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# A Study Of New Jersey Public School Superintendents' Perceptions Regarding The Behavioral Characteristics Of Effective Elementary School Principals

Richard W. Fair

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**A STUDY OF NEW JERSEY PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS'  
PERCEPTIONS REGARDING THE BEHAVIORAL CHARACTERISTICS OF  
EFFECTIVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**

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**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements of the Degree of Doctor of Education**

**Seton Hall University**

**2001**

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This dissertation not only represents my research study, but is a symbol of all the time and commitment I have invested in my love of learning and belief of my purpose on earth.

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## DEDICATION

This is dedicated to Theresa Fair, my mother; George Fair, my father; Maria Fair, my wife; and Rebecca Fair, my daughter. To my mother who was my first, my best, and who has always been my life long teacher. To my wife and my daughter for helping me maintain balance in my life and reminding me of what is most important in this world while I was in the pursuit of my degree. They also provided generous support, love, and understanding as I spent countless hours away from them while working on the dissertation. And finally, to the memory of my father, George Fair, who continues to live in my heart and my mind everyday.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

**“Over the past twenty years, researchers have built a compelling body of evidence that links successful schools and effective principals” (p. 24, Murphy 1997). Effective school researchers hold that a key element of an effective school is an effective principal.**

**Edmonds (1981) states, “The principal has to be the person the instructional personnel look to for the instructional leadership in the system” (p. 26).**

**Weber (1971) listed “strong leadership from the principal” as a characteristic of “successful” schools (p. 317).**

**Keller (1998) states:**

**Twenty years of research strongly suggest that they [principals] make a big difference in shaping the education that goes on in a school. If a school is going to be successful academically, it needs someone whose potential can't be summed up on a scoreboard. (p. 25)**



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(1994) states:

italization of public schools has become a national quest, and the formulas  
 ellence have included everything from increased graduation requirements,  
 t pay for teachers, to parent involvement, to increased course rigor and  
 ed management. All these elements are essential as we strive for  
 nce; however, the contributions of an effective principal must not be  
 ated. The formula for educational excellence and change must include a  
 xus on the principal as the front-line, educational leader in a school.

(1994) continues supporting the concept that effective principals create  
 ols by stating, "The major function of a principal is to act not only as a  
 ger, but as an educational leader capable of providing teachers with  
 back, support and reinforcement of effective teaching methods" (p. 37).

an (1998) notes that researchers have long been fascinated with the  
 ween effective and ineffective schools and says that the possibility of fixing  
 ols or improving mediocre ones by manipulating key variables in the  
 nment is a tantalizing prospect for educational reformers. While each  
 generated a different set of descriptors that characterize effective or  
 ols, one variable always emerges as critically important, the leadership  
 : building principal, particularly in the instructional arena.

Stronge (1993) notes that a disturbing theme has emerged from the instructional leadership theory. According to the instructional leadership argument, the generalist-managerial role of the principal must give way to one oriented toward curriculum and instruction. Stronge believes that the separatist viewpoint of instructional leadership and middle management is misdirected and as Murphy (1988) characterized, produces a false dichotomy between the concepts of educational management and instructional leadership.

#### Being Perceived as an Effective Principal

Principals are aware of much of the research concerning what it means to be effective and understand the importance of their job. The concern has always been where to spend their time, knowing they need to be efficient managers and effective instructional leaders. Merely understanding the problem has not helped the principal cope with the challenge.

Keller (1998) states:

The research hasn't always brought about changes in the way principals do their jobs. Many principals know what to say about leading a school, though they may not know how to actually do it. In fact, researchers have repeatedly noted a mismatch between what principals profess and what they practice. (p. 26)

Simply stated, the principals know what they are supposed to be doing, but the observation of their behaviors appears to be out of alignment with what they know.

help understand the differences between the management and leadership of a school, an examination of the relative importance of the various tasks of the principal's job must be done. Since the superintendent is responsible for the evaluation of the principal, there must be agreement between the superintendent and the principal regarding leadership and management.

Principals often do whatever it is they think they are supposed to do in the eyes of their superintendent. Barth (1980) notes,

A central office can have an especially significant influence upon principals' behavior and effectiveness through the procedure it employs to evaluate principals. Principals as a rule try to comply with what is expected of them. If they are rated according to how well they carry out standard district policies, they are likely to try to carry them out. (p. 209)

The issue is really to know what is expected of the person identified as the principal. Can they effectively blend the role of building manager and instructional leader, and in their efforts, be acknowledged for both by their immediate supervisor, the superintendent? Will the successful blend of their responsibilities, both management and leadership, enable them to be described as effective?

In the preface to Instructional Leadership: How Principals Make a Difference, Smith and Andrews (1989) begin with the following statement which describes the

importance of principal and superintendent agreement in reference to the role of the principal.

The most important obligation is to build a structure of relationships within schools so that all children learn. To fulfill this obligation, the most important function of educational leadership is to create good schools. By creating good schools, we mean principals and superintendents use their professional knowledge and skills to foster conditions where all children can grow to their full potential.

(p. vii)

To aid in the understanding of their accountability, principals need to know how superintendents describe an effective principal. Yukl (1998) believes that there is no simple answer to the question of how to evaluate leadership effectiveness. The decision or determination of effectiveness lies with the person's perception of what is effective. For example in business, top management may prefer different criteria than other employees, customers, or shareholders. To cope with the problems of incompatible criteria, delayed effects, and the preferences of different stake holders, it is usually best to include a variety of criteria in research on leadership effectiveness and to examine the impact of the leader on each criterion over an extended period of time.

The principal's leadership behavior has been a subject of discussion since the early 1960s. Smith and Andrews (1989) cite the work of role theorists (Kahn & Rosenthal, 1964; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1975) suggest that:

The principal's leadership behavior is shaped by the perceptions of how other people (the superintendent, other principals, teachers, students and parents) want the leader to behave. The principal's perception of role requirements is influenced by prescriptions such as job description, day-to-day requests, and orders and directions from the superintendent. (p.6)

Literature supports the need for leadership. Defining effective leadership is difficult, whether it is instructional, transformational, or transactional, leadership needs to be present and visible. Trying to decide what type of leadership has been as difficult as trying to define it. "Despite thousands of empirical studies yielding hundreds of definitions of leadership there is still no consensus about it. We still don't know conclusively what distinguishes leaders from non-leaders and strong leaders from weak ones" (Bennis & Nanus, 1985, pp. 4-5).

Many experts in the field of education define leadership differently or identify it by style though Keller (1998) notes Elmore's contention that, "A principal's approach or style matters far less than the central project of helping teachers" (p. 27).

Sergiovanni (1987) identified successful school leadership as activities that are directed toward the improvement of teaching and learning for students. The principal assumes an active role in this enhancement, but also acts as an enabler of others to function more effectively. "One rarely finds an effective school without an effective principal" (p. 7).

According to Keller (1998):

When researchers examined good schools they did not look for heroes, but they did observe that good schools usually have good principals. In response to this research, policy makers looked for strong leadership, a term that quickly gave way among educators to "instructional leader" and, more recently, facilitator.

Through all of this, the tough question remained as to how do effective principals who are considered effective do it? If principals play an important part in school improvement and student achievement, what are their secrets and what are the limits to their powers? (p. 25)

The principal is the key person in the building who can truly make a difference in what takes place in the school. The importance of his or her role cannot be overstated and the need for him/her to be both an effective leader, as well as an efficient manager is a balance many find difficult to strike. To make matters more confusing, principals are often rewarded more for running an efficient, well-managed building rather than for attempting to be initiators of change which is designed to positively impact teaching and learning. Often principals look to the guidance of the superintendent to help them determine what is considered "being effective" in their role as the school principal in their district. Studies have presented research on leadership styles, traits, and behaviors that are regarded as the characteristics of effective principals. The problem that arises is the challenge to understand the research and to make connections amongst the different

leadership and management behaviors considered to be effective and their application to one's current principal assignment.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate, by means of qualitative research methods, superintendents' perceptions of the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals.

### Research Questions

Using a qualitative design, the following research questions were investigated:

1. What are the perceptions of superintendents' regarding the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals?
2. To what extent are the reported perceptions of superintendents' regarding the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals congruent with the research?

### Significance of the Study

Significant to the study of principalship is the perceived role of leadership. According to Hallinger and Murphy (1987) rarely has instructional leadership been defined in studies as specific policies, practices, and behaviors initiated by the principal, leaving it unclear as to which behaviors are most important.

Stronge (1993) discusses research demonstrating that a review of the literature reveals a wide range of traits and behaviors reported to contribute to the instructional leader's effectiveness.

Stronge (1993) notes:

The dichotomized viewpoint of instructional leadership versus middle management tends to support the premise that instructional leadership is more worthy of the time and attention of the principal, and that managerial responsibilities are relatively unimportant, demeaning, and generally to be avoided. However, this conception of the principal's role runs contrary to reality.

An examination of virtually any principalship task analysis study reveals that principals invest significant amount of time in general administrative duties that can hardly be construed as instructional leadership, given even the broadest reading of the instructional leader construct. (p. 5)

Bredeson (1985) characterized the fundamental role of contemporary school principals with the metaphor of maintenance. He discussed the fact that the major activities the principal was involved in were administrative priorities and responsibilities supported by the metaphorical theme of maintenance. "Regardless of personal leadership style, eighty-nine percent of the principals' total number of daily activities were intended to keep the school doors open and the process going" (p. 38).



This study is intended to provide important information with regard to the perceptions of superintendents concerning the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals. It is attempting to determine the superintendents' perceptions of the appropriate blend of managerial and leadership behaviors which effective elementary school principals demonstrate. If the relationship between what the literature states regarding the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals and what superintendents perceive to be the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals can be established, then improved elementary schools may result. If the understanding of the behavioral characteristics of effective principals translates into improved schools, then both superintendents and principals in school districts can work toward this understanding in their own districts.

#### Definition of Terms

In the interest of consistency and understanding throughout this study, the following definitions are offered:

1. **Behavioral characteristics**: For the purpose of this study, behavioral characteristics were defined as those characteristics that are manifested by specific behaviors.
2. **District Factor Group**: The District Factor Group (DFG) is an indicator of the socioeconomic status of citizens in each New Jersey School District. The measure

was first introduced in 1975 using demographic variables from the 1970 United States Census. Since then, the socioeconomic status (SES) of some districts changed. As a result, a revision was made in 1984 to take into account new data from the 1980 Census and to slightly change the theoretical model of socioeconomic status. Another revision was made reflecting data from the 1990 Census.

The DFG construct was motivated by research conducted in the late 1960s and early 1970s that showed a strong relationship between socioeconomic status and education outcomes. The DFG construct was developed by the Department of Education for its own use in the reporting of test scores. In its publicly released testing reports, the Department shows district-by-district results, arranged by DFG. Comparisons are made between districts of similar SES, rather than on a geographic basis. The intent of this procedure is to reduce the variation in reported scores, which is due to factors beyond the control of local educators.

The DFG index of socioeconomic status contains seven indices. These include: (a) percent of population with no high school diploma, (b) percent with some college, (c) occupation, (d) population density, (e) income, (f) unemployment, and (g) poverty.

There are eight district factor groups: A, B, CD, DE, FG, GH, I, and J in New Jersey.

3. Instructional Leader: The principal as an instructional leader is someone who dedicates the majority of his/her time to activities that support and promote teaching and learning.

4. **Manager**: The principal as building manager is someone who engages in activities designed to maintain the current operations of the school.
5. **Principal**: The principal is the chief administrator in a school.
6. **Superintendent / Chief School Administrator**: For the purpose of this study, both of these titles refer to the chief school administrator for a school district. In New Jersey the title of choice is most often Superintendent.

#### Delimitations of the Study

This study had as its participants, eight selected superintendents of public school districts in New Jersey. It was further limited to school districts with the District Factor Group designation of GH; therefore, the results cannot be generalized to the entire population. The scope of the topic and the number of participants interviewed in the qualitative study were limited as a result of time considerations and the number of superintendents in districts with a District Factor Group (DFG) of GH in the state of New Jersey. This study was limited in sample size. During this study there were 63 districts designated as GH spread among sixteen counties in New Jersey. Ten counties were solicited with six counties being represented. This sample consisted of eight superintendents from either K-8 or K-12 school districts with a GH designation. These limitations indicate that the result of this study might not be reflective of (a) principals in other district factor groups, or (b) principals in non-public schools not similarly situated.

Data collection was accomplished by means of in-person interview techniques.

Qualitative research techniques enable the researcher to gain an intimacy with the data in a natural setting.

Creswell (1994) defines a qualitative study as, "inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting" (p. 2).

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) state:

We use qualitative research as an umbrella to refer to several research strategies that share certain characteristics. The data collected has been termed soft, that is, rich in description of people, places, and conversations, and not easily handled by statistical procedures. Research questions are not framed by operationalizing variables; rather, they are formulated to investigate in all their complexity, in context. While people conducting qualitative research may develop a focus as they collect data, they do not approach the research with specific questions to answer or hypotheses to test. They are concerned as well with understanding behavior from the subject's own frame of reference. (p. 2)

### Organization of the Study

Chapter I presents the introductory background to the study: the purpose, the significance of undertaking the study, definition of terms, and design delimitations.

## CHAPTER II

### Review of Related Literature

The purpose of this study was to investigate, by means of qualitative research methods, superintendents' perceptions of the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the relevant literature concerning the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals. This chapter is divided into the following sections: (a) theories and approaches to study leadership, (b) related leadership styles and strategies, (c) instructional leadership, (d) the role of the principal, (e) the principal and the culture, (f) the principal and change, (g) behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals, and (h) summary.

Attempting to identify what makes principals effective is challenging, especially in light of the perception of those who stand in judgement of their effectiveness.

Research has been unable to pinpoint the exact combination of traits, behaviors, or situations that can serve as a model to adequately prepare a candidate for the principalship. Keller (1998) acknowledges Sergiovanni's (1996) contention in that the training principals receive often does not prepare them to be the type of leader that the

research says is needed. It is left up to the principals to determine whether they are to be more of an instructional leader or more of a building program manager.

### Theories and Approaches to Study Leadership

Business has presented educators with a number of leadership theories that were believed to be transferable to schools. Sergiovanni (1996) has taken these theories and identified them as (1) The Pyramid Theory, (2) The Railroad Theory, (3) The High Performance Theory, and (4) Community Theory. According to Sergiovanni the Pyramid Theory is deceptively simple. The foundation of the theory is based on the premise that the way to control the work of others is to have one person take responsibility by providing direction, close supervision, and inspection.

Sergiovanni continues:

As the number of people to be supervised increases, and as separate work sites develop, it becomes impossible for one person to do everything directly.

Management burdens must therefore be delegated to other managers. A hierarchical system begins to emerge with the head manager at the top, other managers with delegated power just below, and those to be managed at the bottom. Rules and regulations develop as the top manager attempts to ensure that all the managers think and act as they should, and that those who are to be managed at the bottom are all treated similarly. These rules and regulations

provide the protocols and guidelines to be used for planning, organizing, controlling and directing. The Pyramid Theory works well for many kinds of organizations. It is particularly suited to organizations that need to produce standardized products in uniform ways, and to situations where deviations hinder rather than promote effectiveness. However, when the Pyramid Theory is applied to schools, the work of principals and teachers becomes increasingly simplified and standardized, and the outcomes of schools also come to share these features of simplicity and standardization. (1996, p. 10)

The second theory Sergiovanni (1996) examines is the Railroad Theory, which seeks to control the work of people who do different jobs, meet different responsibilities, and work in different locations by standardizing the work processes in which they engage. The Railroad Theory differs from the Pyramid Theory because it shifts the focus of relying on direct supervision and the visible display of hierarchical authority to spending more time on the anticipation of all the questions and problems that are likely to come up, and solving them before they happen. Once this is done, answers and solutions are developed that represent "tracks" people must follow to get from one goal or outcome to another. Sergiovanni states, "Once the tracks are laid, all that needs to be done is to teach people how to follow the tracks, and to set up a monitoring system to confirm that everyone follows the tracks and reaches the various stations on time" (p. 11).

According to Sergiovanni (1996):

When the Railroad Theory is applied to schools, an instructional delivery system is created. Specific objectives are identified and tightly aligned to an explicit curriculum. Typically, both are connected to a specific method of teaching.

Teachers are supervised and evaluated and students are tested to ensure that the approved curriculum and teaching scripts are being followed.

In both the Pyramid and Railroad Theories, it is important for managers to be sensitive to workers as human beings by ensuring a pleasant working environment, and by doing what they can to meet the psychological needs of workers. Applied to schools, principals are expected to be expert human relations practitioners who know how to handle people by pressing the right psychological button to get the job done, while keeping morale up. (p. 11)

The third theory Sergiovanni (1996) discusses is the High Performance Theory, where decentralization is the key. This theory empowers workers to make their own decisions about how to do things. The High Performance Theory allows workers to gain control by connecting them to outcomes rather than rules or work scripts. Borrowing from the practices of efficient business organizations, the High Performance Theory assumes that the key to effective leadership is to connect workers tightly to ends, but only loosely to means.



Sergiovanni (1996) states, "When High Performance Theory is applied to schools, the ends are measurable learning outcomes. Though outcomes themselves are standardized, schools are free to decide how they are going to achieve them" (p. 12).

The benefit of the High Performance Theory is that it allows principals and teachers to organize schools and teach in ways that they think will best enable them to meet standards. High Performance Theory emphasizes collecting data to determine how well workers are doing, and encouraging them to figure out ways to continuously improve their performance.

The final theory, which Sergiovanni believes is most appropriate for schools, is the Community Theory (1996). Community Theory is linked to his view that principals of schools need to exercise moral leadership.

Sergiovanni (1996) states:

Because school leadership should be directed to connecting parents, teachers, and students morally to each other, and to their responsibilities as defined by shared purposes. In schools, moral connections cannot be commanded by hierarchy or sold by personalities, but be compelled by helping people to accept their responsibilities. (p. 83)

Smith and Andrews (1989) note three other theories that have deepened the understanding of how conditions shape leader behavior. The three theories are (a) role, (b) expectancy, and (c) adaptive-reactive.

Role theorists (Kahn & Rosenthal, 1964; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1975) suggest that, "The principal's leadership behavior is shaped by the perceptions of how other people (the superintendent, other principals, teachers, students, and parents), want their leader to behave" (p. 5). They also note that the principals' perception of role requirements is influenced by their perception of their job description, day-to-day requests, and orders and directions from the superintendent.

Smith and Andrews (1989) describe Nebecker and Mitchell's (1974), expectancy theory of leadership that suggests that the principals' behavior can be predicted from their expectations about the consequences of their behavior. An example of this would be if the principal perceives that keeping a neat and orderly building is more likely to win praise, that is what he or she will do.

The last leadership theory addressed is adaptive-reactive. Andrews and Smith (1989) acknowledge the work of Osborn and Hunt, (1975) suggesting that principal behavior is a product of larger variables such as the structure of the school, centralized versus building decision making, and other such conditions. Essentially the adaptive-reactive theory assumes the principal adapts to the structure, size, and external environment variables and reacts to teacher attitudes and traits. Understanding the theories connected to leadership is one aspect of attempting to identify the effective elementary school principal but, what the effective principal actually does, calls for another approach.

Yukl (1998) discusses the fact that social scientists have attempted to discover what traits, abilities, behaviors, sources of power, or aspects of a situation determine how well a leader is able to influence followers and accomplish group objectives. There are areas of consideration to try to determine why some people emerge as leaders, as well as the determinants of the way a leader acts. However, of all the questions that have been investigated, the predominant concern has been with leadership effectiveness.

According to Yukl (1998), the major lines of research approaches to study leadership include (a) trait approach, (b) behavior approach, (c) power-influence approach, and the (d) situational approach.

Yukl (1998) states:

One of the earliest approaches for studying leadership was the trait approach. The trait approach emphasizes the personal attributes of leaders. Underlying this approach was the assumption that some people are natural leaders who are endowed with certain traits not possessed by other people. Early leadership theories attributed managerial success to extraordinary abilities such as tireless energy, penetrating intuition, uncanny foresight, and irresistible persuasive power. Hundreds of trait studies were conducted during the 1930s and 1940s to discover these elusive qualities, but this massive research effort failed to find any traits that would guarantee leadership success. (p. 8)

Yukl (1998) further states:

In the 1950's researchers became discouraged with the trait approach and began to pay closer attention to what managers actually do on the job. The behavior research falls into two general subcategories. One subcategory is research on the nature of managerial work. This research examined how managers spend their time and describes the content of managerial activities in terms of content categories such as managerial roles, functions, and responsibilities. The research on managerial work relies mostly on descriptive methods such as direct observation, diaries, job description questionnaires, and anecdotes obtained from interviews.

Another subcategory of research on managerial behavior compares the behavior of effective and ineffective leaders. The preferred research method has been survey research with behavior description questionnaires. In the past 40 years, hundreds of studies have examined the correlation between questionnaire measures of leadership behavior and measures of leadership effectiveness. A much smaller number of studies have used laboratory experiments, field experiments, or critical incidents to determine how effective leaders differ in behavior from ineffective leaders.

The power influence approach examines influence processes between leaders and other people. The power influence approach attempts to explain

McEwan (1998) continues:

The classical theorists debated whether leadership was a function of the individual and his or her characteristics or whether the historical context served to shape the individual in response to societal needs or events. Most contemporary researchers, however, have found it far more constructive to study what leaders actually do than to focus on traits such as intelligence, friendliness, or creativity. What causes one individual to lead his or her organization to greatness while another individual, although equally intelligent, friendly, and competent, manages to achieve only mediocrity? Why are some individuals highly effective leaders in some settings, while in others they are only marginally successful? (p. 3)

### Related Leadership Styles and Strategies

Black (1998) believes that school leaders can mix and match leadership styles or strategies, calling them models, according to the needs and circumstances of their district or school. She acknowledges Lashway's (1996b) work noting the advantages of hierarchical leadership. Hierarchical is straightforward, predictable, and one in which the results can be efficient and cost-effective. However, there is a down side presented. Principals who follow a hierarchical style tend to squelch creativity and turn their relationship with teachers and others into one that has more to do with efficiency than with education.

Lashway (1996b) continues:

Hierarchy rests on the structural frame of thinking, regarding leadership as a series of technical decisions. It assumes that there is one best way of doing things, and that best way can be identified through careful analysis by experts.

Once the decision has been made, the organization's job is to carry it out as efficiently as possible, for each worker doing his or her assigned part. (p. 26)

Transactional leadership is another style that follows someone in the footsteps of hierarchial, in the concept that it could be coercive.

According to Bass (1990):

A transactional leader is someone who emphasizes the transaction or exchange that takes place between leaders, colleagues, and followers. This exchange is based on the leader specifying what is expected and helping followers to clearly understand what they will receive, or avoid, if they fulfill those expectations.

(p. 15)

Yukl (1998) states:

Bass' description of transactional leadership strikes one as being quite consistent with traditional view as how to animate and activate a group to action in support of organizational objectives. At the risk of igniting the often tiresome debate of the differences between leadership and management, we consider the impact and

methods of the transactional leader as being primarily associated with management. (p. 57)

Black (1998) presents Conley and Goldman's (1994) definition of facilitative leadership as, "the behaviors that enhance the collective ability of a school to adapt, solve problems, and improve performance" (p. 35). They also caution that, "facilitative leadership often takes considerable time and energy, and sometimes it creates ambiguity and confusion as teachers and others get accustomed to their new roles and responsibilities" (p. 35).

Transformational leadership can be defined in terms of the leader's effect on followers. Leaders who use a transformational leadership style foster a feeling of trust, admiration, loyalty, and respect among their followers. Followers of transformational leaders also tend to be more motivated and do more than they were originally expected to complete. The idea of transformational leadership was first developed by Burns in 1979, and later extended by Bass (1990), as well as others. Neither Burns nor Bass studied schools but rather based their work on political leaders, army officers, or business executives. (Yukl, 1998)

Black (1998) notes, "Transformational leadership strategies allow principals to motivate, inspire, and unite teachers and others on common goals" (p. 35). She also references Lashway's viewpoint stating, "Transformational leaders tend to rely on

persuasion, idealism, and intellectual excitement to capture and persuade others to join their vision and share their dreams" (p. 35).

However, according to Black (1998), Lashway also cautions that principals and others who attempt to lead by using transformational strategies need a high level of energy and a huge reservoir of knowledge and skills about teaching and learning.

Sergiovanni (1996) states, "It is not enough for leaders to just make the right moves for any purpose that suits them, or for any vision that they might have of what school should be like" (p. 93). He agrees with the noted historian and leadership theorist Burns (1978), who pointed out that purpose and vision should be socially useful, should serve the common good, should meet the needs of followers, and should elevate followers to a higher moral level. Sergiovanni calls this kind of leadership "transformational" (p. 93).

Sergiovanni (1996) aligns his views of transformational leadership with Heifetz. Heifetz (1994) explains that transformation involves supporting or challenging people's conceptions of themselves, their roles, and most importantly their ideas about how social systems make progress on problems.

Black (1998) asks the question, "Which kind of leadership works best?" She states that Lashway recommends keeping the following guidelines in mind as one makes strategic choices about which leadership strategies best fit one's personal style and the needs of the school or district. Lashway recommends that one use flexible leadership



strategies. He also suggests that one choose leadership strategies according to short-term and long-term needs. For some school functions such as preparing a budget on time, one might need to use a more hierarchical style, for planning curriculum programs it might be better to use a facilitative approach.

Finally, Black (1998) notes that Lashway advises, "Think of leadership strategies for every action" (p. 35). For example, one should consider what type of leadership he or she would use with different groups of people such as, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, home-schooling parents, and special education teachers. "Think of every action as an opportunity to help students, to assess the school's climate, and to reinforce the school's key values" (Black, 1998, p. 35).

There are various recognized leadership styles. Yukl (1998) states, "The best leadership style is the one that gets the desired results" (p. 4).

### **Instructional Leadership**

Understanding that a principal must be both a manager and a leader, the critical aspect of his leadership is in the area of instruction. McEwan (1998) finds that although many of the lessons of leadership in the corporate world are applicable within the walls of our schools, we need our own model of leadership. The world of education is one that incorporates the unique characteristics of teaching and learning. From this need there has

arisen a body of research referring to the principal role as the instructional leader. Prior to this, the role of the principal was defined by traditional administrative tasks.

McEwan (1998) cites these seven traditional administrative task areas:

1. Staff personnel;
2. Pupil personnel;
3. School-community;
4. Instructional and curriculum development;
5. Finance and business management; and
6. Facilities management.
7. Intergovernmental agency relations as they relate to the four classic

management functions (planning, organizing, leading and controlling).

McEwan (1998, p. 5) states that today's educational administrator in training must add an additional assignment to become an instructional leader. In a recent study of over five hundred Illinois school principals, these behaviors/tasks/skills were identified as being most critical to success in the principalship:

1. Evaluating staff performance;
2. Setting high expectations for students and staff;
3. Modeling high professional standards;
4. Establishing and maintaining vision, mission, and goals;
5. Maintaining positive interpersonal relationships;

6. Maintaining a visible presence;
7. Establishing a safe and orderly environment;
8. Developing a school improvement plan;
9. Establishing an internal communications system;
10. Interviewing candidates for teaching positions; and
11. Complying with mandated educational programs.

Smith and Andrews (1989) also discuss the principal as the instructional leader.

They report:

The role of the principal is by no means a simple one. Thus, identifying factors that influence how principals perform their professional roles is equally complex. To gain insights into how or why principals perform as they do, we need to know what parts of the job principals typically consider to be most important and how they perceive they ideally should spend their time as they perform that role. Then we need to contrast this with how the average principal actually spends time and how this differs from principals who perform the role with a focus on instructional leadership activities. Understanding these issues will allow us to design training activities to help school principals improve their instructional leadership skills. (p. 23)

Smith and Andrews (1989) describe the principal as an instructional leader by stating that the principal is perceived as:

Sergiovanni's (as cited in McEwan, 1998) technical aspects of instructional leadership deal with the traditional practices of management such as planning, time management, leadership theory, and organizational development. The human component encompasses all of the interpersonal aspects of instructional leadership essential to the communicating, motivating, and facilitating roles of the principal. The educational aspect involves the instructional responsibilities of the principal's role in teaching, learning, and implementing the curricula. The symbolic and cultural forces derive from the instructional leader's ability to become the symbol of what is important and purposeful about the school (symbolic), as well as to articulate the values and beliefs of the organization over time (cultural).

McEwan (1998) notes that the technical and human leadership skills are generic. They should be present in any organization where strong leadership is evident. Effective leaders, regardless of the setting, need planning and time management skills as well as the ability to organize and coordinate. Sergiovanni's educational, symbolic, and cultural leadership forces, however, are specific to the school setting. Principals who are instructional leaders must be knowledgeable about learning theory, effective instruction, and the curriculum. They are the power within the educational force. In addition, the instructional leader must communicate and represent to the students, teachers, and parents what is important and valuable in the school. He or she must become a symbolic

force. Finally, the instructional leader must be skilled in the actual construction of a culture that specifically defines what a given school is all about.

### The Role of the Principal

Evans (1996) states, "In recent years it has become common to make a distinction between leadership and management, venerating the former at the expense of the latter" (p. 148). He goes on to say that the problem most school leaders face is that they always have to spend time managing rather than leading.

"Running an organization seems to be a matter of solving an endless set of messes" (Bolman & Deal, 1991, p. 29). Evans (1996) agrees that efforts to exert leadership are usually cut short by the need to manage the messes.

