.”

Principal Three: “There needs to be a lot of checks for understanding with the kids during instruction, so that the teachers can get a real feel for where the children are individually and as a whole group.”

Principal Two: “I expect to be able to go up to students and ask them what they’re doing and have them tell me about the assignment, why they’re doing it, and how they know if it’s good work. I expect them to have criteria that they’re using to judge their own work and take responsibility for it.”

Principal One: “The teacher should say ‘This is the expectation as to why we are doing this. This is how it’s connected to the standards.’ Those are the kinds of things I’m looking for.”

**3.3.1.4. Defining Teacher Quality** The district’s model for teacher supervision and evaluation, along with the principals’ descriptions of what they expect to see in classrooms, is consistent with the research on what comprises teacher quality. Researchers identify the teacher’s knowledge of content and pedagogy, the teacher’s skills and classroom practices in delivering the curriculum, and the teacher’s relationships with students and other members of the school community when defining teacher quality (Wenglinsky, 2002; Schalock, Schalock, & Myton, 1998; Collinson, 1999).

**3.3.1.5. Collaborative Supervision** The district’s model and the principals’ resulting approach are consistent with the positive research associated with a collaborative approach to supervision. Collaborative supervision enables teachers to evaluate their own instructional effectiveness (McBride & Skau, 1995) and to solve instructional problems (Beck, 1994; Nolan & Francisa, 1992; Zepeda, 2003). Collaboration places responsibility for teacher learning and growth on the teacher and the principal equally (Grimmett, Rostad, & Ford, 1992). In year one of the supervisory cycle, the teacher and principal meet to review the four domains and discuss how the teacher is performing in each area. Then, depending on the teacher’s strengths and needs, they collaboratively derive goals that relate to the domains for the teacher to work on for the three year cycle. Again, the principals favor this approach because it is consistent with what they hope teachers are encouraging in classrooms: self-evaluation, reflection, and goal-setting. They believe that a teacher’s practice can only improve when teachers play a central role in their evaluation process. Drago - Severson (2004) notes, “The central goal of reflective practice is improving one’s teaching . . . Creating a context wherein teachers are encouraged to engage in reflection promotes (and models) risk taking” (p. 105). Just as they hope teachers will encourage their students to take risks and try new approaches to learning in their classrooms, the principals model this process in their interactions with teachers. Principal Two explains the process,

[The goal] could be something that they do already and expand or learn more about. It’s supposed to help them in their role as teacher. I usually let them pick an area of interest, and then I’ll encourage them if I see something that they’re doing that’s great. I’ll support that, and I’ll want them to share that.

Some examples of goals that teachers work on include:

1. Reading a book or various articles about a particular topic and then discussing these
2. Seeking specialized assistance in an area of interest or need (such as technology)

3. Developing particular assessment or management tools together
4. Improving parental involvement
5. Implementing writing across the curriculum
6. Using alternative teaching methods
7. Exploring brain research

Zepeda (2003) observes, “Supervision that makes a difference fosters the internal and external motivation that leads teachers to professional growth” (p. 158). This can be accomplished through the following practices, all of which are consistent with the model these principals implement: encouraging teachers to examine and reflect on practice; allowing teachers to develop, initiate, and direct their learning; individualizing learning opportunities; challenging and motivating teachers to take risks; and striving to understand how teachers feel about their work. McBride and Skau (1995) add, “One of the goals of supervision is to help teachers become effective in evaluating their own instructional behavior” (p. 3). As part of the model that these principals use, they select goals for the supervision and evaluation process along with the teachers and collaboratively evaluate the teachers on these goals with the teachers. The principals and teachers also collaborate on what the principals should look for in classrooms during classroom walkthroughs. Each principal conducted an exercise with her teachers to identify a list of actions that the teachers and principal felt should be the focus of their respective buildings. Principal One gives examples of these actions: “They’re real generic things like using the writing process, letting kids know what the expectations are.” According to Grimmert, Rostad, and Ford (1992), “With an emphasis on collaborative cultures, teachers experience a heightened sense of teaching efficacy and professional empowerment . . . They take charge of their professional lives and engage in perpetual learning about their craft” (p. 186).

Embedded in the notion of collaborative supervision is the concept of trust. To build trust with their teachers, the principals interviewed focus on the positive things that the teachers are doing. They believe that by emphasizing the positive, they will reinforce those behaviors as opposed to actions that are less desirable.

#### Sample Responses:

Principal Two: “The thrust of working with Otto and the University of Pittsburgh has been to recognize the good things people do, and the fortunate thing is that there are a lot of good things going on.”

Principal Three: “If you read observational reports that I’ve written, you’ll not find anything in there that’s critical. If I’m having problems with a teacher, I handle it a different way. I believe that I can help people best by calling out what’s good in them. So if there’s something we need to talk about and work on, I do that as part of the dialogue, but I don’t do it in a written form.”

This focus on the positive extends even to the marginal or potentially unsatisfactory teacher. Again, by promoting the positive in these teachers, the principals hope to build on those positives in order to eliminate the negative. Also, they hope to use this positive reinforcement to maintain their professional relationship with the teacher in order to help the teacher improve.

Principal Three shares,

The hardest part is the people that are borderline. That’s where I feel like I can fan the fire and call out what is good in them, then I think people will repeat the behaviors that they’re praised for. So, I try to isolate some things that I do think are really good and help them repeat those and build on that satisfaction. It’s just a way that works for me.

Whether the teacher is marginal or satisfactory, these principals believe that the teacher/principal relationship is key to the teacher’s improvement. They remember their own classroom experiences as teachers, the good and the bad, and realize that teachers have these same good and

bad days. Focusing on the positive allows these principals to maintain relationships with teachers so that teaching and learning is constantly improving in their buildings. Shautz (1995) affirms this view that the principals have of their teachers: “Female principals generally viewed the teachers with whom they worked as being professional, dedicated individuals. Female principals place a great deal of trust in teachers” (p. 212).

#### Sample Responses:

Principal Three: “Because I bring fifteen years of classroom experience with me, I understand that sometimes your very best lesson is when no one is there. I do give them the opportunity to invite me in for something special, because sometimes I think teachers plan and work really hard and think, ‘Oh I’d love for somebody to see this.’ I give them that opportunity.”

Principal One: “A lot of my belief about supervision of teachers has more to do with the kind of relationship that you build with them than it has to do with the actual supervision.”

Principal Three: “I think this is maybe a gender related way of feeling. You can say ten good things. You make one comment that’s negative and that’s what people focus on and feel badly about. So I don’t want to do that.”

**3.3.1.6. Providing Feedback** The principals’ focus on the positive in teacher performance characterizes their verbal and written feedback to teachers. This feedback occurs not only after a formal observation but through informal interactions and conversations. The principals maintain visibility and make themselves available to teachers as part of their supervisory practices. This approach is consistent with what Nolan and Francis (1992) describe as ideal: “Supervisors must see themselves not as critics of teaching performance, but rather as collaborators with teachers in attempting to understand the problems, issues, and dilemmas that are inherent in the process of

learning and teaching” (p.58). Beck (1994) adds, “In addition to being learners, caring administrators would also function as teachers in that they would view personal and professional interactions as opportunities to further educative purposes, embracing whatever roles these purposes required” (p. 91).

As part of their approach to giving feedback, these principals rely on their educational expertise and questioning skills to direct the interaction, as depicted in the literature (Springer, 1996). Principal Three relates, “I frequently ask questions, ‘What other way could you present that?’ That’s where I might say, ‘One time I saw somebody. . .’ Maybe I did see it or maybe it’s something I did myself. That seems to be an effective strategy.” Principal One believes that impromptu conversations occur because of her availability. These conversations then generate teaching and learning. After a teacher tells her what is going on, Principal One tries to focus in on what the teacher can do to resolve the problem. She focuses on how teaching and learning are connected to the problem.

When describing their approach to providing feedback, the principals describe using strategies that are consistent with best practices described in the research (Perry, 1992; Blase & Blase, 1998; Goleman, 1995). They believe that they are specific in their feedback, listen before making suggestions, extend the teacher’s thinking, share their own professional experiences, give examples and models, encourage teacher reflection, support, refer to research, use data to support their descriptions, collaborate, and focus on behavior. In his dissertation on male and female approaches to supervising teachers, Perry (1992) notes that female principals focus “on the maintenance of interpersonal relationships as well as the academic/instructional dimension” when giving feedback to teachers (p. 161). The principals interviewed believe that they meet these criteria when providing feedback. To illustrate their belief, they each provided sample

observation forms based on the four domains of their district's supervision and evaluation model. A review of these documents indicated that the principals report events that they witness in the classroom, offer recommendations, refer to research, pose questions, and offer praise. The format and practices used by the principals in this study support previous studies that indicate that female principals use data based and specific feedback, point out why an action was effective, emphasize teacher's technical skills, and are concerned with teaching and learning (Shakeshaft, 1989; Shakeshaft, Nowell, & Perry, 1991; Perry, 1992). The following are excerpts from the forms offered by the principals in this study:

Principal One: "In talking with students, it is evident that the activity was enjoyable, engaging, and a great way to connect learning for both grade levels."

Principal One: "As students read their drafts stories to you, you gave them your full attention and then provided them with specific, meaningful, and constructive feedback."

Principal One: "Plans, activities, and expectations are developmentally appropriate and of the interest level of students."

Principal Three: "Such learning opportunities as the student seminar and the Stock Market Game allow the children to explore their own areas of strength and to be supported in their areas of weakness."

Principal Three: "Students were eager to share their ideas with others. They responded excitedly to the game format. The children asked questions without hesitation, observing the established classroom rules for asking questions."

Principal Three: "Ms. \_\_\_\_\_ has selected activities that will allow the children to think, describe, analyze, interpret, and evaluate. They will have opportunities to create through a



variety of media. These varied experiences are examples of excellent teaching tools to help children understand and learn the objectives stated in the lesson plans.”

Principal Two: “You discussed a dilemma that one student was having and how he solved the dilemma by checking two items on the ‘good work checklist.’ You extended the assessment by asking, ‘Looking at your list, what do you think you need to work on?’”

Principal Two: “\_\_\_\_\_ uses student information cards and a notebook to keep track of important contacts with parents. Lesson plans are developed in synch with the other first grade teachers and are written in a block format.”

Principal Two: “You modeled their problem and had students analyze why it was not good work. This practice helped students to begin thinking about their own work critically.”

**3.3.1.7. Promoting Teacher Growth** The principals in this study report the strategies they use to promote teacher growth as providing professional development, modeling teaching behaviors that they hope to see in classrooms, working with the grade level teaching teams, and implementing a school based learning team as part of the district’s devotion to site based management. The principals feel that teacher learning and continued growth are the keys to student learning and growth. The principals’ view of their role in promoting teacher growth is consistent with a study conducted by Drago-Severson (2004) in which she concludes: principals have a key role in supporting teacher learning and a responsibility to develop a clear vision of how school contexts can better support this learning; leadership supportive of teacher development makes schools better places of learning for children; and schools need to be places where the adults as well as the children are growing. First, each principal devotes a substantial

amount of time to informal and formal methods of professional development. Principal Two reports,

This district that I'm in enables us to provide a lot of staff development activities in the district as well as in the building. As a result, there's this environment, a culture of learning, which is real important to have a safe, nurturing community for everyone.

Each principal has at least two professional development meetings a month in place of the weekly staff meeting, preferring to handle announcements via email. Literacy, math, and technology coaches are also available to help teachers connect their lessons to standards. Other methods of professional development that the principals describe utilizing are showing videos of model instruction, encouraging teachers to observe each other, sharing what they see in classrooms, and distributing and discussing research. Blase and Blase (2001) note that effective principals facilitate professional development, share professional readings, and discuss teaching with teachers. The principals also mention building wide, formal in-service experiences that were designed to promote teacher growth. Describing the teachers' reaction to professional development, Principal Two shares,

They are like little sponges and they love learning, and if we can promote that "love of learning" and keep it going, I'm real excited about what's ahead for them because they love it. They love learning these things, and the teachers are very creative. It's not drone learning. It's not drill and practice; it's just exploration and learning at the same time.

Professional development sessions included a session devoted to scoring writing samples at each grade level in a standardized way and a time when teachers shared samples of assignments and assessments.

Another way that the principals promote teacher growth is by modeling what they expect to see teachers doing in classrooms. Each principal describes moments when they taught classes

and ran meetings, professional development sessions, and assemblies with the elements of good instruction in mind. For example, Principal Three recounts how she taught the children in her building sign language in assemblies and how she uses mini lessons, instead of direct instruction, in professional development sessions.

An additional strategy that the principals describe using to promote teacher growth is to utilize and frequently meet with grade level teacher teams. Drago-Severson (2004) suggests that principals use teams to build connections among teachers, share leadership, build community, allow teachers to share information and expertise, encourage innovation, and build leadership capacity. Principal Three reports that she attends team meetings to share information related to teaching and learning and to prompt the teachers to share and discuss what they are doing in their classrooms. Drago-Severson (2004) concurs with this strategy, “Teaming can be a context for testing new ideas and ways of acting as colleagues collaborate over time” (p. 73). Principal Three particularly uses this strategy when she wants one of the teachers to share something that the principal has recently observed.

A final way that the interviewed principals promote teacher growth is through implementation of a learning team in each building. Hall and Hord (2001) state that the purpose of a learning team is to share “information about what teachers are doing and analyzing their successes, concerns, and needs” (p. 151). Each principal works with the learning team to address instructional issues. The learning team brainstorms and organizes professional development sessions, sets building goals, and analyzes data. Schmoker (1996) believes that “data should be an essential feature of how schools do business” (p. 30). The learning team allows professional development to be driven by both teacher and building needs. For example, when the learning teams of each building were analyzing state assessment scores, they realized that writing was a

weakness across the district. So they began making appropriate modifications. The principal's role on the learning team is consistent with research conducted by Blase and Blase (2001): The principals provide time, space, and money to implement ideas; reassure people that ideas and plans are valued; are available and informed; provide an open, friendly, supportive environment; and stay out of the way during the process.

**3.3.1.8. Visibility** All three principals discuss the importance of visibility as part of their supervisory style. The principals have an open door, open calendar policy for teachers and are frequently out in their schools to promote accessibility. Principal Three notes that she keeps her calendar available to her teachers so that they can easily schedule appointments. The principals feel that their visibility allows their teachers to view them as ready and available to help them solve problems, address instructional concerns, or just listen. Blase and Blase (2001) explain that being available and providing an open, friendly, supportive environment are keys to teacher empowerment. Principal One feels that this informal learning, where individual concerns are addressed, is critical to a teacher's development: "The real learning and the real growth comes out of inspiring people to want to be better . . . The real learning comes when they own it, they choose it, they know what it is that they want to learn, and I help facilitate their movement along that learning continuum." The principals in this study report that when not in formally scheduled meetings, they are roaming the halls in order to have opportunities to speak to teachers and students, observing informally in classrooms, and connecting personally with the teachers and students, practices consistent with those identified by Cioci, Lee, and Smith (1991). They feel that their accessibility allows their staff to view them as supports in the teaching and learning process, particularly if suggestions about performance need to be made in the future.

**3.3.1.9. Summary and Connections to Related Literature** Based on the data reviewed for this research question, the presentation was organized into the following categories through data analysis, as delineated by the interview questions posed to the principals: purposes of supervision, the school district's model of supervision and evaluation, classroom expectations, defining teacher quality, collaborative supervision, providing feedback, promoting teacher growth, and visibility. The principals in the study reported that they supervise teachers in a variety of ways including utilizing the district's site-based management structure to promote teaching and learning through the implementation of a Learning Team, devoting staff meetings to professional development, sharing resources and their own educational expertise, visiting and observing in classrooms, being visible in the school, and meeting with teachers about educational issues. These methods are consistent with those articulated by Zepeda and Ponticell (1998), Sergiovanni and Starratt (1988), and Beerens (2000). The principals also reported a belief that the supervisors of teachers should examine teachers through a variety of lenses, not just the lens of a single classroom observation. This belief is similar to the views of differentiated supervision espoused by Danielson and McGreal (2000) and Glickman (1990), among others.

What the principals reported practicing in the area of supervising and evaluating teachers is derived from the district's policies and procedures for the supervision and evaluation of teachers, created by the district, based on the work of Danielson (1996). Using this model, the principals evaluate teachers in the areas of planning and preparation, the learning environment, instructional practice, and professional reflection and professional responsibilities. The principals record observations, comments, and recommendations in these areas based on observing the teachers in the classroom, a parent / teacher conference, or a professional development activity, or through a review of lesson plans. The principals spoke favorably about the district's model

because it is consistent with their beliefs about the supervision and evaluation of teachers. The model takes a portfolio approach to teacher evaluation, looking at teachers from a variety of lenses.

Another area under exploration was classroom expectations and teacher quality. The principals were consistent in their responses to what they expect to see teachers and students doing in classrooms. Their responses were based on a common belief in a student centered, constructivist learning environment and approach to curriculum. The principals believed that a teacher's instructional delivery and classroom learning environment should emphasize the whole child and allow students to be happy in the class and to see learning as fun. These views are consistent with definitions of teacher quality as stated by Wenglinsky (2002), Schalock, Schalock, and Myton (1998), and Collinson (1999).

Additionally, the principals discussed the importance of collaborative supervision and feedback. The district's model and the principals' resulting approach are consistent with the positive research associated with a collaborative approach to supervision (McBride & Skau, 1995; Beck, 1994; Nolan & Francis, 1992; Zepeda, 2003; Grimmer, Rostad, & Ford, 1992; Drago-Severson, 2004). The principals collectively expressed that they feel a teacher must be part of the supervision and evaluation process in order for the teachers to make any needed changes in their practice. They also believed that teachers need to see the principals as supporters in the supervision process. In order to build this trust, they focus on the positive actions that teachers show to provide reinforcement. This approach extends to the feedback the principals provide to teachers. Through their feedback, the principals described trying to collaborate with teachers to improve teaching and learning, an approach advocated by Nolan and Francis (1992) and Beck (1994). The principals believed that they are specific in their feedback, listen before

making suggestions, extend the teacher's thinking, share their own professional experiences, give examples and models, encourage teacher reflection, support, refer to research, use data to support their descriptions, collaborate, and focus on behavior. These approaches are consistent with best practices articulated by Perry (1992), Blase and Blase (1998), and Goleman (1995). Sample observation forms written by the principals supported their descriptions.

Another area under discussion was how the principals promote teacher growth. The principals felt that teacher learning and continued growth are the keys to student learning and growth. They reported that they provide professional development, model teaching behaviors that they hope to see in classrooms, work with grade level teaching teams, and implement a school based learning team as part of the district's devotion to site based management. Their approach is consistent with research by Drago-Severson (2004), Blase and Blase (2001), Hall and Hord (2001), and Schmoker (1996).

Finally, the principals discussed the significance of their visibility in the school. The principals have an open door, open calendar policy for teachers and are frequently out in their schools to promote accessibility. They reported that when not in formally scheduled meetings, they are roaming the halls in order to have opportunities to speak to students and teachers, observe informally in classrooms, and connect personally with the teachers and students. This approach is consistent with the views of Blase and Blase (2001) and Cioci, Lee, and Smith (1991).

Based on their descriptions, the way that the principals in this study describe their roles as supervisors and evaluators of teachers is dependent on a great deal of involvement with teachers through formal and informal interactions. Beck (1994) advises,

Administrators . . . should be better able to remember that these activities [supervision and evaluation] are intended to understand

and support teachers and teaching, to celebrate effective instructional approaches, and to collaboratively solve problems and discover new and better ways to promote learning and development. (p. 94)

For them, the goal of supervision is to promote teaching and learning in their schools. Irwin (1995) states, “Women supervisors may believe that working with a community of teachers is vitally important. Therefore, a supervisor who sees herself as a change facilitator and as a role model may be involved with many teachers” (p. 159). In order to promote teaching and learning, these principals rely on a collaborative model of supervision, based on praise, for they realize that teachers are the key to changing classroom practices that improve learning.

### **3.3.2. How do the beliefs of female principals about supervision and evaluation compare with the reality of No Child Left Behind?**

The specific interview questions posed to the principals to acquire data to answer this research question were:

1. Describe your approach to supervising teachers. How is your approach consistent with what you believe are best practices in supervision?
2. What do you expect to see in classrooms? Has NCLB changed your expectations?
3. What are your goals when you conduct formal observations of teachers? Have these goals changed in light of NCLB?
4. How do you define teacher quality? Has NCLB changed this definition?
5. How do you promote teacher growth? Has your approach changed since NCLB?
6. What connection is there between what you do or do not observe in classrooms and professional development? Has professional development changed in light of NCLB guidelines?



7. How do you deal with the marginal or unsatisfactory teacher? Has your approach changed since NCLB?
8. Describe the methods you use to improve teaching and learning. Have these methods changed with NCLB?
9. What is your approach to providing feedback on teacher performance? Has your approach changed since NCLB?
10. How have NCLB and other accountability measures affected your practices as an instructional leader?
11. Describe your approach to evaluating teachers. Has your approach changed since NCLB?
12. Provide examples of how you do the following as an instructional leader. Has NCLB changed these practices?
  - a. Provide resources so that a school's academic goals can be achieved
  - b. Use your knowledge and skills in curricular and instructional matters to improve teachers' instructional practice
  - c. Communicate in various situations
  - d. Create a visible presence in the school
13. Describe a typical workday. How do you spend your time? How has NCLB changed your work day?
14. What are the functions of the learning team? Does the team relate to NCLB?
15. How has the availability of student achievement data affected your supervisory relationship with teachers?
16. How do you motivate teachers to meet external and internal accountability standards?

The specific interview questions posed to the teachers to acquire data to answer this research question were:

1. What does your principal expect to see in classrooms? Has NCLB changed her expectations?
2. How does your principal define teaching quality? Has NCLB changed this definition?
3. How does your principal promote teacher growth? Has her approach changed since NCLB?
4. What connection is there between what your principal does or does not observe in classrooms and professional development? Has professional development changed in light of NCLB guidelines?
5. Describe the methods your principal uses to improve teaching and learning. Have these methods changed with NCLB?
6. What is your principal's approach to providing feedback on teacher performance? Has her approach changed since NCLB?
7. How have NCLB and other accountability measures affected your principal's practices as an instructional leader?
8. Describe your principal's approach to evaluating teachers. Has her approach changed since NCLB?
9. Describe your principal's interactions with you and other teachers. Have these changed since NCLB?
10. Provide examples of how your principal does the following as an instructional leader. Has NCLB changed these practices?
  - a. Provide resources so that a school's academic goals can be achieved

- b. Use her knowledge and skills in curricular and instructional matters to improve teachers' instructional practice
- c. Communicate in various situations
- d. Create a visible presence in the school

**3.3.2.1. Why Schools Are Changing** The No Child Left Behind legislation specifically concerns “teacher quality and the absolute need for principals to lead teachers in the direction of professional growth and development across the career continuum for beginning as well as veteran teachers” (Zepeda, 2004, p. 1). In terms of NCLB, the professional growth and development of teachers is measured by increased student achievement, the key quality in determining a school's progress. This national mandate to evaluate a school's progress via students' progress toward proficiency in math and reading may lead to changes in how principals interact with their teaching staffs, as described by Holland (2004): “Administrators are responsible for ensuring that teachers are held accountable for student learning as defined by standards and tested by high-stakes tests. Principals and teachers are accountable to external officials at district and state education levels, as well as to the public for student achievement on these tests” (p. 8). This new emphasis on student achievement scores on a single state mandated test, like the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA), has initiated research on how that emphasis will change the practices of principals. In a dissertation titled “A Caring School Culture in a Standards Based Era,” McNamara (2004) wonders, “In the shadows of the standards and test score accountability movements and the NCLB legislation, how can elementary school principals promote academic excellence for all students while maintaining a positive, child-centered, caring school culture?” (p. 5).

**3.3.2.2. Effects of Accountability** Although the principals in this study relate that the pressures to constantly improve achievement are ever present on their minds, the teachers in the study note that although they realize that their principals are under this pressure, they have only observed subtle changes in their behavior as the principals always had high expectations for student achievement. Teacher Eight states, “I know that the pressures are there but she doesn’t show it. She’s very professional about handling things.” Teacher Nine concurs, “I don’t think it has changed her and the way she supervises our school because, from the first year I came here, she has always done and expected what was sound educational practice.”

The principals give equal credit to the teachers for always having high expectations. Principal Two observes, “I think teachers are not only putting pressure on themselves, but they’re putting pressure on each other to be accountable. They are on all different grade levels, and they expect the teachers before them to do their job, because it’s very difficult to catch students up.” Schlechty (2001) believes that this type of collective accountability is critical to improving student achievement. Thinking systemically, beyond one’s individual classroom, is essential to efforts to improve student performance (Lieberman & Miller, 1999).

The most significant effect that NCLB has had on the principals is that it poses yet another demand on their time. Starratt (1997) states that an “unpredictable but incessant flow of events confront administrators in everyday school life, causing them to lurch through a schedule laden with conflicts, crises, and instant problems, interspersed with meetings, paperwork, insistent telephone messages, and veiled threats from a dissatisfied community” (p. 5). The principals relate that, when they are not in classrooms or with teachers, their days are consumed with meetings that focus on how the district can improve student achievement. There is also additional paperwork, associated with NCLB, that has added to their workload.

### Sample Responses:

Teacher Four: “The accountability pressures are there. I don’t think her expectations have really changed. She lets us know that we are definitely accountable and that the expectations are out there.”

Teacher One: “We’re significantly harder on ourselves than she could ever enforce us to be.”

**3.3.2.3. Standards and Rubrics** Despite the high standards that the principals and teachers believe they have always held, each group recognizes that their schools have made changes to address the demands of NCLB. For instance, principals and teachers emphasize that classroom instruction is now standards-based and that rubrics are used to help the students produce work that meets these standards. Schlechty (2001) emphasizes, “Individual teachers should be accountable for ensuring that the work they provide students improves continuously in terms of producing measurable student engagement, persistence, and satisfaction” (p. 78). The principals collectively feel that teaching to standards and developing rubrics are positive results of the accountability movement that help the teachers plan appropriately. Principal Two states, “Teachers need to know where they’re expected to take the children. It’s really a benefit to the teachers to know what they want the kids to know and do in order to be able to plan how to get them there.” The teachers note that principals use the standards and resulting rubrics in conferences with teachers to help the teachers reflect on their teaching. Teacher One describes one such instance: “When in classrooms or talking with teachers, our principal asks, ‘Why is this activity important? What are the kids getting from it? Why are they doing it? Where’s the rubric that says this is important?’ So she’s really encouraging us to use rubrics, especially student friendly rubrics.” The teachers also observe the increased emphasis on teaching to standards and

having those standards posted in their classrooms. Teacher Four states, “The standards are stated and the kids know right up front that this is why I’m teaching it. These kids want to know why they’re learning something.”

**3.3.2.4. Testing and Data Use** Both the principals and teachers describe how the impact of student performance on PSSA tests has brought about conflict in what they believe are best practices in instruction. The principals and teachers admit that there are positives and negatives to the information provided by PSSA test scores. Each school has a learning team that consists of teachers and each building’s principal. One of the learning team’s tasks is to analyze test data and make recommendations for instruction based on that data. Principal One relates that her building’s learning team recognized that their students performed higher on multiple choice items than open ended tasks on the PSSA. This was a consensus across the district that led to a focus on writing. Teacher One states, “It’s turning into that push on how can we start these children in kindergarten, how can we start them in first grade, how can we as a full community understand the importance of writing and an open ended approach?” Principal Three adds, “I had no problem with that because I think to teach kids to be good writers is to help them to be good thinkers. What we have done that I struggle with a little bit is we are using a lot of things with a PSSA like format.”

Teaching to the test and the emphasis on PSSA scores as the sole piece of evidence in judging a school’s success are concerns of both the principals and the teachers. Teacher Three states, “With NCLB, teachers are having less freedom and you see some schools where they’ve adopted these programs where basically the teachers are just robots and they read out of scripts. I don’t think she [principal] would be behind that.” However, their test data has already caused the

district to make some changes in their reading and math curricula in order to deliver more consistent instruction across grade levels. This was done, according to Principal Two, “to bring everybody on board and doing the same things so that progress is made in an organized way, and we’re reaching our standards in helping the children to be a success.” The teachers relate that these changes have been minimal to date and in some ways have been helpful to their teaching. Most of the changes have involved ensuring that they address standards and mimic the test format in existing assessments. Teacher Nine describes, “NCLB has affected all of us from the standpoint of trying to do the things we know the kids are going to be tested on, in the way that they’re tested.” The teachers also mention the use of common grade level assessments to ensure the students are on target with standards. This, they believe, has been a great benefit to them because it allows each grade level to get together to discuss student work.

One area that has been problematic for the principals in the use of PSSA data is that their district as a whole scores well above the state averages. To continue to improve their scores and motivate the teachers to focus on this improvement presents a challenge.

#### Sample Responses:

Teacher Ten: “I feel we have been so public and our scores and everything have been out there so much and have been analyzed that I feel that we had a high expectation for quite some time. I think that she may feel some pressure to make it higher and try to explore how she can do that with people.”

Principal One: “I’ve been trying to help them understand that you can’t just keep doing what you’ve been doing, or it might not keep us where we are right now. I think it’s harder to be at the top of the heap because moving from great to even greater is very hard.”