Smith and Andrews (1989) continue to note that:

The role of the principal as building manager versus instructional leader is related to the way principals perceive their time commitments and the way they actually spend their time. Building management are those activities that the principal engages in to maintain the current operations of the school. Instructional leadership activities are those things that the principal must do to improve the learning environment for children. Building management functions are the foundation for the operation of the instructional program. (p. 29)

need purpose, passion, and imagination, the products of a leader” (p. 2). They continue, “particularly in times of crisis or rapid change, we look to leaders, not to managers, for hope, inspiration, and a pathway to somewhere more desirable” (p. 2).

Olson (2000) cites the point of view of Vincent L. Ferrandino, executive director of the National Association of Elementary School Principals, who believes the position of principal has gone from largely managing teachers and a facility, to one of instructional leadership. The problem is, there is widespread agreement that many principals lack the time and training to fulfill that role.

The role of the principal as manager and that of being a leader is acknowledged as important, even critical to be able to do both; however, a leader leads, and a manager follows. Bennis and Nanus (1985, p.21) proposed that “Managers do things right and leaders are people who do the right thing.”

Yukl (1998) holds a view contrary to that of other writers (Bass, 1990; Hickman, 1990; Kotter, 1988), who find no good purpose served by assuming it is impossible to be both a manager and a leader at the same time. They believe that it is desirable to view leading and managing as distinct processes, but not to view leaders and managers as different types of people.

Yukl (1998) notes:

The use of simplistic stereotypes to label people as either managers or leaders, does little to advance our understanding of leadership. Furthermore, the word

“manager” is an occupational title for a large number of people, and it is insensitive to use the term in a way that fosters an inaccurate stereotype of them. Even defining leading and managing as separate processes may obscure more than it reveals if the processes are not mutually exclusive, and they can be effectively integrated. Such questions should be explored in empirical research, not predetermined by arbitrary definition. (p. 6)

In Principal-Centered Leadership, Covey (1991) discusses the distinction between leadership and management:

Leadership deals with direction-with making sure the ladder is leaning against the right wall. Management deals with speed. To double one’s speed in the wrong direction, however, is the very definition of foolishness? Leadership deals with vision - with keeping the mission in sight - and with effectiveness and results.

Management deals with establishing structure and systems to get those results. It focuses on efficiency, cost-benefit analyses, logistics, methods, procedures, and policies. Leadership focuses on the top line. Management focuses on the bottom line. Leadership derives its power from values and correct principles.

Management organizes resources to serve elected objectives to produce the bottom line (p. 246).

Like Yukl, Covey (1991) believes that management and leadership are not mutually exclusive. “Leadership itself can be broken into two parts, one having to do

with vision and direction, values and purposes, and the other with inspiring and motivating people to work together with a common vision and purpose" (p. 246).

According to Covey (1991):

The basic role of the leader is to foster mutual respect and build a complementary team where each strength is made productive and each weakness made irrelevant.

The essential role of a manager is to use leverage to multiply the work and role of the producer. A producer rolls up his sleeves and does what is necessary to solve problems and get results. (p. 246)

Yukl (1998) also notes that it is more useful to study leadership as a process than to study the leader as an individual. The criteria selected to evaluate leadership effectiveness, reflects a researcher's explicit or implicit conception of leadership.

Yukl (1998) also shows examples of objective measures of performance or goal attainment in business including profits, profit margin, sales increase, market share, sales relative to targeted sales, return on investment, productivity, cost per unit of output, and costs in relation to budgeted expenditures. If one wants to use a subjective measure, this would include such things as ratings of effectiveness obtained from the leader's superiors, peers, and/or subordinates.



## The Principal and Culture

One area always influenced by the leadership of the principal is the culture of a school. Deal and Kennedy's (1983) writing on educational leadership sees culture building among the staff as the prime responsibility of the principal, rather than anyone else.

Schein (1992) defines the culture of a group or organization as, "shared assumptions and beliefs about the world and their place in it, the nature of time and space, human nature, and human relationships" (p. 12).

Yukl (1998) says that the major function of culture is to, "help us understand the environment and determine how to respond to it, thereby reducing anxiety, uncertainty, and confusion" (p. 330).

Barth (1980) notes:

School leadership is heavily influenced by the "culture" of the school system. The mores, the taboos, the overt and covert reward systems, and the quality of personal relations are far more significant than the organizational chart on the wall of the school committee room. Just as the culture of the school has a far more powerful effect upon the growth of the faculty than contrived attempts at in-service training, so the culture of the system has a far greater influence upon the effective leadership of principals than administrative workshops. (p. 202)

The principal in his interaction with teachers, the community, and the students not only influences the climate of the school, but also significantly influences the culture. His behaviors and disposition promote a professional and continuous learning community.

Sergiovanni (1996) states:

Culture is an important factor in improving schools. The heart and soul of school culture is what people believe, the assumptions they make about how schools work, and what they consider to be true and real. These factors in turn provide a theory of acceptability that lets people know how they should behave.

Underneath every school culture is a theory, and every school culture is driven by its theory. Effort to change school cultures inevitably involves changing theories of schooling and school life. (pp. 2-3)

And finally, Michael Fullan, in his book, What's Worth Fighting for in the Principalship (1997) emphasize the importance of establishing a professional culture by stating:

In addition to concrete curriculum projects, the principal must pay attention to the professional culture of the school focusing on the interrelationships among curriculum, instruction, and assessment, through fostering a professional learning community. We know that professional cultures, with their openness to new

ideas, their focus on what and how students are learning, their giving and receiving help are strongly related to success in continuous improvement. (p. 30)

### The Principal and Change

One of the many responsibilities of being a principal is having an active role in the process of change. The principal, in reference to being a leader or a manager is often viewed as either an implementer of change or as an initiator of it, depending upon one's point of view. Undertaking the process of change can be one of the most challenging tasks a principal is required to perform. Principals who are viewed as leaders may initiate change while others serve more of a middle management function in the process. Literature has spent time discussing the change process and challenges associated with education, but has spent little time discussing it from the point of view of the principal.

Fullan (1991) states:

Change is only one small part of the forces competing for the principal's attention, and usually not the most compelling one. Yet some principals are actively engaged as initiators or facilitators of continuous improvement in their schools. The principal is in the middle of the relationship between teachers and external ideas and people. As in most human triangles there are constant conflicts and dilemmas. How the principal approaches (or avoids) these issues determine to a

large extent whether these relationships constitute a Bermuda triangle of innovations. (p. 144)

Change in schools is often associated with staff development or usually addresses what teachers teach or how they teach it. Since changing the curriculum does not impact the curriculum's pattern or way of doing things, the focus of change is usually directed towards the behaviors of teachers. Resistance to change is most often anchored there and the principal is the one who is forced to contend with being the change agent. Often where the change is being directed from, is half of the challenge of implementation. Real and effective change in schools is usually best served if driven from the roots up. When the principal serves as the initiator of change and involves the staff in the process, the change tends to be more accepted.

Barth (1980) references the point in this manner:

If we have learned anything about educational change over the past twenty years, it is that change imposed upon schools from without does not work; at best it promotes momentary compliance, which vanishes with the departure of the change agent. On the other hand, change that emerges from within the school, especially from individual teachers, is authentic. (p. 34)

Implementing change and the role of the principal can be viewed differently when change is initiated outside of the school.

Fullan (1991) also states:

The expectation that principals should be leaders in the implementation of changes that they had no hand in developing and may not understand is especially troublesome. Amidst the conflicting demands and problems described by principals and researchers, taking on a change agent's role seems most problematic, especially as it is not clear exactly what that means. Generalities, such as the "principal is the gatekeeper of change" or the principal and the school is the "unit of change", provide no practical clarity about what the principal could or should do. Given the other demands on the role, it is no wonder that most principals do not approach their change responsibilities with enthusiasm. (p. 152)

Robbins and Alvy (1995) summarize the principal and change by stating:

The principal can set a personal example by viewing change as an opportunity and encouraging risk taking and ownership on the part of teachers regarding the changes. This will help to create the atmosphere of trust that will be necessary for success. (p.77)

#### Behavioral Characteristics of Effective Principals

Yukl (1998) states that most researchers define effectiveness as, "the consequence of the leader's actions" (p. 6). Another commonly used measure of leader effectiveness is the extent to which the leader's organizational unit performs its task successfully and

attains its goals. Sometimes leader effectiveness is measured in terms of the leader's contribution to the quality of group processes as perceived by followers or outside observers.

According to Smith and Andrews (1989), "How we define leadership of the school principal seems to determine the extent to which it is a key element in producing an instructionally effective school" (p. 7).

Sweeney (1982) found that effective schools have effective leaders. He believes that much of what the school does to promote achievement is within the principal's power to influence and control. Specifically, he identifies six leadership behaviors that have been consistently associated with schools that are well managed and whose students achieve. They are the behaviors of principals who:

1. Emphasize achievement: They give high priority to activities, instruction, and activities that foster academic success. Effective principals are visible and involved in what goes on in the school and its classrooms. They convey to teachers their commitment to achievement.

2. Set instructional strategies: They take part in instructional decision making and accept responsibility for decisions about methods, materials, and evaluation procedures. They develop plans for solving students' learning problems.

3. Provide an orderly atmosphere: They do what is necessary to ensure that the school's climate is conducive to learning: it is quiet, pleasant, and well maintained.

4. Frequently evaluate student progress: They monitor student achievement on a regular basis. Principals set expectations for the entire school and check to make sure those expectations are being met. They know how well their students are performing as compared to students in other schools.

5. Coordinate instructional programs: They interrelate course content, sequences of objectives, and materials in all grades. They see that what goes on in the classroom has bearing on the overall goals and program of the school.

6. Support teachers: Effective principals communicate with teachers about goals and procedures. They support teachers' attendance at professional meetings and workshops, and provide in service that promotes improved teaching.

The National Association of Elementary School Principals' (1991) publication, Proficiencies for Principals states that the leadership styles of principals vary as situations and personalities vary, but they tend to share certain basic traits and characteristics. Effective principals display behavior, values, beliefs, and personal attributes that inspire others to grasp and achieve the school's academic, social and cultural goals, thereby assuring a meaningful and enjoyable school experience.

The publication also lists what the National Association of Elementary School Principals believes the exercise of leadership of the proficient principal to be:

Rogus (1988) upheld the importance of instructional leadership. School administrators who are effective, tend to prioritize instruction, identify activities that support that function, and adopt a mindset of patience and persistence each day.

Persell and Cookson (1982) have reviewed more than seventy-five research studies. They report the following recurrent behaviors that seem to be associated with strong principals:

1. Demonstrating a commitment to academic goals;
2. Creating a climate of high expectations;
3. Functioning as an instructional leader;
4. Being a forceful and dynamic leader;
5. Consulting effectively with others;
6. Creating order and discipline;
7. Marshaling resources;
8. Using time well; and
9. Evaluating results.

Rutherford's (1995) study of elementary and secondary principals revealed that effective principals all demonstrated five essential qualities of leadership:

1. Demonstrated clear visions of desirable futures for their schools;
2. Translated those visions into specific goals;
3. Established supportive environments for improvement;



4. Monitored progress; and
5. Intervened effectively when necessary.

Keller (1998) states that current thinking on principals has identified several characteristics that are important in providing sound leadership.

A good principal:

1. Recognizes teaching and learning as the main business of school;
2. Communicates the school's mission clearly and consistently to staff members, parents, and students;
3. Fosters standards for teaching and learning that are high and attainable;
4. Provides clear goals and monitors the progress of students toward meeting them.
5. Spends time in classrooms and listening to teachers;
6. Promotes an atmosphere of trust and sharing;
7. Builds a good staff and makes professional development a top concern; and
8. Does not tolerate bad teachers.

Smith and Andrews (1989) suggest:

Taken collectively, these lists of characteristics suggest that the principal who is a strong leader functions as a forceful and dynamic professional through a variety of personal characteristics, including high energy, assertiveness, ability to assume

the initiative, openness to new ideas, tolerance for ambiguity, a sense of humor, analytic ability, and a practical stance toward life. (p. 8)

### Summary

The research presents similar strands of identification of effective principal behaviors. Murphy (1997) expresses the viewpoint that what principals do to help create a shared vision, promote it across their schools, guide good instruction, manage effectively, discipline fairly and reach out beyond the campus, governs success in every classroom.

Although different researchers identify characteristics using different terms, the following list is a synthesis of those characteristics.

#### Effective principals:

1. Share a clearly defined vision and mission with everyone;
2. Set instructional goals and monitor student achievement;
3. Supervise and support effective instruction;
4. Are involved in curriculum development and instructional strategies;
5. Establish a culture of high expectations for students and staff; and
6. Create a safe and positive climate for teaching and learning.

If the relationship between what the literature has found regarding the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals and what superintendents

perceive to be the effective behavioral characteristics of elementary school principals can be established, improved elementary schools may result.

The clarity of the role of the principal, having reached agreement with the superintendent on what constitutes being effective, would lend itself to better managed and better lead schools. Principals need to understand what is valued and considered effective from the point of view of the superintendent, who represents the school board and who in turn represents the community. Given the interpretation of the research and the application of it along with the superintendent's beliefs in reference to being effective, efforts toward school improvement and the continuation of current successful programs will be more effectively maintained.

Figure 1 provides a matrix of the effective principal behavioral characteristics that was constructed to provide a graphic representation of the literature.

Figure 1. Effective Principal Behavioral Characteristics

	Vision/Mission	Curriculum	Instruction	Assessment	Climate	Organizational Management
Keller	Communicates the school's mission clearly and consistently to staff, parents and students	Posters standards for teaching and learning that are high and attainable	Spends time in classrooms and listening to teachers	Provides clear goals and monitors the progress of students toward meeting them	Provides an atmosphere of trust and sharing	Builds a good staff and makes professional development a top concern
McBryen	Establishes and maintains vision, mission, and goals	Sets high expectations for academic success	Evaluates staff performance	Develops school improvement plans	Maintains a visible presence	Establishes a safe and orderly environment
Murphy	Creates and promotes a shared vision	Defines academic goals	Guides good instruction	Monitors academic results	Disciplines fairly	Manages effectively
NABSP	Exercises vision that involves students, staff, and parents	Initiates and manages constructive change	Recognizes the individual needs of all staff and students, including those at risk.	Analyzes relevant information	Bonds the school community through shared values and beliefs	Identifies and coordinates use of resources
Parrell & Cookson	Creates a climate for high expectations	Demonstrates commitment to academic goals	Functions as instructional leader	Evaluates results	Consults effectively with others	Creates order and discipline
Rutherford	Has a clear, informed vision of what the school should be	Translates vision into specific goals and expectations		Monitors progress continuously	Establishes supportive environment	Intervenes effectively when necessary
Sergiovanni	Communicates to parents, teachers, and students what is important and valuable in a school	Demonstrates knowledge about curriculum	Demonstrates knowledge about learning theory and instruction		Constructs a culture that defines what the school is about	Demonstrates technical skills
Smith and Andrews	Creates a presence supporting the purpose of school	Possesses knowledge and skill about curriculum	Possesses knowledge and skill about instruction			
Sweeney		Coordinates instructional programs	Sets instructional strategies	Frequently evaluates student progress	Supports teachers	Provides atmosphere conducive to learning
Weber	Defines the school mission	Manages curriculum and instruction	Observes and gives feedback to teachers	Assesses instructional program frequently	Promotes positive learning climate	

## CHAPTER III

### Methodology

The purpose of this study was to investigate, by means of qualitative research methods, superintendents' perceptions regarding the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research sample, research procedures, techniques for data collection, rationale behind the development of the interview instrument, and interview questions. This chapter will also describe the methodology used to determine the behavioral characteristics perceived as effective by New Jersey school superintendents. This chapter is divided into the following sections: (a) research sample, (b) research procedures, (c) techniques for data collections (d) development of interview instrument, (e) interview questions, (f) treatment of data and, (g) summary.

Qualitative research was used to collect data reflecting superintendents' perceptions of behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals. Qualitative research is designed to get close to the individual's perceptions and thoughts through data that has detail and depth. Insights are arrived at inductively during the

process of investigation. Patton (1989) discusses the means by which the qualitative method works:

Qualitative measure has to do with the kinds of data or information that are collected. Qualitative data consist of detailed descriptions, of situations, events, people, interactions, and observed behaviors; direct quotations from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts; and excerpts or entire passages from documents, correspondence, records, and case histories. The detailed descriptions direct quotations and case documentation of qualitative measurement are raw data from the empirical world. The data are collected as open-ended narrative without attempting to fit program activities or peoples' experiences into predetermined standardized categories such as the response choices that comprise typical questionnaires or tests. (p. 22)

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) describe qualitative research as:

An umbrella term to refer to several research strategies that share certain characteristics. The data collected has been termed soft that is, rich in description of people, places, and conversations, and not easily handled by statistical procedures. Research questions are not framed by operationalizing variables; rather, they are formulated to investigate in all their complexity, in context. (p. 2)

### Research Sample

Superintendents were selected as the participants of study, because they are responsible for the selection of principal candidates and recommendation for hire to the board of education. They are also responsible for the formal observation and evaluation process in reference to a principal's performance. The perception of behavioral characteristics of an effective principal undoubtedly plays a role in the superintendent's evaluation of the performance of principals.

The study sample was drawn from the District Factor Group GH. This was done for the purpose of uniformity of socioeconomic status (SES). A District Factor Group is a classification which combines into a single measure, a number of 1990 Census variables which, when combined, provide an indication of the socioeconomic status of a community. District Factor Group GH is one the researcher is familiar with and one in which the variables of comparison of the effective behaviors of elementary school principals could be considered to be of similar nature.

The District Factor Group is an indicator of the socioeconomic status and was first used as a measurement instrument in 1975, using demographic variables from the 1970 United States Census. Since then, the socioeconomic status of some districts has changed. As a result, a revision was made in 1984 to take into account new data from the 1980 Census and to slightly change the theoretical model of socioeconomic status. The third DFG was constructed reflecting data from the 1990 Census.

The District Factor Group was motivated by research conducted in the late 1960s and early 1970s that showed a strong relationship between socioeconomic status and education outcomes. The Department of Education developed the District Factor Groups for its own use in reporting of test scores. In its publicly released testing reports, the Department shows district-by-district results, arranged by District Factor Group. Comparison is made between districts of like SES, rather than on a geographic basis. The intent of this procedure is to reduce the variation in reported scores, which is due to factors beyond the control of local educators.

The District Factor Group index of socioeconomic status contains seven indices. These include: (a) percent of population with no high school diploma, (b) percent with some college, (c) occupation, (d) population density, (e) income, (f) unemployment and, (g) poverty. There are eight district factor groups: A, B, CD, DE, FG, GH, I, and J.

In a survey of the twenty-one counties in New Jersey, eleven were identified as having K-8 or K-12 school districts within the District Factor Groupings identified as GH. There were twenty K-8 or K-12 available districts spread throughout the eleven counties.

#### Research Procedures

Twenty superintendents of schools were sent letters (see Appendix A) inviting them to participate in the study. An enclosed reply form and a stamped, self-addressed



envelope for each superintendent were also enclosed, so the superintendents could indicate whether or not they would participate in the study.

### Techniques for Data Collection

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the perceptions of school superintendents regarding the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals. The researcher interviewed eight superintendents. Qualitative research by means of a standardized open-ended interview was collected.

Patton (1989) noted that:

The purpose of open-ended interviewing is not to put things in someone's mind (for example, the interviewer's preconceived categories for organizing the world) but rather to access the perspective of the person being interviewed. We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe.

(p. 196)

Bodgan and Biklen (1982) also discuss the fact that researchers who conduct qualitative studies are concerned with understanding behavior from the participant's own frame of reference. They continue stating, "The best known representative of qualitative research and those that most embody the characteristics we just touch upon are participant observations and in depth interviewing" (p. 2).

### Development of Interview Instrument

The interview instrument for this study was developed as a product of the literature search in the areas of organizational management behaviors and the instructional leadership behaviors associated with being a school principal. During the search specific note was made of the behaviors in each area. Areas investigated included the principal's ability to demonstrate a vision and formulate a mission in regard to that vision. The necessity for a strong knowledge base in curriculum and supervision of instruction was noted, as well as the ability to monitor and evaluate program success based on test data. It is acknowledged that principals play a role in determining the climate in a school and the ability to manage many administrative tasks. Research into the role of the principal was heavily conducted in the 1980s and has again been revisited as recently as the winter of 1999 with a series of articles in Education Week.

For this study, each citation of instructional leadership behavior and organizational management behavior of a school principal was cited. At the completion of the literature search, a matrix of the identified instructional leadership and organizational management behaviors was constructed to provide a graphic representation of the literature review. The questions for the interview were derived from the matrix with the purpose of revealing the superintendents' perceptions regarding the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals. The questions, along with the superintendents' responses, provided a rich database for comparison with the

literature in order to determine what behavioral characteristics would be considered as effective when exhibited by the elementary school principal.

### Interview Questions

#### Superintendent Background

The first series of questions served to provide some background information on each of the superintendents interviewed.

- 1.) What is the enrollment of your district?
- 2.) Why did you enter the field of education?
- 3.) Why/how did you become a superintendent?
- 4.) Were you ever a principal, what level of education?

#### Area 1: Self-Perceptions of Leadership

There were four questions for superintendents in this series. Topics included their description of themselves as a superintendent, their perception of the principal's position, the relationship between the superintendent and the principal, and any additional comments they wished to make regarding the principal and leadership.

- 1.1 How would you describe yourself as a superintendent?
- 1.2 What do you see as the most difficult part of the principal's job?

1.3 What do you perceive as the ideal relationship between a principal and a superintendent?

1.4 Do you have any additional comments related to self-perceptions of the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals?

### Area 2: The Reliable Indicators of Effective Elementary School Principals

There were only two questions in Area 2, one that asked the superintendents to identify their perception of the reliable indicators of an effective elementary school principal and the second question asked if they had additional comments in regard to the reliable indicators of an effective elementary school principal.

2.1 What do you perceive as reliable indicators of an effective elementary school principal?

2.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the reliable indicators of an effective elementary school principal?

### Area 3: The Principal's Role in Regard to Creating Culture and Climate

The third area contained two questions, which addressed the principal's role in creating culture and climate in the school, and if they had any additional comments in regard to the principal's role in creating culture and climate.

3.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to creating culture and climate?

3.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role in creating culture and climate?

#### Area 4: The Principal's Role in Regard to Change

This area contained three questions and examined the superintendent's perception and the principal's role in regard to being an initiator of change and an implementer of change. The superintendents were asked for any additional comments in regard to the principal's role and change.

4.1 How do you perceive the principal acting as an initiator of change?

4.2 How do you perceive the principal acting as an implementer of change?

4.3 Do you have any additional comments related to the principal's role with regard to change?

#### Area 5: The Principal's Role in Regard to Goal Setting

Area 5 contained four questions which referenced the principal's role in regard to the mission statement of a school, the educational objectives of both the school and the teachers, and any additional comments they may have in regard to the principal's role and goal setting.

- 5.1 What is the principal's role in regard to the mission statement of a school?
- 5.2 What is the principal's role in regard to educational objectives of the school?
- 5.3 What is the principal's role in regard to the educational objectives of the teachers?

#### Area 6: The Principal's Role in Regard to Staff Development

Area 6 had only two questions, the first regarding the principal's role in staff development and the second asking for any additional comments.

- 6.1 What is the principal's role in regard to staff development?
- 6.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role and staff development?

#### Area 7: The Principal's Role in Regard to Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Area 7 contained four questions in reference to the principal's responsibility in attaining core curriculum content standards, their responsibility in regard to the administration, and interpretation of standardized test scores. The area concluded by asking for any additional comments in reference to the principal's responsibility in regard to the principal's role and curriculum, instruction, and assessment?

7.1 What is the principal's responsibility in regard to the administration of standardized test?

7.2 What is the principal's responsibility in regard to the interpretation of assessment data?

7.3 What is the principal's responsibility in regard to the attainment of the state core curriculum content standards?

7.4 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role and curriculum, instruction, and assessment?

#### Area 8: Superintendent's Advice to a Search Committee

This area had only two questions, one asking for the advice superintendents would give to a principal candidate search committee, and the second seeking any additional comments concerning the topic.

8.1 What advice would you give to a search committee seeking a principal candidate?

8.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the advice you would give to a search committee seeking a principal candidate?

#### Area 9: Additional Comments Concerning the Behavioral Characteristics of Effective Elementary School Principals

This final question served as a recap of the entire interview and provided the superintendents with one last opportunity to comment on their perception of the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals.

9.1 What additional comments do you have related to the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals?

### Treatment of Data

Transcripts of the tape-recorded interviews provided the data for this study. Patterns of responses were examined for each question. Each interviewee was assigned a code ensuring an accurate record could be maintained and anonymity would be guaranteed as well.

In addition, a Chi-square statistical analysis was utilized to determine whether or not the observed frequencies of the interviewee responses were a "good fit" to the expected frequencies. Chapter IV of this study provides a presentation and summary of these findings.

### Summary

In this chapter, the instrumentation method used in gathering data was presented. The method for selecting the research sample, the research procedures, techniques for



data collection, the development of the interview instrument, the interview questions, treatment of the data, and summary are also presented.

## CHAPTER IV

### Presentation of Findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate, by means of qualitative research methods, superintendents' perceptions of the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals.

The purpose of this chapter is to present the research findings and to provide a summary of those findings relative to the study objectives. The primary focus of this chapter is the analysis of data relative to the congruency among New Jersey superintendents and their perceptions regarding the behavioral characteristics associated with being an effective elementary school principal. This chapter is divided into the following sections: (a) nature of the study, (b) presentation of data, (c) summary of findings, and (d) summary.

#### Nature of the Study

This researcher interviewed eight superintendents of schools. They were interviewed in the winter of 1999-2000. The school districts in which these superintendents worked were either K-8 or K-12. They were all in the District Factor

Group of GH. Interviewees were asked a series of questions covering nine separate areas involving the principalship. The first series of questions dealt with their self-perceptions of leadership and the elementary school principal. The second group of questions focused on the reliable indicators of an effective principal. The third series of questions had as their focus, the principal's role in creating culture and climate. The fourth series of questions dealt with the principal's role in regard to change. The fifth series of questions examined the principal's role in regard to goal setting. The sixth series of questions dealt with the principal's role in regard to staff development. The seventh series of questions focused on the principal's role in regard to curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The eighth question asked what advice a superintendent would give to a search committee seeking a principal candidate. The last question in each series was intended to give the interviewees the opportunity to make any additional comments related to the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals.

#### Presentation of the Data

Interviews were conducted in various locations within the offices of the superintendents. Most were held in the superintendent's office, while two were held in a conference room.

## Interviews

### Superintendent #1

The first interview was conducted with a superintendent whose school district had an approximate enrollment of 1800 students in a K-12 configuration. Superintendent 1 had been a principal of both an elementary and a middle school at one time during his career. He possesses a doctoral degree and has been a superintendent for more than ten years.

#### Area 1: Self-Perceptions of Leadership.

##### 1.1 How would you describe yourself as a superintendent?

The easiest description is demanding. I think I'm a demanding leader and have high expectations. I'm cooperative, a team player, I participate, I'm a role up your sleeves type of superintendent. I participate in a lot of committees and I delegate work. I also have a responsibility to help where I can. I think I'm a good communicator. Our administrators often meet as a group. We had a holiday party and socialized. I sponsor 3 or 4 of those a year. We also have administrative council meetings. I think that from my perception my greatest asset is my technical knowledge and my ability to communicate my expectations to the principals.

##### 1.2 What do you perceive to be the most difficult part of the elementary school principal's job?

From my experience as an elementary school principal, the most difficult part of the job is that you don't have any other resources, you take responsibility for just about everything. In our school system I've put a guidance counselor in each school who would have some flexible time to help the administrator or have the LD resource teacher have some flexible time so they could help the administrator try to handle everything. We have also gone to K-12 supervisors who can lend

technical knowledge. It's hard to be eclectic and that's what the elementary school principal has to be. They have to have a full understanding of everything and it's hard to be all things to all people. The other aspect of an elementary school principal, since the school is so small, is when they have an issue with a staff member because of their supervisory responsibilities they have to see them all the time because of the closeness of an elementary school. I think that's a difficult thing for an elementary principal to deal with the issues of a poor staff member. We have a cooperative evaluation process where other members of our administrative team help the principal conduct evaluations. In a high school where there are supervisors and there are multiple evaluations, there is support. Elementary school principals are alone unless they have a relationship with another principal and can get help. This is why I have a family approach to dealing with my principals, so they don't feel they are alone in their positions.

- 1.3 What do you perceive as the ideal relationship between a principal and superintendent?

The ideal relationship is open and honest, has a sense of integrity and cooperation, a sense of working together, not against, teamsmanship. I think those are ideal situations that lead to better leadership and a better management team. At times there is going to be conflict and if you can't be honest about that and move away realizing this is not a personal issue. We have to come up with the issue and focus on solving it outside of the personal relationship. We need to be able to move forward.

- 1.4 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal and leadership?

There are a lot of comments about leadership. You haven't asked about me about specific skills a principal should have. There's a notion about leadership, like their ability to be creative or bring new ideas to the table for the group to share. Their ability to forge with their staff a certain level of professional development or a specific area such as school wide mission. You asked me about the leadership relationship and I spoke at length about the qualities of the people and that interpersonal relationship lays a fabric over time and it takes time. We can't be in a hurry to try and create that relationship, it takes years to develop a relationship. Too often superintendents move too quickly attempting to create the relationship with their administrators. I have had the good fortune of working with our administrators over a number of years and have developed relationships

on both a personal and professional level. I am still in a position to say, OK I'm not satisfied with that, and they understand that.

### Area 2: Reliable Indicators of Effective Elementary School Principals.

- 2.1 What do you perceive to be the reliable indicators of an effective elementary school principal?

That can be situational, as you well know depending upon the type of school or school community they are in. There are some things that cut across that situational piece. A principal has to be a good communicator and have a sense of mission and expectation for his or her school. A principal needs to have specific skills in the area of decision making, a decision making process and be able to prioritize the work. They have to be able schedule their work according to an appropriate time slots. They have to be able to engender among the student body a certain level of respect and understanding. They have to maintain discipline in their schools through their teachers making sure their teachers are consistent their approaches to discipline. They have to be able to focus on the instructional mission of the school and establish parameters as to what those instructional objectives are and make sure that the teachers are reaching for feedback from students in those objectives and making the necessary corrections where appropriate. The principal has to engender from his teachers a relationship where he's ensuring what is happening in each classroom from a performance basis. The principal also has to have an understanding of district policy and be able to understand how to work within that policy, creative management if you want. There's policy and there's creative management within that policy and that's helpful because I think there's situations that call for that. I think from effective leadership points, I would expect them to have professional development plans to improve their knowledge and understanding. I think in doing so that can be communicate to a faculty and they can have their faculty work with them and their faculty can participate in management and share in decision making in a building. I think the principal has to create a culture in the school and a climate where parents are engaged in the process. The principals need to convey that to his faculty to work with him to work on that philosophy.

- 2.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the reliable indicators of effective elementary school principals?

No, my word, I think I've exhausted myself.

Area 3: The Principal's Role in Creating Culture and Climate.

3.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in creating culture and climate?

I think culture and climate is a number of factors that influence that. Naturally a principal sets the tone for a level of communication within the building and the culture with the building and they are a big influence there. They can promote participation, they can promote engagement of parents within the schools or they can eliminate that. From my philosophy I think it's very important that they engage the parents, that they promote their staff, that they engage their staff in that. They can promote their staff through a model of participation. So I think the culture and climate is dictated and set by the principal by their openness by their willingness to have open participation in their decisions and that model goes all the way down through the student body. If the principal allows the students to participate in decisions that effect them, there is a model there that can create a climate. If you engage students and staff in decision making, you create a model, which can result in a culture, and the principal can make that happen.

3.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role in creating culture and climate?

Well I do, in that a principal that is negative; a principal that does not engage the staff and the students is going to create a negative culture and we have to be conscious of that. A principal that is Machiavellian in nature in their behavior is going to create a certain way of dealing with people. They are going to approach that principal in a way and a culture is going to be quite different than one that's humanistic and straightforward and not Machiavellian in nature.

Area 4: The Principal's Role in Regard to Change.

4.1 How do you perceive the principal acting as an initiator of change?

Principals will take on different roles in reference to change. In my early years as a principal and also observing principals, some will have a lot of ideas and use faculty meetings to present those ideas and that's one model. Another model is,

the principal will have a couple of faculty members do research and then present to the faculty new ideas. You have all different styles of bringing change, but I think the principal has a foremost responsibility in bringing the faculty the understanding and support necessary for change. The way they go about doing that may be different depending on styles, but if they understand that doing that is bottom line in order for change to occur. It is also necessary for the faculty to buy into the change. So, the principal's support in initiating the change is a key ingredient and the principal plays a large part in that as the formal leader in the school.

4.2 How do you perceive the principal acting as an implementer of change?

The principal has to be supportive of the change if they are an implementer of the change. For example, if there is a central office decision that has to be implemented they have to take a position with the faculty that they are supportive of it. Sometimes it can occur, that a memorandum comes out of central office, and the principal conveys that this is not important. The staff will read that right away how the principal feels, so the principal has to be conscious of that. Whether he agrees with it even though it is a central office initiative or not. So the principal is key to implementing change.

4.3 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role and change?

Yeah, if there is change that the district has endorsed and the principal is having a problem with that, I'm going to take that principal aside and let them know that their behavior is not meeting the expectation. If they have change at the building level that they are initiating they should have made sure that I'm aware of that. It is just the same with change at the building level or district level. I'm going to converse with them about why I think it's important. They should be doing the same with me and making sure we are all working on the same wave length.

Area 5: The Principal's Role in Regard to Goal Setting.

5.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to the mission statement of a school?



Each of our schools has a mission statement and the principal develops the mission statement with their faculty. Inherent to each of those is the education and instructional nature at the school that's the primary focus of the school and also, their relationship with each other. We have a mission statement in the district and we hire staff to help make sure that mission is accomplished. So each of our schools has a mission statement and each of our schools develops that.

5.2 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to the educational objectives of a school?

I assume you're talking about the state department of education objectives. Each of our principals are required to come up with three major objectives and they can be key to the state department objectives as well as their own. They can be two instructional objectives and one professional. Each of the principals is required to do that and engage their staff and PTA's in developing those objectives. Many of our principals send 5 or 6 objectives over to us. Each of the principals is key to developing them and they are used in their evaluation at both mid-year and end of the year evaluation. There are at least 4 contacts in reference to those goals and they are responsible for developing them with their faculty.

5.3 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to the educational objectives of teachers?

I think the principal is a facilitator of the educational objectives with the teachers whether you are talking about instructional or professional. If we are talking about instructional, principals are responsible to make sure they have resources. They have grade level meetings in order to make sure teachers are working in the same instructional areas and the pacing of the areas, the principal would have that responsibility. The teachers would have to implement them, but the principal would have to make sure they are focused and have the assistance necessary to implement them. Regarding professional development, principals have a definite responsibility to make sure teachers are growing and invade new territory to enhance their skills. A principal with higher caliber teachers can allow them to direct their own professional development plans and the principal more or less facilitates that. If you have a staff member having difficulty, the principal may become the prime sponsor of their plan or creator and implementer of that plan with teacher participation.

- 5.4 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role and goal setting?

Yes, I have a very important one. The principal should participate in district goal setting for them to participate at their building setting and with their teachers. We just went through a long range planning process here and our principals with our community members and staffs were all involved in setting the goals for our 5-year plan. Our principals are all involved that way because there is a collapsing in the district of central focus. I think we've been able to accomplish a lot here because of everyone working together pulling in the same direction.

Area 6: The Principal's Role in Regard to Staff Development.

- 6.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to staff development?

There are some central functions that a principal has to plan in regard to staff development. Number one there is the individual professional development plan where the principal can provide support and assistance, make sure the classes are covered so the teacher can get out if they are observing other classes. The principal also has a building level responsibility where the principal is responsible for opening the avenues of his teachers thinking. There is a professional development from the entire faculty and the principal must encourage everyone to participate. You have a much larger piece which deals with degree levels where the principal tries to encourage the teachers to renew their education in formal course work and we have a wonderful reimbursement program. The principal's responsibility is to engage staff and get them to utilize those resources that will help the quality of the staff. They can bring guest speakers in. One principal got the PTA to help fund a staff development program with funds from the PTA. That was a different model because I've never seen the PTA do that. The principal has a major role in that at all levels.

- 6.2 Do you have any additional comments in regards to the principal's role and staff development?

No.

Area 7: The Principal's Role in Regard to Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

- 7.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's responsibility in regard to the attainment of the state core curriculum standards?

The principal has a specific responsibility. He needs to make sure that the staff is familiar with the standards. He needs to make sure the staff has ways to collect information and providing instructional activities in those core curriculum instructional areas. He also needs to facilitate staff development in those areas. Principals need to participate in district activities designed to write curriculum in those areas. So they have a multi-faceted responsibility. They have a responsibility to make sure their staff understands what the curriculum standards are, how those standards are infused into our curriculum and how staff members are assessing attainment of those standards.

- 7.2 What do you perceive to be the principal's responsibility in regard to the administration of standardized tests?

They have to oversee the integrity of it because we have guidance counselors who generally take the responsibility that all test books are collected and uniform standards are set. The principal should oversee the schedule and make sure the criteria in the administrator's manual are followed. The principal in the building must make sure the integrity of the test taking process is established. The principal must make sure his teachers are following the rules of test administration and that there is nothing to damage the integrity.

- 7.3 What do you perceive to be the principal's responsibility in regard to the interpretation of assessment data?

They had to have an understanding of interpretation and what the results mean. They have to facilitate their faculty in how to utilize their results. The principal's responsibility would be to locate area of weakness in the test and make sure the staff comes up with some type of plan to address the weak areas. I think the principal needs to be able to gain the resources to help his staff understand the statistics and what they mean. Many teachers come out of college and they don't know what the results mean or how to utilize them. I think that's an important responsibility of the principal process. I think they also have to help the community and parents understand as well.

- 7.4 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role in regard to curriculum, instruction, and assessment?

No.

Area 8: Superintendent's Advice to Search Committee.

- 8.1 What advice would you give to a search committee seeking a principal candidate?

Dig deeper than what you're seeing on the surface from the candidates. I think from what we had, it's important for you to understand the candidate and always be aware that you have 2 or 3 candidates in the finalist pool. Also, always do your research into the background of those candidates.

I think that is very important because there is a lot than can be told on the surface from a communication style. When you dig deeper, you may not see that surface. We used to send our candidates to an assessment center years ago and that was helpful. When there is an opening here, I will do all the screening of the candidates. Then, I select 5 or 6 to send to a committee for the legwork. Generally, our principals and other staff members sit on those committees as well as staff and other community members. I think it is just more than interviews. Check their background as to how they work.

- 8.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the recruitment of principal candidates?

No.

Area 9: Additional Comments Concerning the Behavioral Characteristics of Effective Elementary School Principals.

- 9.1 Do you have any additional comments in reference to the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals?

No.

## Superintendent #2

The second interview was conducted with a superintendent whose school district had an approximate enrollment of 3500 students in a K-12 configuration. Superintendent 2 had been a principal of both an elementary school and a middle school. He possesses a doctoral degree and has been a superintendent less than five years.

### Area 1: Self-Perceptions of Leadership.

#### 1.1 How would you describe yourself as a superintendent?

In terms of leadership, I think we are all affected by our role models. I have a great belief in site-based management and enabling people to exercise their leadership styles in their buildings. I believe the building principal should be interviewed and placed as a matter of a person who has industriousness, self-initiative, and be a life long learner who wants to apply those learnings in an experimental way. The leadership style of empowerment will allow them to be creative in their school.

#### 1.2 What do you perceive to be the most difficult part of the elementary school principal's job?

I believe there are two areas, one being public relations where principals try to make everyone happy and can't do that, so sometimes that makes it difficult to make decisions. The other thing is when I interview people the hardest thing to find in a candidate is people who can take a blank screen and be creative.

#### 1.3 What do you perceive as the ideal relationship between a principal and superintendent?

Keeping the superintendent informed. I encourage my principals to keep me informed and don't feel as if you troubling me or imposing upon me. I need to know. Also, the relationship needs to encourage advice and consensus that's an important expectation in reference to the relationship.

- 1.4 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal and leadership?

The principal needs to understand to serve as an effective change agent. They need to supplement their understandings with research, reading and even graduate study in order to stay current.

Area 2: Reliable Indicators of Effective Elementary School Principals.

- 2.1 What do you perceive to be the reliable indicators of an effective elementary school principal?

I think of reliable in the statistical definition, reliability in honesty and integrity. Reliability means every time you measure it you get the same result. The only way to develop trust in the staff and the community is in performance over the long haul that is reliable. Next, would be substantive competency in your field. You know your business and can answer questions accurately.

- 2.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the reliable indicators of effective elementary school principals?

No.

Area 3: Principal's Role in Creating Culture and Climate.

- 3.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in creating culture and climate?

It's a key role. The research is that the principal is the organizational leader of the building in every regard. When you break it out to culture and climate the principal is the one; when they take the position, they decide whether to continue a culture or attempt to change it. When they make a decision they do it with that regard that they make it with a cognizance of the importance of culture is another matter. They also will play a key role in what will be, whether celebrate birthdays and recognize student achievement and how so. One thing that's interesting at the elementary level is a principal who gets on the roof to encourage students read books. That can be cultural, the point is that they initiate it. They may read it in a magazine or be approached by the PTA, the point is that's its their decision and they affect the culture of the school.

- 3.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role in creating culture and climate?

No.

Area 4: The Principal's Role in Regard to Change.

- 4.1 How do you perceive the principal acting as an initiator of change?

I can speak from my own experience where I was the one to attend state and national conferences. I always felt obligated to bring back items proven to be successful and see if I could implement them in my building. To distinguish between initiation first of all that became the standard or culture of the building was that we supported change based on the principal's leadership standards.

- 4.2 How do you perceive the principal acting as an implementer of change?

The implementation side is a different matter because then you have to construct the plan and build consensus and involve people and share a vision and that's a different skill.

- 4.3 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role and change?

No.

Area 5: The Principal's Role in Regard to Goal Setting.

- 5.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to the mission statement of a school?

Given that they believe in one and there ought to be one, they could hand it down and say there it is, or they could draft and craft one. I think there is a skill to actually having an exercise where we collectively do it with a chalkboard. I've done it many times and think that it has a value. I use a process called a "we agree" statement. In this process they don't always get along, so we can go back

to the mission statement even though when you first construct it, it seems so mom and apple pie, so elementary, it can serve to ground you in a favorable way.

- 5.2 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to the educational objectives of a school?

I'll take this from a New Jersey viewpoint and that would be the expectation required through core and the monitoring process involving the stakeholders and so forth and that would be the QAAR whereby it's required that you involve people in setting the objectives. Having said that it is a site-based process and determined by law, there is only one person that can and should do it and that is the principal. So I think it's a matter of compliance and expectations by the superintendent that it happens in a way that's designed by state level philosophy and so forth and that the principal is the person to make that happen in a meaningful way. It only takes a facial expression or body gesture to let people know that this is an exercise in compliance and not a genuine goal setting process. To answer your question, the principal's role in how they bring that about is really crucial.

- 5.3 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to the educational objectives of teachers?

The principal is a facilitator there because what we assume that it is happening through the professional improvement plan. When that happens, the principal can hand it down stating, it can be a, b, c, but for goals and objectives to be effective it needs to be measurable, attainable, meaningful, and finally the most important element agreeable. The principal, as the facilitator, brings about this criterion in goal setting.

- 5.4 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role and goal setting?

No.

#### Area 6: The Principal's Role in Regard to Staff Development.

- 6.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to staff development?



That's a local call. Some localities may think as it stands now. In this district, I would rely upon principals to participate in the planning of staff development. In the delivery side they need to be involved with one is content support that what were doing is fitting with our needs and the other is with compliance that everyone is there and engaged in the process, that's important, it's nuts and bolts. There have been districts I have been associated with where people were not there and accounted for so that makes it hard on the morale. It sounds simple but that's important.

- 6.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role and staff development?

No.

**Area 7: The Principal's Role in Regard to Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.**

- 7.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's responsibility in regard to the attainment of the state core curriculum standards?

Because that's a top down process, where the standards are established at the state level and handed down through the superintendent to the principal. The principal then delivers them to the point of service or delivery, the teachers. So awareness is important and a lot of districts, if they're approaching monitoring, are referencing those standards in their plan books. So then the principal would be less a leader and more a manager to insure that compliance and that the expectation occurs. However, the principal may take to a more sophisticated standard particularly if they are into curriculum and assessment and understand what this is really about in their school, nation, or state.

- 7.2 What do you perceive to be the principal's responsibility in regard to the administration of standardized tests?

Organization in a way that it's set up that its least disruptive to the overall schedule needs of the school and that it's not disruptive when the testing begins. Usually, tests are designed with their standards and directions that they are not ordinarily compromised. It is the principal's job to be sure that every detail is

tended to and that the conditions in the school promote and accommodate appropriate testing conditions.

- 7.3 What do you perceive to be the principal's responsibility in regard to the interpretation of assessment data?

That varies from district to district because there happens to be a number of places where the tests are received and essentially they are filed. In my experience I took a great deal of interest in assessing those results as a personal improvement plan and using those to have a good information base to point where the needs for improvement were. I have to tell you in my experience I have seen that not occur more often than not, they are minimally used. I'm talking about standardized tests, which are often used to provide a basis for remedial analysis in BSI and that's it. They don't go a long way, perhaps for gifted and talented identification but that's it. Parents get their report mailed home and then they are done. I think the state assessments that are occurring now are causing principals and teachers to get far more connected to the process than in the past where they were far fewer stakeholders.

- 7.4 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role in regard to curriculum, instruction, and assessment?

No.

#### Area 8: Superintendent's Advice to a Search Committee.

- 8.1 What advice would you give to a search committee seeking a principal candidate?

Start early. First of all establish the criteria that you need to fit the expectations of the school district and that they fit that school where the principal would be assigned. So, if the superintendent and the board of education are expecting a high performing principal with really strong background and indicators in all the areas you spoke about, if they understand the indicators of the effective indicators of the effective principal, then they will recognize that and advertise accordingly for those needs. So when you say strong background in curriculum and instruction, that's important. Then design the assessment instrument for interview accordingly, then finally bring the final candidate forward with those expectations

that you established early on and don't settle for anything but the best as the applicant pool will produce.

- 8.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the recruitment of principal candidates?

No.

**Area 9: Additional comments in Reference to the Behavioral Characteristics of Effective Elementary School Principals.**

- 9.1 Do you have any additional comments in reference to the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals?

I think that for elementary school principals it is really caring for children and their needs. You can't hide that, it will come out, and at every level, and at the elementary setting it will particularly. That is a characteristic that will be really obvious. Then there is the work with the parent community. Most of us realize a higher connection with parents in the elementary building, which tends to diminish with age. So in the elementary school the principal needs to be prepared to rise to the occasion and really have good people skills to interact positively with parents. That goes along towards school climate and culture and so forth and the other indicators for effective schooling, Lezotte and all those people.

**Superintendent #3**

The third interview was conducted with a superintendent whose school district had an approximate enrollment of 1350 students in a K-8 configuration. He had been a principal of an elementary school. He also possessed a doctoral degree and has been a superintendent more than ten years.

### Area I: Self-Perceptions of Leadership.

#### 1.1 How would you describe yourself as a superintendent?

Energetic comes to mind where I try to stay on top of what goes on in the district either by personally being in the schools or really open communication style with the principals who I view as the on site managers of the district. The communication system we set up is largely informal where I call them or they call me and have frequent communication about things that are going on in the school. I think I'm very involved in the school and very much on top of what the board needs and that becomes a very important function as I see it, keeping the board informed. The old adage is nobody likes surprises, goes for anybody who works in this business. That goes for the board of education who are lay people and largely don't have a full understanding of what the dynamics of a school system are like and what the implications of their decisions can be. One of the things I do in terms of information flow is write a memo to the board every Friday to keep them informed. I incorporate some of the things that are going on and give my recommendations to specific situations as well as updates and things that may be coming down the pike. I also have a monthly meeting with a group we call PTA advisory and we meet here in the middle school. Each month we meet and invite in the presidents and vice presidents of our four PTAs and also the building principals, our director of curriculum, school business administrator, and two representatives of our local education association.

That forum, which sometimes includes the principal of the high school, of which we are a sending district, is an opportunity for us to exchange ideas and keep up to date on the information flow. Another important thing we do is in curriculum and instruction. We have had in place for years a position, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, whose primary role is to make sure the programs we have are consistent with the needs of the kids. One of the biggest things we've been grappling with the last couple of years is the core curriculum content standards, everybody is, and now the new implications having to do with the ESPA and the GEPA. We have a very fine person in that position, but I also play a very important role in the decisions that have to do with curriculum and instruction. Budget development is important and I am involved with that from the ground up. We design the strategies and procedures we will use for designing the budget and determine the decision making process for items we recommend to the board that should remain in the budget and items we will consider for reduction if the budget should not pass. We've been fortunate in the 14 years I've

been here to have only one budget defeat and we did have to implement a plan as to what reduction of services we would implement in that particular year.

1.2 What do you perceive to be the most difficult part of the elementary school principal's job?

I think there are two parts to that. I think the first part has to do with the staffing element of the principalship and I don't mean the replacement staff, we have some of that due to retirements and leaves. I'm really referring more to the supervisory and evaluation component of the principal's job. The principal's job as you know it is multi-faceted and that means that the principal's time energy and thought go into many, many areas. We like to say that the principal's primary role is that of instructional leader. If that's so and that's a difficult thing to follow through on, then the principal has to have the time the inclination and the skills to help the staff continue to move and grow in positive directions. I think that's a very difficult thing to do. We have some contractual obligation in respect to formal observations of teachers; we have some legislative responsibilities with respect to the same things. I think it really is the primary function of the principal to make sure the teachers are doing the best they can and that they have identified avenues of growth and receive the support and training in order to grow. For those people that are just aren't cutting it, they are invited out of the profession or at least out of the school district. The whole thing is about what's best for kids and the best thing for kids are the best teachers we can find and put in the classrooms. Therefore, I see that as the primary difficulty the principal faces, staff supervision, staff evaluation, staff selection, staff development all of that toward what we can offer the children is the very best available.

The second thing is interfacing with parents. This is a community where there are high expectations of the performance of our children and therefore often times a building principal must often defend and explain decisions that are made. Just this morning one of elementary school principals had to deal with a parent who is requesting that her 4<sup>th</sup> grade son be admitted into the accelerated math program. Careful analysis of the child's skills and abilities in mathematics indicates that would be inappropriate. The parent has been on the phone and meeting with that principal five or six times or so. The telephone call this morning was Mrs. X is not satisfied and will probably be calling you. So, the interfacing with parents who have concerns, sometimes legitimate, sometimes somewhat shaky in the validity, I think is a very important aspect of what principals have to deal with at the elementary school level. It may happen at the upper level, but I don't think

it's as intense since so many people concern the first 4 or 5 years the building blocks of education to follow. Parents want the best education for their children and we do too, it just sometimes we don't agree on how to get there.

1.3 What do you perceive as the ideal relationship between a principal and superintendent?

Maybe one word comes to mind which is simply open, an open relationship. I think we have it in this district. I hope if you spoke to our principals they would support this. One where we hold different positions and have different levels of responsibility you're really a management team. Having been a building principal, as I said before, I think there's a high degree of autonomy that the principal enjoys, at the same time I think there's a whole string of responsibilities with that autonomy. To communicate up and down the line, I think is a very important aspect of that. We each need the information that the other component can provide. I think it is essential both formally and informally for administrators, both superintendent and principal to communicate. The telephone conversations that I have mentioned to you, as well as my being in the building from time to time, help. We formalize the process with a monthly meeting with each of the building principals at their buildings where I will come in with a loose agenda and just talk about the things we need to talk about. We don't necessarily have it written down in a technical way, but I say, "Hey what's going on, what can I help you with, what do you need to tell me so I feel informed?" What suggestions can I offer you so that the issues with which you dealing with can be more effectively concluded? We also have a bi-weekly administrative council meeting with building principals and the one assistant principal at the middle school, the director of curriculum and the business administrator meet as a forum and talk about issues that are common to all of us. That also is a sounding board for any one of us to say hey, I'm dealing with this problem, what do you think? Do you have any suggestions, any warnings; any experiences that will help me do the best I can with that particular issue. So I think the open communication style the principal can bring to the conversation is imperative, again no surprises work for all of us.

1.4 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal and leadership?

No, I do not at this time.

Area 2: Reliable Indicators of Effective Elementary School Principals.

- 2.1 What do you perceive to be the reliable indicators of an effective elementary school principal?

Communication continues to come foremost to my mind, one who can communicate honestly, openly with all the constituents that he or she serves including parents, staff, the children, the community at large, the board, the superintendent. I think that's absolutely essential. None of us is alone, is an island and it takes the interaction of each one of us together to put together the package, the package being an effective school. That's probably absolutely paramount. I'd like to think that the principal is also a learner, one who sees learning as an on-going thing. He is one who models learning and that doesn't mean taking graduate courses at Seton Hall, but doing things in his or her life that demonstrates and shows to others that learning is a life long endeavor. That could mean reading, it could mean doing research, it could mean doing any kind of thing that complements the skills the person already has taking those skills to a higher level of effectiveness. I think the ability to work, as a supervisor of teachers in the classrooms to know the children, to know some of the needs of the kids and how the teachers are dealing with those needs is a very important thing. Teachers come to principals all the time, some of the issues are personal, some are professional and the principal has to know how to stay on top of the professional issues that teachers bring to his or her door. And that means being a visible partner to the staff in the schools. I say those are three that are paramount in my mind this morning.

- 2.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the reliable indicators of effective elementary school principals?

No.

Area 3: Principal's Role in Creating Culture and Climate.

- 3.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in creating culture and climate?

I think the principal serves as a facilitator/coordinator of that climate. I don't think that a principal can establish that by himself or herself. I think primarily in working with the parent and teachers at the school, the climate evolves, the

climate takes shape. I think the principal has to have some understanding of what the climate is and some vision as to what the climate should be. I do believe it takes one who can collaborate with others and one who can perceive moving people forward that the climate and environment take shape. Teachers take a very important role in that. Too often you hear teachers complain about top down style that somebody may have in their particular role. I don't think it should be top down or bottom up; it has to be a blend. The key players, the parents, the teachers and the principal determine what will happen in that building, what the culture will be. Again, I think that is the best way to get at it, and I think the results in that case will be the best as well.

- 3.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role in creating culture and climate?

No.

#### Area 4: The Principal's Role in Regard to Change.

- 4.1 How do you perceive the principal acting as an initiator of change?

I think the principal can serve as catalyst for change and bring to the table his ideas about change that appear to be necessary and important, and also the ideas of others. I don't think the principal can take the position that only the changes he or she brings will be implemented. I think that he acts as a clearinghouse and as a facilitator of that process making sure that change is an effective one. His role is a facilitator and coordinator I think that summarizes my point of view on that.

- 4.2 How do you perceive the principal acting as an implementer of change?

Again, never alone. We sometimes joke in our business I served on a committee, but I do think the social function of people getting together to work out ideas, to work out processes is important. I see the principals as having a very important role in that, but not to do it alone. An example of that would be the building level objectives that we have in the monitoring process where parents, teachers, and administrators work together to develop one or two building level objectives. I think that's a good model to support and I think that as implementation takes place, there's no ego involved in that, everyone has a stake in it, and there is a lot of satisfaction when everyone can say we made this happen.



- 4.3 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role and change?

No.

Area 5: The Principal's Role in Regard to Goal Setting.

- 5.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to the mission statement of a school?

It's going to sound kind of redundant in reference to the things I said before, but I do think that he plays a key role in getting things going. In a faculty meeting he might remind staff there is a need for us to focus on what the school is all about. From that there is a guiding path for us to use as we make decisions and go about our day to day work. I think that here again when he and the staff, with some parental involvement, which is important too, began to frame that out. Frame out what that school is about, what it is, where it should be going and maybe as a later point as the mission statement is in place, how are we going to keep that going in regard to decisions with that mission statement in mind. I hope that he would ensure that the mission statement speaks to the school's role with respect to the academic, social, and emotional development of children. I think from there, if he can accomplish that much, the rest of the statement will fall into place nicely.

- 5.2 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to the educational objectives of a school?

I think similarly, the principal is a key person in the school. He is the catalyst that determines what is going on and ensures it's in an appropriate way. I don't think this has to be in a controlling way, but he has to make sure as the instructional leader of the school who is empowered with the legal and professional responsibility to guide what happens in that school, that its heading in a positive direction, so the school may make discernable progress and growth.

- 5.3 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to the educational objectives of teachers?

To try and draw as much from the teaching staff as one could possibility draw. It's easy for a principal to sit back and describe and write professional improvement plans for staff members, but the commitment of those plans is directly related to the staff member's involvement in their development. So this suggests to me as teachers design their objectives, or as principals and teachers work together to design those objectives, we have a team of operation happening in that instance where through conversations and meetings, building principal with the classroom teacher together define the objectives for those teachers. I'm assuming you mean professional growth objectives, so I'm using that framework. Performance of staff members through the process of evaluation, serves as a springboard for deciding the kinds of things that teachers must do or should do to grow professionally. I think that's a collaborative effort in which both are very active partners.

- 5.4 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role and goal setting?

No.

Area 6: The Principal's Role in Regard to Staff Development.

- 6.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to staff development?

I think the principal should be an acute observer of teacher performance, not only teacher performance individually, but teacher performance collectively. There are some things we do with a staff that are very personal. This teacher needs to work on a particular aspect of her teaching performance, questioning skills. There are other things that we do that have a general application. This staff in this building appears to have a deficiency in their application of technology to learning. I think we do some things that would apply across the board. I think the principal must be a keen observer of teacher performance and from his observations encourage his teachers to identify areas collectively and individually that they need to focus on to move forward.

- 6.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role and staff development?

No.

Area 7: The Principal's Role in Regard to Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

- 7.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's responsibility in regard to the attainment of the state core curriculum standards?

The principal is a very key player in that. In this district there is a director of curriculum and staff development who also is a very important component of what happens in curriculum and staff development herein. The principal must work very closely with that director and the principal, on the other side, must also work very closely with the teachers to ensure that we are moving in the directions we want to move and to ensure that the standards are in place. The principal through his direct work with the teachers in the building acts to monitor that is happening and provides direct feedback to teachers with respect to that assessment. He assists in developing strategies to see that core curriculum content standards are in place and we are being honest to them. It's been a very big task in school districts for the last three or four years, we think we are moving quite well in that direction, though we have more to go. The team effort has been very productive for us. I see the principal as being very important there, particularly at the building level.

- 7.2 What do you perceive to be the principal's responsibility in regard to the administration of standardized tests?

He certainly is the guy who sets up the schedule and makes sure that the teachers have all the supplies they need and that they are delivered on time in both directions. We are in the process right now of going beyond that and are in the process of identifying a new standardized test to replace the Iowa Test of Basic Skills which had been used our district for a long time. This is direct response to us trying to get everything in line with the core content standards. The principals working with the central office staff has examined alternate assessments tools, have interacted with representatives from assessment companies who are providing alternate assessment tools. The principals are very important in the decision as what to select. They also help determine what we should test, when we should test, what instrument shall we use, and what does the principal need in terms of test reporting forms that the company provide to us. This is so he or she can work with the staff in a diagnostic sense so they can make some general statements about what the school has to do to improve test scores and student performance in a particular area.