Teacher Twelve: “All of us are under a lot of stress because of NCLB. Part of it is because our scores are high to begin with. It’s going to be almost impossible for us to increase yearly progress based on where we are to begin with.”

**3.3.2.5. Conflict Between Beliefs and Practice** Meier (cited in Barth, 2001) observes, “The legislative mandates are all neglecting the heart and killing the soul of the profession and demeaning the richness of the experience and insights of those who have devoted themselves to it” (p. xi). McNamara (2004) notes, “Education is moving to a bottom line mentality with its emphasis on test scores” (p. 41). This “bottom line mentality” conflicts with why teachers and principals became educators:

Most of us – teachers, principals, and other school people – signed up for this profession because we care deeply about our important place in the lives of students . . . In addition to a brain, we have a heart – and we want to put it to use in promoting young people’s learning. (Barth, 2001, p. xxv)

The principals in this study articulate how they struggle with balancing their beliefs about what constitutes educationally appropriate practices with the demands put on them through NCLB.

There are numerous ways that NCLB conflicts with the beliefs of the principals in this study. First, NCLB is frustrating because it does not focus on an individual student’s growth, only on whether they are proficient at a fixed point in time. Also, NCLB does not consider the developmental readiness of a student in relation to the proficiency mandates. Teacher Three states, “You have to take students where they are and teach them from there. She [principal] understands that even if the state and federal legislators don’t.” Looking at growth would allow schools to demonstrate improvement in a child’s learning, especially if a child comes to a school or grade level at a deficit. Principal Two notes that the results of kindergarten screening at her



school reveal that her students are at least a year behind students in the other schools. As a result, “Our teachers need to pull out all the stops to bring our children up to speed and have them be successful and be where they are. Our teachers need to take pride in that.” Teacher Eleven states the teachers’ position in addressing NCLB, “Every child’s success is our goal as we focus on NCLB. We are working to nudge the struggler, build stronger connections for all children, learn all we can, and create a positive school climate.”

The principals also have difficulty making test scores their sole focus as NCLB has. Teacher Seven remarks, “Her focus, just like all of our focus, has to go to the bottom line of student achievement. We have to produce children who are going to do well on the PSSA.” This new focus is in opposition to the principals’ belief system. Principal One states, “The tricky part is that accountability outweighs some of the belief system of why we’re here as teachers and supervisors of teachers.” Expanding this view, Principal Three explains,

All the expectations for the test scores are the things that have really made me do some things that are against what I believe. They’re not quite morally, ethically wrong, but I wonder. I wonder. And I don’t know where my line is because I’ve already moved it. I used to say, before I get there, I’ll quit. And now I’m thinking.

The principals are able to identify specific practices that they are engaging in to improve PSSA scores that conflict with what they believe are best practices. These include the amount of time that they practice the test format, flexible grouping for skills instruction that may advocate ability grouping/tracking, and pushing kids to high achievement before they are developmentally ready. Principal Three states, “I’ve believed all these years if you just lay the good foundation, the kids will bloom when they’re ready. And I still believe that, but I have to push them.”

The teachers are aware of the demands that NCLB has placed on their principals and how these demands conflict with the principals’ beliefs. Teacher Six explains, “I think she’s very

open with us about the difference between her personal philosophy and what has to be.” Many of the teachers comment that they would never want to be a principal after seeing what their principals go through. Teacher Twelve says, “I see and I feel that she’s taken most of the burden upon herself with the NCLB regulations.” Teacher Eleven explains her principal’s approach to dealing with NCLB, “She sets high expectations for herself and others. As a staff, we are encouraged to rise to difficult obligations and challenges of public education today. The students are nurtured and inspired to become responsible citizens, reaching for the highest standards.”

Zepeda and Mayers (2004) articulate the demands that these teachers describe:

The work of the principal supervising the instructional program is one in which there are many complexities. The press for accountability at the hub of the labor of meeting adequate yearly progress and the constant demands of the work outside of the realm of instruction often leaves little time for the work that principals must do to ensure learning for teachers and students. These pressures are perennial, and they will continually present challenges and opportunities for the principal. (p. 193)

As a result of this pressure, the principals have made some changes to their practice.

The principals have also adjusted how they approach classroom observations and the resulting interactions with teachers as a result of NCLB. Gougeon (1991b) asserts, “Female principals tend to orient their emotions and demands for accountability toward teacher actions and not toward the teachers themselves” (p. 21). The principals acknowledge an increased focus on a teacher’s use of standards when observing teachers and examining their lesson plans. Principal One relates, “Have I started to make sure that the standards are posted in the classroom? And that the teachers are having them connected to their lessons each day? And do I care more about those things now than I did five years ago? Yes. Absolutely. I have to.” Lashway (2002) believes that to meet the mandates of NCLB, principals must be able to

recognize whether lessons and student assessments are aligned with the standards when supervising teachers.

When discussing how the supervision and evaluation of teachers might change, the principals articulate a fear of using student test data as the sole indicator of a teacher's performance, an approach consistent with their views of student assessment. Lashway (2002) advises that instead of monitoring and encouraging teacher performance in the classroom, principals must now lead teachers to produce tangible results in student performance on ambitious academic standards. To do this, he recommends that principals coach teachers through demonstration lessons and model a willingness to be driven by results. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) add, "When accountability policies stress standards for professional performance for teachers and others in the school, leaders need to stay abreast of best professional practices and help create conditions for professional growth" (p. 5). While the principals in this study have developed a repertoire of tools to use when moving teachers toward professional growth and believe that student assessment data should be a source for identifying areas for teacher growth, they object to using student assessment data as a main source in describing teacher performance.

Instead, the principals propose using a model that is more consistent with value-added assessment. Value-added will allow the principals to identify weak areas of students so that teachers have a focus when determining the goals that they should work toward. Beerens (2000) concurs with this approach, adding, "Faculty growth and development must occur if we are to increase student achievement" (p. 9). Value-added also allows principals and teachers to monitor student growth from the beginning of the year. When depicting the link between a teacher's work and accountability for students of varying abilities, Darling-Hammond (1997) concludes,

Each hour of every day teachers must juggle the need to create a secure supportive environment for learning with the press for

academic achievement, the need to attend to individual students and the demands of the group, and the challenges of pursuing multiple strands of work so that students at varying places in their learning move ahead and none are left behind. (p. 69)

This approach is consistent with how the principals would like to see students assessed in a model that promotes growth for all.

Just as the principals do not want to judge their teachers solely on student assessment data, they do not want their performance to be judged on this same data. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) report, “In these times of heightened concern for student learning, school leaders are being held accountable for how well teachers teach and how much students learn” (p. 1). In an approach consistent with how they would prefer to evaluate students and teachers, the principals prefer to be evaluated based on the growth of their school. Principal Three relates, “I believe that my obligation, and this is what I can be accountable for, is to ‘feed and water’ the kids metaphorically and the staff so that they can grow.”

Because of the disparity between their beliefs about best practices and the reality of NCLB, each principal expresses that she may retire soon, instead of going against what she believes. In a study of successful professional women, Morrison, White, and Van Velsor (cited in Porat, 1991) found that they “said what they really thought and did what they needed to do to avoid compromising their personal integrity” (p. 413). Principal One remarks, “It’s [NCLB] made me decide that I don’t think I want to do this for a whole lot longer.” The pressure to be responsible for what teachers do on a daily basis and for the levels of knowledge that students bring with them has caused each of them to think of retirement. Their feelings are consistent with findings by Houston (cited in Drago-Severson, 2004) who identifies accountability as a reason for the shortage of principals because principals are expected to fix schools without the necessary

resources. Malone and Nelson (2004) also found that complying with state, federal, and organizational rules and policies is the highest contributor to administrator stress.

#### Sample Responses:

Principal Three: “[Accountabilty] is something that would make me quit. I don’t mind being accountable. I think I should be held accountable to run a good school, to provide a safe, happy environment for children and optimal learning experiences. I can be accountable for all of that. I can’t be accountable for what the children bring.”

Principal One: “The other thing I feel about being a principal is you’re so responsible for things that you have no control of. I can’t force the teachers every single day to do what they need to be doing.”

**3.3.2.6. Summary and Connections to Related Literature** Based on the data reviewed for this research question, the presentation was organized into the following categories during data analysis, as delineated by the interview questions posed to the principals and teachers: why schools are changing, effects of accountability, standards and rubrics, testing and data use, and conflict between beliefs and practices. Research by Zepeda (2004), Holland (2004), and McNamara (2004) provided the basis for how schools are changing under NCLB. In terms of NCLB, the professional growth and development of teachers is measured by increased student achievement, the key quality in determining a school’s progress. In Pennsylvania, schools are evaluated by students’ performance on a single test, the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA). Although the principals in this study related that the pressures to constantly improve achievement are ever present on their minds, the teachers in the study noted that although they realized that their principals are under this pressure, they have only observed

subtle changes in their behavior as the principals always had high expectations for student achievement. The principals gave equal credit to the teachers for always having high expectations and for working together as a collective unit to improve achievement, behavior advocated by Schlechty (2001) and Lieberman and Miller (1999).

The principals and teachers were able to articulate ways that NCLB has altered their practice in both positive and negative ways. The most significant effect that NCLB has had on the principals is that it poses yet another demand on their time. Classroom behavior has also changed. The principals and teachers emphasized that classroom instruction is now standards-based and that rubrics are used to help the students produce work that meets these standards. However, both the principals and teachers described how the impact of student performance data on PSSA tests has brought about conflict in what they believe are best practices in instruction. Teaching to the test and the emphasis on PSSA scores as the sole piece of evidence in judging a school's success were concerns of both the principals and the teachers. Also, the principals explained how they struggle with balancing their beliefs about what constitutes educationally appropriate practices with the demands put on them through NCLB. Researchers such as Meier (cited in Barth, 2001), McNamara (2004), and Barth (2001) have echoed this struggle.

There were numerous ways that NCLB conflicts with the beliefs of the principals in this study including that it does not focus on an individual child's growth and it does not consider the developmental readiness of a student in relation to proficiency mandates. They also have difficulty making test scores their sole focus as NCLB has. Above all, they do not believe that a single assessment should be permitted to judge the progress of students, teachers, and schools. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) have also explored this issue. The principals were concerned that NCLB will one day change the way that they supervise and evaluate teachers as AYP mandates

approach the one hundred percent mark. They described a fear that they will have to evaluate teachers solely on student assessment data. Because of the disparity between their beliefs about best practices and the reality of NCLB, each principal expressed that she may retire soon, instead of going against what she believes. This realization is consistent with research on how accountability affects principals (Houston cited in Drago-Severson, 2004 and Malone and Nelson, 2004).

According to Combs, Miser, and Whitaker (1999), “Administrators are held accountable for their schools’ scores even though they have no control over how well kids do. . . . The numbers game begins to drive everyone’s efforts, sometimes to the detriment of real learning and growth” (p. 5). These researchers succinctly describe the feelings of the principals in this study regarding accountability mandates. The principals advocate a developmentally appropriate instructional and assessment model for children that also allows their teachers to grow and improve. Each day, these principals wrestle with how to meet the mandates, while maintaining their personal beliefs.

### **3.3.3. How do female teachers describe the role of female principals as supervisors and evaluators of teachers?**

The specific interview questions posed to the teachers to acquire data to answer this research question were:

1. Describe your principal’s approach to supervising teachers.
2. What does your principal expect to see in classrooms? Has NCLB changed her expectations?

3. The new forms developed by PDE address four areas. Describe what your principal looks for in a teacher's planning and preparation, classroom environment, instructional delivery, and professionalism.
4. How does your principal define teaching quality? Has NCLB changed this definition?
5. How does your principal promote teacher growth? Has her approach changed since NCLB?
6. What connection is there between what your principal does or does not observe in classrooms and professional development? Has professional development changed in light of NCLB guidelines?
7. Describe the methods your principal uses to improve teaching and learning. Have these methods changed with NCLB?
8. What is your principal's approach to providing feedback on teacher performance? Has her approach changed since NCLB?
9. Describe your principal's approach to evaluating teachers. Has her approach changed since NCLB?
10. Provide examples of how your principal does the following as an instructional leader. Has NCLB changed these practices?
11. Provides resources so that a school's academic goals can be achieved
12. Uses her knowledge and skills in curricular and instructional matters to improve teachers' instructional practice
13. Communicates in various situations
14. Creates a visible presence in the school



15. Describe your principal's interactions with you and other teachers. Have these changed since NCLB?

**3.3.3.1. Purposes of Supervision** The teachers in this study are able to identify a number of activities that they feel their principals engage in as part of the supervision process. These activities include being visible and accessible, visiting classrooms and providing feedback, discussing issues relative to teaching and learning, sharing resources and the principals' own educational expertise, and reviewing lesson plans. Killion (2000) believes that informal learning "ignites and sustains teachers' excitement for learning, growing, and changing their classroom practices" (p. 3). She identifies informal learning as "teacher planning, grade level or department meetings, conversations about students, reflection on students' or teachers' work, problem solving, assisting each other, classroom based action, research, coaching and supporting one another, making school based decisions, [and] developing assessments, curriculum, and instructional resources" (p. 3). According to the teachers in this study, their principals use these strategies as part of the supervision process. Of these activities, Teacher One feels that visiting classrooms is her principal's preferred mode of supervising: "Her passion is really coming into classrooms and supervising. She approaches it with 'This is the best part of my job. I love being in classrooms; I love working with teachers.'" Through their responses, the teachers indicate that they were not averse to being supervised, but instead appreciate the principals' efforts to be a part of their classrooms. Teacher Six calls the process "proactive and positive." The principals' visits to classrooms could be in the form of formal observations or walkthroughs, and the principals often talk with students as part of this process. Many of the teachers note that the principals frequently are in classrooms. Formal observations are usually announced and include a

preference, although Teacher Six indicates a preference for unannounced visits because she feels “you get a better feel for how someone is actually teaching when you do that.”

#### Sample Responses:

Teacher Nine: “When she comes to observe, she comes in in the least intrusive way possible. She puts herself in a corner, and she types up her observation on her laptop. She’s really involved in what the kids are doing, and to me, that shows how much she cares about the kids. She’s also trying not to make the teacher nervous because she has such a pleasant look on her face.”

Teacher Ten: “She really spends some time in a classroom. She spends a lot of time with the kids. I think she gets to know what is going on before she reaches some conclusion.”

Teacher One: “When I see her coming into the classroom, I know that she does it full heartedly. It’s the smile on her face and how she interacts with the children when she’s in the classroom.”

Another way of supervising that the teachers discussed is that the principals regularly review lesson plans and respond to them. When looking at lesson plans, Teacher Seven says that her principal matches them to standards and what happens in classrooms, looks at how the teacher is implementing curriculum, and checks for developmentally appropriate instruction. In addition to daily lesson plans, the teachers submit long range plans every nine weeks for reading, language, and spelling. Teacher Nine notes, “She just doesn’t look at them and put a check and signature [on them], but she checks off the domain of planning and preparation [on an observation form] and then writes this whole narrative.”

The teachers also describe how the principals share their educational expertise and resources with them to improve instruction. Blase and Blase (2001) observe that, in order to improve teaching and learning through supervision, principals “provide opportunities for professional development, current professional literature, and additional support in the form of

basic resources when possible. They also make themselves available to talk and share thoughts about teaching” (p. 80). The teachers in this study state that the principals employ internal and external experts to assist teachers with instructional issues. These experts include the district’s literacy, math, and technology coaches and external consultants, if the issue is outside the principal’s knowledge base. Teacher Seven states, “She knows where her area of expertise lies and where it does not, and she will ask somebody who is more familiar to deliver something to us.” Teacher One notes that in these cases, her principal also becomes a learner in order to improve her knowledge about instruction: “She is very enthusiastic about learning. She’s actually participating in a math class right now.” The teachers also relate that their principals use examples from their own teaching to help them, send teachers to conferences, offer workshops after school, and email them websites of educational interest. They also report that their principals teach demonstration lessons to help them. Additionally, the teachers share that their principals carefully develop the school budget to ensure that funds are used to improve learning, and they apply for grants to receive additional funds.

#### Sample Responses:

Teacher Nine: “She actually worked on getting a grant so that every child in the class can take home one or two books every week. It’s just to enjoy reading, for the fun of reading.”

Teacher Seven: “She’s not somebody who doesn’t remember what it was like to be teaching, and she talks about the actual day to day teaching thing.”

Teacher One: “My principal asks, ‘What do your students not have that you need to purchase to make sure that they are able to have a successful year and be able to learn and be able to create?’”

Teacher Nine: “She’ll actually create lessons herself and come in and do them. She’ll share ideas that she’s done and inspire us to do similar things.”

Teacher Eleven: “In support of our curriculum, she has applied for and received many grants. These funds are used to support a variety of learning endeavors for children. The district allocated budget is carefully reviewed and directed toward achieving the best possible learning environment and materials.”

**3.3.3.2. The School District’s Model of Supervision and Evaluation** The teachers report that the district’s model is based on the work of Danielson (1996). The principal and teacher collaboratively develop goals that the teacher works on for three years. The teacher and principal have a status conference at the end of years one and two. Teachers work in cohort groups, select three goals, and evaluate themselves. The teacher turns in a project at the end of year three. Their evaluation plan is based on their performance in four domains: planning and preparation, the learning environment, instructional practice, and professional reflection and responsibilities. The teachers report that their principals use these domains to choose an observational focus and as the basis for their feedback.

Sample Responses:

Teacher Eleven: “The teachers have a structured supervision model as prescribed by the district. She is in the classrooms daily. She is familiar with current educational literature and ‘best practices’ for achieving successful learners and works toward implementing these practices in the classrooms.”

Teacher Eight: “The teachers are very aware of what is required within those domains. [The observation form] has a checklist that we are aware of from either the induction system we go through or through the cohort system.”

Teacher Nine: “She may come in here one day to observe and be looking at the learning environment and the respect and rapport between the child and the teacher. So she’ll pick throughout the year each of these [domains] and a different time and come and observe for that reason.”

Teacher Eight: “She really looks for a lot of the details. She looks to see a lot of the specifics within each domain.”

Teacher Six: “We set goals that come out of the domains. We rate ourselves and it is up to us where we want to go with it.”

**3.3.3.3. Classroom Expectations** When identifying what they believe their principals expect to see in classrooms when they observe, the teachers name characteristics based on the feedback they receive from the principals in either formal or informal situations. The lists generated by the teachers include many commonalities across respondents. These commonalities include:

- the teacher facilitating instruction
- questioning strategies
- assessment techniques
- student engagement
- teacher following lesson plans
- student interest
- student understands purpose of lesson

- best practices
- thought provoking activities
- excited and enthusiastic students
- how students work together
- discussions of what good work is
- student created classrooms
- inquiry
- focus on standards
- integrated instruction.

Individual teachers also express specific focus areas for observations of their individual principals. Teacher Three adds that her principal expects the teachers to focus on the individual student and meeting each student's needs. Teacher Eight states that her principal focuses on developmentally appropriate instruction. Teacher Four relates that her principal focuses on the instructional environment, that "it sparks the kids' interest and gets them engaged." Teachers Two and Ten emphasize that their principals want to see happy kids. Teachers Four and Six state that their principals look at teacher professionalism, including how they work with parents, students, and other teachers. Many teachers also mention that their principals look for examples of good student work on the walls.

**3.3.3.4. Defining Teacher Quality** The teachers provide numerous definitions for how they believe their principals would define teacher quality. Their definitions focus on what they believe the nonnegotiable characteristics are that their principals would want teachers to hold. Overwhelmingly, the teachers' responses emphasize a focus on children and putting the

children's needs above all. Kaplan and Owings (2001) also emphasize promoting a positive learning climate in their definition of teacher quality.

Sample Responses:

Teacher Four: "It's your professionalism, the personal ability with the students, the expectations that you have of your students, engaging your students. Are your students engaged in your classroom? Are they learning? What kinds of things are coming out of your classroom?"

Teacher Five: "The teacher knowing her subject and each of the children, understanding students' developmental stages, being compassionate towards the students, the nurturing aspect of teachers' kindness and caring and respect."

Teacher One: "She looks for teachers that deliver instruction and treat all children like they are going to be successful."

**3.3.3.5. Collaborative Supervision** The teachers believe that the supervision and evaluation model that the district utilizes encourages collaboration between the teachers and principals. Each teacher sets goals to work on with her principal. She then meets regularly with the principal over the three year evaluation cycle to discuss progress. The teachers also relate that each principal led a meeting at each building to collaboratively develop a list of classroom look-fors to use in observations. Additionally, the teachers may request that their principal observe them to look at particular areas. The teachers report that the collaborative nature of the supervision process encourages them to try new things in their classrooms. Collaboration places responsibility for teacher learning and growth on the teacher and principal equally (Grimmett, Rostad, & Ford, 1992).

**3.3.3.6. Providing Feedback** The teachers report receiving feedback in a variety of fashions. These include post observation conferences, evaluations of goals, notes in their mailboxes, emails, responses to lesson plans, and informal conversations. The teachers report that this feedback assists them in growing professionally and makes them feel valued and important. Teacher Seven relates that her principal gathers anecdotal notes of what happens in a classroom as part of her observation report. Teacher Six explains that her principal “substantiates whatever she’s writing with the actual examples in the classroom.” The teachers also receive feedback in developing their goals as Teacher One reports, “She really helped us narrow and pinpoint what our goal needs to be.”

**3.3.3.7. Promoting Teacher Growth** The teachers report that their principals promote teacher growth through a variety of formal and informal mechanisms. The principals direct monthly staff development sessions based on what they are seeing in classrooms or learning themselves. Teacher Six explains that professional development is a mix of teacher input, what the principal sees in classrooms, “plus the ever present PSSA.” Teacher Four states, “There is something new constantly whether it is new techniques or polishing of techniques. There are activities that we work on together in different grade levels.” The principals also send literature and websites to the teachers, relate their former experiences as teachers and how they handled those experiences, and direct building and district in-services on the latest educational information. Teacher Eight notes, “If there’s something going on that’s ‘the latest and greatest in education,’ then she tries to relate that to us and how we can incorporate that. She makes sure that they’re tailored to the specific needs of what’s going on in the building at that time, which is very helpful.” Teacher Eleven adds,



She recognizes the importance and outcomes of providing teachers with proven strategies to improve and accelerate learning. She continuously seeks to adopt initiatives that will lead to educational excellence. There is ongoing professional development for the staff.

Due to their emphasis on promoting teacher growth, the teachers view their principals as teachers of teachers. Teacher Nine states, “She really works on coming up with presentations where she can teach us.” Teacher Four notes, “She does not expect any more of us than she expects of herself, and we know that.”

#### Sample Responses:

Teacher Eleven: “She is successful at motivating staff members toward improving learning outcomes and learning excellence. The school has ongoing professional development two times a month. As the facilitator, she seeks to share knowledge and inspire the staff through these training sessions.”

Teacher One: “There’s an opportunity for growth in our building.”

Teacher Six: “I think she treats us all like we’re still growing, because she’s still growing too. It’s a journey kind of thing and we’ll take the journey together. We may take different paths or whatever, but we’ll be on the journey together.”

**3.3.3.8. Visibility** When discussing her principal’s visibility, Teacher Four proclaims, “You see her all over the place. She’s everywhere.” This is a sentiment of many of the teachers in this study when discussing visibility as part of their principal’s supervisory repertoire. The teachers state that their principals attend staff meetings, parent-teacher organization meetings, and site based council meetings; lead assemblies; read to students in classrooms and play with them at recess; conduct morning and afternoon announcements; visit classrooms; are present in hallways

and the cafeteria; and attend evening programs. The teachers believe that the principals' visibility allows the principals to assess the entire instructional program and have access to the perspective of all of their school's stakeholders. Teacher Eight observes, "She makes sure that by doing these observations and by being in the hallways, and by being in the classrooms, she's aware of what's going on in the building."

#### Sample Responses:

Teacher Nine: "Almost every morning she walks in to almost every classroom just to check the kids and make sure that they know that she's there."

Teacher Eleven: "She is visible and accessible. She is busy greeting students at the entrance area as they arrive in the morning, and then quickly makes her rounds to visit the classrooms in the morning."

Teacher Twelve: "She's available all the time. You never feel like even if it's something stupid and small, her door is open all the time. If you email, if you call, you get a response right away, which is terrific."

Teacher Eight: "The teachers are very aware of her presence. She's always available. If she's not in her office but in the hallway, she'll still stop to talk to you. She's just really in the presence of everyone in the building from staff to students in a very professional way."

Teacher Ten: "She wants to be where the action is. She's at recess, she's at the playground, she's in the lunchroom, and she's in the hallway. If I want to talk to her, I won't find her in her office."

**3.3.3.9. Summary and Connections to Related Literature** Based on the data reviewed for this research question, the presentation was organized into the following categories through data analysis, as delineated by the interview questions posed to the teachers: purposes of supervision,

the school district's model of supervision and evaluation, classroom expectations, defining teacher quality, collaborative supervision, providing feedback, promoting teacher growth, and visibility. The teachers in this study were able to identify a number of activities that they feel their principals engaged in as part of the supervision process. These activities included being visible and accessible, visiting classrooms and providing feedback, discussing issues relative to teaching and learning, sharing resources and the principals' own educational expertise, and reviewing lesson plans. These activities are consistent with Killion's (2000) research on informal learning and research by Blase and Blase (2001) on how principals improve instruction. Additionally, the teachers reported that the district's model of teacher supervision and evaluation is based on the work of Danielson (1996) and utilizes the categories of planning and preparation, instructional practice, learning environment, and professional reflection and responsibilities as part of the evaluation. The teachers spoke favorably about their role in the process and the procedures involved.

The teachers were also able to enumerate what they believe their principals expect to see in classrooms when they observe. Many of these items were consistent with Kaplan and Owings' (2001) research on teacher quality. The teachers were able to articulate these items based on the collaborative nature of the supervision process. The teachers believed that the supervision and evaluation model that the district utilizes encourages collaboration between the teachers and principals. Each teacher sets goals to work on with her principal. The teachers also related that each principal led a meeting at each building to collaboratively develop a list of classroom look-fors to use in observations. The teachers reported that the collaborative nature of the supervision process encourages them to try new things in their classrooms, a view consistent with the

research of Grimmett, Rostad, and Ford (1992). The teachers set goals based on what they believe are their strengths and weaknesses. The principals support them in this process.

Additionally, the teachers reported receiving feedback in a variety of ways, which assists them in growing professionally and makes them feel valued and important. The teachers felt that promoting the teachers' professional growth is a primary goal of the principals. The teachers reported that the principals promote the teachers' professional growth by directing monthly staff development sessions, sending literature and websites to the teachers, relating their former experiences as teachers, and directing in-services. Due to their emphasis on promoting teacher growth, the teachers viewed their principals as teachers of teachers.

Finally, the teachers commended the principals for their visibility in the schools. The teachers believed that the principals' visibility allows the principals to assess the entire instructional program and have access to the perspective of all of their school's stakeholders.

#### **3.3.4. How does the leadership style of female principals as reported in the literature compare with the reality of female principals in the era of No Child Left Behind?**

The specific interview questions posed to the principals to acquire data to answer this research question were:

1. Provide examples of how you do the following as an instructional leader. Has NCLB changed these practices?
  - e. Provide resources so that a school's academic goals can be achieved
  - f. Use your knowledge and skills in curricular and instructional matters to improve teachers' instructional practice
  - g. Communicate in various situations

- h. Create a visible presence in the school
2. Describe your leadership style. Provide specific examples of how you lead your school.  
Has your approach changed since NCLB?
3. How do you approach your interactions with teachers? Has your approach changed since NCLB?
4. Describe the structures that you have put in place to promote teacher leadership.
5. What are the functions of the learning team? Does the team relate to NCLB?
6. What are the functions of the resource management team? Does the team relate to NCLB?
7. How do you utilize the committee structure to supervise and work with teachers? What is your function in the committee structure?
8. How do you develop teacher leaders, and how do they contribute to the school?

The specific interview questions posed to the teachers to acquire data to answer this research question were:

1. Provide examples of how your principal does the following as an instructional leader.  
Has NCLB changed these practices?
  - a. Provides resources so that a school's academic goals can be achieved
  - b. Uses her knowledge and skills in curricular and instructional matters to improve teachers' instructional practice
  - c. Communicates in various situations
  - d. Creates a visible presence in the school
2. Describe your principal's leadership style. Provide specific examples of how she leads your school. Has her approach changed since NCLB?

**3.3.4.1. A Team Approach** According to Leithwood and Riehl (2003), “Leaders influence student learning by helping to promote vision and goals, and by ensuring that resources and processes are in place to enable teachers to teach well” (p. 3). To accomplish their visions for their respective schools, the principals in this study utilize structures and procedures to involve everyone in leading the school. The principals emphasize the concepts of sharing and collaborating when describing how they lead their schools. While they are ultimately responsible for their school’s progress, the principals believe that a team approach is the best way to accomplish their visions for their schools. In describing her vision for her school, Principal Three wants a learning environment that fosters a child’s natural disposition toward learning. She wants her teachers to give the students “rich environments where they can grow.” She adds, “We create a rich environment and we support them [students]. We make their lives outside of school as good as we can. We make sure school is the best part of their day. We can always do that every single day.” Principal Two has a vision of a “happy child place” for her school. Principal One explains, “My vision is that every child has an opportunity to be the best that he or she can be. I want every child to come to school every day, be happy to be here, learn, and have fun.” The principals constructed what their visions were in collaboration with their staff. The teachers share that this was a positive way to do this and allowed everyone to contribute. The principals note that they intentionally focus on happy children in their descriptions as opposed to the vision of proficient children proposed by NCLB. They believe that a school has to meet a child’s basic needs first, before achievement can happen.