- 7.3 What do you perceive to be the principal's responsibility in regard to the interpretation of assessment data?

One of the things we have been doing is having the principals provide to this office a three year look at a cohort of children on what has been to this point the IOWA's. We want to look at the trends, so we've asked each principal to take a particular grade level, let's say grade 4. Then we look at those children as they were in grade 2 and grade 3 so we have a particular picture of the trend as to how the children are performing in language arts or math. That we hope for the principals, is the centerpiece of the conversation he should be having back at the building with grade levels and individual teachers.

He should then share the trends, the peaks and the valleys, so the test results become an instructional tool. We don't do that as well as we like too and I think that's an indictment of school districts in general. Too often those tests are looked at, put aside, and forgotten about and we go on with business as usual. We are trying to make the test procedure more meaningful as a tool to improve what goes on in the classroom.

- 7.4 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role in regard to curriculum, instruction, and assessment?

No.

#### Area 8: Superintendent's Advice to a Search Committee.

- 8.1 What advice would you give to a search committee seeking a principal candidate?

I suggest they be very thorough. To be intergalactic if that's possible, to wide reaching which is certainly possible and to make every effort, even if its more than once. We need to get the very best person for that position who is available for that position as they match up against district standards and criterion the district has established. The principalship is a very key function or position in a school district. As I said earlier, our position is that the principal is the instructional leader in the school and though that can be difficult that's the role of the principal first and foremost. Many other things can interrupt that role, but that's what we should be looking for. So my suggestion is to carefully develop

the process at the outset, do a wide based screening of the candidates, interview thoroughly, visit them at their schools, get as much information as you possibly can before a recommendation goes to the board of education for appointment. We recently filled a principalship just last July 1<sup>st</sup>. I'm glad to say that the process I'm describing here is the one we followed, we did advertise a second time for the position and luckily we found an outstanding candidate who had not applied the first time around. In addition to being thorough, don't be in too much of a hurry, take your time, do the job thoroughly and I think the outcome will be the best it possibly can be.

8.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the recruitment of principal candidates?

No.

Area 9: Additional Comments in Reference to the Behavioral Characteristics of Effective Elementary School Principals.

9.1 Do you have any additional comments in reference to the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals?

I don't think I do.

Superintendent #4

The fourth interview was conducted with a superintendent whose school district had an approximate enrollment of 450 students in a K-8 configuration. He had been a principal of a K-8 school. He possesses a doctoral degree and has been a superintendent more than five years.

### Area 1: Self-Perceptions of Leadership.

#### 1.1 How would you describe yourself as a superintendent?

I think my leadership style is one that tries to get people involved. It is an approach where I don't believe dictating is going to get people to accomplish goals. Whereas if you can get people to participate in the decisions that are made they would tend to embrace those changes. It's tough to get people to change, so by getting them involved. It is a real key. Working as a building principal you have that opportunity to make people understand that they can have an impact on what happens and once they buy into that concept, I think you have a chance at there being a more cohesive operation. Ultimately, the bottom line is, everyone needs to know that you are the boss and there are times where you accept input, but the ultimate decision has to rely on what you observe and what you think.

#### 1.2 What do you perceive to be the most difficult part of the elementary school principal's job?

I view the elementary school principal as an individual who needs to be the instructional leader. If the elementary school principal has assistance, then they can take on that role. I think they have to be the leader in curriculum. I think they have to be the leader in moving people to use the kinds of resources that are available in this day and age technologically speaking. I think they need to encourage people to go out and keep abreast of changes in our business. That sometimes is difficult for some people to understand that needs to be their role. What happens is they get caught up in the minutia of their job, the paperwork. They lose site of the fact that they could be the instructional leader of their building. One thing that I encourage my principals to do is to get out of their office and get in the hallways and spend time with kids. They should go into the classrooms. A little tip that I have given people who work for me, is to go into the classroom and check plans, don't collect lesson plan books. Going into the classroom and seeing the plans while the lesson is taking place allows you to see if they are on their road map within a day or two of what they want to do. It also tends to lessen the circumstance when you come in to do an evaluation. By coming in weekly the kids get a chance to see you and it gives them an opportunity to view you in a different role, as well as provides the teacher with the opportunity to view you in a different capacity. So, I think those kinds of situations is where the principal can present themselves in the concept of being

the instructional leader. That's what I strive for in regard to the people who have worked for me to do.

1.3 What do you perceive as the ideal relationship between a principal and superintendent?

Open lines of communication. The job of being a principal, and trying to pursue that concept of being the instructional leader sometimes can be tough. I think a supportive superintendent can assist the principal to pursue those kinds of things. I share with the people that have worked with me the concept, I won't surprise you and you don't surprise me. Keep me abreast of issues. We need to always be on the same page and that happens via the communication process. I believe it is incumbent on the superintendent to understand that principals have ideas and you need to be one who is interested in listening to what they ideas or perceptions might be. I think the administrative team needs to be a working unit whereby there are established goals that we are pursuing and we all understand what our roles are and we all understand that we are working towards that goal. Communication goes a long way in assisting that process.

1.4 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal and leadership?

I view the principal not only as the instructional leader, but also as the overall leader of the building. I take the role that my expectation is for the principal to deal with the issues that are germane to those particular buildings needs, whether it is the staff, whether it is the students, or whether it is parental. I will be available in a support position if called upon, but I will also say to individuals who work for me, if I need to do your job I don't need you. I like to give people discretion so that they can do the kinds of roles that are required in terms of running a building and so that they can oversee the individuals working within the framework of that building. I also think another real important component is the hiring and evaluation process, looking to the principal to give me recommendations on personnel that I can come in and evaluate. I don't know the person, or see the person daily, so I need their input on that process. As far as the hiring process is concerned, we do some things that I believe have enabled us to select really quality people. We have a writing component in our evaluation process when we hire. We also have people teach lessons and we have been pretty successful. But, I say to principals there is such a large number of applicants per position, if we hire someone and we look at them for two years and they are not cutting the grade, what's the sense of keeping that individual. Let's

move on that individual and bring someone who may be better. The ultimate goal of our job is to do what's best for kids.

Area 2: Reliable Indicators of Effective Elementary School Principals.

- 2.1 What do you perceive to be the reliable indicators of an effective elementary school principal?

I think in this day and that we're dealing I don't think we can assess performance without looking at one of the indicators the state has put upon us. So I think one of the indicators has to be test performance, but I'll take that a step back and say I think it's incumbent upon the principal to have worked with the staff to prepare the kids for the test. I'm not saying teach to the test, but I'm saying the students should have the best shot of dealing with the questions on the test because they have been taught the subject matter that's related to the test. So, I think that the teachers have to be cognizant of those indicators. By title six we challenge those teachers with assessment indicators in their evaluations so it should be a component of the principal's evaluation. I think interpersonal relations with the staff, I think what I mentioned earlier, the hiring process, the evaluation process, I think interpersonal relations with the students, and I think interpersonal relations with the community. I like to view the principal as the cheerleader of the building, the one who gets parents involved, the one who builds community whereby it's the parents, the teachers, the staff, the board of education all working together to do what's best for kids. So those of are some of the indicators that I look at when I look at things I want to be considered reliable indicators of an individual's performance. Then, I can assess their performance and give them feedback. I can also give them ideas for growth and goals to strive for in the coming year.

- 2.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the reliable indicators of effective elementary school principals?

No, I think if you have those kinds of things being discussed and the person understanding what the challenges are of the job, then I think they have a better shot at meeting those challenges.



### Area 3: Principal's Role in Creating Culture and Climate.

#### 3.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in creating culture and climate?

I think the principal has to be a part of the culture as it develops. I think the climate in the school to be oriented towards positives. To give you an example of some negatives that might occur, in an elementary school building, discipline on an occasion, can be an issue. I think it's important that there be discipline with dignity. I think there need to be types of ways to change negative behavior into positive behavior, and the principal can play a very strong role in the process as far as the climate of the building. I think one of things, unfortunately, that I've observed over the years that there is this notion of a pound of flesh mentality sometimes is fostered in the faculty room. "Well you know what Johnny did in my class, and he did in her class, so we need to whack him." Well you know what, that's not changing negative behavior, whacking the kid. I'm using that as a colloquial term, obviously. One of the things I think the principal can work on is the whole process of orienting things towards a positive. I think the principal will play a role in the climate in the building just simply by their being in the halls. Visibility plays a very key role. If you are one that comes to work at 8 o'clock and you spent the whole day in the office you are not going to have any impact on any of those kinds of things that will help to promote climate or help to intersperse the cultures that will be. I look at my wife who is a teacher and she has in her building 36 different languages. There's a really cultural melting pot I think a principal can really embrace and bring kids along so that can learn about one another and get teachers fired up on that idea. I think having a principal who is a cheerleader makes a big difference. Climate and culture are two areas where, especially climate in a building, where a principal has to work at keeping negative things from happening. I think one thing that is guaranteed in regard to a negative climate in a building is when the collective bargaining process breaks down. I'm a firm believer in the concept that we should have countywide negotiations. No negotiating in the district put it on another level. Any building level administrator you talk to, and if they don't give you the same answer their lying, will agree when you are at impasse that's a negative climate. But when you are at labor peace, that's the first year of a three contract, that's a whole different ballgame. These are the realities of being a building person, and you need to be aware of these things in order to begin to orient things towards the positive.

- 3.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role in creating culture and climate?

No.

Area 4: The Principal's Role in Regard to Change.

- 4.1 How do you perceive the principal acting as an initiator of change?

The principal has to be very careful in the change process. Because, if they are perceived as the sole reason for the change, I don't see the change process being accepted as readily as it might be if people in the building are involved in the process and we can use the possessive "we" as opposed to "I." I think a realism about change is that nobody likes change, why do we need to change, if it isn't broke, don't fix it. But, innovative ideas come down the pike, new ways of doing things and new challenges. A perfect example is the open-ended questions on the GEPA and ESPA and the speaking requirements for those tests. These are all things that require changes. I think to accomplish acceptance of these kinds of ways to prepare the kids for these kinds of changes it really is important for the building principal to get more people to take ownership. I said it earlier on, when you are going to change anything, if you get people to participate in the process of change there is a higher degree of success in that change process rather than just mandating a change, meaning that this is the way it's going to be. Change is very tough, particularly in our business. Our business is one of the few professional jobs where there isn't a whole lot of communicating going on between people in the business. Take for instance doctors, take for instance lawyers, they regularly have collegial support. When the teacher is having difficulty they close the door. It's seldom that they are going to go to the person next to them or the A+ teacher on your staff and seek out assistance. It's just the nature of our business. I've been in the business 28 years and it's a small portion of our population of that would do that and I don't know why. There are so many things that could be shared teacher to teacher and that doesn't happen. I think peer assistance is an area that needs to be changed. I don't know whether it is the strength of the NJEA or the local unit that's opposed to that idea. I think that's one area, as a principal, you could draw on the ideas of one individual and get them to share ideas with others. It's less threatening and there's a better chance of it being a success story and less chance that we would have to get rid of an individual. So change is a tough process.

#### 4.2 How do you perceive the principal acting as an implementer of change?

If the collective "we" were able to review and at least have some participation in the process, I think that would make the principal's job easier in terms of bringing about change. During the change process, if the principal can look to those key staff members for support or assistance, I think it would be recognized in a different way than if it's just the principal telling us or the superintendent who went to a conference and came back and told us this is the way to do it. If people spent the time in the preparation in the way to bring about the change when they implement the change, you'll have a different perspective. One of the things we do in our district when we have curriculum revision, we make an effort to encourage participation in the committee process. When we implement the curriculum in the first year after board approval, we take the position that we will not evaluate the teacher in that particular curriculum if we can. If it's an elementary teacher and they teach many disciplines and social studies is the selected curriculum this year, we will not evaluate the person in that area. If it is a specialty area such as home economics, and there is only one home economics teacher well then there is no way. But that says something, that says to the person that its ok to try new things, and it's ok to make a mistake. In this change, it's not a gotcha. It's an effort to bring about change that is going to help kids. Another instrument called CBAM. The Concerns Based Adoption Model. This is an instrument whereby we ask the teachers to give us an evaluation about a particular change. In this case a curricular change anonymously. In the first three months, they fill out a form about their perceptions about the implementing of the new social studies curriculum. At the conclusion, we ask again and tally the responses. Then we get a scatter sheet and plot them. At the end of the year we do the same thing, but we don't share the responses, then we compare the responses. It's interesting information they give you, again anonymous, in which you tend to get a very clear perspective as to whether or not the revision was accepted and whether or not the revision is working. I look at the process for curriculum revision as a three-year process. We do a year's worth of revising, a year's work of implementing and a year's work of redesigning what we implemented because we found that we wanted to change, this, this, and this. Again, incorporating the involvement of teachers under the direction of the building principal, it's a collective approach. The principal has a better opportunity to be perceived as someone who is not jamming things down their throat, but listening to ideas putting them into practice and making a difference for kids, which is why we're in the business.

- 4.3 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role and change?

Gee, I don't think so.

Area 5: Principal's Role in Regard to Goal Setting.

- 5.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to the mission statement of a school?

Some schools have mission statements and some schools don't. I worked in buildings where they have had them, and I worked in building where they haven't. I think the advent of the monitoring process and the requirement where you have to have building goals replace the mission statement. I believe New Jersey, with its orientation towards state assessment has really driven where we are going. With the core curriculum content standards being what they are, we don't have a lot of leeway to where we're going because we have to meet those core curriculum content standards. I think you can have a mission in your district or building if you perceive a need to have something like that. Let's say that you are a very multi-cultural building and you're having difficulty with those cultures clashing. Maybe a mission might be to do something related to that issue. I will be very frank with you, because of the demands that are being placed on building principals via the state, I don't know you would necessarily have the time to spend a great deal of time on a mission. A district can develop a mission that would be under the responsibility of the superintendent and the board of education with the district participating in the process, but I am not sold on the notion a building has to have a mission unless they perceive there is a need.

- 5.2 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to the educational objectives of a school?

That's a real critical job for the building principal. Per the law, committees have to be set up with the constituencies be they teachers, be they the parents, be they the board of education member and community members. I think it's very important we get a mix of individuals who can sit on that committee and meet two times a year to review the work that has been done. I think the principal has to be a leader whereby they can bring the various constituencies together, analyze what the building needs are and present ideas to those committee members. This is

because they don't necessarily have all the information that you, as the principal, would have and then craft the process so that goals are established that are meaningful, necessary, and not out of sight. I think it's important to have challenging goals, but I don't think you should set goals that are unobtainable. Since each building has to come up with two, I would hope there has been a needs assessment that has been done so that can be shared with the committee. I think that falls on the shoulders of the faculty and the principal to see what those needs are. It seems to me that they are tied to ESPA and GEPA results these days.

5.3 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to the educational objectives of teachers?

The responsibility of the building principal in the evaluation process is to work with the teacher to develop a Professional Improvement Plan. Some districts call them professional development plans, code calls it a PIP. I think you need to have a real good handle on the areas of growth for that individual. Sometimes you are going to call them areas of need, sometimes you will call them areas of growth because that person is a really fine teacher and just needs some assistance in order to grow. In other instances you are going to find there are staff needs that dictate more instance and demand, what do they say, aggressive supervision. You play a very key role in that process. I think human nature being what it is, most of us are pretty lazy, I think the principal has to challenge the teacher to improve, and I think this is the very process to do that. Over the last few years, with the purchase of more and more technology, this is one of the things we do in our district. You need to remove barriers. One of the things we did was this. We have an active technology training center located at the school for technology, which is a twenty five-minute ride from our district. So, one of the things I did as a superintendent was convince the ETTC director to use our new computer classroom as a southern site to offer new ETTC courses. We have removed a barrier from our teachers. They can't say, well I go to [town indicated] and you want me to drive all the way up there. Well, you know what, it's right in house. So I think these are the kinds of things a building principal can do. Identify areas to make teachers grow, remove barriers to growth, and challenge them. Be realistic as to how much you can challenge them. I am curious to see this new 100 hour standard. It's going to be interesting to see what happens with that. My understanding of that is if you write it into the PIP, it's going to fall under the auspices of the district paying the cost. Whether that plays out, or whether the NJEA is able to accomplish some of their goals in this process, it's going to

something to watch the politics of this whole thing when it is implemented in September.

- 5.4 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role and goal setting?

No, I don't think so.

#### Area 6: Principal's Role in Regard to Staff Development.

- 6.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to staff development?

I think it is very critical. Here again if you are to challenge people to improve, the principal needs to be aware of opportunities for people to expand their boundaries and make that information available to the teachers. If you do this, there's a greater likelihood the teacher will embrace the idea and go for it. But, if you don't have suggestions and if you are not knowledgeable about the latest research in particular topics it will probably still happen. It just will not happen as readily as it would if you can give suggestions. So, I think it's really important for the principal to stay on top of what is happening in our field. I think one of the ways you can do is by being active in your principals' organization by being active in your opportunities to go to state and national conventions and glean information that you can bring back. It's like being a coach. If you can go to a clinic and bring back one thing that can improve players performance it was worth going. I think the same thing applies to principals and staff development. Smaller districts with smaller groups, it's not unlike dealing with various components of staff development. I know when I've worked in school districts that have 4000 or 5000 students, many times principals would dictate what are our needs are based on what's been done in house, so here are our needs, this, this, and this. This building is going to do this, and here's how we're going to implement the staff development. You articulate to your superintendent what your needs are. Once you establish what those needs are you knew how to come up with type of way to implement instruction for your staff that will enable the staff to improve in the areas that you have identified. So, I think it is a very important role for the building principal.

- 6.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role and staff development?

No.

Area 7: Principal's Role in Regard to Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

- 7.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's responsibility in regard to the attainment of the state core curriculum standards?

The standards are in place. They have the frameworks developed and I think because it is mandated by law, the building principal must be able to ensure that those standards are being met. When the standards were implemented, I've found that districts have handled them in different ways. For instance in my wife's district, when she does her lesson plans, she is required to write a number that corresponds to a particular standard to insure that instruction is being met in that area. In my particular district we don't do it that way, but we have worked on our curriculum guides to ensure that they are completely compliant with the standards. One of the things we've done, for instance with the social studies frameworks, where there is still being work done, we have each of our classrooms connected to the internet. We have put the responsibility on the teachers that they must access the frameworks for social studies and demonstrate that they are utilizing those kinds of instructional tools. The ultimate determination as far as the state is concerned is performance on the ESPA and the GEPA. So the principal really has to ensure that the staff understand this is mandated by law. It is a change that has to be embraced and has to be implemented. There is resistance to that because people have taught their curricular areas for many, many years, and now for all intents and purposes we have a state curriculum and some people are unwilling to make those changes. The principal is responsible to make sure that the kids are receiving the information to do well on the test and if they are not, that's not fair to the kids. So, I think the principal plays a very important role in that process.

- 7.2 What do you perceive to be the principal's responsibility in regard to the administration of standardized tests?

The actual administration, I think the principal has to oversee the entire process, unless you have a test coordinator who is going to do it, but most elementary

schools don't. So a principal has to start with the scheduling of the test and be concerned with the confidentiality. For instance, with the state test no one was permitted to see the test so the principal has to ensure this happens if the requirement is in place. The principal has to ensure that the actual delivery of instructions is being done in a way that kids can understand. One of the areas that always concerns me is if you have substitutes, people are out sick, to administer the test, that presents problems. So you have a schedule in place to call on your additional people to assist in that process. So I think the physical administration of the test has to be under the direction of the principal. So, I think they can get their guidance counselor involved or they can dole out responsibilities, but ultimately if there is an error in sending information or a question about the administration of a test in a classroom, the ultimate responsibility falls back on the shoulders of the principal.

7.3 What do you perceive to be the principal's responsibility in regard to the interpretation of assessment data?

I think they have a very important role. One of my biggest complaints with the ESPA results is that we are not going to get an item analysis of the data. One of the things that I used to do when I was a principal, and that I require my principals to do, is report back to the staff with the results and to break it down. With some of the national tests like the IOWAs or CATs they give you an item analysis with the results. The state test, as it has been, they contend that they can't give us an item analysis. But I think the difficulty with that is that you can't assess instructional needs because you are not being given enough information as to the areas where the kids are falling down on. I think that if you take for instance the language portion of the ESPA, why were the scores so low on the language and so high on the science when the state contends that teachers working in the field developed those tests. This tells me that maybe the expectations of the teachers working in the language area were too high. For there to be a universal problem with the results on that test compared to the scores that were higher than the expected on the science, was the science test too easy. Principal's ability to interpret and share that information helps to assist people in the needs to alter their instruction and alter the delivery of information. If we can't find out we fell down in area A, area B, and area C, and excelled in area D, E, and F, then we're not going to be sure of what we need to work on as far as remediating or bring about a change so that our kids are prepared to be challenged by the test. That's my big complaint about the ESPA results at this moment. The principal needs to be able to explain the results to his staff members and the parents in the



community because many times parents will compare how one town is doing to another. I know one thing is for sure, boards of education do that a lot. So being able to interpret results and being able to explain them, is another very important thing for a principal to do. However, he must also explain that no one test can give us a true indication of performance. There are a lot of things that go into impacting upon that. When we as educators give information out, we have to be mindful that many times people see us as we are defending failure or low scores and that's not the case. We are simply saying that this particular group at this particular time performed this way. Let's face it, there are times when you'll have a group that, two or three years I remember, our neighboring district's eighth graders scored advanced proficient. It was unbelievable class, almost everybody was in advanced proficient. That was an exceptional group of students, so people need to understand that there is a lot that goes into this process of determining results. One of the things that we deal with in small school district is that every individual's performance has a greater impact on the number or percentage than for instance in a larger school. We may have 40 or 50 kids taking the GEPA so one or two scores will have a greater impact on the percentage being lower or higher than a district that has 400 kids in the eighth grade. So taking the test is one of the things we have to deal with but that is part of the business.

- 7.4 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role in regard to curriculum, instruction, and assessment?

No, I don't think so.

Area 8: Superintendent's Advice to a Search Committee.

- 8.1 What advice would you give to a search committee seeking a principal candidate?

I think one of the most important things you need to look at is whether or not the ability has been demonstrated by whom you are considering for a position. Whether or not they have demonstrated enthusiasm for what they do. I think enthusiasm breeds positive. I'm a firm believer in those that excel in education, it is innate qualities that enable them to do that. I think a more introverted person, a person who not a good communicator, not a person who can assess issues and bring solutions to the table is not a good person, those are the kinds of people that are not going to make good leaders. In this time frame of 1999, I'm seeing fewer and fewer people who want to pursue principalships. Part of that reason is that

teachers are making more money now and they say, "Why do I want to put up with all the headaches of a principalship for a few dollars more and why do I want to work eleven or twelve months out of the year?" I think you want to look at the application pool very carefully. Is this a person who enjoys pursuing additional knowledge, or is this a person who got their masters degree and they haven't done a thing since then. Is this a person who has demonstrated leadership qualities? Is this person who can communicate to the degree that they can recognize their role in a situation and become a team player at some points and be a leader at some points? Those are the kinds of things I look at when I'm in the process of hiring a new administrator. One of the things I found to be a least effective tool in that process has been the information I've gotten from references that I haven't known. I've been burned a few times when I've gotten references from individuals we didn't know and I found that to be a problem. One of the ways that you can circumvent that a little is by looking at an individual right within your district who has been coming to the administrative role. The market seems to be thinning a bit and I hear the same thing about superintendent searches. There seems to be a smaller nucleus of individuals pursuing a superintendent's position as compared to the past and I know that's the same for the principals. I listen to my colleagues at round table talks about how difficult it is to find a high school principal or how difficult it has been in the pool to find an elementary principal. Not a lot of people are going into the vice-principals these days, so it's real tough.

8.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the recruitment of principal candidates?

Nowadays a lot more involvement in the hiring process is including teachers on the committee, parents on the committee, and board members on the committee. I welcome their input as a superintendent, but I think one very important key in the marriage of a new administrator and a superintendent is the fact that they are going to be able to work together. So, I think it is important to get input from other people for different perspectives. What I say to my board is that it is important that there be some kind of chemistry possible between the superintendent and the principal or it might present some difficulties down the road. So that's just another component I think has to be considered.

Area 9: Additional Comments in Reference to the Behavioral Characteristics of Effective Elementary School Principals.

- 9.1 Do you have any additional comments in reference to the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals?

No, not anything else that I haven't shared with you. I'm sure when I leave, get down the road and say, I should have told Rick this, this, and this. I would be very interested in seeing your results.

Superintendent #5

The fifth interview was conducted with a superintendent whose school district had an approximate enrollment of 1400 students in a K-12 configuration. He had been a principal of a high school. He possesses a doctoral degree and has been a superintendent less than five years.

Area 1: Self-Perceptions of Leadership.

- 1.1 How would you describe yourself as a superintendent?

I would say that I am a transformation leader. I describe myself as being open, concerned, and someone who uses a team approach to solving problems. Bringing people in, being a visionary approach to problem solving; however, the buck stops here and when push comes to shove I am the one who has got to make the final decision, the one who has got to stand behind it. You can get the input, but the reality is the buck stops here and you have to be comfortable with the decision that you are making in order to bring that decision forward, and if you are not, it is not going to become a reality. So I am a transformational leader, someone who believes in an inclusionary process, someone who gets things done.

- 1.2 What do you perceive to be the most difficult part of the elementary school principal's job?

That is a tough question. The job has become immensely more difficult in the last ten years. I think that right now, there is a parental expectation that wasn't there ten years ago. I think elementary school principals now are experiencing some of the things that high school principals experienced for the last twenty years. That is state testing programs, parents being very cognizant of test scores, wanting to make certain that their students are doing as well as the other school across town. I think the testing program has put a great deal of pressure on the elementary school principal to perform at levels similar to other schools in his district or districts surrounding. I think that is certainly one of the pressures and that parents are much more demanding than ten or fifteen years ago.

- 1.3 What do you perceive as the ideal relationship between a principal and superintendent?

I think there has to be an open, honest, straight forward relationship, neither one have to be a subservient of each other, but the reality is the superintendent is the final arbiter. I think they have to open with each and be candid. I think otherwise if you don't have that kind of relationship, I don't think you are going to accomplish much because everyone is going to be worried about covering his or her tracks. If you have a principal who is afraid to bring an idea forward, you're going to stifle the creativity, stifle the progress of that principal. On the other hand you don't want a principal who is out there disobeying the law, who's out there being a maverick going off doing what ever he or she feels is appropriate. Bottom line is, I think the principal has to be somebody who can get the job done, speak candidly with the superintendent who can make his ideas know, but who is still part of the organization, who realizes he is one cog in the wheel of the overall organization.

- 1.4 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal and leadership?

The kind of principal I look for is someone who goes beyond the transactional leader and can transform a school. I want to see those leadership characteristics that simply go beyond doing the job.

**Area 2: Reliable Indicators of Effective Elementary School Principals.**

- 2.1 What do you perceive to be the reliable indicators of an effective elementary school principal?

I think there are going to be several indicators. One, you are going to hear very candidly from staff members what is going on in an elementary school. It's not something that is kept very quiet. I think that staff perceptions will become obvious to the parent community. I think parents' perceptions will become very obvious very quickly. If you have parents and staff that are demonstrating support by word and action I think you will see the start of a successful principal. The other indicators are those kinds of things we would all look for. Test scores, test indicators, discipline in the school, those kinds of things that are very obvious and solid concrete indicators as to what is going on in the school. The reality is that a principal who is getting the job done is someone who is going beyond just demonstrating high test scores.

- 2.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the reliable indicators of effective elementary school principals?

No.

**Area 3: Principal's Role in Creating Culture and Climate.**

- 3.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in creating culture and climate?

Well he is a major factor. A principal sets the tone for the entire school. If he creates a climate where education is rewarded, where good teaching is rewarded, where professional activities and professional growth are rewarded, there is going to be a totally different climate than in a school where it is a laissez-faire, do your own thing, be your own, set your direction. If a principal sets a course for the school or a direction, you will have a totally different climate from the good old boy who sits back and lets everybody do pretty much what they want.

- 3.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role in creating culture and climate?

No.

**Area 4: The Principal's Role in Regard to Change.**

**4.1 How do you perceive the principal acting as an initiator of change?**

Well, I think if you are going to be a transformational leader, you are going to have initiate change. Again, change is a process, it is not an event. We have educational leaders, sometimes superintendents, who come in and create great events, but not change. Change is something that is scary, sometimes frightening to older teachers who are used to doing things in a certain way. I think a principal has to come in and bring those people who are afraid of change into the process and become a part of it. I think that's how you create some meaningful and lasting change in schools. Yes, I see the principal as initiator of change.

**4.2 How do you perceive the principal acting as an implementer of change?**

There are going to be some changes that come down from the district that may be a central kind of initiative. The principal there has to rally the troops to come along with the direction of the district. So, there is a slightly different role to implement the changes that are being implemented across the district. Again it's the superintendent's role to make sure the principals are on board for the kinds of changes the superintendent wants to see. Again, it goes out to the principals and some of the superintendent's changes may be going through the principal who serves as a conduit to the faculty. For example, we need to look at a new reading program or a new math program, so that's where it would come down to the principal.

**4.3 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role and change?**

The principal is a key change agent, and probably the most visible change agent.

**Area 5: The Principal's Role in Regard to Goal Setting.**

**5.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to the mission statement of a school?**

When you develop a mission statement you are supposed to bring all the stakeholders into the process. Therefore the principal's role would be to bring the

stakeholders into the process and really articulate with those people to develop what their mission is, and to try to clearly and concisely state that it. Again, he is the one who brings it together, he doesn't develop the statement by himself, he does not work in a vacuum, he works with people collaboratively to make sure that mission statement reflects the values of the stake holders in the community.