The teachers in the study report that they feel empowered to do anything in their schools from applying for grants to trying new ideas. Teacher Twelve elaborates, “She has a great deal of confidence in everybody and allows people to use their own expertise to handle things within the

framework of what we all expect.” Teacher Seven adds, “She’s very open to an idea that you’ll bring to her.” Leithwood and Riehl (2003) note, “Effective leaders enable the school to function as a professional learning community to support and sustain the performance of all key workers, including teachers as well as students” (p. 4). The principals in this study report that they empower their teachers to encourage continued investment in their school’s program.

As part of their principals’ team approach to leadership, the teachers report that the principals use the expertise of their staff, share their own experiences and research, and mentor the teachers. Teacher Seven observes, “She yields to the expertise of the person in a particular area and lets you explain what you need to explain.” Teacher Two states, “She has a leadership style that incorporates finding strength in others and finding how they can contribute. I think she’s put a lot of power in our hands when it comes to making decisions.” Principal One also emphasizes the importance of mentoring teachers and being a role model for their staff. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) concur that leaders must provide an appropriate model for their staff.

The principals also emphasize collaboration as part of their team approach. Regan and Brooks (1995) define collaboration as “the ability to work in a group, eliciting and offering support to each other, creating a synergistic environment for everyone” (p. 26). Teacher Twelve states, “The most important thing I think she does is try to make a team here in a non-competitive environment. So included in that would be her encouragement for us to work as teams at our grade level.” Principal Two elaborates, “I’m encouraging work to be shared and welcomed by staff members and teammates because we’re all in this together.” She adds, “If we can share our tasks, recognizing the strength of the people on staff and being grateful for the sharing, that’s where I’d like to go.” Leithwood and Riehl (2003) note that leaders “provide individualized support” by “showing respect for staff and concern about their feelings and

needs” (p. 4). Teacher Twelve illustrates this idea: “Encouraging teamwork is very high on her [the principal’s] priority. Also trying to be sure that when people make mistakes, they get let up from them and are not punished forever.”

**3.3.4.2. Connections** Because their principals have emphasized teamwork, the teachers feel that they and the students are connected to the principals. Regan and Brooks (1995) note, “Most successful leaders maintain connectedness to students and to their staffs” (p. 26). Teacher Three observes, “I think she really cares about the staff and students.” The teachers feel connected to their principals because the principals fight for what is right for children and protect their teachers from harm. Teacher Six describes this feeling, “She guards us. She does protect us and will not put us out there. . . . I think we’re all born overachievers. We love that edge to us that we really do fight for our children and she does too.” The teachers also admire the high expectations the principals have for themselves and their staff. One principal even has her staff evaluate her. Teacher Nine states,

I know she has high expectations; she works hard and expects the same of others. This is a hard working staff and I don’t think you would get that in a building where the teachers didn’t respect the principal as much as we do.

Principal Three attributes much of this mutual respect to her time as a classroom teacher: “I think it buys me credibility. I think it gives me a depth of understanding that I wouldn’t have without it as to what happens every day in the classroom.” The other principals and the teachers in the study concur with this assessment.

#### Sample Responses:

Teacher Nine: “She’s definitely a leader. She’s somebody who takes in what’s going on and very quietly at the end can put her two cents worth in. It’s constructive.”



Teacher Six: “Anytime that there’s something that we feel we need, if it’s at all possible, she’ll come through for us. We know that when we go to her, if it’s a justified kind of need, that she’s going to hear us.”

Teacher Four: “She makes it a point to keep in contact with the students. She works constantly for a school theme, how we all approach the year. She constantly comes up with programs for kids.”

**3.3.4.3. Site Based Management** The principals in this study attend a variety of meetings and participate in numerous committees to enable others to participate as leaders in their schools. Building the leadership capacity of others is a hallmark of transformational leadership (Liontos, 1992). Restine (cited in Grogan, 1996) believes, “If we subscribe to the notion that virtually everyone has some potential for leadership, schools can be extraordinary places for expanding opportunities for leadership” (p. 137). To that end, the principals utilize a site based management council that oversees four committees: the Learning Team, the Resource Management team, the Communications Team, and the Well-Being Committee. Each committee is led by a teacher. The committees develop ideas and oversee areas on each school’s strategic plan. Principal Three believes that the committees should be proactive: “We can always make this a better place for kids.” The principal is a member of each committee. Her role is to help the committee refine their proposals before presenting them to the site based management council; she also provides resources. Teacher Nine states, “She could tell you what each committee is doing, how they’re going about it, and sometimes she knows the things that can help them like resources.” The committees present their ideas to the site based council, which consists of teachers, parents, administrators, and community members. The site based management council makes decisions

based on the committee's proposals. Senge (1999) believes that these kinds of leadership communities enable the building of leadership capacity throughout the organization so the organization can continually adapt and reinvent itself. This is a collaborative process that Leithwood and Riehl (2003) and Lambert (1998) also espouse. Sergiovanni (1992) explains,

As leaders of leaders, they [school administrators] work hard to build up the capacities of teachers and others, so that direct leadership will no longer be needed. This is achieved through team building, leadership development, shared decision making, and striving to establish the value of collegiality. (p. 123)

The principals in this study believe that the contributions of all stakeholders in leading the school are vital to the school's success.

**3.3.4.4. Teacher Leadership** Drago-Severson (2004) believes that teachers have the strongest influence on school planning and structure, because teacher leadership builds democratic workplaces, increases teacher professionalism, increases teacher effectiveness, and promotes collegial interactions. Principal One concurs with this assessment, "The teacher leader is the most powerful position to effect change." The principals in this study describe utilizing teacher leaders in a variety of ways: to serve on or chair committees, to present professional development sessions, to lead grade level teams, and to act as cooperating teachers or as mentors to new teachers. These roles are consistent with what Drago-Severson (2004) identifies as possible leadership roles for teachers.

The principals in this study believe that mentoring teacher leaders is one of their most important functions as administrators. Principal Three relates, "I think a lot of times I felt people just don't realize how good they really are. They need me to point that out and offer to support that." Principal One describes working with teachers to reinforce the positive things that they do

and guide them to help others. Drago-Severson (2004) asserts, “A leadership role can provide a space where individuals are supported and challenged by others as they articulate their own thinking and reflections in an open way and listen to and learn from other people’s perspectives” (p. 87). Teacher Eleven relates a similar sentiment when describing how her principal promotes teacher leadership:

She is able to identify and foster potential in others. She nurtures individual interests and talents. She works to build each teacher’s capacity for leadership by inspiring them to accept challenges and responsibilities beyond what may be their comfort level.

Principal Three adores this part of her job because she gets to see the fruits of her labor: “It has been so much fun to watch some of them blossom. A teacher wrote me one of those notes that’s a keeper. She said, ‘Thanks for believing in me.’”

The principals in this study believe that developing teacher leaders is a key to meeting the requirements of NCLB. As paperwork and meetings consume more and more of their time, it is a relief to them to have trusted teacher leaders share the responsibilities of instructional improvement. They also rely on teacher leaders to promote effective teaching through providing professional development and acting as role models. The principals believe that they need to utilize the strengths of their entire staff to secure proficiency for all students.

**3.3.4.5. Summary and Connections to Related Literature** Based on the data reviewed for this research question, the presentation was organized into the following categories through data analysis, as delineated by the interview questions posed to the principals and teachers: a team approach, connections, site based management, and teacher leadership. A predominant idea in their descriptions of leadership was the principals’ and teachers’ belief that it takes many people to lead a school. To accomplish their visions for their respective schools, the principals in this

study described structures and procedures that they have utilized to involve everyone in leading the school. The principals emphasized the concepts of sharing and collaborating when describing how they lead their schools. As a result of the principals' approach, the teachers reported that they feel empowered to do anything in their schools from applying for grants to trying new ideas. Regan and Brooks (1995) and Leithwood and Riehl (2003) emphasize taking a team approach to leadership.

Because their principals have emphasized teamwork, the teachers felt that they and the students are connected to the principals, an effect also found by Regan and Brooks (1995). The teachers reported feeling connected to their principals because the principals fight for what is right for children and protect their teachers from harm. Additionally, because of their emphasis on teamwork, the principals use each building's site based management structure to enable others to participate as leaders in their schools. Numerous researchers have related the benefits of shared leadership (Liontos, 1992; Restine cited in Grogan, 1996; Senge, 1999; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Lambert, 1998; Sergiovanni, 1992). Sharing leadership has led to the emergence of numerous teacher leaders who serve on or chair committees, present professional development sessions, lead grade level teams, and act as cooperating teachers or mentors. Drago-Severson (2004) emphasizes the importance of teacher leaders. The principals in this study believed that developing teacher leaders is a key to meeting the requirements of NCLB. As paperwork and meetings consume more and more of their time, it is a relief to them to have trusted teacher leaders share the responsibilities of instructional improvement.

Bredeson (cited in Blase and Blase, 2001) states that principals who practice team centered leadership paid greater attention to teacher and group needs, relinquished control to others, facilitated and advised, and created a culture of support and trust. The principals in this study use

a team approach to leadership in order to involve their staffs in creating a particular vision. They collaborate and connect with their staffs, utilize teacher leaders, and employ a site based management structure. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) conclude, “At the core of most definitions of leadership are two functions: providing direction and exercising influence. Leaders mobilize and work with others to achieve shared goals” (p. 2).

### **3.3.5. How does the communication style of female principals as reported in the literature compare with the reality of female principals in the era of NCLB?**

The specific interview questions posed to the principals to acquire data to answer this research question were:

1. What is your approach to providing feedback on teacher performance? Has your approach changed since NCLB?
2. Describe your communication style. Provide specific examples of how you communicate with teachers. Has your approach changed since NCLB?
3. How do you approach your interactions with teachers? Has your approach changed since NCLB?
4. How do you use conversations with teachers to promote teaching and learning?

The specific interview questions posed to the teachers to acquire data to answer this research question were:

1. What is your principal’s approach to providing feedback on teacher performance? Has her approach changed since NCLB?
2. Describe your principal’s communication style. Provide specific examples of how she communicates with teachers. Has her approach changed since NCLB?

3. Describe your principal's interactions with you and other teachers. Has her approach changed since NCLB?

**3.3.5.1. Feedback** The principals report providing feedback to teachers as part of the formal teacher supervision process and as part of the informal interactions that occur as part of daily life in a school. The teachers receive feedback on their goals and what they see in observations and classroom walkthroughs. Conferences occur after formal observations in which teachers receive oral feedback, as well as a written report. The teachers report that the principals often take verbatim scripts during an observation that they can use as a focal point for the post observation conference. Teacher Five reflects, "She types down a script of pretty much everything I say as I'm instructing, and that's a good opportunity for me to go back and look at my communication style with the kids." The principals believe that the feedback that occurs through the conference is where teachers have the best opportunity to grow and learn. Principal One states, "To me, the meaningful part of supervision doesn't have to do with what you write on paper. It has to do with the conversation that happens either before, after, or incidentally as a result of that." In addition to feedback on classroom observations, the teachers also report receiving feedback on their lesson plans. Teacher Twelve explains, "We get a response back from all of our lesson plans and our long range plans. So you get an awful lot of feedback here." The principals believe that constant feedback helps the teachers to improve their performance.

Both the principals and teachers emphasize that the principals are positive when giving feedback to teachers. Blase and Blase (1998) identify four reasons for praising teachers: to motivate and reward, to enhance self-esteem, to demonstrate caring, and to gain compliance with expectations. The principals believe that by praising their teachers and focusing on the good

things that teachers are doing, they will motivate the teachers to continue those practices. However, they worry that as the one hundred percent proficiency mandate of NCLB grows closer, they may have to abandon this type of approach and be more directive and less collaborative in helping teachers improve their practice.

#### Sample Responses:

Teacher Five: “She would discuss what she saw in the observation and ask my input about the lesson, share my evaluations, my criticisms, and my own work, but she’s very positive and supportive. I think that she’s very supportive and most helpful at pointing out things that are already good and already working.”

Teacher Six: “She notices when kids and teachers are doing what they’re supposed to do and comments on it.”

Principal Two: “I heard recently that you can have all the praise in your head thinking as you walk through the building, but if it just stays there, it doesn’t have the impact that it can have if it’s expressed one on one with the teacher.”

Teacher Eleven: “She seeks to motivate the staff through positive feedback, inspiration to do their best work, and opportunities to grow. She listens to our needs and responds with quick and immediate attention.”

The principals also include questions as part of their feedback process. Blase and Blase (1998) report, “Good principals usually took an inquiry approach to talk with teachers by asking questions” (p. 41). Teacher Nine relates that her principal always includes a question for reflection on the observation report. The principals do this in order to help the teachers discover information about their practice themselves. Teacher One states, “Her questions are more probing and learning more about how we present things.” Some questions that the teachers have

been asked include: “How do you assess your students if they are doing animal behavior projects?, How do you reinforce students’ learning?, Why did you say that?, and Why is that the way you praise children?”

The principals and teachers also report that the principals give frequent notes of praise to teachers as reinforcement. These include personal notes, letters to the entire faculty, and “kudos” certificates. Principal Three states, “I do give teachers notes and seals of approval particularly as we start school. I frequently distribute this ‘let’s go team’ kind of note or ‘I’m proud of your work.’” Hutton and Gougeon (1993) report that female principals provide personal feedback in the form of memos and notes of appreciation. Principal Two recalls, “I remember as a teacher how I loved to get a written note from an administrator. And once again, I have to try to put myself in the teachers’ shoes and try to do more of that.” The principals often try to put themselves in the place of the teachers when considering the effects of their actions.

**3.3.5.2. Open Approach** The teachers and principals report that the principals make themselves available for formal and informal interactions and communicate in a variety of ways. The principals conduct team building activities to improve group processing skills, publish newsletters, and share all meeting minutes so that the staff always knows what is going on in the school. They also conduct exit interviews with each teacher at the end of the year to discuss the teacher’s perspective on the school year. Additionally, the principals update the staff on what is happening in the school through faculty meetings, committee meetings, team meetings, and email. Principal Three reflects, “Most discontent arises from poor communication. What I really believe is if you can establish some really clean structures, it just helps so much with communication. I really feel, that at this school, if you don’t know what’s going on, then it’s



because you're trying not to know." The teachers express appreciation for not only the amount of information they receive, but also for their principal's availability. This strategy is consistent with the findings of Shakeshaft (1989) and Gray (2002).

#### Sample Responses:

Teacher Eleven: "She exemplifies high quality communication by speaking carefully and with regard. She seeks to keep all members of the community informed of educational programs, activities, and events that are in place or are forthcoming. She publishes a monthly staff newsletter. She meets with the staff to discuss the monthly calendar events and share updates on the work of the building committees."