5.2 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to the educational objectives of a school?

Again, there are going to be certain objectives that may be driven through state mandate. It is certainly his job to make sure those objectives are being met. It is his job to make sure he is developing objectives which make sure they are accomplishing the mission of the school and so that is going to be involving other members of the team. Other members of the community are also involved so again his role is to be a leader in that effort, but not a dictator. There is a difference between a leader and a dictator. He's got to have some clear direction. He has to help people understand and clarify where their ideas should be going. Often I think there is a muddled view about what the objectives of the school should be, and I think it's the principal's job to un muddy the waters and find out what those goals are. Again, some are going to be district directed and some are going to be school directed. It's the principal's job to make certain those objectives meet the requirements of the mission statement and meet the requirements of them all.

5.3 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to the educational objectives of teachers?

Are we talking teachers who are writing objectives for lessons? Again I think the teachers are going to have certain objectives that they are going to want to bring forward. They should be congruent with the school goals and with district goals. They should certainly reflect the state curriculum and mandates. There has got to be some flexibility in their ability to meet the goals of the school. I think that the principal has something to say about what the objectives are and how they should be met. I think he would be evading his role if he were not involved in the process the teachers are using to create the objectives.

- 5.4 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role and goal setting?

No.

Area 6: The Principal's Role and Staff Development.

- 6.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to staff development?

I think nobody knows the school better than the principal. The principal has got to understand there may some district initiatives in regard to staff development. He has got to understand where his staff may need to be developed more fully. It is going to be his duty to forward to central administration what he feels are the necessary components to staff development for his building. He also has to be creative when talking about how he is going to finance that staff development. I do believe principals have a lot to say about the budget, and I give a lot of autonomy to our principals in regard to budget. However, again, getting back to staff development, there are going to be some district initiatives and there are going to be some school initiatives and the principal has got to be sure his staff is meeting the school goals for staff development as well as district goals.

- 6.2 Do you have any additional comments in regards to the principal's role and staff development?

No.

Area 7: The Principal's Role in Regard to Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

- 7.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's responsibility in regard to the attainment of the state core curriculum standards?

The principals can certainly set a direction. He can make sure the teachers are teaching the curriculum. He can monitor how well the students are doing as far as reaching that goal. He can certainly see where students are having difficulty. He may want to address with individual teachers certain problems that he sees within the curriculum. For example, if he sees certain students do poorly in an aspect of



the state test, he may want to take a look at the portion of the curriculum. If he sees the kids aren't able to work with mixed numbers, he may want the teachers to focus a little more in that area. He also may find that there are individual teachers who are not meeting the curriculum in certain areas. Students in those classes of the teacher or teachers are not meeting the standards, so he may need to address the teacher. I know that's not a very popular view and that the education association may say we are equal and are all teaching everything the way it should be taught. However, the reality is we know that all students and all teachers are not alike, and even within the curriculum one teacher may be teaching the curriculum, but students may not be learning. So therefore we really have to take a look at that so test scores can give us an indication as to if certain teachers are meeting those goals. Very difficult, there are certain factors, to control. For example we know the number one indicator for how a student is going to do on the SAT is socioeconomic background. We can't control socioeconomic background, we can't control other factors which may have a negative effect on student performance. We can control certain factors. We have to give the student the best opportunity possible. We have to look at data, we have to look at test scores, and it could be anecdotal for parents. We have to use all the information at hand to try and correct the problems. We have to use all the information to help the students to do as best as they can in their performance in school.

7.2 What do you perceive to be the principal's responsibility in regard to the administration of standardized tests?

Again, we are going to be interpreting what we mean by the administration of standardized tests. Obviously the tests are administered in an appropriate manner and students are given an appropriate workspace and quiet environment. Certainly, this is the administrator's responsibility to make sure the tests are given at the best time and most appropriate way possible. Again, he or she may decide to directly monitor how the tests are given so he can be certain students are given what they need to be given, are taking the test seriously, not daydreaming, or talking during the test.

As far as the administration goes, I don't see the principal taking over the roll of the teacher. He needs to make sure the room is adequate and that the physical environment is conducive to testing.

7.3 What do you perceive to be the principal's responsibility in regard to the interpretation of assessment data?

He has a leadership role in determining what that data indicates and get that back to teachers, parents in the community as far as what they are going to do to improve. Again, he can't shirk that responsibility. He's got to interpret it, and sometimes he'll receive some help in the interpretation of that data. He has to make certain that if he sees a pattern being developed that he addresses that pattern. One low score does not mean that an entire class has not gotten the idea. It's up to him to certainly indicate to central office, superintendent, exactly how his students are doing. I guess to make certain that those students can improve in the future.

- 7.4 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role in regard to curriculum, instruction, and assessment?

I'm not in an interview mood this morning.

Area 8: Superintendent's Advice to a Search Committee.

- 8.1 What advice would you give to a search committee seeking a principal candidate?

Get someone who is dynamic, effervescent, has a great deal of energy, enthusiasm. Get someone who is willing to take risks. Get someone who is knowledgeable of current teaching trends. Get someone who is knowledgeable of brain research. Get someone who is willing to give 150%. Look for someone who has good people skills. Who has a positive attitude, someone that can make a difference in the world.

- 8.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the recruitment of principal candidates?

No, if you can find someone who can make a difference in the world then you have a pretty good candidate for the principal.

Area 9: Additional Comments in Regard to the Behavioral Characteristics of Effective Elementary School Principals.

- 9.1 Do you have any additional comments in reference to the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals?

I know that this all open to interpretation. I'd like to see the study and see what my colleagues had to say in regard to this.

### Superintendent #6

The sixth interview was conducted with a superintendent whose school district had an approximate enrollment of 315 students in a K-8 configuration. He had been a principal of high school. He possesses a doctoral degree and has been a superintendent more than ten years.

### Area 1: Self-Perceptions of Leadership.

- 1.1. How would you describe yourself as a superintendent?

I would describe myself as neither task orientated nor people oriented. I would instead describe myself as an idea oriented person. I think that's what motivates the best organizations. I also think the true test of a leader is the degree to which you build true leadership capacity in other people. Over the past twenty years I have gone from being the classic leader, the one who generates most of the ideas and makes most things happen, to now being a person who builds leadership capacity in other people. One who creates structures and then creates the outside limits, so people know what they can do, how to do it, and then are free to do it. So, I would describe myself as an idea oriented person who thinks that, as Phillip Schlentz says, "The best schools he knows is where every teacher is a leader and every leader a teacher."

- 1.2 What do you perceive to be the most difficult part of the elementary school principal's job?

Providing well for the huge developmental differences that children have and not allowing things like schedules to really become the primary reason why you do anything. The differences I have found in young children's abilities are incredible and they have nothing to do with capacity. They have to do with a whole host of things, maturation, size of family and relationship to other siblings. What I've tried to do here, and what I've done in other places is tried to take big things and make them into small things. That is take advantage of the size, but create small learning communities that are really flexible. Here, what I've tried to do is get us to the point where we don't act like we're small. There are all kinds of limitations when you are small. If you have 34 kids you can't put them all in one class. You can put two groups together, when you start grouping for instruction, and I believe in flexible grouping. But, if you don't really create very fluid and flexible things, then you don't provide well for the developmental abilities that kids have, and you find yourself in these very compromising educational positions called independent study and things like that. So I think the biggest challenge is to provide well for the developmental differences that children have.

- 1.3 What do you perceive as the ideal relationship between a principal and superintendent?

I've had a few that were really close. That is the principal attends to all the day to day educational decisions while the superintendent attends to the critical relationship with the policy people. They become a team and between the superintendent and the principal the important day to day decisions in the lives of children are handled primarily by the principal with the clear understanding of the policy directions and parameters set by the superintendent. Finally, the ability to close doors and hammer things out, though they are two different people they do the best they can to find the best way to proceed in any given situation and then go and proceed.

- 1.4 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal and leadership?

I think that the principal is the most, in my mind, the most interesting and valuable position in public education. When I was a principal and I tried to encourage every person I ever hired to be a principal I always wanted them to think of themselves as a teacher even if they didn't have a class everyday. But at the moment that they are not seen as a teacher and a learner, the messages get

compromised. So what the principal must be, as the old saw goes, is the personification of continuous learning.

### Area 2: The Reliable Indicators of Effective Elementary School Principals.

#### 2.1 What do you perceive to be the reliable indicators of an effective elementary school principal?

The agreed upon indicators of students achievement. I say agreed upon, because I think standardized test scores are very important, but I also do not think that standardized test scores are the only measures. I am chagrined by our inability still, not to be able to provide a lot of reliable indicators beyond standardized tests. I think that is the educators' fault not the public's fault. We are the ones, who as I tell people here, if we don't take the leadership role in all of these issues, somebody else will. I think that there must more than the students standardized test scores. However, there should be standardized tests scores, there should be state test scores. Certainly there should be grades, but all of these have to be the product of a system where there is a relationship from one grade level to another. It should not be isolated such as this teacher does this, this teachers does that. I would like to get to a point someday where we have, not final exams, but some sort of end of the year demonstration of what kids know. Put those things together and you will have a great aggregate of students' achievement, that's one.

I think that in the area of professional relationships, there are other indicators. Some people tend to see that as a grievance, I don't. There are measures of just how effectively the principal has established professional relationships with the staff. You can see that in things like evaluation and supervision, in staff development, and in all those other things that happen where a principal motivates teachers to continuously learn. Finally, I think it is the issue of management of resources. How do you handle money, how do you handle time, how do you organize money and time how do you utilize resources in the most effective way. I think the final thing is, I like to see people who develop the great questions, and who are constantly thinking about ways you can do it better than you are doing it. So, those four parts are how I would have judged a principal.

- 2.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the reliable indicators of effective elementary school principals?

No.

Area 3: Principal's Role in Regard to Creating Culture and Climate.

- 3.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in creating culture and climate?

Clearly, the principal is the most responsible person for that. A lot of things I was just saying in the question you asked have to do with that culture in an anthropological sense. What kind of environment exists? For too long in too many places, environments have existed that are social as opposed to professional. They are not environments where the primary purpose of why we are here is a professional one, one about learning. It is too often one about parties and those things are clearly important as human beings have relationships. But, a principal has to see that the culture in the school is one of learning, one of teaching, one of continuous improvement. That's what the principal has to do. The principal has to build leadership capacity in other people so that other people sustain that culture as well. It's very obvious if you don't get others to share in the leadership and the principal walks out the door, then all of that tends to just disappear or take on the characteristics of the next person that walks through the door. That's not leadership. In summary, that's one of the primary responsibilities of a principal.

- 3.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role in creating culture and climate?

No.

Area 4: The Principal's Role in Regard to Change.

- 4.1 How do you perceive the principal acting as an initiator of change?

I don't know how one serves as an educational leader without being an initiator of change. I think the initiator of change is the easy part of it because people who are intellectually alive understand if you are not involved in improving what you

are doing, then what you are doing is stagnating. There are only two speeds, forward and reverse. So, initiating change intellectually is obvious. Where I have seen the great problem in over thirty years is not the initiating of change, but the implementing of change. I think that most people understand the need to change, they don't understand real well how difficult that is, how you prepare, and you create systems that support change. Including, how you put together a meaningful evaluation. It is not enough to just have great ideas. In forty years I have seen ninety percent of great ideas fail. You put a lot of things in jeopardy when you have failures on great ideas. A lot of people say, well we have done that before and we've tried that here and it doesn't work. More seriously you kill innovative spirit in people. As Bruce Joyce says, "When you start doing something different, you get worse before you get better." You have to understand that, because you have to be behind people who are trying to do something different. What a principal has to do is certainly have responsibility for change, but what I have found is that most people don't understand the implementation side of change. That's why change doesn't work as well as it should. There's all kinds of inertia, so if both of those things and if you don't do both of those things it's almost worse than not even presenting the idea because a series of failures damages an important spirit that I think most schools need.

4.2 How do you perceive the principal acting as an implementer of change?

The principal role of support is critical, because if you create a culture where you've got teachers acting as leaders, the ideas come from all kinds of places. But the idea of how you implement that is not something the teachers can be primarily responsible for. It is the principal. So I think it more in the implementation side because that's not so easy to share, the idea side of it is easy to share.

4.3 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role and change?

No.

Area 5: The Principal's Role in Regard to Goal Setting.

5.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to the mission statement of a school?

I would rather talk about the mission than the mission statement because I think there are a lot of places with a mission statement that have kind of an inscrutable mission. The principal is responsible for keeping the mission clear, alive, and functional. That is done in a lot of ways, but mostly is done day to day. If you don't reinforce by action, what it is you have identified by word, word just becomes words. We did have a mission statement here at one time. The principal, more than anyone is responsible for keeping the mission clear and alive both in his or her actions, but also in the actions of his or her school.

5.2 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to the educational objectives of a school?

The objectives of the school have to be set against the backdrop of the mission. That's the continuous question. Let's look at this as a reverse pyramid. If these are ideas about what it is we are going to do, we need more and more specific ideas illustrations of that. So we set school wide objectives and we ask the question, "How does this serve the mission?" Along the way, what we do to get to the objectives, there is usually something you have identified that isn't in place. We are not doing enough of, or we need to do more of, or we think that going this way by promoting this kind of program will advance the mission more than what we are currently doing. So putting those building objectives together is a function of the analysis of how well we are doing, what we are doing, what is missing and an agreed upon understanding of that. There's lots of ways of doing that, but the objectives always ought to have either as a preliminary statement or concluding statement. A statement such as, we are doing this because we have found this to be the case where we are not doing very well in relation to our mission, that has to be the case.

5.3 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to the educational objectives of teachers?

Since we continue to talk and live the mission, we always have the continuous communication about what we are doing and how well we are doing and whether we are doing that well. We also have as a fundamental piece of this, the requirements that the state imposes called professional improvement plans, but more important than that, the professional requirements of being a continuous learner. How are you as an individual working on the results that we have for you, the results that you've seen that we have, the mission of the school, what are the things that you are going to do. They don't have to be, in most cases they



shouldn't be, a one-year proposition because that's an artificial time frame. It should be the response to the basic question. Based on what you have seen in terms of the results we have, the things we are trying to do, what kinds of things do you plan to be doing? What's the plan, how can I help you, what kinds of tools do you need for that? In that conversation, what you are able to do is bring other professionals into the circle as opposed to keeping professionals isolated from each other. Say things like, well so and so is also working on part of that and may be we could work on those sorts of things and share that and then bring people together. So it is in some ways like that magnet that goes through the iron filings and brings people and ideas together. That's the role of the principal in terms of posing the questions, prompting the answers and then helping people get together, and then marshalling the resources.

- 5.4 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role and goal setting?

No.

#### Area 6: The Principal's Role in Regard to Staff Development.

- 6.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to staff development?

Always making it clear that staff development is a piece of the professional responsibility that we all have and that is one of continuous learning and that means continuous improvement. As educators, one of the more powerful ways of inspiring kids is to see that in terms of teachers. Staff development is, on one level, an individual responsibility that one will have. It is one in which the individual cannot come in and ask what the place is doing for us. However, another part of this is in the community of learners called school. We need to, using a variety of measures and indicators, decide what collectively would help all of us. Now all of us don't have to participate in every single thing. I think there is entirely too much of one size fits all stuff in schools, whether it's for teachers or kids. I do think you can get so diluted it becomes meaningless. So, my idea of staff development is that first we understand that we all have a part of this and there is an individual responsibility as educators and learners. The second part is to participate in those on-going discussions about the mission, the objectives, and the individual objectives. What we learn from that will be helpful to our teachers. Sometimes you do things like bring Internet into every

classroom. It's very obvious that you need to provide Internet kinds of experiences for everybody. But that's the exception, not the rule. So I see that the principal ought to provide for a well considered, a well-structured set of group staff development things based on the objectives or the mission as opposed to fads.

- 6.2 Do you have any additional comments in regards to the principal's role and staff development?

No.

Area 7: The Principal's Role in Regard to Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

- 7.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's responsibility in regard to the attainment of the state core curriculum standards?

I don't think there's any question that they are primarily responsible for that. In order to do that, there has to be a very functional understanding about what the core content standards are and how standards drive curriculum, which drives teaching. People think that's well understood and it's not. Over the years I've listened to people talk and they think they're talking about curriculum and it's really teaching or it's standards. The principal difference in all of this is that standards are an outcome. Making it clear to everybody that standards-based teaching is about outcomes based teachers. The reason people don't want to get into outcomes or associated with outcome based education is they don't want to deal with all of the revolts everywhere. Standards based education has a real hopeful set of opportunities because it makes the outcomes clear and then frees up the roots to the outcomes. Too often people have gotten involved with the curriculum and then figure if they teach the curriculum and they make sure they do this a specific topic by February, then there's an assumption that the standards will be met. Well that's not the case. If you are standards based, then you are outcome based and now you then make decisions along the way about what kind of progress you are making. That allows you to make decisions about how you are going to teach. You can't make decisions about deciding to teach just the Civil War, or thinking I'm going to teach something else. But, you can make decisions about what to teach concerning the Civil War based on what kinds of outcomes you have. It builds results based orientation that I think is terrific. The

principal's role is to understand that and have an on-going discussion with the superintendent about what they are doing and how they are doing it. Then the principal should go to the teaching staff and by word of mouth or action, make it standards based and build this results based orientation. You can't do all that stuff unless you access data, and access means you get a sense of where you are. Evaluate means after you have a sense of where you are, you make some judgements about how good or bad. Making people understand the pieces here, this is a standard, this is the curriculum, and this a teaching decision. You need to separate these and this is part of an instructional management plan. Out here also is this multi-faceted set of indicators that tell how well we are doing what we are doing.

7.2 What do you perceive to be the principal's responsibility in regard to the administration of standardized tests?

I don't think that the principal has to administer a standardized test, I think that the principal has to see that the test is administered well whenever that's done. That's different in different places depending of the size. Much more important than the administration of it, is the use of it. The part of administration in the broader sense is use and that is the principal's primary responsibility. The principal is responsible that the test is administered well, but if you are doing your job, somebody else is responsible for that. The bigger part, once you are sure there is test security, is to build an understanding about what you do with the results.

7.3 What do you perceive to be the principal's responsibility in regard to the interpretation of assessment data?

First it's mechanical, certain parts of organization is, here's where we get the test, here's where we keep them. The use of the test, that's a key issue done poorly in most places. Teachers and others just look at it, then put it away, especially if it's pretty good. People only tend to look at it when it's real bad, because somebody's yelling about it. The principal is responsible for seeing that those results are used in meaningful ways. You have to promulgate the message that these are tools. The tools, such as standardized tests, are used in multi-year ways. Whether the district does that or the principal, somebody has to do it. If the district doesn't do it well, you have to do it yourself. Then you have talk to the teachers about the results as tools. What we are going to do is make sure we judge as part of our effectiveness, the issue of gain and I think you can make everybody understand,

what are the simple indicators of student progress. Things like NCE's what do they mean? And create a situation where you are asking questions and keeping alive the standardized test results by crating a system where that is one of a number of ways you look at achievement. That part of it, like the implementation of change, I don't think anybody but the principal can do. Maybe in big places somebody in central office has that job. When that happens, and I've been in big places, I find that principals subcontract that function to somebody else, and I don't think you can.

- 7.4 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role in regard to curriculum, instruction, and assessment?

No.

Area 8: Superintendent's Advice to a Search Committee.

- 8.1 What advice would you give to a search committee seeking a principal candidate?

I've told search committees many times, what we are looking for is a leader. That's more important than where they were before or what they did, though we want to spend some time looking at that. If you don't find leadership ability in the person, none of the other stuff matters. It doesn't matter because if a principal doesn't lead I don't think a principal can do what a school and what teachers and children need. And so that gives you the ability, when you understand that is the first and most important thing, that gives you the ability to look for people in all kinds of places with all kinds of abilities and backgrounds. I don't think that there is a trait approach to leadership and that I would tell search committees, and I have told them, not every leader who does what a building needs is an extrovert, though lots of people tend to think of leaders as only extroverts. The simple question is will this person be able to provide leadership to this group of people? Make that first, make that primary. If the answer is no, don't bother looking at the other things, they don't matter. If that answer is yes, then the question is, is this the kind of leadership that this school needs, because there are different kinds of leaders. There are people who can bring a group of people together and move them together at a moderate pace. There are people who come in and make things happen quickly. There are people who are good at bringing people together and then building, mending and healing. The second part of this is, what do you need, and how do you know what you need? That's what I would advise people. I

would also say to them, don't make the mistake of assuming that the best person for this job is the person who has the closest set of experiences to the one that we have. More often than not, the person who has those close sets of experiences lacks the compelling reason to come. Why do you want to do it again? Yet, most search committees tend to look for a person with similar experiences. So don't get into that trap. A, is the person a leader and how do we know that B, what kind of leader do we need here and how do we know that? What is it about that person's experiences that come close to that? That's what I would tell them.

- 8.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the recruitment of principal candidates?

No.

Area 9: Additional Comments in Regard to the Behavioral Characteristics of Effective Elementary School Principals.

- 9.1 Do you have any additional comments in reference to the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals?

No.

Superintendent #7

The seventh interview was conducted with a superintendent whose school district had an approximate enrollment of 6200 students in a K-12 configuration. He had been a principal of an elementary school. He possesses a doctoral degree and has been a superintendent more than ten years.

Area 1: Self-Perceptions of Leadership.

- 1.1 How would you describe yourself as a superintendent?

I believe that my job as superintendent is to drive the district towards quality. I believe the district is both an educational and political institution. On the educational side we try to do what is right for the students. On the political side we must do what appears right to the greatest number of constituents at the moment. So I must serve as a buffer between the educational and political sides. I must interpret what we are doing educationally to the board of education and the voters and gain their confidence so the administrators, teachers and students don't have a zig-zaggy ride, but pretty much can do things over a period of time. So my educational leadership is to tap the creativity and energy of the people around me, primarily the principals who make the biggest difference in the educational process and then support them the best I can with strong central office staff and supervisors who are specialists. Hygienic concerns such as building, transportation, grounds, and good food, that's what a superintendent does.

- 8.0 What do you perceive to be the most difficult part of the elementary school principal's job?

Balance the idea that you need to have a pleasant atmosphere and live on a day to day basis with the professional staff. Because kids catch the moods of the adults around them, you need to be careful while you try to improve things and make sure the quality of professional instruction is high. You must be supportive and then take what ever other actions you must to work with teachers who are below that quality, I think its that balance.

- 1.3 What do you perceive as the ideal relationship between a principal and superintendent?

My idea of a good principal is somebody who, I always use this hokey analogy, is captain of a star ship way out in the galaxy somewhere. The captain has to make decisions that have to be in alignment with what we all agree to do to go forward. Then the superintendent hires the best people and gets out of their way so they can do what we need in their particular way. A good principal we are always trying to rein in, "OK, I don't know if we have enough money to do that this year, but maybe next," a bad principal is telling me, "Just tell me what to do boss, I'm loyal to you."

- 1.4 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal and leadership?

The principal is the most important component in the equation, because you cannot make a school district good, you can only make schools good and then you add them all up and you get a good district.

### Area 2: The Reliable Indicators of Effective Elementary School Principals.

#### 2.1 What do you perceive to be the reliable indicators of an effective elementary school principal?

When I visit the school. I'll ask to walk around the building with the principal. The principal seems to know what's going on in the school. So for example, if we stop at a door, he will not say this is Miss Jones's room but, Miss Jones is going through a unit on writing, concept webbing, and that's why the kids are all drawing. When we walk into the room, the kids should not all appear shocked that the principal is in there. They may be shocked that I'm there, or that a stranger is there, but not the principal. They will move easily around the principal. As we walk around the building the people that we encounter as we walk around the school will make eye contact or they may discuss some small business talk about papers or that memo, or I got those pencils for you. I've found in most schools that you can talk to the principal for ten minutes and infer the mood of the building. Walk through the building for a half-hour and you can infer the mood of the principal or at least the portion of her personality she brings to the building. There are things going on, the teachers that you know to be enthusiastic, are enthusiastic about something. As you walk by rooms, you see kids working in an instructional model that you find to be a good one. If you walk by a room where there appears to be less décor, a colder antiseptic feel and the teacher sitting at the desk, you've probably already heard about this teacher and there's some kind of plan to move towards a better instructional model. The principal also keeps me informed and has garnered the support of her parents, but not by dividing one group of parents against the other, but by any parent you talk to saying they could call her, talk to her, get a straight answer. You could talk to the teachers and they would say he's there for me when I need something. The test scores are level or are rising. More importantly, when you sit down with the test print out and say, Susan "what do you think of this," and that person is able to say, "We thought introduction of this concept would take a little more time. I've looked at these kids and this group looks to be at-risk for growth or that kind of thing. That's my idea of a good principal.

- 2.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the reliable indicators of effective elementary school principals?

Unfortunately, I've encountered in my career that there are apparently effective principals who are nothing of the kind. These are people who have identified the powerful communicators, parents who have the ear of board members and other people in the community. They may have identified teacher association leaders and they have formed an alliance with those people based on I will give you special treatment if you look upon me favorably and it's a nice little arrangement we have here. That's the worst kind of principal you can run into.

### Area 3: The Principal's Role in Regard to Creating Culture and Climate.

- 3.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in creating culture and climate?

The principal, absolutely, finds a culture when he or she arrives, but eventually changes that culture. I define culture as the way we do things around here and climate as general mood that people are as they go through a normal day. I'm not talking about the day that the roof fell in from the leak, or the bathroom backed up, or it's 95 degrees, I'm talking about the normal way people act towards each other. So the way you define the culture, the way we do things around here, the principal as a transformational leader, and that's the kind of principal I'm looking for, the kind that Fullan describes in his book, The Meaning of Educational Change. The kind of principal who has enthusiasm, expertise, leadership, and a positive outlook on things. It's not see how great I am, but more how you see yourself reflected in this, I see this in you and I treat you this way. That way that we are lucky to be in this business it's so important, the kids are going to keep us young. We are not going to generalize from the worst. The principal also creates the climate by taking a look at the Maslow needs. When a teacher says the clock in my room moves slow, the screens don't work, that gets fixed. When you come in somebody has put coffee on, or there's a faculty meeting somebody's made sure that its in an air-conditioned room or if the air conditioner is broken we'll postpone it until tomorrow. So, after a while, the teachers get the idea that I am a valued member of a professional community. I am like a doctor at a hospital. It's not that I come in and my boss tells me how to set bones and what pills to give out. The boss needs to be like a hospital administrator that wants to make things right for me because she sees me as such a professional. The climate needs to be one of comfortably braced. People aren't walking around knocking on each



other's doors with coffee mugs saying come to the room we'll chat about this and that. But, they are friendly towards each other and helpful. The support staff sees themselves as able to go into the classroom and they are welcomed into the classroom. That's all done by the principal and the number one thing the principal does, is to be out and about in the building each day every day. He should have a thick pad of, " I really liked the snowman essays when I visited your room" so that after awhile the kids are ok with the principal coming in and the teachers are ok. The kids see a nice professional climate.

- 3.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role in creating culture and climate?

Sometimes culture will have taken on a very negative aspect in which a small group of teachers have formed a clique that may have taken on an aspect of informal leadership that can overpower a new principal's leadership style, especially if she is trying to establish herself as trustworthy. So the central office may have to step in and transfer personnel to break up long standing clicks.

#### Area 4: The Principal's Role in Regard to Change.

- 4.1 How do you perceive the principal acting as an initiator of change?

The principal is probably one of the best initiators of change. In fact the one thing I have seen that does not work is the people in central office, or the curriculum office devising something that they hand over to the principal and teachers as a "fait-accompli". The reason the principal can be the best initiator of change is because she can get the staff together and find out from them how they see the current status. She can do the same things with the parents and then she can begin to make changes in the day to day life of the students and the day to day delivery of the curriculum, which are the single most important changes. I think a principal should have wide leeway, certainly advising the central office and making sure the resources are available. He needs to be sure that we are not stepping outside of budget, or contractual agreements, but beyond that she should have wide leeway transferring teachers among grade levels, using curricular materials differently, initiating other curricular materials, and changing the building in any way she sees fit. I would like to see them have more leeway in site-based budgeting which is always difficult in a district this size. But initiating change, that's key. Now implementing change, we have nine elementary schools

in the district and it's very important that no one of them is perceived as falling behind the others. Also that no one of them is perceived as having more materials than the others. This can be sometimes frustrating for a principal. A principal may be convinced that Open Court is the way to go and wants to put it in her building and we have to say no, we have to stick with the Holt, we all ordered the Holt, we are using the Holt. I expect that a principal should be ready to do that in terms of the district's needs. But, if that principal were to come and say, look I really believe central office has to be as flexible as possible, now that is initiating change.

4.2 How do you perceive the principal acting as an implementer of change?

Well, they are the ones who are going to give you feedback if you are going to avoid having a build up of tremendous pressure as we did in whole language or as we do constantly. New math, blocks of time, you name it; we kill it. The one thing we don't seem to have is the milepost data that would allow us to make course corrections rather than zig-zag and say "ok", we'll no longer have whole language, we'll have phonics. The thing that we currently lack here in our district, and I don't know how it is in your district, is the availability of milepost data for principals. We set a yearly building objective. A year later we get data in and either we did it or did not do it, so we modify it. Later we get more data, and the data we have is in such difficult form to use that literally you have to pore over computer print out sheets to actually see patterns and nuances. What we really need is a much more organized way of looking at information that the principal could have so that she could track things. It would be very good if we could give principal's graphic displays of absentee patterns in their buildings, test score patterns, end of chapter tests with questions identified that supervisors or somebody could be use as valid and reliable indicators as to how you are doing on your yearly objective. That would be much better. We have to try to reach consensus in initiating change once we all agree on something we all have to implement.