Teacher Five: "She's always been extremely welcoming when I go to the door and talk with her. She's very approachable and she has an open door policy."

Teacher Eight: "She really likes to make herself available. She'll fill up her schedule to the minute if she has to in order to make sure that there's good communication between her and her staff."

Teacher Eleven: "She is quick to respond to calls, letters, and e-mails during the school day and addresses issues or concerns that arise in a timely manner."

**3.3.5.3. Informal Conversations** The principals report that they use the informal conversations that arise during the school day between themselves and teachers to improve teaching and learning. They believe that this informal, one on one time is the perfect opportunity to promote teacher growth. Senge (1990) and Tannen (1990) emphasize the importance of conversations in improving organizations. Barth (2001) explains, "Conversations have the capacity to promote reflection, to create and exchange craft knowledge, and to help improve the organization" (p.

68). Principal Three relates that the topics of teaching and learning “are constant in this school. People are eager to share their good ideas. I ask questions to ‘get the ball rolling’ whenever I can.” Principal Two shares, “I try to talk to the teachers when I can about what they’re really excited about in their classrooms and what they’re doing that’s different that they’re excited about.”

**3.3.5.4. Summary and Connections to Related Literature** Based on the data reviewed for this research question, the presentation was organized into the following categories during data analysis, as delineated by the interview questions posed to the principals and teachers: feedback, open approach, and informal conversations. Feedback is a key communication tool for the principals in this study. The principals reported providing feedback to the teachers as part of the formal teacher supervision process and as part of the informal interactions that occur as part of daily life in a school. Both the principals and teachers emphasized that the principals are positive when giving feedback to teachers and include questions as part of the feedback process, an approach advocated by Blase and Blase (1998). The principals believed that by praising their teachers and focusing on the good things that teachers are doing, they will motivate the teachers to continue those practices. To that end, they also give frequent notes of praise to teachers as reinforcement as described by Hutton and Gougeon (1993).

Additionally, the teachers and principals reported that the principals make themselves available for formal and informal interactions and communicate in a variety of ways. The principals conduct team building activities to improve group processing skills, publish newsletters, and share all meeting minutes so that the staff always knows what is going on in the school. The teachers expressed appreciation for not only the amount of information they receive,

but also for their principal's availability. Shakeshaft (1989) and Gray (2002) present research findings consistent with this open approach to communication.

A final approach that the principals use in their communication repertoire is informal conversation. The principals reported that they use informal conversations that arise during the school day between themselves and teachers to improve teaching and learning. Senge (1990), Tannen (1990), and Barth (2001) emphasize the importance of conversations in improving organizations.

Based on their descriptions, the principals and teachers in this study report that the principals use communication to improve teaching and learning in their schools. The teachers receive frequent and positive feedback from their principals in the form of conferences, notes, and observation reports. Drago-Severson (2004) concludes,

Engaging in honest conversations about new ideas and proposed school changes enables teachers to gradually adjust, because these conversations provide a context for teachers to voice concerns and feelings about the impending changes and help principals to appreciate and learn from the teachers' perspectives. (p. 108)

The principals are available and accessible to the teachers for conversations. The principals believe that these conversations are instrumental in improving teaching.

### **3.3.6. How does the power orientation of female principals as reported in the literature compare with the reality of female principals in the era of NCLB?**

The specific interview questions posed to the principals to acquire data to answer this research question were:

1. How do you use the power associated with your position? Provide specific examples. Has your approach changed since NCLB?
2. Describe your decision making process. How do you involve or empower others?

3. How do you decide if a situation calls for you to share power with others or use power over others?

The specific interview questions posed to the teachers to acquire data to answer this research question were:

1. How does your principal use the power associated with her position? Provide specific examples. Has her approach changed since NCLB?
2. Describe your principal's decision making process. How are you involved or empowered?

**3.3.6.1. Shared Decision Making** Hurty (1995) asserts that women lead in “power with” mode as demonstrated by their “emotional energy, nurtured growth [of learning], reciprocal talk [talking with instead of at others], pondered mutuality [considering others when making decisions], and collaborative change [involving others]” (p. 385). The principals in this study employ several structures to promote communication between themselves and the stakeholders in their schools and to encourage the contribution of a variety of voices in making decisions that affect the schools. The principals use forums such as faculty, team, and committee meetings, the site based management council, and informal conversations to gather input when making decisions. Teacher Eleven states, “The decisions that are made are based on a shared-decision making model. Faculty and community input are encouraged in the continual review and monitoring of the curriculum. Teachers and parents serve on the standing committees, task forces, and the site-based team.” This approach is consistent with the advice of Brown and Moffett (1999) who share, “Perhaps the most significant thing we have learned is the importance of respectful involvement of all stakeholders” (p. 87). Principal Three believes that involving

others early in decision making leads to less resistance later on during the implementation stage: “You have to convince people, before the decisions are made, or after the decisions are made. So I have found, if they’re convinced before a lot of these decisions are made, you hit the ground running. You have fewer people who are resistant, because they’ve had at least some input.” This contribution of many voices in the decision making process helps the principals gain the support of the school’s stakeholders.

The principals in this study use the best interest of children as the yardstick when working with others to make decisions. Teacher Eleven states,

She has worked with the community and staff to develop a clear understanding of the school’s vision and goals. The focus of all meetings is centered on children and creating the best possible learning environment for children and adults. Every committee, every meeting, and every decision is focused on supporting and encouraging student learning.

The principals then gather input from others. Teacher Ten describes,

She first listens to people’s opinions. She tries to get a variety of opinions. So then she tries to process that through to figure out what will work and what’s going to be palatable, and what’s going to be manageable and make sense. The bottom line always is what’s in the best interest of the kids.

Blase and Blase (1997) assert that principals who promote shared decision making maintain a focus on instruction.

Often, decisions are made by consensus, a process that Senge et. al. (2000) believe allows decisions to belong to all who are involved, instead of individuals. Principal Three promotes consensus because “I don’t want sides to things.” Principal Two recounts, “I involve staff members in the decision and usually decisions are made by consensus. There are very few that I have to take the final stand on because we work it out.”

The principals also use their judgment when weighing the different voices pertaining to a particular decision. Principal One describes her decision making process,

I like to get lots and lots of teacher input. I get lots of parent input too. Not only just with real committee kind of things but even in terms of discipline and working with kids. I want them to feel like they've been heard. I want the issues to be out there on the table so that everybody has a sense that they have some input into it. And then I try to blend my beliefs, what they want, and come to something that we can all live with.

Of sharing decision making with others, Principal Three states, "You realize there are frequently many ways to get where you need to go, and there's no way really of knowing what the exact, optimal answer is. So you make your best judgment and kind of go for it."

The principals believe that shared decision making is an essential element in their schools because it promotes community, relationships, and teacher leadership. They believe that shared decision making gives all stakeholders a voice and promotes ownership of what occurs in their buildings. Blase and Blase (2001) concur with their beliefs. However, the principals worry that the mandates of NCLB will force them to make more decisions unilaterally, without teacher input, because so much of NCLB compliance goes against the beliefs of their staff.

#### Sample Responses:

Teacher Six: "She always makes sure that she listens for the input of others and asks, 'Are there other ways to do it?'"

Principal One: "I think it's real important that every grade level be represented on committees because you're making decisions that those teachers have to be able to do in their classroom."

Principal Three: "I feel like I keep my fingers in everything, but I also try to listen. It's a shared way of working. I very much believe in shared decision making."

Teacher One: "She wants to include everybody; she wants people to be involved."

Teacher Five: “There are different committees that help to come up with what we are doing in the school and then she [principal] attends them as frequently as she can. There is a lot of participation in terms of making building wide decisions.”

**3.3.6.2. Teacher Empowerment** The principals and teachers in this study report the principals’ use of a variety of strategies, consistent with the study findings of Blase and Blase (2001) to empower teachers. For instance, they share decision making with teachers through structures that promote team building and collaboration. This includes teacher participation on committees and the site based management council. Also, the principals empower teachers through frequent conversations that give the teachers a voice in their schools. These opportunities often occur because the principals are visible and accessible in the schools. Finally, the principals promote professional growth as a means of empowering teachers. They utilize teacher expertise, encourage risk taking, and support the teachers’ work.

Sample Responses:

Teacher Twelve: “She [principal] has confidence in the way people make decisions about what they’re managing. She supports you when you make a decision even if you’re wrong. She’ll support you and try to work out a solution that’s mutually agreeable to everyone.”

Teacher Eleven: “The teachers chair and run the committees and teams that comprise the governance and planning systems of our school. Every teacher is encouraged to serve on an instructional team. Many teachers serve on a variety of committees at the school and district level. Other teachers have provided important voices in grant projects or as workshop leaders for our school, the district, and a variety of organizations.”

**3.3.6.3. Summary and Connections to Related Literature** Based on the data reviewed for this research question, the presentation was organized into the following categories through data analysis, as delineated by the interview questions posed to the principals and teachers: shared decision making and teacher empowerment. When explaining their views on shared decision making, the principals in this study reported employing several structures to promote communication between themselves and the stakeholders in their schools and to encourage the contribution of a variety of voices in making decisions that affect the schools. The principals reported using forums such as faculty, team, and committee meetings, the site based management council, and informal conversations to gather input when making decisions. This method is consistent with the views of Hurty (1995) and Brown and Moffett (1999). The principals' commitment to shared decision making empowers the teachers to be a part of the process. The principals reported that they encourage teacher participation on committees and the site based management council, utilize teacher expertise, encourage risk taking, and support the teachers' work in order to empower their teachers. The principals' strategies are consistent with the findings of Blase and Blase (2001) and their research on teacher empowerment.

Therefore, the principals and teachers in this study report that the principals work in a mode consistent with the "power with" orientation due to an emphasis on shared decision making and teacher empowerment. The principals believe that these strategies build community and shared ownership in their schools and promote teacher leadership. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) add that shared decision making and teacher empowerment are important because "leaders primarily work through and with other people. They also establish the conditions that enable others to be effective" (p. 2).



### **3.3.7. How does the ethic of care displayed by female principals as reported in the literature compare with the reality of female principals in the era of NCLB?**

The specific interview question posed to the principals to acquire data to answer this research question was:

Researchers believe that females act with an ethic of care. This usually translates into a focus on relationships, empowering others, and creating a climate of caring. How do you demonstrate an ethic of care in your practice? Has your approach changed since NCLB?

The specific interview question posed to the teachers to acquire data to answer this research question was:

Researchers believe that females act with an ethic of care. This usually translates into a focus on relationships, empowering others, and creating a climate of caring. How does your principal demonstrate an ethic of care in your practice? Has your approach changed since NCLB?

**3.3.7.1. Relationships** Because of their focus on relationships and connections, females are said to act with an ethic of care (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984, 1992). Their caring allows them to support and encourage others and involve them in decisions, thus creating connections, collaboration, and relationships (Aburdene & Naisbitt, 1992; Beck cited in Regan & Brooks, 1995; Gilligan, 1982; Sernak, 1998; Heim, Murphy, & Golant, 2001). The principals and teachers in this study emphasize the relationships that the principals have built with teachers. The principals believe that by supporting and encouraging the teachers through focusing on the positive, they will build the relationships with them that are key to their schools becoming a true community of learners. The principals believe that by sharing their lives with their staff and

allowing their staff to see them as people, the staff will view them as allies in promoting teacher and student growth. Barth (2001) agrees that relationships are paramount in schools:

The relationship among the adults in the schoolhouse has more impact on the quality and the character of the school than any other factor . . . Among adult relationships in schools, that between teacher and principal is decisive. I have found no characteristic of a good school more pervasive than healthy teacher-principal relationships. (p. 105)

The principals in this study believe that building relationships and the trust which results are essential to school improvement. Principal One asserts, “Because I think adult learners are so much different than children as learners, building that relationship helps teachers to realize their responsibility in the profession and why they chose it in the first place.”

The principals admire the work of their teachers and do things to show that appreciation to their staff. They have had their staff to their homes for dinners, made breakfast at school for the teachers, sponsor a monthly greet and treat, send positive notes and cards, participate in after school events like bowling, organize luncheons for the teachers, are available, and organize team building activities. The principals also share their lives outside of school with the teachers. Most importantly, they take time just to talk with their teachers. The principals strive to model the positive behaviors in these instances that they hope their teachers will recreate with students. Principal Two maintains that building trust and relationships happens “one on one. And if you don’t take time to talk to people one on one, I think you can lose that very quickly.” Additionally, the principals develop teacher leaders, utilize structures that allow teachers to share in decision making, and ensure that children are at the center of the work of schools as part of their focus on relationships. Relationships help motivate the teachers to grow professionally and do their best work. This approach is consistent with the research of Witmer (1995), Kropiewnicki and Shapiro (2001), and Sernak (1998).

The principals and teachers believe that the caring the principals show their staff helps them in times of stress, such as in dealing with PSSA testing or the mandates of NCLB. The teachers describe their principals as “a cheerleader,” “rallying force,” and “mother.” In her study on workplace communication, Tannen (1994) notes, “Women frequently referred to themselves, or were referred to by others, as ‘mothers’ as if they watched out for those who reported to them” (p. 161). The teachers in this study concur that they view their principals as protectors in times of stress, a role that the principals relish. Principal Two states,

[Due to] students’ needs and faculty needs, I feel like I’m the “mom” of the building. And I feel like I have that responsibility. I’m mom and I need to look and make sure everybody’s happy, everybody has what they need to do their work, and everybody needs to have me pat them on the back for doing the good work. So I feel like a mom.

This familial feeling extends the caring that exists in each school.

#### Sample Responses:

Teacher Six: “I think she always shows us respect, always shows us the best side of her that she can at any point in time.”

Principal Three: “I just try to be sensitive to their needs, and ask them to be sympathetic to mine. I’d say I’ve made a lot of mistakes. If you forgive me, I’ll forgive you kind of thing.”

Teacher Eleven: “As our principal, she understands that quality learning occurs best when there is trust among all members of the school community.”

Teacher Eight: “She’s always perky and has a smiling face. I think that just walking down the hallway and seeing that just makes you want to smile back at her. I think she has done a lot of good things for this building.”

**3.3.7.2. Nurturing Environment** The principals try to model the climate that they want the teachers to create in their classrooms by creating a positive, trusting, nurturing environment in their schools. The principals have worked diligently to provide a working environment that shows caring. Principal Two states, “It’s important when you walk in the school, and that’s my responsibility I feel, to make sure the school looks like it’s an organized, caring professional environment.” To create this environment, the principals display pictures of the teachers in the foyer of their schools so that the teachers are readily known by any person who visits the school. They have also used funds to upgrade furniture for their schools so that the appearance improves. Also to improve the appearance of the schools, the principals display student art throughout the building.

The principals try to give their teachers tangible and intangible proof of their value. Principal Two states, “I put myself in their place. What would I like as an employee? I’d like to be known and appreciated.” To that end, the principals try to recognize the contributions of their teachers to the schools. They value the teachers’ lives outside of school by involving the teachers’ families in school functions, give trophies and other awards for teacher actions including kindness to others, send encouraging emails, hold staff meetings to promote the good that happens in their buildings, and promote best practices through the creation of a professional library and a teacher workroom, where the teachers can gather and collaborate together. Citing numerous research studies, Beck (1994) relates that teachers who feel recognized, valued, and cared for contribute to school effectiveness.

Sample Responses:

Teacher Eleven: “She works to promote harmony among the members of the school community. She reminds us to ‘be present in the moment’ and encourages us to value each day and each

other. She assists the staff in being people of positive and grateful hearts by creating a pleasant school environment.”

Principal Two: “My style is environment centered a lot and I believe it’s all of our jobs to create an environment where it’s okay to come to work and feel welcome here when you enter the door. To have people around you that care about you. And with that kind of nurturing environment, people do their best work.”

Teacher Eleven: “Through her successful leadership, she continues to challenge the process, inspire shared vision, enable others to act, model the way, and encourage the heart.”

**3.3.7.3. Summary and Connections to Related Literature** Based on the data reviewed for this research question, the presentation was organized into the following categories through data analysis, as delineated by the interview question posed to the principals and teachers: relationships and nurturing environment. The principals in this study reported that building relationships with their teachers is of paramount importance to them. Researchers relate how caring helps to build relationships (Aburdene & Naisbitt, 1992; Beck cited in Regan & Brooks, 1995; Gilligan, 1992; Sernak, 1998; Heim, Murphy, & Golant, 2001). The principals believed that by supporting and encouraging the teachers through focusing on the positive, they will build the relationships with them that are key to their schools becoming a true community of learners. The principals believed that relationships help motivate the teachers to grow professionally and do their best work, an idea supported by Barth (2001), Witmer (1995), Kropiewnicki and Shapiro (2001), and Sernak (1998).

Another way that the principals reported showing caring is by creating a nurturing environment. The principals reported trying to model the climate that they want the teachers to

create in their classrooms by creating a positive, trusting, nurturing environment in their schools. The principals reported that they try to recognize the contributions of their teachers to the schools. Beck (1994) supports the importance of teacher recognition in school improvement efforts.

Beck (1994) asserts, “Caring depends upon a special kind of relationship between persons, one characterized by some measure of commitment. [They] act in ways that further the welfare, growth, and development of others and of themselves” (p. 20). The principals in this study build relationships and create a nurturing environment to demonstrate caring in their schools. They believe that by modeling caring to their staffs, the teachers will show these same attributes with students. The teachers view their principals as protectors in times of stress, such as implementing NCLB mandates.

## **4. CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **4.1. INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this study was to describe the present status of teacher supervision and evaluation in the era of No Child Left Behind as experienced by three female elementary principals and twelve female elementary teachers in a well performing, suburban school district in Western Pennsylvania. The study compared the findings from the literature in the areas of supervision and evaluation and its components of leadership, communication style, power orientation, and ethic of care, with the beliefs and reality of present practice from the point of view of the respondents. For the purposes of this study, “supervision” is defined as any activity that a principal engages in to improve teaching and learning, and “evaluation” is defined as ranking the quality of that activity. A study of how the gender of the principal influences the supervision and evaluation process was considered to be important since teacher quality is a critical factor in the accountability movement established and symbolized by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. This study sought to compare the findings from the review of literature with descriptions of present practice under the mandates of NCLB from the perspectives of the respondents.

The study took the form of a case study in order to provide a detailed description of a single school district in Western Pennsylvania. Three elementary schools, each headed by a female principal, were studied in this district. Interview questions were constructed based on the

research questions in the research domains. Common themes were identified for each research question based on the responses of the principals and teachers.

The study revealed profound consistency between the information cited in the review of literature and the information reported by the respondents across each area of supervision and evaluation, leadership, communication style, power orientation, and ethic of care. The study also revealed the potential conflicts between the principals and the NCLB legislation and the effects of NCLB on the practices of the principals and teachers. This chapter will present significant themes based on the findings of the study. Further recommendations will then be reported. The fact that these three female elementary principals lead elementary schools has defined their supervisory practices, including their leadership and communication styles, power orientation, and particularly, their focus on caring. This same context has influenced their response to meeting the requirements of No Child Left Behind as it pertains to these same practices. The following themes were identified based on the findings of the study. The themes are a synthesis of the findings of the study based on their significance in terms of how frequently they were mentioned and articulated by the respondents and by how they contributed to the existing literature base.

## **4.2. SIGNIFICANT THEMES**

### **4.2.1. An emphasis on caring creates a family like atmosphere in these elementary schools.**

Most significantly, working in an elementary school has allowed these three principals to create a school climate built around the concept of caring. Elementary schools are child centered environments. Principals and teachers focus on the whole child, including the child's emotional,



social, and academic needs. Because the children in their care are very young, the principals and teachers often take on the role of co-parent. This caring has led to a familial atmosphere in the schools, where metaphors associated with the female gender abound.

Principal Two conjured the image of a mother when depicting how she cares for her staff, an image similar to descriptions used by Principals One and Three. Each principal discussed how they care for their staff, making sure that their needs are met, so that the teachers, in turn, will care for the students. The principals spoke of their teachers with genuine fondness and pride, just as mothers. Each principal talked about how she takes care of the teachers so that the teachers would take care of the students in the same way.

Also, just as mothers display pictures of their children in their homes, the principals have photographs of their teachers hanging in their schools in a prominent spot in the main hallway. They also invite the teachers to their homes away from school for gatherings, in addition to school celebrations, in which one principal has even cooked meals for her staff. This image of motherhood even extends to the principal's role on the school's site based management team and other committees, with the principal, as mother, presiding over the group just as they were sharing a meal at her dining room table, checking to make sure that everyone has the resources to accomplish what they need, but not completing the tasks for them.

Just as mothers, when their work lives get tough, the principals stay strong in front of the teachers. Instead, they work as a district family, preferring to turn to each other, as sisters, for support. Often, this need for support arises as the principals struggle with implementation of the mandates of NCLB. The principals were clear that much of what the principals need to implement to meet these mandates goes against their beliefs, and the beliefs of their staff, about appropriate educational practices, a fact known by the teachers. These instances include

practicing writing in the PSSA format and pushing children to achieve before they are developmentally ready. The principals articulated their struggle with how far they may need to go to ensure that all of their students are proficient in reading and math. Each of them even expressed that they might retire before crossing this line between what they believe is right and what they must do. Much of this struggle may be due to the fact that they feel like mothers to their staff. If they prompt their teachers to go against their beliefs, what message are they giving? Is it like telling children to do something they know is wrong? And, if they do indeed retire, what fate are they leaving their staff? That is the heart of the principals' struggle with No Child Left Behind.

Much has been written about enacting an ethic of care in schools. However, there are still gaps in the literature pertaining to how an ethic of care influences the decision making of teachers and principals in times of conflict and stress. Little has been written about the concept of a school as a family. This study revealed practices and structures that promote a family like atmosphere in schools. Policymakers should examine these structures and practices that prompted a family like atmosphere in these high achieving elementary schools in order to promote them through legislature such as NCLB.

**4.2.2. The district's supervision and evaluation model has facilitated the caring, proactive, individualized approach used by the principals when supervising and evaluating teachers.**

The principals model a developmental assessment model, derived from their district's procedures for teacher evaluation, when assessing teachers that is based on growth and collaboration. This model is based on a teacher's improvement on goals chosen in collaboration with the principal. The model looks at teachers in several areas: planning and preparation, the learning environment,

instructional practice, and professional reflection and responsibilities. The model looks at a teacher's performance over time, not simply in a single instance such as a classroom observation. The teachers work in cohorts to complete a portfolio that will demonstrate proficiency toward meeting their goals. This developmental assessment model is an example of how the principals feel that students, teachers, principals, and schools should be assessed, creating another conflict with NCLB, which uses a single test to measure the achievement of students and schools.

The district's model for the supervision and evaluation of teachers works for these principals because it is consistent with their beliefs in this area. They feel successful in using this model. Interestingly, the teachers were supportive of this model even though it is more labor intensive than other models that merely rely on a single classroom observation. This model allows them to create projects, set and meet goals, and collect evidence in areas beyond the scope of a classroom observation. The model promotes teacher leadership through the projects that the teachers work on to meet their goals. This, in turn, builds the capacity of the teachers and principals to improve their schools for the students.

The district's model for teacher supervision and evaluation is based on best practices as depicted in the literature. The model allows teachers to set and meet goals and perform at high levels, which contributes to student achievement in this well performing district. Policymakers are promoting the implementation of this model in many states. In Pennsylvania, for instance, policymakers have mandated a similar model for use with non-tenured teachers as evidenced through the creation of teacher evaluation forms called PDE 426 and 427.

The elementary culture and the principals' emphasis on caring have influenced many of their supervisory practices. The principals and teachers think of the principals as teachers of teachers, so the principals use their role as supervisors to model behaviors that they hope the

teachers will emulate when working with their students. They utilize developmentally appropriate practices whether the principals are working with adults or children. For instance, when conducting professional development sessions, the principals will use instructional strategies, like mini-lessons or inquiry learning, that are proven to be successful with elementary students.

The elementary culture and the principals' emphasis on caring not only affects how the teachers are assessed, but also what the principals look for when assessing teachers. The principals base what they expect to see teachers and students doing in classrooms on their belief in a student centered, constructivist learning environment and approach to curriculum. This belief again extends to how they supervise because the principals attempt to model these same behaviors when working with teachers. One key element that the principals describe looking for is an emphasis on the whole child (social, academic, and emotional aspects). By emphasizing the whole child, the principals believe that a teacher's instructional delivery and the classroom learning environment should allow students to be happy to be in the class and to see learning as fun.

The principals' communication style is also influenced by the caring aspect of this elementary culture. Again, the principals try to model how they hope the teachers will communicate with students. A primary example exists in how the principals deliver performance feedback to teachers. The principals believe that by supporting and encouraging the teachers through focusing on the positive, they will build the relationships with them that are key to their schools becoming a true community of learners. The principals believe that relationships help motivate the teachers to grow professionally and do their best work. They work collaboratively with the teachers when discussing teacher performance, hoping that teachers will be able to

repeat the good things they are doing to continually improve. They also collaborate to devise goals that the teachers can work toward to improve. The principals additionally use feedback to ask the teachers questions to promote reflection and encourage risk taking.

#### **4.2.3. Working in a high performing school district has created unique advantages and challenges to meeting the mandates of No Child Left Behind.**

The principals explained that the pressure to constantly improve achievement is ever present in their daily lives as administrators. This pressure is complicated by the high levels of achievement currently present in their schools. The principals believed that it is harder to attain continuous improvement and to motivate their staff to attain higher levels of achievement when their PSSA scores are well above state averages. The principals believed that as their schools move closer to one hundred percent proficiency as mandated by NCLB, it becomes harder and harder to achieve adequate yearly progress. The parental pressure that comes with working in a high performing district compounds the problem. Parents in this district, while supportive, expect their schools to be the best. Since their schools are high achieving, they have to continually find new ways to motivate their staff and convince them that they cannot just work to maintain the status quo.

As the principals continue to work with their staff to improve student achievement, each of them has employed a particular approach to motivate their staff. One principal relied on constant visibility in hallways and classrooms to ensure that she is available for students and teachers as needed to discuss teaching and learning. She viewed these informal learning opportunities as ways to improve achievement. Another principal constantly showed caring with teachers and students so that they would do their best work. The third principal employed the committee structures in place in her building to build community and a shared vision of student

success in her school. While all three of the principals utilized each of these approaches, the emphasis of each of them appeared to be related to their particular school context. Because she is new to her school, visibility helped one of the principals to bond with her staff. Since her school is perceived by some members of the community to be weaker than the other elementary schools, one of the principals used her caring to make the teachers and students feel special. As a result of her extended experience with her staff, another of the principals was able to rely on the committee structures to further improve her school.

Fortunately for this district, they have resources available to assist them in reaching the one hundred percent proficiency mandate. This school district closely emulates best practices as described in the research. Policymakers who are interested in ensuring that all schools are high performing would be wise to study these practices and include them in any revisions to NCLB or subsequent legislation. For instance, the district utilizes models, such as differentiated supervision and site-based management, which are associated with high achievement. Literacy, math, and technology coaches are employed to assist teachers in their classrooms. Professional development is a priority in this district so that the teachers can continually refine their skills. There is an abundance of supplies and resources for use in classrooms. The teachers in each school serve as important resources as they often take on leadership roles; these roles assist the principals in completing the many tasks they must perform. Finally, there is a great deal of parental involvement and support in the district. These advantages can help the principals as they strive to meet proficiency mandates.

**4.2.4. The principals have a consistent view of assessment, whether it pertains to students, teachers, or collectively to the student body.**

Whether discussing the assessment of students, teachers, or the collective student body, which is ultimately a reflection of their own performance, the principals were consistent in their view of what good assessment entails. They believe that it should occur frequently, take place in a variety of settings, emphasize growth, and be individualized, a view consistent with the research on best practices in assessment.

This is in contrast to the view of assessment of schools as the collective student body, students, and teachers that NCLB advocates through the publication of student test scores, by grade level and school, on a single, standardized test and the resulting rewards and sanctions imposed on schools for those scores. These include being public placed on a warning list to improve scores, then being placed in school improvement if scores do not improve, and finally, being taken over by the state if scores still do not improve.

In the principal's view, in the case of students, they should be assessed throughout their learning: before, during, and after a learning episode. This assessment should be frequent to show a student's growth throughout the learning. This way if a student is having difficulty, his or her strengths and weaknesses can be analyzed and an improvement plan can be implemented to help the child when needed immediately. This contradicts the view of assessment under NCLB in which students are assessed once annually. The principals worried that judging a student's success by a single test score ignores the developmental readiness and growth of a student. The test only measures whether an individual student is proficient at a fixed point in time. The results of this assessment, at least in the case of Pennsylvania, are reported long after the students have left a particular grade level or school. Schools then have no opportunity to help students to

improve their learning. Assessment of students should also occur in a variety of settings so that students can demonstrate their learning in different ways to match their learning styles. Again, this conflicts with NCLB where students are tested in a standardized way.