4.3 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role and change?

I think the toughest thing we have to do in the last five years is the kind of cyber-gaga that exists between IBM users and Macintosh users. We had a lot of money one-year to buy everybody computers. When teachers all wanted a Macintosh, they all got Macintosh. Among the administrators, most of us wanted a

Macintosh, a few of us wanted PC's as the business office, payroll office and personnel office were saying, " You can't use Macintosh." So we all had to go with PC's. Now I go around and visit schools and there will be the PC off and the Macintosh would be on, but we will eventually get there.

#### Area 5: The Principal's Role in Regard to Goal Setting.

- 5.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to the mission statement of a school?

The principal is the guardian of the mission statement; she is the interpreter of the mission statement. Mission statements, a lot of thought goes into them and eventually people come up with just the right word that embodies the discussion they have had over the past few days. Six months later, somebody reads the mission statement and that words mean nothing to them. You've often heard it's just apple pie and the American flag. We don't have building mission statements written down that I know of, but I bet you each principal could tell you what it is. We have a district mission statement and it talks about parents as school partners and children as life long learners, etc. In the elementary school handbook there is a mission statement for each of the elementary schools. In the other handbooks the principals have written things. The mission statement either dies or becomes just another piece of paper that no one cares about, or the principal makes sure it doesn't. You could go to one of our high schools now and you would find in classrooms little snip-its taken out of the building mission statement that's in the front of the handbook. "All transactions that take place at our school are characterized by respect." That's in the front of the handbook, but it's also posted around there. You'll find the principal using that in conversation. That's their role.

- 5.2 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to the educational objectives of a school?

They are central to it; they are key to it. If the principal is behind it attaining the objectives and knows how to attain them, then the objectives can be met. If the principal is behind it, knows how to do it, and exercises the daily habits that get it done, then it will be done. If the principals don't exercise those habits, no matter what everybody else does, Board of Ed, superintendent, supervisors, teachers, it won't happen because somebody has to call together the staff and make them see

what a dynamic process this is. As an English teacher I used to ask my kids, "Did you have this last year, do you know what a noun is?" They answer no and yet you know that they did. If you are acting in isolation, you are thinking no one else taught these kids what a noun or a verb is. Of course that's not true, but it's the principal who brings everybody together and says here's where we are and here's what we are doing. Here's the objective for grade five and here it is for grade six and we are building on that work. When the sixth grade teacher says they don't seem to know it, we can bring the grade five data in and explain it. Unless, the principal does that, the teachers will continue to act more and more in isolation. And unfortunately as Goodlad says, "They do."

5.3 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to the educational objectives of teachers?

This is crucial. The educational objectives for some teachers after twenty years are almost impossible to see. They are obscured by kind of a social overlay convoluted with the aging process, with the divorce process, with disappointment with their own kids. The antidote for them is for a principal to be working with them trying to help them constantly, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The principal needs to remind them why they went into teaching and try to interact with that teacher in a way to create constant reminders. The principal needs to know why you went into teaching, needs to know you love literature, and that you want kids to love literature. This all helps keep the teachers focused on their objectives.

Another thing a principal must do is to keep the mechanical things where the teachers make bureaucracies subservient to professionals. A professional serves the client, a bureaucrat serves the organization. So each time you give a teacher a piece of paper to fill out, alphabetize this, put into a sequence, make a list, you make them a bureaucrat. Each time you are able to take that away, saying we'll put that into an access database and have a clerk enter the January codes, it allows the teacher more time for teaching. This is an example of when you are helping teachers be more professional. It's crucial.

5.4 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role and goal setting?

Each year on the teacher's annual performance report, I list my goals that we've come up over the year based on test scores, program goals, the budget and my

assessment of their performance. Here are my goals for you, please add your goals. There are some principals that will add fifteen or twenty goals, and some will say this is really enough. What you've listed is enough and there is no correlation between that and the quality of the principal. I thought there would be because I'm a very goal oriented person and always have my projects. But some principals don't seem to be or look at the district goals and say they're good, yet seem to be just as effective as those principals who add a lot of goals.

#### Area 6: The Principal's Role in Regard to Staff Development.

##### 6.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to staff development?

The principal is closest to the staff, so if he or she is following the idea of getting into the classroom every day, he can figure out what the staff really needs and can get feedback on that. He could also create an environment where we all help each other. She is good at this, he's good at that, so the next faculty meeting we will do this. Schools spend woefully too little money on staff development. A typical corporation spends 8 percent of the total budget. A typical school district spends 1/2 of 1 percent of the total budget. In a typical corporation the whole purchasing department may be going on retreat for a week. A typical public school can't have the teachers out of the classroom so that staff development becomes trying to refit the ship while the ship is at sea. And moderate seas at that, because kids come in everyday and they exert pressure. So on the in-service days that we have, the best you can accomplish is to get everyone together and make them feel good. If they leave saying I knew all this stuff, that's good because if you listen to Channel 7 news, or Fox 5, or read the Daily Record, you'll think I'm bad if you are a teacher. So you need that day to say, "Aren't we great. Let's meet outside on the veranda and we'll hear some feel good talk and then here's Grant Wiggins to talk about such and such." That's fine, but the real issue is in terms of is it what teacher would really want to do in the next six months to help her move her along. A principal is the one who is really going to do that. Let's say you want to show your kids a film. The principal says I know you really wanted to read this article on this thing. Why don't you go down to lounge and read and I'll show the film?" The most important staff development takes place at that level. And the faculty meeting is the most important vehicle of staff development because it's the old concept of networking. You have a faculty meeting and someone displays something with software. You have earlier adopter "A teacher" says, "I'm going to use it." Later adopter "B teacher" says I'll come over on my free period and

watch it. The principal is key. No matter what factor, no matter what, the principal is key.

- 6.2 Do you have any additional comments in regards to the principal's role and staff development?

I think the principal will be the area of change over all educational administrative structure during the next 25 years. Our monopoly is over. Corporate American will compete with us. As the charter school idea is shown to be wanting and the voucher plan is shown to be wanting. The attention will then become focused on the school district itself. Plus the shortage of superintendents and the turnover of superintendents, and sometimes when you are just picking a superintendent because you need one and six months later the guy is in the paper for some kind of behavior that reflects poorly on the school district for years. The place corporate America could come in and do a replacement would be at the superintendent, business administrator level. Advances in computer technology just in time, computer processing and data warehousing. The place where corporate America can't come in is at the principal level because that's the place where we need professionals.

Area 7: The Principal's Role in Regard to Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

- 7.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's responsibility in regard to the attainment of the state core curriculum standards?

The number one duty of the principal is to make sure the attainment of the core curriculum content standards does not reduce the quality of life in the school to that of an insect colony. So you don't have teachers saying, "Oh you're pet frog died, I'm sorry we don't have time for that, open to page 7 we are on activity 43." The principal can do that by helping the teachers and making sure that they have what they need. Also by making sure that any kind of result is viewed in a school sense, not a teacher by teacher sense. The better we do, should always be focused on us as a school. The transfer to core standards means a transfer of philosophy of education from fundamentalism. Teach the reading, writing, and math and let them apply it to a essentialism. Actually find the several hundred behaviors within the fundamentals and make sure the kids can do every one of them. And that's fine as long as two things, you've got the list right and I think pretty much

we do, and secondly that's it taught right, that it isn't hammered. There needs to be some transfer of value to it. The principal can make sure that she has teachers good enough to teach core content standards without sacrificing art, music, and socialization.

- 7.2 What do you perceive to be the principal's responsibility in regard to the administration of standardized tests?

The principal needs to keep the mood positive, yet braced, especially at the lower levels. He has to make sure the administration of the test does not threaten the child's perception of himself in later tests that is more reliable and more important. And of course they need to set up an environment in which the kids can take the test where there's absolutely no question that anything unethical happened. The principal cannot allow any teacher to create a favorable environment or an unethically favorable environment for their students by something like practice sheets or whatever. If something is found, the principal must be assiduous in reporting it and make sure that consequences occur.

- 7.3 What do you perceive to be the principal's responsibility in regard to the interpretation of assessment data?

This is the principal's toughest job. Only in education are test scores used to point fingers of blame. Everywhere else, you go to the doctor and get a cat scan, a PET scan, lipid count, everywhere else that information is used exclusively to say, "Here's the data doctor, what do you recommend?" So everybody wants more tests. You're not going to cut me open until I'm satisfied with the tests. Only in education are tests used as a scapegoat. That's the thing the principal has to fight. So if the principal can create a mood where it's a loop, the curriculum is written, the curriculum is taught, the curriculum is tested and back to the curriculum is written. Doctor what should we do? Should we go back to where the curriculum is written? Should we move improper fractions later in the year. What should we do? We should never evaluate or make personnel decisions on the basis of test scores. If we do our lesser teachers will begin to focus on those things monotonically. Principals should look at test scores across every variable, but only with the intention of helping.

- 7.4 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role in regard to curriculum, instruction, and assessment?

It could be greatly abetted if the state would say that the elementary tests are a diagnostic instrument and treat them as such and not give aggregate data out to the public to be published in newspapers.

Area 8: Superintendent's Advice to a Search Committee.

- 8.1 What advice would you give to a search committee seeking a principal candidate?

To the greatest extent possible, after you have screened what appear to be pretty basic things like quality of education, quality of experience, see if you can get somebody with enough integrity to tell themselves the truth. Someone with enough honesty to tell you the truth and enough faith in their own intuition to sit down at the desk and decide what do I think is best for the kids instead of what do I think would look best to the parents, my boss, and the board.

- 8.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the recruitment of principal candidates?

No.

Area 9: Additional Comments in Reference the Behavioral Characteristics of Effective Elementary School Principals.

- 9.1 Do you have any additional comments in reference to the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals?

Effective elementary school principals are straight with themselves. They have enough confidence in themselves to suppress their own ego from time to time in favor of allowing children's parents' or teachers' egos to have their moment in the sun. They all have strengths and weakness, and you can blend them together. Some principals are like a mechanic who can put their ear to the hood of the engine and say that's a value. Some other principals can not do that all and say if we do this the parents are going to be angry. An example would be we used to write book reports, now we do video book reports and they don't like it. So if we are going to make this change, we need to let parents know about such and such. So if you can combine their talents and not make them feel like they are not out to get each other, that would be the best thing to do.



Superintendent #8

The eighth interview was conducted with a superintendent whose school district had an approximate enrollment of 5600 students in a K-12 configuration. He had never been a principal. He possesses a masters degree and has been a superintendent less than five years.

Area 1: Self-Perceptions of Leadership.

## 1.1. How would you describe yourself as a superintendent?

I describe myself as someone who is very good at listening, who is very good at being able to ascertain the deeper interest, concerns, desires of our constituencies whether they be parents, teachers, students, or board members. I like to think I'm good at being able to find the solution to problems, solutions that the participants in the problems aren't even aware of necessarily because of the complexity of the problems. I think I'm pretty good at that I also think I give legitimate praise to those who work very hard at servicing the children. I think I listen well I can understand and resolve problems. I try to acknowledge contributions and talent where I see it. That's the basis of it. I think beyond that I try to articulate for the institution and all of its individuals where I think we all need to go. I try to identify a vision and expectation of what we are to become. So, I think that reflects my leadership style. So in some areas I'm very soft in terms of understanding and listening and there are some areas where I am very firm with respect to the standards of giving people tenure. There's a very, very high standard. No one is to receive tenure here unless they are excellent and I hold all the administrators accountable for that. So, I think it's a very humanistic leadership. I think it's the kind of leadership, fortunately or unfortunately, you have to have in school districts because they are such porous, democratic institutions. You have to obtain buy in from your constituents in order to be effective. I think that works well for me.

## 1.2 What do you perceive to be the most difficult part of the elementary school principal's job?

Assuring that the instruction that occurs in each one of his or her classrooms occurs at the highest level of effectiveness. I think what is the most difficult, is the way we are organized in education. It causes our staff members to be isolated in their four walls at all times. The principals have to make sure they are in their teachers' classrooms on a regular basis and are seen as an educational colleague, assisting them and assuring that education is as effective as it can be with the children they have.

- 1.3 What do you perceive as the ideal relationship between a principal and superintendent?

I think the ideal relationship is one that is characterized by communication. The superintendent doesn't want to have surprises, nor does the principal, so I think there has to be a high level of communication as well as a very clear sharing of goals and expectations and a commitment to one another to be of assistance and work as a team.

- 1.4 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal and leadership?

Very clearly the principal must be the educational leader in a facility. The principal must know how to recognize excellent instruction and be able to guide his or her teachers of towards excellent.

### Area 2: The Reliable Indicators of Effective Elementary School Principal.

- 2.1 What do you perceive to be the reliable indicators of an effective elementary school principal?

I can't help but hesitate to describe the reliability of achievement tests, because I don't feel that we in multi-ethnic districts, with multi-economic levels, can rely upon the testing system to give us the kind of information that is reliable, consistent and that is helpful to principals. I don't know that the state helps us at all in that regard. We could go along a very long time on that. But, clearly one important measure is, even though one has to take it with a grain of salt, is test performance. It's very difficult in a community like ours to use that as a sole measure or a dominant measure of performance or success. A second measure would be school climate that is expressed through the opinions or commitment of

staff, parents, and even students if they are old enough to express satisfaction. Another indicator is simply being able to access the level of commitment of the principal and his staff, their mission, describing it as a mission, understanding what their goals are, observing how they establish programs or expand programs. That's a little soft; it's not easy to measure, but I think that it's a very good indicator of how committed our principals are.

I had a conversation with a principal yesterday, two or three actually over the course of the day, about his school. He currently has a K-3 primary school in the most economically disadvantaged area of town. His population reflects a greater number of disadvantaged children than any of the others. In my dialogue with that principal as he describes the extra initiatives, extra programs, commitment of his staff, and the understanding of the needs of children that come to us from disadvantaged circumstances speak very loudly. Are they easily measurable, I'm not sure quite sure, but they are a very high indicator of the commitment of the principal and the staff to the students that are there. Other reliable measures to some degree, even though it shouldn't be this way, are peoples' perception. Corporations do this all the time. They sample the perception concerning their products. It may be the worst product in the world, but if the sales program is good it is an effective product. To some degree we have to build that into our programming. We cannot survive without a certain level of public trust. So to some degree the reputation of the principal and the staff, not that it should be, is an indicator of success. Public confidence is a very critical it is a factor. Staff evaluation, the retention of staff and granting of tenure and the degree to which inadequate staff are addressed appropriately, are also factors.

- 2.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the reliable indicators of effective elementary school principals?

I think I mentioned in different words that the constituencies must be confident in their leaders, parents, and teachers. Both constituencies are critical to their effectiveness, whether you agree with it or not, it has got to be. If the principal is not perceived by the parents as a positive influence on their children, it will not be a productive school.

### Area 3: The Principal's Role in Regard to Creating Culture and Climate.

- 3.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in creating culture and climate?

The principal's primary role is to create a culture and a climate in a school. He's the person that everyone looks to establish the environment, the feeling of the school. His primary role is that he's primarily responsible for creating that. The principal's role is to set the standards for the climate.

- 3.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role in creating culture and climate?

I would not necessarily separate it too distinctly from the principal's role in an effective school environment, because the climate of the school is so intertwined with the question. The principal's role is to be responsible for the climate, the productivity, the standards, and the achievement of that school. It's that person's primary goal.

#### Area 4: The Principal's Role in Regard to Change.

- 4.1 How do you perceive the principal acting as an initiator of change?

The principal is the primary administrator on the line. With respect to initiating change they have to be very flexible. They have to understand and accept change when it's necessary to meet student needs. I view that, what I mean that, when that school environment changes structure, school activities, class activities, the nature or type of instruction. If change needs to be made to suit the needs of those children, then the principal has to be able to be a change agent relatively to those kinds of issues on a day to day basis. It may be a change in the schedule, it may be a change in procedure. All of those things are critical to the principal. If the principal is in tuned to what's going on in the school and not ego driven having to be right all the time, I think that is the mark of a good principal. That they are listening, that they are attentive, that they see change as an opportunity for improvement will implement those at the school level.

- 4.2 How do you perceive the principal acting as an implementer of change?

There are some decisions in a school district that cannot be made at the school level. Simply to avoid having each school go on in their own direction from a curricular point of view or an instructional point of view. Those issues need to be governed by the policies of the board of education, the desire of the community at

large, the directives of the superintendent and those responsible for curriculum. So, in that regard the principal must be a solid team player. He must be willing to provide feedback and response to the direction that the superintendent or board wants to take. Once the decision is made, the principal is responsible to implement them, hopefully not too many are top down. Input on many decisions have involvement of teachers and principals, but in a large institution not every body is in agreement. So the principal's role, like every administrator's role at times, including the superintendent is to fulfill the will of the body of the organization. So in that regard the principal has to put his own thoughts or desires, or priorities to side in light of how the district has decided to proceed.

- 4.3 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role and change?

The principal is in the unique position of being able to provide feedback on major change or decisions relative to policy, structure, or direction. Any good leader will listen very, very carefully to the managers on line as to what direction we should take. Whether we are ready or not to proceed with a certain objective, whether or not the time is right to initiate certain programs. So from an organizational point of view, I think the principal's have a wealth of knowledge that needs to be tapped. They see education on a day to day basis in operation. I am very distant from this. For me, I rely upon them as my eyes and ears as to how things are going. From where I sit, I've got to deal with boards of education, the commissioner's representatives and the chamber of commerce. The very broad issues of public confidence and policy development keep me busy, so it is very hard for me to be on the front line seeing or hearing the trends or direction of activity. So, principals are critical to me in that regard.

#### Area 5: The Principal's Role and Goal Setting.

- 5.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to the mission statement of a school?

Allow me to just clarify from the outset that we spend a fair amount of time at the district level establishing goals. Those goals are a major topic of work and discussion between the board of education and I. I bring to the table what I believe to be are the obvious interests and expectations of our schools and the staff. The district winds up with half a dozen goals in all areas. The process of

collecting information from the field, is not one in which I send out a survey. If you can't pick the four or five most important things from just listening and being around your colleagues, then you are really in the wrong ballpark. With respect to the board's establishing goals for the institution, it's very easy if you are listening, if you are out there with your finger on the pulse of the institution so you know which direction the weather vanes are going. So those are pretty straightforward. In that regard, principals are constantly giving you that information.

- 5.2 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to the educational objectives of a school?

With respect to the goals of the school, the principal plays a similar role in understanding the interest of the parents. When it's the needs of the students, the desires of the staff, it's the principal's role to bring together the interests, codify them with those constituencies. To craft them in such ways that he thinks will best serve the interest of the school. So, the principal's role in establishing goals, just to repeat, is to understand the interests and needs of its constituents and to help the key groups that build those goal statements into crafting those statements in a very precise manner that reflects true needs of that institution.

- 5.3 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to the educational objectives of teachers?

This gets to the heart of our industry, having the principal as I mentioned earlier, is the hardest part of the principal's job, to ensure excellence in classrooms throughout the day. So the principal role in respect to the individual teachers goals and objectives must arise from his knowledge of his or her performance, from their style, their strengths, their weaknesses. So, establishing the goals and objectives, whatever they may be called, a PIP, requires the principal to know the teacher, to see the teacher in operation, have a relationship with that staff member, so he can see what is genuinely transpiring on a day to day basis. Hopefully with the staff member he can reach collegial cooperation and establish what those goals are or should be. It doesn't always happen that way, so sometimes a principal has to rely on his or her best judgement.

- 5.4 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role and goal setting?

No.

Area 6: The Principal's Role in Regard to Staff Development.

- 6.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to staff development?

I guess I see two roles for the principal in staff development. A day to day role where they give suggestions and recommendations to teachers in the delivery of instruction, and in their interactions with their students. Given the fact education has become so specialized, I don't think that the principal can provide remediation for the teacher or staff training in the most sophisticated areas; however, the principal can provide guidance, clarity, and give good examples. So that's on a day to day basis. In addition to that, in a more formal way, the principal needs to be able to communicate to the superintendent, or assistant superintendent, where the needs for more intense training is necessary so that the curriculum specialist in the district can identify common training needs and provide those to staff.

- 6.2 Do you have any additional comments in regards to the principal's role and staff development?

No.

Area 7: The Principal's Role in Regard to Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

- 7.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's responsibility in regard to the attainment of the state core curriculum standards?

I guess number one, they would need to understand what those standards are and what those expectations are. Number two, to communicate them to a staff, even though in an institution like this one, there are content area directors who play a primary role. Also perhaps, ensuring that parents are aware of those expectations as well. Thirdly, to ensure that what transpires in the classroom is related to those standards and the district's curriculum. To ensure that people aren't doing what's just fun or what they like in the classroom, but that it is tied to what the community, whether it be the state community or the local community, considers necessary to be taught and included in the curriculum.

- 7.2 What do you perceive to be the principal's responsibility in regard to the administration of standardized tests?

I guess preparation is one area to ensure that his staff are fully prepared to implement, that the students in his school have been carefully and judiciously prepared to take the test not just in terms of the content material, which is obvious, but also test taking behavior. That they are relaxed, that they have gone through some practice sessions, that they know how to behave. I think those are the principal's responsibilities in terms of test taking.

- 7.3 What do you perceive to be the principal's responsibility in regard to the interpretation of assessment data?

I don't necessarily think that the principals played a primary role in the interpretation of data. My sense, at least in a district this size, is that there are staff members who have a global view, a district wide view, of the performance of the students in each of the schools, of the district, of the state, of the region and so forth. So the interpretation, the more global interpretation of where we are headed, we are we going, what does this mean, usually occurs at a higher level.

My sense is that the responsibility of the principal in terms of the interpretation of the tests for his school is to determine whether or not the instruction in his building is adequate to meet students' needs. Generally, are there areas in my building where the teachers have not met the mark. More specifically are there staff members who have not met our expectations for our students because their instruction has not been up to par. We use Terra Nova on an annual basis from grades one to ten. The principal should be able to, at least at the elementary level, make some judgement in test scores by instructor. It's a little difficult, especially in a district as diverse as ours, because not every classroom is as well balanced as other classrooms in terms of socio-economic status or ethnicity, first language, or that sort of thing. I think the principal can dialogue with his staff in areas of strength or weakness as shown in the results of the test, so they can improve instruction at the school level.

- 7.4 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role in regard to curriculum, instruction, and assessment?

Just to conclude that the principal is the implementer. It is his job to make sure the curriculum is implemented in each classroom.



Area 8: Superintendent's Advice to a Search Committee.

8.1 What advice would you give to a search committee seeking a principal candidate?

Know your constituents, know your students, and know your school district. Try to identify what your particular needs are. I don't mean that in terms of the person who most recently left the job. Sometimes there is a rush to fill the job and one fills the vacancy in response to what didn't go well with the last person, or what did go well. I think that they need a little time to objectively assess what their student needs are, what the parental expectations are or what the board has expressed are the needs of the community. Have a clear sense of what your needs and an understanding of your population. I think that is the most important thing. Another piece of advice would be to try to understand as clearly as one can, the decision making process that the candidate follows. Does the candidate always have to be right or does the candidate search for the right answers no matter where they come from. Another area is human relations. How will this individual try to establish and maintain high standards? Will it be in a humanistic way of supporting and understanding staff and parents? Or will it be in a way that is destructive and counter productive. So, I would give those three recommendations.

8.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the recruitment of principal candidates?

Yeah, and that is relative to pedagogy. I think it's important for a committee to know whether or not the principal is at the top of their form in understanding instruction, knowing what to look for in a good teacher, and knowing how to assess whether a building or individual is being successful.

Area 9: Additional Comments in Reference to the Behavioral Characteristics of Effective Elementary School Principals.

9.1 Do you have any additional comments in reference to the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals?

If I haven't stressed enough, I will tie this back to the comments you asked me about leadership. I think that the leadership of the principal has to be one in which they listen very, very carefully. It's critical to understand your constituencies no

matter how much you may agree or disagree with them. Whether or not they are sophisticated in educational issues or pedagogy you simply have to understand who they are, where they are coming from, and meet them at a place where even they can be successful.

### Summary of Major Findings

The major findings of this research were based on the results of the eight interviews conducted with superintendents of school districts with a district factor grouping designation GH. In an effort to determine the summary of major findings, the researcher worked with the data, organizing it, breaking it down question by question, interview by interview, then synthesizing it searching for patterns of responses. After completion of identification of patterns and conclusions of what the responses represented a summary of their content by question was developed.

#### Area 1: Self-Perceptions of Leadership

There were four questions for superintendents in this series. Topics included their description of themselves as a superintendent, their perception of the principal's position, the relationship between the superintendent and the principal, and any additional comments they wished to make regarding the principal and leadership.

1.1 How would you describe yourself as a superintendent?

One superintendent described himself as "demanding and having high expectations," while another described himself as "energetic." Three superintendents defined themselves as "good communicators" and another, as a "good listener." Three superintendents mentioned they were very involved in what goes on in the schools, while three others discussed believing in a site-based management philosophy. Only one superintendent described himself as a "transformational leader" and another as "neither task oriented" or "people oriented." He describe himself as, "idea oriented."

Reflected in most answers, was a responsibility to be in charge. "I think that from my perception my greatest asset is my technical knowledge and my ability to communicate my expectations to the principals." Another superintendent stated, "Ultimately, the bottom line is, everyone needs to know that you are the boss and there are times when you accept input, but the ultimate decision has to rely on what you observe and what you think."

A third superintendent said:

I describe myself as being open, concerned, someone who uses a team approach to solving problems. Bringing people in, being a visionary in approach to problem solving, however, the buck stops here. When push come to shove I am the one who has got to make the final decision, the one who has to stand behind it.

Finally, the last superintendent viewed himself as a buffer between the educational and political sides. He believes his job as superintendent is to drive the district towards quality.

1.2 What do you perceive to be the most difficult part of the elementary school principal's job?

The majority of superintendents focused on two issues in response to the most difficult part of the elementary school principal's job. One was working with parents and attempting to meet their expectations and the other was working the staff.

One superintendent said, "One area is public relations where principals try to make everyone happy and can't do that, so sometimes that makes it difficult to make decisions."

A second superintendent said, "Principals have to have a full understanding of everything and it's hard to be all things to all people."

A third stated, "Interfacing with parents, communities often have high expectations for the performance of their children and therefore often times a building principal must often defend and explain decisions that are made."

Lastly, one superintendent believes current parental expectations are much higher than they used to be. He linked the release of the Elementary School Proficiency

Assessment to parental pressure stating, "I think that is certainly one of the pressures that makes parents much more demanding than ten or fifteen years ago."

Four superintendents believed working with the teaching staff was the most difficult part of the elementary school principalship.

One superintendent responded:

When they have an issue with a staff member because of their supervisory responsibilities, they have to see them all the time because of the closeness of an elementary school. I think that's a difficult thing for an elementary principal, to deal with the issues of a poor staff member.

A second superintendent said, "I see that as the primary difficulty a principal faces, staff supervision, staff evaluation, staff selection, staff development. All of that toward what we can offer the children as the very best available."

A third superintendent believes it is very difficult to balance the idea that you need to have a pleasant atmosphere and live on a day-to-day basis with the professional staff who may or may not be performing up to par.

Finally, a fourth superintendent said that, "In working with the staff, the principal must assure that the instruction that occurs in each one of his or her classrooms occurs at the highest level of effectiveness."

One superintendent stated:

I view the elementary school principal as an individual who needs to be the instructional leader. If the elementary school principal has assistance, then they

can take on that role. I think they have to be the leader in curriculum. I think they have to be the leader in moving people to use the kinds of resources that are available in this day and age technologically speaking. I think they need to encourage people to go out and keep abreast of changes in our business. That sometimes is difficult for people to understand that needs to be their role. What happens is they get caught up in the minutia of their job, the paperwork, they lose sight of the fact that they could be the instructional leader of their building.

1.3 What do you perceive as the ideal relationship between a principal and superintendent?

Out of eight superintendents, five responded that they needed the principal to be a team player, someone who is cooperative. One superintendent described the ideal relationship with a principal as open and honest, having a sense of integrity and cooperation, a sense of working together, not against each other; teamsmanship.

A second superintendent said, "I think the administrative team needs to be a working unit whereby there are established goals that we are pursuing and we all understand what our roles are and we are all working towards that."

A third sees the principal's ability to sit down with the superintendent and close the door and hammer things out as important aspect of being a team player.

Communication was acknowledged by four superintendents as the other top characteristic of an idea relationship between a principal and a superintendent.

Another superintendent stated:

The superintendent doesn't want surprises, nor does the principal, so I think there has to be a high level of communication as well a very clear sharing of goals and expectations and a commitment to one another to be of assistance and work as a team.

A second superintendent encourages his principals to keep him informed and not to feel as though they are troubling him, while a third superintendent stated, "To communicate up and down the line, I think is a very important aspect of that. We need the information that the other component can provide."

A fourth superintendent said, "I share with the people that have worked with me the concept, I won't surprise you and you don't surprise me. Keep me abreast of issues." Finally, one superintendent replied to the question by stating, "I think the ideal relationship is one that is characterized by communication."

1.4 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal and leadership?

In response to this question, two superintendents stated the principal needs to be creative. Two superintendents characterized the principal as the lead learner, one stating,

“So what the principal must be, as the old saw goes, must be the personification of continuous learning.”

Another superintendent responded by stating, “I view the principal not only as the instructional leader, but also as the overall leader of the building.

A sixth superintendent wants a principal who goes beyond the transactional leader and can transform a school. “I want those leadership characteristics that simply go beyond doing the job.”