According to the principals, teachers should be assessed in the same way as students. The district's model is consistent with their views. Teachers are assessed frequently throughout the year, instead of through a single classroom episode. They are also assessed in different settings, such as professional development sessions and parent/teacher conferences. The specific frequency and settings in which a teacher is assessed is determined by the goals that the teacher sets in collaboration with the principal. Together, the teacher and principal determine areas of strength and need. The teacher then collects data in a portfolio, over time, to show growth toward those goals. The principals worried that, at some point in the future, they will have to use student achievement as the only data source in evaluating teachers to motivate them to meet the NCLB mandates of one hundred percent proficiency in reading and math for all students. Just as they oppose the view of assessment for students set forth by NCLB, the principals would oppose this same type of assessment for teachers.

Instead, the principals advocated for Value-Added Assessment. This type of assessment looks at a student's growth over time and can identify strengths and weaknesses of individual students and groups of students. Value-Added Assessment looks at how a student grows in his or her learning from a specific point. Even if a student is not proficient at a particular point in time, his or her growth can be examined. This information can also be used by teachers to look at their students' achievement in specific areas. The teachers could then use this information as part of their goal setting process. Policymakers should look at the research on value-added assessment for possible inclusion in revisions of NCLB or subsequent legislation.



**4.2.5. No Child Left Behind is in direct conflict with the principals' emphasis on caring, individual progress, and fostering community.**

The principals in this study have strived to infuse their schools with structures built around the concepts of caring, progress, and community through their supervision and evaluation practices. An attitude of caring is the foundation for all of their actions, in order to have the students and teachers make progress in their learning and to develop a sense of community in their schools. The principals perceive the rigid mandates of NCLB, and the possible actions that they may have to implement to meet those mandates, as roadblocks to continuing their current practices based on caring, progress, and community.

One aspect of their schools that the principals and teachers have noticed changing as a result of NCLB is classroom instruction, which has affected their supervisory practices. Classroom instruction is now entirely standards based. When observing in classrooms and reviewing lesson plans, the principals now ensure that teachers are addressing and teaching to standards. The teachers also use rubrics to help the students produce work that meets standards. In order to ensure that all students meet standards, the district has made changes in its reading and math curricula to deliver more consistent instruction across grade levels. Common grade level assessments are used to ensure the students are on target with standards. The teachers and principals believe that these changes were positive moves because it is important that the students and teachers know the expectations that they are supposed to achieve and how to achieve them. However, they do worry that this is just one step to a movement to completely uniform instruction and curriculum that does not consider student needs or teacher input. Many companies in the educational field now promote publications that are designed to increase test scores. These publications typically are step by step, teacher proof guides that clearly separate

the art and science of teaching. The teachers believe that these types of programs eliminate any chance to deliver a curriculum suited to the needs of individual students and strongly objected to any use of these programs.

Another change in the district brought about by NCLB legislation is a focus on PSSA data to drive instruction. The Learning Team in each school is charged with analyzing test data and making recommendations for instruction based on that data. This has led to a district focus on writing that helps the students practice the open ended PSSA test format. The principals voiced concern about this practice. Although they believe that writing is an important skill, they worry that the district is teaching to the test by practicing the PSSA format.

The focus on caring in these schools has permeated all aspects of the principals' practice, including their leadership. When describing their vision for their schools, each principal depicted a school where the students were happy and the teachers who worked there were equally happy to come to work. They sought to create an environment where students would see learning as fun, so that they would continue to want to learn. At no point in their descriptions of their visions for their schools did any of the principals articulate a desire to have all students proficient in reading and math at the conclusion of third grade, a mandate of NCLB. This is not to say that they do not believe in students achieving at high levels; they absolutely do, but with a caveat. These principals believe that a student should be pushed to high achievement as it is clear that the child is developmentally ready, a view consistent with the elementary culture in which they function. They worry that by infusing primary grades with more and more academic work in order to meet proficiency requirements, they are actually turning these students away from learning for the long term. They worry that when students view learning as drudgery, at such an early age, instead of seeing it as something that can be playful and fun, their long term learning

and achievement will be affected. The principals in this study were able to articulate several ways that NCLB conflicts with what they believe are developmentally appropriate practices for teaching students. They opposed many practices used solely to improve PSSA scores. These included the amount of time the students practice the PSSA test format, flexible grouping for skill instruction that may advocate ability grouping and tracking, and pushing students to high achievement before they are developmentally ready.

The principals also worried that as the proficiency mandates of NCLB grow closer, they will need to be more directive and less collaborative in giving feedback to teachers as part of the supervision process. This is a valid concern since NCLB promotes the use of “scientifically based research” as the sole guide in devising instructional strategies, putting the direction of educational best practices in the hands of scientists, instead of the practitioners who work with children on a daily basis. When teachers are encouraged to explore different avenues when designing instruction and utilize what they understand as working best with their particular set of students, they feel that they can make a difference in their classrooms. But when these decisions are taken out of the teachers’ domain, how can they be expected to enact what they are not a part of creating? They cannot, which will only promulgate a vicious circle of research being forced upon teachers who cannot truly comply with it.

The principals also use caring to focus their use of power. While realizing that they can ultimately make and enforce a decision, they believe that utilizing shared decision making and giving everyone a voice diminishes the sense of disenfranchisement of teachers who feel that they are not a part of the school, but rather feel like automated workers in a system which silences them. Shared decision making also allows the principals and teachers to have a consistent viewpoint once consensus is reached. Consistency in responses was distinctly

noticeable throughout the interview process for this study. Since they are given a voice in the leadership of their schools, perhaps shared decision making allows the teachers to embrace decisions, even if they do not whole heartedly agree with them, but merely because they had a voice in the process.

However, the principals expressed fear that the mandates of NCLB will force them to make more decisions unilaterally, without teacher input, because so much of NCLB compliance goes against the beliefs of their staff. This is a lose/lose situation for them for several reasons. By promoting practices that the teachers know are against the principals' beliefs, the principals will lose credibility with their staff. Also, they will never have the full support of their staff to enact the results of those decisions. Ultimately, without the support of their staff, the desired results will not occur, and the principals will be left alone, trying to meet the demands of the NCLB mandates.

#### **4.3. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

Since this study only focused on the perspectives of three female elementary principals and their experiences in the areas of supervision and evaluation and its components of leadership, communication style, power orientation, and ethic of care in comparison to the literature and reality in the era of NCLB, a number of suggestions can be made for further research. First, the study could be repeated with female middle school or high school principals and teachers. Since middle schools and high schools are often more content driven, than child centered, this perspective may yield different findings. The study could also be repeated with male elementary principals. Since the interview questions were drawn from literature related to female principals,

a study of how male elementary principals are coping with the mandates of NCLB may also yield different results. Also, a comparison study between male and female elementary principals and their methods of addressing NCLB would prove insightful. This study would indicate if there were still differences and what kinds of differences in their approach to meeting the mandates of NCLB. A final area of study would be to repeat this study with female elementary principals and teachers in a school that is on a warning or school improvement list. Such a study would reveal the perspective of teachers and principals who feel a greater sense of urgency in meeting the requirements of NCLB.

In addition to repeating the study, future research could concentrate on how the stress of engaging in practices that are against one's beliefs affects principals who, unlike those in this study, cannot retire or leave the profession. This type of study could discuss how dealing with NCLB affects principals in these circumstances, as well as those who have threatened to retire. Future studies could also examine how No Child Left Behind could be adapted to promote accountability as well as practices that teachers and principals believe are best for students. This study could identify specific ways that NCLB could be changed from the perspective of principals and teachers. This study could also be repeated in the same site as the year 2014 approaches, if NCLB is still in place and all schools must reach one hundred percent proficiency to see how practices may have changed in the ten years between now and then.

#### **4.4. FINAL THOUGHTS**

The principals in this study described their supervision and evaluation practices, including leadership style, communication style, power orientation, and ethic of care. They used each of

these to create caring, high performing elementary schools. The principals and teachers in this study worked relentlessly to enact a vision of a school where students would have positive experiences with learning and become successful, lifelong learners. The structures that are in place in these schools, all of which emphasize caring, have allowed students to attain high levels of achievement.

However, most of the structures are in conflict with measures needed to reach the proficiency mandates set forth by No Child Left Behind. This conflict has led the three principals in this study to contemplate retirement instead of employing practices that are against their beliefs to meet these mandates. If these high performing schools have utilized practices in conflict with NCLB to be successful, what does that reveal about NCLB? What toll will NCLB take on education by making successful administrators consider leaving the profession? As educational practitioners and legislators continue to consider NCLB, hopefully they will consider these issues.

## **APPENDIX**

## APPENDIX A

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

#### **Initial Interview Questions for the Principals and Correlation to Research Questions:**

1. Describe your approach to supervising teachers. How is your approach consistent with what you believe are best practices in supervision? (Research Questions 2 and 3)

Additional probes for question 1:

- What do you expect to see in classrooms? Has NCLB changed your expectations? (Research Questions 1, 2, and 3)
- The new forms developed by PDE address four areas. Describe what you look for in a teacher's planning and preparation, classroom environment, instructional delivery, and professionalism. (Research Questions 1 and 2)
- What are your goals when you conduct formal observations of teachers? Have these goals changed in light of NCLB? (Research Questions 1, 2, and 3)
- How do you define teaching quality? Has NCLB changed this definition? (Research Questions 1, 2, and 3)
- How do you promote teacher growth? Has your approach changed since NCLB? (Research Questions 1, 2, and 3)
- What connection is there between what you do or do not observe in classrooms and professional development? Has professional development changed in light of NCLB guidelines? (Research Questions 1, 2, and 3)
- How do you deal with the marginal or unsatisfactory teacher? Has your approach changed since NCLB? (Research Question 1, 2, and 3)



- Describe the methods you use to improve teaching and learning. Have these methods changed with NCLB? (Research Questions 1, 2, and 3)
  - What is your approach to providing feedback on teacher performance? Has your approach changed since NCLB? (Research Questions 1, 2, 3, and 6)
2. How have NCLB and other accountability measures affected your practices as an instructional leader? (Research Question 3)
  3. Describe your approach to evaluating teachers. Has your approach changed since NCLB? (Research Questions 1, 2, and 3)
  4. Provide examples of how you do the following as an instructional leader. Has NCLB changed these practices?
    - a. Provide resources so that a school's academic goals can be achieved
    - b. Use your knowledge and skills in curricular and instructional matters to improve teachers' instructional practice
    - c. Communicate in various situations
    - d. Create a visible presence in the school (Research Questions 1, 2, 3, and 5)

Additional probe for question 3:

- Describe a typical work day. How do you spend your time? How has NCLB changed your work day? (Research Questions 1, 2, and 3)
5. Describe your leadership style. Provide specific examples of how you lead your school. Has your approach changed since NCLB? (Research Question 5)
  6. Describe your communication style. Provide specific examples of how you communicate with teachers. Has your approach changed since NCLB? (Research Question 6)

Additional probe for question 6:

- How do you approach your interactions with teachers? Has your approach changed since NCLB? (Research Questions 5 and 6)
7. How do you use the power associated with your position? Provide specific examples. Has your approach changed since NCLB? (Research Question 7)

Additional probes for question 7:

- Describe your decision making process. How do you involve or empower others?
  - How do you decide if a situation calls for you to share power with others or use power over others?
8. Researchers believe that females act with an ethic of care. This usually translates into a focus on relationships, empowering others, and creating a climate of caring. How do you demonstrate an ethic of care in your practice? Has your approach changed since NCLB? (Research Question 8)

**Initial Interview Questions for the Teachers and Correlation to Research Questions:**

9. Describe your principal's approach to supervising teachers. (Research Questions 1 and 4)

Additional probes for question 9:

- What does your principal expect to see in classrooms? Has NCLB changed her expectations? (Research Questions 1, 3, and 4)
- The new forms developed by PDE address four areas. Describe what your principal looks for in a teacher's planning and preparation, classroom environment, instructional delivery, and professionalism. (Research Questions 1 and 4)

- How does your principal define teaching quality? Has NCLB changed this definition? (Research Questions 1, 3, and 4)
  - How does your principal promote teacher growth? Has her approach changed since NCLB? (Research Questions 1, 3, and 4)
  - What connection is there between what your principal does or does not observe in classrooms and professional development? Has professional development changed in light of NCLB guidelines? (Research Questions 1, 3, and 4)
  - Describe the methods your principal uses to improve teaching and learning. Have these methods changed with NCLB? (Research Questions 1, 3, and 4)
  - What is your principal's approach to providing feedback on teacher performance? Has her approach changed since NCLB? (Research Questions 1, 3, 4, and 6)
10. How have NCLB and other accountability measures affected your principal's practices as an instructional leader? (Research Question 3)
11. Describe your principal's approach to evaluating teachers. Has her approach changed since NCLB? (Research Questions 1, 3, and 4)
12. Provide examples of how your principal does the following as an instructional leader. Has NCLB changed these practices?
- a. Provides resources so that a school's academic goals can be achieved
  - b. Use her knowledge and skills in curricular and instructional matters to improve teachers' instructional practice
  - c. Communicates in various situations
  - d. Creates a visible presence in the school (Research Questions 3, 4, and 5)

13. Describe your principal's leadership style. Provide specific examples of how she leads your school. Has her approach changed since NCLB? (Research Questions 3 and 5)

14. Describe your principal's communication style. Provide specific examples of how she communicates with teachers. Has her approach changed since NCLB? (Research Questions 3 and 6)

Additional probe for question 15:

- Describe your principal's interactions with you and other teachers. Have these changed since NCLB? (Research Questions 3, 4, and 6)

15. How does your principal use the power associated with her position? Provide specific examples. Has her approach changed since NCLB? (Research Questions 3 and 7)

Additional probe for question 15:

- Describe your principal's decision making process. How are you involved or empowered?

16. Researchers believe that females act with an ethic of care. This usually translates into a focus on relationships, empowering others, and creating a climate of caring. How does your principal demonstrate an ethic of care in her practice? Has her approach changed since NCLB? (Research Question 8)

### **Interview Questions for the Principals II:**

1. Describe the structures that you have put in place to promote teacher leadership. (Research Question 5)

2. What are the functions of the learning team? Does the team relate to NCLB? (Research Questions 2, 3, and 5)

3. What are the functions of the resource management team? Does the team relate to NCLB? (Research Questions 2, 3, and 5)
4. How has the availability of student achievement data affected your supervisory relationship with teachers? (Research Question 2)
5. How do you utilize the committee structure to supervise and work with teachers? What is your function in the committee structure? (Research Questions 2 and 5)
6. Has NCLB changed the mission or vision that you have for your school? (Research Question 3)
7. How do you motivate teachers to meet external and internal accountability standards? (Research Question 2)
8. How do you determine what to focus on in an observation? (Research Question 2)

**Interview Questions for the Principals III:**

1. What are some examples of the types of projects and goals teachers do in their cohorts? (Research Question 2)
2. How do you use conversations with teachers to promote teaching and learning? (Research Question 6)
3. How do you develop teacher leaders, and how do they contribute to the school? (Research Question 5)
4. What changes would you make to the accountability measures of NCLB to get them in line with your beliefs about the supervision of teachers? (Research Question 3)

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