The seventh superintendent stressed:

Only that I think that the principal is the most, in my mind, the most interesting and valuable position in public education because when I was a principal and I tried to encourage every person I ever hired to be a principal. I always wanted them to think of themselves a teacher even if they didn't have a class everyday.

Additional comments from previously mentioned superintendents included, “The principal is the most important component in the equation, because you cannot make a school district good, you can only make school good and then you add them all you and you get a good school district.” The second comment from another superintendent was, “Very clearly, the principal must be the educational leader in a facility.

### Area 2: The Reliable Indicators of Effective Elementary School Principals

There were only two questions in Area two which asked the superintendents to identify their perception of the reliable indicators of an effective elementary school



principal, and if they had an additional comments in regard to the reliable indicators of an effective elementary school principal.

2.1 What do you perceive to be the reliable indicators of an effective elementary school principal?

When asked to identify the reliable indicators of an effective elementary school principal, all eight superintendents stated that the principal's ability to work with people, whether it the staff, the parents, or the students, was of critical importance. One superintendent said, "I think the ability to work, as a supervisor of teachers in the classrooms, to know the children, to know some of the needs of the kids and how the teachers are dealing with those needs is a very important thing."

A second superintendent responded:

I think interpersonal relations with the staff, I think what I mentioned earlier, the hiring process, the evaluation process, and I think interpersonal relations with the students and I think interpersonal relations with the community. I like to view the principal as the cheerleader of the building, the one who gets parents involved, the one who builds community where by it's the parents, the teachers, the staff, and the board of education all working together to do what's best for kids.

A third superintendent stated:

There are measures of just how effectively the principal has established professional relationships with the staff. You can see that in things like evaluation and supervision, in staff development, and in all those other things that happen when a principal motivates teachers to continuously learn.

Lastly, one superintendent said:

The principal keeps me informed and has garnered the support of her parents, but not by dividing one group of parents against the other, but by any parent you talk to saying they could call her, talk to her, get a straight answer. You could talk to the teachers and they would say he's there for me when I need something.

Second to the importance of being able to work with staff, students, and parents was demonstrated success in the area of standardized testing. The introduction of the Elementary School Proficiency Assessment has raised the importance of obtaining good test scores to another level.

Four superintendents cited the importance of test scores, one stating:

I think in this day and what we're dealing with, I don't think we can assess performance without looking at one of the indicators the state has put upon us. So I think one of the indicators has to be test performance.

Two of the other superintendents mentioned standardized tests scores, but quickly indicated they were not the only indicators. One said, "I think standardized test scores are very important, but I also do not think that standardized tests are the only measure."

A third superintendent went so far as to say, "It is very difficult in a community like ours to use those [test scores], as a sole measure or a dominant measure of performance or success."

At least two of the eight superintendents addressed the principal as a communicator, a continuous learner, a maintainer of discipline, and a molder of culture and climate as important, but no others beyond two of the eight having mentioned any other common indicator.

2.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the reliable indicators of effective elementary school principals?

When responding to the question for additional comments, only two superintendents responded. One clearly shared his thoughts on the difficulty of agreeing on the indicators of an effective principal.

He stated:

Unfortunately, I've encountered in my career; there are apparently effective principals who are nothing of the kind. These are people who have identified the powerful communicators, parents who have the ear of board members and other people in the community. They may have identified with the teacher association leaders and they have formed an alliance with those people based on I will give you special treatment if you look upon me favorably and it's a nice little arrangement we have here. That's the worst kind of principal you can run into.

The second shared the following comment:

I think I mentioned in different words that the constituencies must be confident in their leaders, parents, and teachers. Both constituencies are critical to their effectiveness, whether you agree with it or not, it's got to be. If the principal is not perceived by the parents as a positive influence on their children, it will not be a productive school.

Area 3: The Principal's Role in Creating Culture and Climate

The third area contained two questions, which addressed the principal's role in creating culture and climate in their school, and if they had any additional comments in regard to the principal's role in creating culture and climate.

3.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in creating culture and climate?

Six of the eight superintendents expressed the opinion that the principal was responsible for creating a culture and climate in a school. The first said, "Naturally a principal sets the tone for a level of communication within the building and the culture within the building and they are the big influence there."

A second superintendent said, "It's a key role. When you break it out to culture and climate, the principal is the one, when they take the position, to decide whether to continue a culture or attempt to change it."

A third superintendent emphatically stated:

He is a major factor. A principal sets the tone for the entire school. If he creates a climate where education is rewarded, where good teaching is rewarded, and where professional activities and growth are rewarded, then there is going to be a totally different climate than in a school where it is a laissez-faire do you own thing, be your own boss, set your own direction. If a principal sets a course for the school or a direction, you will have totally different climate from the good old boy who sits back and lets everybody do pretty much what they want.

And finally, a fourth superintendent said:

The principal's primary role is to create a culture and a climate in a school. He's the person that everyone looks to establish the environment, the feeling of the school. It's his primary role is and he's responsible for creating that. The principal's role is to set the standards for the climate.

The remaining two superintendents did not view the principal's role in creating culture and climate as primary, but rather as a coordinator or participant in the process.

The first superintendents said, "I think the principal serves as a facilitator/coordinator of that climate. I don't think that a principal can establish that by himself."

The other superintendent said, "I think the principal has to be part of the culture.

The culture will develop."

3.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role in creating culture and climate?

Five of eight superintendents responded "No" to this question while two of the remaining three focused on the impact of a negative climate. When asked for additional comments, one superintendent responded, "Well, I do in that a principal who is negative, a principal that does not engage the staff and the students, is going to create a negative culture, and we have to be conscious of that."

A second superintendent stated:

Sometimes, a culture will have taken on a very negative aspect in which a small group of teachers have formed a clique that may take on an aspect of informal leadership that can overpower a new principal's leadership style, especially if she is trying to establish herself as trustworthy. So the central office may have to step in and transfer personnel to break up those long standing cliques.

Finally, the last superintendent stated, "The principal's role is to be responsible for the climate, the productivity, the standards, and the achievement of that school. It's that person's primary goal."

#### Area 4: The Role of the Principal in Regard to Change

This area contained three questions and examined the superintendent's perception and the principal's role in regard to being an initiator of change and an implementer of change. The superintendents were asked for any additional comments in regard to the principal's role and change.

##### 4.1 How do you perceive the principal acting as an initiator of change?

The first superintendent believed that the principal took on different roles in reference to change stating, "You have all different styles of bringing change, but I think the principal has a foremost responsibility in bringing the faculty the understanding and support necessary for change."

Another superintendent said, "If you are going to be a transformational leader, you are going to have to initiate change."

A third superintendent said it this way, "I don't know how one serves as an educational leader without being an initiator of change."

A fourth superintendent said:

The reason that the principal can be the best initiator of change is because she can get the staff together and find out from them how they see the current status. She can do the same things with the parents and then she can begin to make changes in the day-to-day life of the students and the day-to-day delivery of the curriculum, which are the single most important changes.

A fifth superintendent shared the same sentiment as above stating:

If the principal is tuned into what is going on in the school and is not ego driven, having to be right all the time, I think that is the mark of a good principal. That they are listening, that they are attentive, they see change as an opportunity for improvement will implement those at the school level.

Each of the remaining three superintendents viewed the principal as more of a coordinator of change, or someone who participates in the process by being supportive.

One of the three superintendents stated:

I don't think the principal can take the position that only the changes he or she brings will be implemented. I think that he acts as a clearinghouse and as a facilitator of that process making sure that change is an effective one.

#### 4.2 How do you perceive the principal acting as an implementer of change?

All eight superintendents shared the belief that the principal must be supportive of any changes he or she was required to implement, and also that they provide feedback on the success of the efforts to implement change.

One superintendent stated, "There are going to be some changes that come down from the district that may be a central office kind of initiative. The principal has to rally the troops to come along with the direction of the district."

Another superintendent said:

The principal's role of support is critical because if you create a culture where you've got teachers acting as leaders the ideas come from all kinds of places. But

the idea of how you implement it, that is not something the teachers can be primarily responsible for. It is the principal.

A third superintendent stressed feedback saying, "Well, they are the ones who are going to give you feedback if you are going to avoid having a build up of tremendous pressure."

Another stated, "He must be willing to provide feedback and response to the direction that the superintendent or board wants to take."

4.3 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role and change?

Three of eight superintendents had additional comments in regard to the principal's role and change. The first emphasized the importance of the principal's role in implementing a district change stating, "If there is a change that the district has endorsed, and the principal is having a problem with that, I'm going to take that principal aside and let them know that their behavior is not meeting the expectation."

The second superintendent cited an example of the difficulty of change by referencing the district's attempt to decide which computer platform was better, PC or Macintosh. They ended up with both.

The third superintendent had an extended statement:

The principal is in the unique position of being able to provide feedback on major change or decisions relative to policy, structure, or direction. Any good leader



will listen very, very carefully to the managers on line as to what direction we should take. Whether we are ready or not to proceed with a certain objective, whether or not the time is right to initiate certain programs. So from an organizational point of view I think the principal's have a wealth of knowledge that needs to be tapped.

#### Area 5: The Principal's Role in Regard to Goal Setting

Areas Five contained four questions which addressed the principal's role in regard to the mission statement of a school, the educational objectives of both the school and the teachers, and any additional comments they may have in regard to the principal's role and goal setting.

##### 5.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to the mission statement of a school?

Six of the eight superintendents expressed two fundamental views in regard to the principal's role and the mission statement. They view the principal as being responsible for the development of the mission statement using a collaborative approach inclusive of all stakeholders, and an individual responsible to ensure its guardianship.

One superintendent expressed it this way:

When you develop a mission statement, you are supposed to bring all the stakeholders into the process, so his role would be to bring the stakeholders into the

process and really articulate with those people to develop what their mission is, and try to clearly and concisely state that. Again, he is the one who brings it together, he doesn't develop the statement by himself, he does not work in a vacuum, he works with people collaboratively to make sure that mission statement reflects the values of the stakeholders in the community.

A second superintendent said:

The principal is responsible for keeping the mission clear, alive, and functional. The principal, more than anyone, is responsible for keeping the mission clear and alive both in his or her actions, but also in the actions of his or her school.

A third superintendent simply said, "The principal is the guardian of the mission statement."

In contrast, one superintendent began discussing a variety of goals developed by stakeholders, while another did not believe mission statements were quite as necessary anymore.

His remarks were:

I think that the mission statement is less important than it used to be, because I believe New Jersey with its orientation towards state assessment has really driven where we are going. With the core curriculum content standards being what they are, we don't have a lot of leeway to where we're going because we have to meet those core curriculum content standards. I think you can have a mission in your district or building if you perceive a need to have something like that.

5.2 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to the educational objectives of a school?

In response to the educational objectives of the school, four of eight superintendents made the immediate connection to the state department of education's Quality Assurance Annual Report. They viewed the principal as the coordinator or facilitator of a process involving the required stakeholders to develop the goals for the school.

Essentially, each of the eight superintendents viewed the principal as the coordinator or facilitator of goals even if they did not reference the state requirement.

One superintendent stated:

The principal's role in establishing goals, just to repeat, is to understand the interests and needs of its constituents and to help the key groups that build those goal statements into crafting those statements in a very precise manner that reflects the true needs of that institution.

A second superintendent responded:

I think the principal has to be a leader, one who can bring the various constituencies together; analyze what the building needs are; present ideas to those committee members because they don't necessarily have all the information that you as the principal would have and then craft the process so that goals are established that are meaningful, necessary, and not out of sight.

5.3 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to the educational objectives of teachers?

When discussing the principal's role in regard to the educational objectives of the teachers, four of the eight superintendents referenced the Professional Improvement Plan (PIP). The superintendents all viewed the principal acting in a supportive role in the development of a PIP or any other growth activities that may have been decided upon.

One difference was related to perception of teacher performance. If there was an assumption the teacher was effective, the principal was seen in a supportive role. If there was an assumption the teacher may be experiencing some difficulty, the principal was seen in a more directive role.

One superintendent stated:

A principal with higher caliber teachers, they can direct their own professional development plans and the principal more or less facilitates that. If you have a staff member having difficulty, the principal may become the prime sponsor of their plan or creator and implementer of the plan with teacher participation.

Another superintendent said:

It's easy for a principal to sit back and describe and write professional improvement plans for staff members, but the commitment of those plans is directly related to the staff member's involvement in their development. So this suggests to me teachers design their objectives, or principals and teachers work together to design those objectives. We have a team of cooperation happening in that instance. Where throughout conversations and meetings, a building principal with the classroom teacher together define the objectives for that teacher. I think that's a collaborative effort in which both are very active partners.

A third superintendent cited the principal's authority stating:

Hopefully, with the staff member, he can reach collegial cooperation and establish what those goals are or should be. It doesn't always happen that way, so sometimes a principal has to rely on his or her best judgement.

In addition, two superintendents mentioned the principal's responsibility in providing the necessary resources to pursue goals.

5.4 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role and goal setting?

Only two of the eight superintendents had additional comments in regard to the principal's role and goal setting. One expressed the need for the principal to participate in district goal setting, for them to participate at their building setting and with their teachers. "I think we've been able to accomplish a lot here because of everyone working together."

The second superintendent referenced the fact that some of his principals will have fifteen to twenty goals for their school and some will simply implement the superintendent's goals for their school. The opinion expressed by the superintendent was that he did not see a correlation between the number of goals for the school and the quality of the principal. He said, "Some principals simply look at the district goals and say they're good and some seem to be just as effective who add a lot of goals."

### Area 6: The Principal's Role in Regard to Staff Development

Area Six had only two questions, the first regarding the principal's role in regard to staff development and the second asking for any additional comments.

#### 6.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's role in regard to staff development?

In reference to staff development, all eight superintendents viewed the principal as a primary coordinator whose role was to identify needs, make them known to the central office, and then seek appropriate in-service.

The first superintendent stated:

I would rely upon principals to participate in the planning of staff development. In the delivery side they need to be involved with content support and whether what were doing is fitting with our needs and the other is with compliance that everyone is there and engaged in the process. That's important, it's nuts and bolts.

A second superintendent said, "I think the principal must be a keen observer of teacher performance and from his observations encourage his teachers to identify areas collectively and individually that they need to focus on to move forward."

A third superintendent shared the sentiment stating:

Here again if you are to challenge people to improve, the principal needs to be aware of opportunities for people to expand their boundaries and make that information available to the teachers. There's a greater likelihood the teacher will embrace the idea and go for it.

And finally a fourth superintendent stated:

He has got to understand where his staff may need to be developed more fully. It is going to be his duty to forward to central administration what he feels are the necessary components to staff development for this building. He also has to be creative when talking about how he is going to finance that staff development.

In somewhat of a contrast from the role of the principal, one superintendent also added:

Staff development is, on one level, an individual responsibility that one will have.

It is one in which the individual cannot come in and ask what the place is doing for us. However, another part of this is in the community of learners called school. We need to, using a variety of measures and indicators, decide what collectively would help all of us. Now all of us don't have to participate in every single thing. I think there is entirely too much of one size fits all stuff in schools, whether it's for teachers or kids. I do think you can get so diluted it becomes meaningless. So, my idea of staff development is that first we understand that we all have a part of this and there is an individual responsibility as educators and learners.

6.2 Do you have any additional comments in regards to the principal's role and staff development?

Only one of the eight superintendents had an additional comment concerning the principal's role and staff development. He cited his belief that in school systems there will be areas that will change in the overall educational administrative structure over the

next 25 years. He believes one place corporate America could come in and do a replacement would be at the superintendent or business administrator level. However, he stated, "One place where corporate America can't come in, is at the principal level because, that's the place where we need professionals."

#### Area 7: The Principal's Responsibility in Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Area 7 contained four questions in reference to the principal's responsibility in attaining core curriculum content standards, and their responsibility in regard to the administration and interpretation of standardized test scores. The area concluded by asking for any additional comments in reference to the principal's responsibility in regard to curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

##### 7.1 What do you perceive to be the principal's responsibility in regard to the attainment of the state core curriculum standards?

Seven of eight superintendents discussed the principal's role in regard to attainment of the state core curriculum standards as being one of communicator and monitor. They cited the principal as the person responsible for making sure all the teachers understand what the standards are.

One superintendent said:



They have a responsibility to make sure their staff understands what the curriculum standards are, how those standards are infused into our curriculum, and how our staff members are assessing attainment of those standards.

A second superintendent referenced monitoring, stating, "Awareness is important and a lot of districts, if they are approaching monitoring, are referencing those standards in their plan books."

Because the standards are developed at the state level, the same superintendent viewed the standards as placing the principal in the role of manager. He stated, "The principal would be less a leader and more a manager to insure that compliance and that the expectation occurs."

A third superintendent expressed a similar belief stating, "The principal must work very closely with the teachers to ensure that we are moving in the directions we want to move and to ensure that the standards are in place."

A fourth superintendent said, "They have the frameworks developed and I think because it is mandated by law, the building principal must be able to ensure that those standards are being met."

Only one of the eight superintendents addressed the core content standards with concern. He saw the principal's role in attainment of the standards differently.

He said:

The number one duty of the principal is to make sure the attainment of the core curriculum content standards does not reduce the quality of life in the school to

that of an insect colony. So you don't have teachers saying, "Oh, your pet frog died, I'm sorry we don't have time for that open to page 7, we are on activity 43."

The principal can do that by helping the teachers and making sure that they have what they need. Also by making sure that any kind of result is viewed in a school sense, not a teacher by teacher sense.

**7.2 What do you perceive to be the principal's responsibility in regard to the administration of standardized tests?**

Six of eight superintendents viewed the role of the principal as the guardian of the integrity of the tests. One superintendent stated, "The principal in the building must make sure the integrity of the test process is established. He must make sure his teachers are following the rules of test administration and that there is nothing to damage the integrity."

A second superintendent stated, "It is the principal's job to be sure that every detail is tended to and that the conditions in the school promote and accommodate appropriate testing conditions."

Another superintendent said, "He certainly is the guy who sets up the schedule and makes sure that the teachers have all the supplies they need and that they are delivered on time in both directions."

The two remaining superintendents commented on the students in reference to this question. One superintendent commented, "He has to make sure the administration of the test does not threaten the child's perception of himself in later tests that are more reliable and more important."

The other superintendent focused on preparation stating:

I guess preparation is one area to ensure that his staff are fully prepared to implement. That the students in his school have been carefully and judiciously prepared to take the test not just in terms of content material, which is obvious, but also test taking behavior. That they are relaxed, that they have gone through some practice sessions, that they know how to behave. I think those are the principal's responsibilities in terms of test taking.

7.3 What do you perceive to be the principal's responsibility in regard to the interpretation of assessment data?

The principal needs to be able to interpret results, explain them to teachers and parents, and utilize them to improve instruction. Each of the eight superintendents referenced the principal's responsibility in the aforementioned areas.

Stated the first superintendent:

They have to have an understanding of interpretation and what the results mean. They have to facilitate their faculty in how to utilize the results. The principal's responsibility would be to locate areas of weakness in the test and make sure the staff comes up with some type of plan to address weak areas.

A second superintendent believes the principal needs to be able to explain the result to his staff members and the parents in the community because many times parents will compare how one community is doing in reference to another. He said, "I know boards of education do that a lot."

Two of the superintendents expressed the concern that at times, that nothing meaningful happens with test results. One replied:

In my experience, I took a great deal of interest in assessing those results as a personal improvement plan and using those to have a good information base to point where the needs for improvement were. I have to tell you in my experience that I have seen that not occur. More often than not they are minimally used. I think the state assessments that are now occurring are causing principals and teachers to get far more connected to the process than in the past where they were far less stakeholders.

The second superintendent indicated, "Too often those tests are looked at, put side and forgotten about, as we go on with business as usual."

One last area in reference to standardized tests was using them in the evaluation of teachers. Two superintendents referenced judging performance by test results. One stated, "He also may find that there are individual teachers who are not meeting the curriculum in certain areas. Students in those classes of the teacher or teachers are not meeting the standards, so he may need to address the teacher."

The other superintendent said, "The principal should be able to, at least at the elementary level, make some judgement in test scores by teacher."

7.4 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role in regard to curriculum, instruction, and assessment?

Only two of the eight superintendents had additional comments in regard to the principal's role in curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

The first superintendent believed that it would be beneficial to all if the elementary tests would only be used as a diagnostic instrument. He did not believe it was necessarily a good thing to give aggregate data out to the public to be published in the newspapers.

The second superintendent stated, "Just to conclude that the principal is the implementer. It is his job to make sure the curriculum is implemented in each classroom."

#### Area 8: Advice to a Principal Candidate Search Committee

This area had only two questions, one asking for the advice superintendents would give to a principal candidate search committee, and the second seeking any additional comments on the topic.

8.1 What advice would you give to a search committee seeking a principal candidate?

Responses among the eight superintendents varied on this question.

One superintendent said to make sure and check the candidate's background, to find out how they work. He said, "I think that is very important because there is a lot that can be sold on the surface from a communication style. When you dig deeper, you may not see that on the surface."

Two superintendents said to make sure to have your criteria established. One superintendent stated, "First of all establish the criteria that you need to fit the expectations of the school district and they fit that school where the principal would be assigned."

The other superintendent said, "We need to get the very best person for that position who is available for that position as they match up against district standards and the criterion the district has established."

Two superintendents stated not to rush. "In addition to being thorough, don't be in too much of a hurry, take your time, do the job thoroughly and I think the outcome will be the best it possibly can be," one superintendent stated.

The second superintendent said to make sure you design the assessment instrument for the interview accordingly, then bring the final candidate forward with those expectations that you establish early on and don't settle for anything but the best as the applicant pool will produce.

Two of the eight superintendents specifically discussed leadership. The first superintendent stated:

Is this a person who has demonstrated leadership qualities? Is this a person who can communicate to the degree that they can recognize their role in a situation and become a team player at some points, become a leader at some points? Those are the kinds of things I look at when I'm in the process of hiring a new administrator.

The second superintendent stated:

I've told search committees many times, what we are looking for is a leader. That's more important than where they were before or what they did, though we want to spend some time looking at that. If you don't find leadership ability in the person, none of the other stuff matters because if a principal doesn't lead, I don't think a principal can do what a school and what teachers and children need. The simple question is will this person be able to provide leadership to this group of people? Make that first, make that primary. If the answer is no, don't bother looking at the other things; they don't matter.

8.3 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the recruitment of principal candidates?

Three superintendents had additional comments in regard to the recruitment of principal candidates.

The first superintendent said:

Now a days a lot more involvement in the hiring process is including teachers on the committee, parents on the committee, and board members on the committee. I welcome their input as a superintendent, but I think one very important key in the marriage of a new administrator and a superintendent is the fact that they are going to be able to work together. So, I think it is important to get input from other people for different perspectives. What I say to my board is that it is important that there be some kind of chemistry possible between the superintendent and the principal or it might present some difficulties down the road. So that's just another component I think has to be considered.

The second superintendent said, "If you can find someone who make a difference in the world, then you have a pretty good candidate for the principal."

Finally, the third superintendent stated:

I think it's important for a committee to know whether or not the principal is at the top of their form in understanding instruction, knowing what to look for in a good teacher, knowing how to assess whether a building or individual is being successful.

Area 9: Additional Comments in Regard to the Behavioral Characteristics of Effective Elementary School Principals

This final question served as a recap of the entire interview and provided the superintendents with one last opportunity to comment on their perception of the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals.

9.1 Do you have any additional comments in reference to the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals?

Three of the eight superintendents had additional comments in reference to the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals.

One superintendent added:

I think that for elementary school principals it's, first of all really caring for children and their needs. You can't hide that it will come out at every level, and at the elementary setting particularly. That is a characteristic that will be obvious. Then there is working with the parent community. Most realize a higher connection with parents in the elementary building, which tends to diminish with age. So in the elementary school, the principal needs to be prepared to rise to the occasion and really have good people skills to interact positively with parents. That goes along toward school climate and culture and so forth and the other indicators for effective schooling, Lezotte and all those people.



The second superintendent stated:

Effective elementary school principals are straight with themselves. They have enough confidence in themselves to suppress their own ego from time to time in favor of allowing children's parents' or teachers' egos to have their moment in the sun. They all have strengths and weaknesses you can blend them together. Some principals are like a mechanics, they can put their ear to the hood of the engine and say that's a value. Some other principals can not do that at all, and say if we do that the parents are going to be angry because they are going to say I used to write book reports, not do video book reports. So if we are going to make this change, we need to let parents know about such and such. So if you can combine their talents and not make them feel like they are out to get each other, that would be the best thing to do.

Finally a third superintendent said:

If I haven't stressed it enough, I will tie this back to the comments you asked me about leadership. I think that the leadership of the principal has to be one in which they listen very, very carefully. It's critical to understand your constituencies no matter how much you may agree or disagree with them.

Whether or not they are sophisticated in educational issues for pedagogy you simply have to understand who they are, where they are coming from, and meet them at a place where even they can be successful.

#### Summary of Research and Findings using Chi-square Statistical Analysis

In this section the responses to the interview questions are analyzed using a quantitative design (Chi-square), in terms of expected responses and outcome responses.

The final question of each section asked the superintendents, "Do you have any

additional comments in reference to this topic," and was not part of the analysis since there was no research base from which to anticipate a response.

### Area 1: Self-Perceptions of Leadership

- 1.1 How would you describe yourself as a superintendent?  
Expected response: Citing a leadership style.  
Outcome response: Only one superintendent cited a leadership style.
- 1.2 What do you see as the most difficult part of the principal's job?  
Expected response: Attempting to be an instructional leader.  
Outcome response: Only one superintendent cited the difficulty in balancing instructional leadership tasks and management tasks.
- 1.3 What do you perceive as the ideal relationship between a principal and a superintendent?  
Expected response: Positive relationship model.  
Outcome response: Five superintendents reference relationship characteristics.

### Area 2: The Reliable Indicators of Effective Elementary School Principal

- 2.1 What do you perceive to be the reliable indicators of an effective elementary school principal?  
Expected response: Work with people.  
Outcome response: All eight superintendents cited ability to work with people.

### Area 3: The Principal's Role in Regard to Creating Culture and Climate

- 3.1 What is the principal's role in regard to creating culture and climate?  
Expected response: Principal plays a central role.  
Outcome response: Six superintendents cited the principal plays a key role.

#### Area 4: The Principal's Role in Regard to Change

- 4.1 How do you perceive the principal acting as an initiator of change?  
Expected response: Principal must be an initiator of change.  
Outcome response: Five superintendents cited the principal as an initiator of change.
- 4.2 How do you perceive the principal acting as an implementer of change?  
Expected response: Principals must be supportive of district directed change.  
Outcome response: All eight superintendents viewed the principal as a support mechanism for change.

#### Area 5: The Principal's Role in Regard to Goal Setting

- 5.1 What is the principal's role in regard to the mission statement of a school?  
Expected response: Principal plays a key role in the defining the mission of a school.  
Outcome response: Six superintendents expressed the point of view that the principal plays a fundamental role in defining the mission statement of a school.
- 5.2 What is the principal's role in regard to educational objectives of the school?  
Expected response: Reference to the Quality Assurance Annual Report.  
Outcome response: Four superintendents referenced the Quality Assurance Annual Report.
- 5.3 What is the principal's role in regard to the educational objectives of the teachers?  
Expected response: Professional Improvement Plan.  
Outcome response: Four superintendents reference the teacher's professional improvement plan.

#### Area 6: The Principal's Role in Regard to Staff Development

- 6.1 What is the principal's role in regard to staff development?  
Expected response: Responsible for coordinating staff development.  
Outcome response: All eight superintendents viewed the principal as the primary coordinator of staff development.

**Area 7: The Principal's Role in Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment**

- 7.1 What is the principal's responsibility in regard to the administration of standardized tests?  
**Expected response:** Principal is very involved in overseeing the administration of standardized tests.  
**Outcome response:** All eight superintendents stated the principal is very involved in overseeing the administration of standardized tests.
- 7.2 What is the principal's responsibility in regard to the interpretation of assessment data?  
**Expected response:** Principal's are responsible for effective interpretation of test results and use of data to improve instruction.  
**Outcome response:** All eight superintendents agreed that principals are responsible for test results interpretation.
- 7.3 What is the principal's responsibility in regard to the attainment of the state core curriculum content standards?  
**Expected response:** Principal is responsible for supervision of the program.  
**Outcome response:** Seven superintendents discussed the principal being a communicator and monitor of the attainment of core content standards.

**Area 8: Superintendent's Advice to a Search Committee**

- 8.1 What advice would you give to a search committee seeking a principal candidate?  
**Expected response:** A blend of style, skills, and abilities.  
**Outcome response:** All eight superintendents gave a response that was similar to others, but never an exact match.

### Chi-square Analysis

The null hypothesis states that there is no significant difference between superintendent perceptions regarding behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals and the leading research covered in Chapter II.

Step 1: In this study, the researcher tested the null hypothesis relative to the perceptions of superintendents regarding the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals. The test statistic for testing this null hypothesis is Chi-Square.

Step 2: There were two categories of responses. There were fifteen questions to be responded to. There were 14 degrees of freedom associated with the test of the null hypothesis. The researcher set level of significance at .05 with a critical valued of  $\chi^2$  for 14 degrees of freedom that was identified as 6.571.

Step 3: To test the null hypothesis for this study, the researcher selected a sample of 8 superintendents in the district factor group of GH located in the state of New Jersey. The affirmed response was found by multiplying the total number in the sample (8) by the respective hypothesized percentages. For superintendent responses, the expected frequency was  $5.8 \times 8 = 46.8$ . The expected frequencies for the other categories are computed similarly. The calculation of the  $\chi^2$  value is 52.915.

**Step 4:** Since the calculated value ( $\chi^2 = 52.915$ ) exceeded the critical value of ( $\chi^2 = 6.571$ ), the null hypothesis is rejected. This research would conclude that the differences between the expected responses and the observed responses in the fifteen categories are too great to be attributed to sampling fluctuation.

Table 1

Observed and Expected Frequency Response Data

	Q1.1		Q1.2		Q1.3		Q2		Q3	
Expected	1	5.8	1	5.8	5	5.8	8	5.8	6	5.8
Observed	7	2.2	7	2.2	3	2.2	0	2.2	2	2.2
	8		8		8		8		8	

	Q4.1		Q4.2		Q5.1		Q5.2		Q5.3	
Expected	5	5.8	8	5.8	6	5.8	4	5.8	4	5.8
Observed	3	2.2	0	2.2	2	2.2	4	2.2	4	2.2
	8		8		8		8		8	

	Q6		Q7.1		Q7.2		Q7.3	
Expected	8	5.8	8	5.8	8	5.8	7	5.8
Observed	0	2.2	0	2.2	0	2.2	1	2.2
	8		8		8		8	

	Q8		Totals
Expected	8	5.8	87
Observed	0	2.2	33
	8		120

Note. Expected Affirmed 5.8  
Observed 2.2

Table 2

Calculation of  $X^2$  for Superintendent Responses

	O	E	O-E	(O-E) <sup>2</sup>	(O-E) <sup>2</sup> /E	R
Q1.1	1	5.8	-4.8	23.04	3.972	-1.99309 *
Q1.1	7	2.2	4.8	23.04	10.473	3.236159 *
Q1.2	1	5.8	-4.8	23.04	3.972	-1.99309 *
Q1.2	7	2.2	4.8	23.04	10.473	3.236159 *
Q1.3	5	5.8	-0.8	0.64	0.110	-0.33218
Q1.3	3	2.2	0.8	0.64	0.291	0.53936
Q2	8	5.8	2.2	4.84	0.834	0.9135
Q2	0	2.2	-2.2	4.84	2.200	-1.48324
Q3	6	5.8	0.2	0.04	0.007	0.083045
Q3	2	2.2	-0.2	0.04	0.018	-0.13484
Q4.1	5	5.8	-0.8	0.64	0.110	-0.33218
Q4.1	3	2.2	0.8	0.64	0.291	0.53936
Q4.2	8	5.8	2.2	4.84	0.834	0.9135
Q4.2	0	2.2	-2.2	4.84	2.200	-1.48324
Q5.1	6	5.8	0.2	0.04	0.007	0.083045
Q5.1	2	2.2	-0.2	0.04	0.018	-0.13484
Q5.2	4	5.8	-1.8	3.24	0.559	-0.74741
Q5.2	4	2.2	1.8	3.24	1.473	1.21356
Q5.3	4	5.8	-1.8	3.24	0.559	-0.74741
Q5.3	4	2.2	1.8	3.24	1.473	1.21356
Q6	8	5.8	2.2	4.84	0.834	0.9135
Q6	0	2.2	-2.2	4.84	2.200	-1.48324
Q7.1	8	5.8	2.2	4.84	0.834	0.9135
Q7.1	0	2.2	-2.2	4.84	2.200	-1.48324
Q7.2	8	5.8	2.2	4.84	0.834	0.9135
Q7.2	0	2.2	-2.2	4.84	2.200	-1.48324
Q7.3	7	5.8	1.2	1.44	0.248	0.498273
Q7.3	1	2.2	-1.2	1.44	0.655	-0.80904
Q8	8	5.8	2.2	4.84	0.834	0.9135
Q8	0	2.2	-2.2	4.84	2.200	-1.48324
	120	120	0		$X^2=52.915$	

Note.  $df = (R - 1)(C - 1) = 14$  $X^2_{cv} = 6.571$



### Interpretation

With the exception of 1.1 and 1.2, the results of the superintendents' perceptions regarding the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals were consistent with the leading research covered in Chapter II (noted as affirmed). The Chi-square critical value of 6.571 at the .05 level of significance was calculated with a value of  $\chi^2 = 52.915$ .

Residuals for 1.1 and 1.2 (values calculated 2.00 or higher) indicate the greatest divergence from their relative expected outcomes.

### Summary

In this chapter, the interview data was presented in its entirety. Also presented are a summary of the superintendent responses question by question and a summary of findings, which was analyzed using a Chi-square statistical analysis.

## CHAPTER V

### Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to investigate, by means of qualitative research methods, superintendents' perceptions regarding the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals.

The purpose of this chapter is to compare the findings of this study with the research concerning the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals and state conclusions as a result of this comparison.

The chapter is divided into four sections (a) summary of investigation and research, (b) results and conclusions, (c) discussion, and (d) recommendations for future research.

### Summary of the Investigation and Research

The purpose of this study was to investigate by means of qualitative research methods, superintendents' perceptions regarding the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals.

Chapter I presented background information related to the principal's role as a leader and the principal's role as a manager. A statement in regard to the purpose of the study, significance of undertaking the study, definition of terms, and design limitations are presented.

Chapter II, the review of the current literature, explored the concept of the role of the principal as both a manager and a leader. Also included in the chapter are discussions of theories and approaches to study leadership, leadership styles and strategies, instructional leadership, the principal and change, the principal and culture, as well as a summary of effective principal behaviors.

Chapter III described the research sample, research procedures, techniques for data collection, development of the interview instrument, interview questions, treatment of the data, and a brief summary.

Chapter IV included a description of the nature of the study, a presentation of findings of the interview data, the summary of findings, a Chi-square statistical analysis, and the chapter summary.

### Results and Conclusions

In this section, research questions are restated and a comparison of findings and research are discussed. Using a qualitative design, the following research questions were investigated:

1. What are the perceptions of superintendents' regarding the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals?
2. To what extent are the reported perceptions of superintendents' regarding the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals congruent with the research?

Following are the eight different areas of the principalship that generated the specific interview questions. The first area addressed the superintendent's self-perception of leadership. The second area referenced the reliable indicators of an effective elementary school principal. The third area investigated the principal's role with regard to creating culture and climate, while the fourth area addressed the principal's role with regard to change. The fifth area dealt with the principal's role in regard to goal setting and the sixth area regarding staff development. Area Seven looked at the principal's role in regard to curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Area Eight concluded the interview with a question pertaining to the advice the superintendent would give to a committee in search of a principal candidate. Finally, each superintendent was asked if he or she had any additional comments regarding the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals.

### Area 1: Self-Perceptions of Leadership

The first question in the area of leadership dealt with the superintendents' description of themselves as a superintendent. No superintendent used leadership style identifications such as facilitative or transactional, and only one used transformational style to describe himself. The superintendents' cited various descriptors as in one case where a superintendent thought of himself as a "demanding leader with high expectations" while several others noted the responsibility of being known as the person in charge. One superintendent viewed himself as "idea oriented." Another superintendent viewed himself as a buffer between the educational and political sides of the district while attempting to drive it toward quality.

The varying points of view of the superintendents is supported by McEwan (1998) who noted that:

The classical theorists debated whether leadership was a function of the individual and his or her characteristics or whether the historical context served to shape the individual in response to societal needs or events. Most contemporary researchers, however, have found it far more constructive to study what leaders actually do than to focus on traits such as intelligence, friendliness, or creativity. What causes one individual to lead his or her organization to greatness while another individual, although equally intelligent, friendly, and competent, manages

to achieve only mediocrity? Why are some individuals highly effective leaders in some settings while in others they are only marginally successful? (p. 3)

There may be no specific description that a superintendent would use to discuss his or her particular perception of themselves as a leader since no one has determined the exact set of traits, behaviors, or characteristics that ensure success.

Yukl (1998) states:

One of the earliest approaches for studying leadership was the trait approach. The trait approach emphasizes the personal attributes of leaders. Underlying this approach was the assumption that some people are natural leaders who are endowed with certain traits not possessed by other people. Early leadership theories attributed managerial success to extraordinary abilities such as tireless energy, penetrating intuition, uncanny foresight, and irresistible, persuasive power. Hundreds of trait studies were conducted during the 1930s and 1940s to discover these elusive qualities, but this massive research effort failed to find any traits that would guarantee leadership success. (p. 8)

The second question in the leadership series asked superintendents what they perceived to be the most difficult part of the elementary school principal's job.

The majority of the superintendents focused on two issues in response to the question concerning what they perceived to be the most difficult part of the elementary school principal's job. One was working with parents and attempting to meet their

expectations and the other was working with the staff. Only one superintendent cited the need for the principal to be the instructional leader. The superintendents', without specifically saying so, suggested that the effective principal has an ability to communicate, persuade, and lead people in an agreed upon direction.

Only one of the eight superintendents discussed the struggle to balance the pursuit of being considered an instructional leader with the responsibilities associated with managing the building.

He stated:

I view the elementary school principal as an individual who needs to be the instructional leader. If the elementary school principal has assistance, then they can take on that role. I think they have to be the leader in curriculum. I think they have to be the leader in moving people to use the kinds of resources that are available in this day and age, technologically speaking. I think they need to encourage people to go out and keep abreast of changes in our business. That sometimes is difficult for people to understand that needs to be their role. What happens is they get caught up in the minutia of their job, the paperwork, they lose sight of the fact that they could be the instructional leader of their building.

Evans (1996) states, "In recent years it has become common to make a distinction between leadership and management, venerating the former at the expense of the latter" (p. 148). He goes on to say that the problem most school leaders face is that they always have to spend time managing rather than leading.

Bolman and Deal (1991) express the viewpoint, "Running an organization seems to be a matter of solving an endless set of messes" (p. 29).

Evans (1996) agrees that efforts to exert leadership are usually cut short by the need to manage these messes. The issue of leader versus manager is also discussed by Smith and Andrews (1989) who note:

The role of the principal as building manager versus instructional leader is related to the way principals perceive their time commitments and the way they actually spend their time. Building management are those activities that the principal engages in maintaining the current operations of the school. Instructional leadership activities are those things that the principal must do to improve the learning environment for children. Building management functions are the foundation for the operation of the instructional program. (p. 29)

There is an everyday interaction between building management and instructional leadership. Smith and Andrews (1989) conclude that school districts seem to expect principals to be instructional leaders, but reward them for running well managed, efficiently operated schools.

Question Three in the leadership series asked superintendents to describe their ideal relationship with a principal. Out of eight superintendents, five responded they needed the principal to be a team player, someone who is cooperative. One superintendent described the ideal relationship with a principal as "Open and honest, has a sense of integrity and cooperation, a sense of working together, not against; teamsmanship."



This perception is supported by the literature and effectively conveyed by Smith and Andrews (1989). In the preface of their book, Instructional Leadership: How Principals Make a Difference, they begin with the following statement that describes the importance of principal and superintendent agreement in reference to the role of the principal.

The most important obligation is to build a structure of relationships within schools so that all children learn. To fulfill this obligation, the most important function of educational leadership is to create good schools. By creating good schools, we mean principals and superintendents use their professional knowledge and skills to foster conditions where all children can grow to their full potential.

(p. vii)

The behavior of the principal can easily be shaped by their perception of what the superintendent expects them to be. Smith and Andrews (1989) describe Nebecker and Mitchell's (1974) expectancy theory of leadership as suggesting that the principal's behavior can be predicted from their expectations and the consequences in reference to their behavior. An example of this would be if the principal perceives that keeping a neat and orderly building is more likely to win praise of the superintendent, then this what he or she will do.

The last leadership theory addressed is adaptive-reactive. Andrews and Smith (1989) acknowledge the work of Osborn and Hunt, (1975) suggesting that principal

behavior is a product of larger variables such as the structure of the school, centralized versus building decision making, and other such conditions. Essentially the adaptive-reactive theory assumes that the principal adapts to the structure, size, and external environment variables and reacts to teacher attitudes and traits.

### Area 2: The Reliable Indicators of Effective Elementary School Principals

When asked to identify the reliable indicators of an effective elementary school principal, all eight superintendents stated that the principal's ability to work with people, whether it is the staff, the parents, or the student, was of critical importance.

Second to the importance of being able to work with staff, students, and parents, was demonstrated success in the area of standardized testing. Four superintendents cited the importance of understanding and working with standardized test score data. One stated:

In this day and age, I don't think few can assess performance without looking at it as one of the indicators, since the state has put it upon us. So I think one of the indicators has to be test scores.

The literature confirms that in order to aid in the understanding of their accountability, principals need to know how superintendents describe an effective elementary school principal.

Yukl (1998) believes that there is no simple answer to the question of how to evaluate leadership effectiveness. The determination of effectiveness lies within the

person's perception deciding what is effective. For example, top management may prefer different criteria than employees, customers, or shareholders in regard to considering the leaders as effective. To cope with the problems of incompatible criteria and the preferences of different stakeholders, it is usually best to include a variety of criteria in research on leadership effectiveness and to examine the impact of the leader on each criterion over an extended period of time.

Knowing how superintendents define the reliable indicators of an effective principal can be extremely helpful to the principal, but will vary to a degree from situation to situation. Matching one's style to the situation is known as situational leadership. McEwan (1998) notes that some theorists have hypothesized that effective leaders not only possess many different characteristics, but they also attempted to match their leadership style to the unique needs of the situation, known as situational leadership. Rather than behaving the same way in every setting, effective leaders assess each situation and adjust their leadership behaviors to both the complexity of the task or goal, as well as the composition and characteristics of the group they are leading.

### Area 3: The Principal's Role in Regard to Creating Culture and Climate

Six of the eight superintendents agreed that the principal has a central role in creating the culture and climate in a school. None of the superintendents spent time discussing or acknowledging the difference between the two or the difficulty involved in

attempting to change a culture versus climate. Two superintendents expressed a stronger point of view than the others.

One superintendent emphatically stated:

He [principal] is a major factor. A principal sets the tone for the entire school. If he creates a climate where education is rewarded, where good teaching is rewarded, where professional activities and growth are rewarded, there is going to be a totally different climate than in a school where it is a laissez-faire do your own thing, be your own boss, set your own direction mentality. If a principal sets a course for the school or a direction, you will have totally different climate from the good old boy who sits back and lets everybody do pretty much what they want.

The second superintendent said:

The principal's primary role is to create a culture and a climate in a school. He's the person that everyone looks to establish the environment, the feeling of the school. It's his primary role, he is responsible for creating that. The principal's role is to set the standards for the climate.

Two superintendents did not view the principal's role in creating culture and climate as primary, but rather as a coordinator or participant in the process. The first superintendent said, "I think the principal serves as a facilitator/coordinator of that climate. I don't think that a principal can establish that by himself." The other superintendent said, "I think the principal has to be part of the culture; the culture will develop."

Research supports a strong correlation between the culture and the climate of the school with the principal. Sergiovanni (1996) states, "The symbolic and cultural forces

derive from the instructional leader's ability to become the symbol of what is important and purposeful about the school (symbolic) as well as to articulate the values and beliefs of the organization over time (cultural)" (p. 5). He also says that, "The instructional leader must be skilled in the actual construction of a culture that specifically defines what a given school is all about" (p. 5).

Sweeney (1982) believes it is up to the principal to provide an orderly atmosphere in the school. "They do what is necessary to ensure that the school's climate is conducive to learning: it is quiet, pleasant, and well maintained" (p. 348).

Block (1987) presents an even stronger point of view stating:

The key to positive politics, then, is to look at each encounter as an opportunity to support autonomy and to create an organization of our own choosing. It requires viewing ourselves as the primary instrument for changing the culture. Cultures can be changed in a thousand small ways, not by dramatic announcements emanating from the boardroom. If we wait until top management gives leadership to the change we want to see, we miss the point. (p. 97)

Fullan (1997) discusses the importance of developing a professional culture in the building. He states:

We know that professional cultures, with their openness to new ideas, their focus on what and how students are learning, their giving and receiving help, are strongly related to success in continuous improvement. Such collaborative work

cultures foster greater coherence and consistency through their constant interaction and focus on what they are doing and on how well they are doing.

(p. 30)

#### Area 4: The Role of the Principal in Regard to Change

The first of two questions in response to the principal's role in regard to change dealt with the principal acting as an initiator of change. Five of the superintendents believed the principal could serve as an initiator of change, and two of them felt it was critical. One superintendent stated, "If you are going to be a transformational leader, you are going to have to initiate change."

A second superintendent said, "I don't know how one serves as an educational leader without being an initiator of change."

A third superintendent replied:

The reason that the principal can be the best initiator of change is because she can get the staff together and find out from them how they see the current status. She can do the same things with the parents and then she can begin to make changes in the day to day life of the students and the day to day delivery of the curriculum, which are the single most important changes.

Research supports the principal acting as an initiator of change. When the principal serves as the initiator of change and involves the staff in the process, the change tends to be more accepted.

Barth (1980) addresses changes:

If we have learned anything about educational change over the past twenty years, it is that change imposed upon schools from without does not work; at best it promotes momentary compliance, which vanishes with the departure of the change agent. On the other hand, change that emerges from within the school, especially from individual teachers, is authentic. (p. 146)

Robbins and Alvy (1995) summarize the principal and change by stating:

The principal can set a personal example by viewing change as an opportunity and encouraging risk taking and ownership on the part of teachers regarding the changes. This will help to create the atmosphere of trust that will be necessary for success. (p.77)

The second question concerned the principal acting as an implementer of change.

When the principal is viewed as the implementer of change, and considering the perception of their role as a leader or manager, the perception is almost always that of a manager. All eight superintendents shared the belief that the principal must be supportive of any changes he or she was required to implement, and that they provide feedback on the success of the efforts to implement the change.

This viewpoint places the principal in the role of middle manager in order to be considered effective. There are numerous difficulties the principal is faced with when

placed in this role. Implementing change and the role of the principal can be viewed differently when change is initiated outside of the school.

Fullan (1991) states:

Principals are middle managers. As such, they face a classical organizational dilemma. Rapport with teachers is critical as is satisfying those in the hierarchy. The endless supply of new policies, programs and procedures ensures that this dilemma remains active. The expectation that principals should be the leaders in the implementation of changes that they have had no hand in developing and may not understand is especially troublesome. (p. 7)

Top down organizations, which strongly enforce a hierarchy structure in the identification and implement of change issues, certainly aid in defining the principal's role, and also what central office may consider to be effective.

Fullan (1991) continues:

Amidst the conflicting demands and problems described by principals and researchers, taking on a change agent's role seems most problematic, especially as it is not clear exactly what that means. Generalities, such as "the principal is the gatekeeper of change" or "the principal and the school is the unit of change" provide no practical clarity about what the principal could or should do. Given



the other demands on the role, it is no wonder that most principals do not approach their change responsibilities with enthusiasm. (p. 152)

#### Area 5: The Principal's Role in Regard to Goal Setting

The first question in the series pertaining to goal setting dealt with the principal's role in regard to the mission statement of a school. Six of the eight superintendents expressed two fundamental views in regard to the principal's role and the mission statement. They viewed the principal as being responsible for the development of the mission statement using a collaborative approach inclusive of all stakeholders and an individual responsibility to ensure its guardianship.

One superintendent expressed it this way:

When you develop a mission statement, you are supposed to bring all the stakeholders into the process, so his role would be to bring the stakeholders into the process and really articulate with those people to develop what their mission is, and try to clearly and concisely state that. Again, he is the one who brings it together, he doesn't develop the statement by himself, he does not work in a vacuum, he works with people collaboratively to make sure that mission statement reflects the values of the stakeholders in the community.

A second superintendent said:

The principal is responsible for keeping the mission clear, alive, and functional. The principal, more than anyone, is responsible for keeping the mission clear and alive both in his or her actions, but also in the actions of his or her school.

A third superintendent simply stated, "The principal is the guardian of the mission statement."

In contrast, one superintendent began discussing a variety of goals developed by the stakeholders. While another did not believe mission statements were quite as necessary anymore.

He remarked:

I think that the mission statement is less important than it used to be because, I believe New Jersey with its orientation towards state assessment has really driven where we are going. With the core curriculum content standards being what they are, we don't have a lot of leeway to where we're going because we have to meet those core curriculum content standards. I think you can have a mission in your district or building if you perceive a need to have something like that.

Research base confirms the opinions of the superintendents. There is a definite need for the principal, according to Keller (1998) to "Communicate the school's mission clearly and consistently to staff, parents, and students" (p. 26).

Sergiovanni (1996) states, "The instructional leader must communicate and represent to the students, teachers, and parents what is important and valuable in the school" (p. 7).

Finally, in reference to the mission statement of a school and the role of the principal, the National Association of Elementary School Principals believes that a proficient principal exercises vision and provides leadership that appropriately involves staff, parents, students, and community in the identification and accomplishment of the school's mission.

Having a vision and developing a mission statement to articulate that vision are important identified behaviors of the effective principal. Rutherford's (1985) study of elementary and secondary principals revealed that all effective principals demonstrated two qualities of effective leadership in reference to having a vision, a mission, and a goal statement. They identified: (a) principal's clear vision of desirable futures for their schools, and (b) their ability to translate those visions into specific goals as being two of the five essential leadership qualities to be considered an effective principal.

Question two dealt with the principal's role in regard to educational objectives of the school. In response to the educational objectives of the school, four of eight superintendents made the immediate connection to the state department of education's Quality Assurance Annual Report. They viewed the principal as the coordinator or facilitator of a process involving the required stakeholders to develop the goals for the school.

Essentially, each of the eight superintendents viewed the principal as the coordinator or facilitator of goals even if they did not reference the state requirement.

One superintendent responded:

I think the principal has to be a leader whereby they can bring the various constituencies together, analyze what the building needs are, present ideas to those committee members. They don't necessarily have all the information that you as the principal would have and then craft the process so that goals are established that are meaningful, necessary and no out of sight.

A review of the research will not specially address building goals. However, much of it agrees with the superintendents' perceptions that the principal is very involved with defining the educational objectives of the school. There is a relationship between goal setting and monitoring student success, especially in New Jersey, since the educational objectives must be measurable. Sweeney (1982) says it is up to the principal to frequently evaluate student progress. They must monitor student achievement on a regular basis. "Principals set expectations for the entire school and check to make sure those expectations are being met" (p. 347).

Persell and Cookson (1982) reviewed more than seventy-five research studies and reported principals must demonstrate a commitment to academic goals and Rutherford (1985) continues stating that effective principals demonstrate clear visions of desirable futures for their schools and translate those visions into specific goals.

The last in this series dealt with the principal's role in regard to the educational objectives of the teachers. When discussing the principal's role in regard to the educational objectives of the teachers, four of the eight superintendents referenced the Professional Improvement Plan (PIP) and essentially the role of supervision. The superintendents all viewed the principal acting in a supportive role in the development of a PIP or any other growth activities that may have been decided upon.

One difference was related to perception of teacher performance. If there was an assumption the teacher was effective, the principal was seen in a supportive role. If there

was an assumption the teacher may be experiencing some difficulty, the principal was seen in a more directive role.

One superintendent stated:

A principal with higher caliber teachers can allow them to direct their own professional development plans and the principal more or less facilitates that. If you have a staff member having difficulty, the principal may become the prime sponsor of their plan or creator of the plan with teacher participation.

Another superintendent said:

It's easy for a principal to sit back and describe and write professional improvement plans for staff members, but the commitment of those plans is directly related to the staff member's involvement in their development. So this suggests to me as teachers design their objectives, or as principals and teachers work together to design those objectives, we have a team of operation happening in that instance, where throughout conversations and meetings the building principals with the classroom teacher together define the objectives for that teacher. I think that's a collaborative effort in which both are very active partners.

A third superintendent cited the principal's authority:

Hopefully with the staff member, he can reach collegial cooperation and establish what those goals are or should be. It doesn't always happen that way, so sometimes a principal has to rely on his or her best judgement.

In addition, two superintendents mentioned the principal's responsibility in providing the necessary resources to pursue goals.

Research, of in the principal's role, in regard to the educational objectives of the teachers, focused on instruction. Keller (1998) believes an effective principal spends time in classrooms and listens to teachers. McEwan (1998) says that the ability to evaluate staff performance is critical to success in the principalship.

Finally, Sweeney (1982) notes that the effective principal supports teachers. He continues, "Effective principals communicate with teachers about goals and procedures. They support teachers' attendance at professional meetings and workshops, and provide in-service that promotes improved teaching" (p. 349).

#### Area 6: The Principal's Role in Regard to Staff Development

In response to the question pertaining to the principal's role in staff development, all eight superintendents viewed the principal as a primary coordinator of staff development. They believed the principal's role was to identify needs, make them known to central office, then seek appropriate services.

The first superintendent stated:

I would rely upon principals to participate in the planning of staff development. In the delivery side they need to be involved with the content support and whether what were doing is fitting with our needs. The other is with compliance that everyone is there and engaged in the process, that important, it's nuts and bolts.

A second superintendent said, "I think the principal must be a keen observer of teacher performance and from his observations encourage his teachers to identify areas collectively and individually that they need to focus on to move forward."

The research agrees with principals supporting teachers. The National Association of Elementary School Principals (1986) believes it is the job of the proficient

principal to explore, assess, develop, and implement educational concepts that enhance teaching and learning.

Rutherford's (1985) research in reference to the five essential qualities of leadership states that principals must establish supportive environments for improvement.

Keller (1998) states, "A good principal builds a good staff and makes professional development a top concern" (p. 25).

Demonstrating concern in reference to staff development is strongly associated with being an instructional leader. When Smith and Andrews (1989) discuss the perception of the principal as an instructional leader, they point out that the principal can be seen as: (a) providing the necessary resources so that the school's academic goals can be achieved, and (b) possessing knowledge and skill in curriculum and instructional matters so that the teachers perceive that their interaction with the principal leads to improved instructional practice.

#### **Area 7: The Principal's Role in Regard to Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment**

This area had three questions dealing with the principal's role in regard to the attainment of New Jersey State Core Curriculum Content Standards, the principal's role in regard to the administration of standardized tests, and the principal's role in regard to the interpretation of standardized tests.

Seven of eight superintendents discussed the principal's role in regard to attainment of the state core curriculum standards as being one of communicator and monitor. They cited the principal as the person responsible for making sure all of the teachers understand the standards. This perception of the responsibility of the principal was supported by the research. Sergiovanni (1996) supports this concept and notes that the principal must demonstrate knowledge about curriculum.

Smith and Andrews (1989) state that an effective principal possesses knowledge and skill about the curriculum as Weber (1989) also acknowledges that the role of the principal is to manage curriculum and instruction.

Principals who set goals in working with curriculum and instruction began to develop awareness among the staff directed at the cycle of continuous improvement in those areas. Newman and Wehlage's (1995) study of over 800 schools discovered, that "Schools with strong professional communities pursued a continuous cycle of innovation, feedback, and redesign in curriculum, instruction and assessment" (p. 38).

In reference to the administration and assessment of standardized testing, research reveals the principal as extremely involved, especially concerning the interpretation of test results. Sweeney (1982) says that principals must focus on achievement. He continues, "They give high priority to activities, instruction, and activities that foster academic success. Effective principals are visible and involved in what goes on in the



school and its classrooms. They convey to teachers their commitment to achievement” (p. 349).

Weber (1989) says that assessing the instructional program, which one would do through the interpretation of standardized test scores, is one of the five main functions of instructional leadership. Keller (1998) states, “A principal, provides clear goals and monitors the progress of students toward meeting them” (p.26). McEwan (1998) says it is up to the principal to develop school improvement plans based on data. The National Association of Elementary School Principals (1986) position is that it is up to the principal to analyze relevant information. Finally, Persell and Cookson (1982) state that a behavior that is associated with being a strong principal is the principal’s ability to evaluate results.

#### Area 8: Advice to a Principal Candidate Search Committee

The final area of the interview was concerned with the advice a superintendent would give to a search committee seeking a principal candidate. Responses among the superintendents varied among the candidate’s background, communication style, demonstrated leadership qualities, and the need to establish and stick to identified criteria throughout the process.

None of the superintendents discussed simply wanting the principal to be instructional leader. None of the superintendents discussed simply wanting the principal

to be a manager. They all alluded to criteria such as, communication and proven leadership, but provided no situation in reference to the use of those skills. One superintendent said he wanted a person who could be a leader at some point, and a team player at another. It was assumed that the effective elementary school principal could recognize the appropriate timing and utilization of the two different roles.

One said to make sure and check out their background, while several focused on having established criteria to make sure someone is selected who can fit the expectations of the school district. Two of the eight superintendents focused on leadership, but did not cite specifically what type of leadership or specific managerial skills were needed.

In response to what advice a superintendent would give to a search committee, the first superintendent said he would pose questions to the committee such as:

Is this a person who has demonstrated leadership qualities, is this a person who can communicate to the degree that they can recognize their role in a situation and become a teamplayer some points, become a leader at some points. Those are the kinds of things I look at when I'm in the process of hiring a new administrator.

A second superintendent replied:

I've told search committees many times, what we are looking for is a leader. That's more important than where they were before or what they did, though we want to spend some time looking at that. If you don't find leadership ability in the person, none of the other stuff matters because if a principal doesn't lead, I don't think a principal can do what a school and what teachers and children need.

The simple question is will this person be able to provide leadership to this group of people? Make that first, make that primary. If the answer is no, don't bother looking at the other things, they don't matter.

The criterion for selecting an elementary school principal from a pool of candidates is difficult due to the fact that a description of what one superintendent believes to be effective varies from another. At best, they all use broad based terminology such as he should be a good communicator without providing a contextual reference. Research has faced a similar dilemma in efforts to describe the effective elementary school principal.

Keller (1998) reinforces the difficulty of having an exact description of what constitutes the make up of an effective principal by stating:

Twenty years of research strongly suggest that they [principals] make a big difference in shaping the education that goes on in a school. If a school is going to be successful academically, it needs someone whose potential can't be summed up on a scoreboard." (p. 25)

Yukl (1998) also notes that it is more useful to study leadership as a process than to study the leader as an individual. The criterion used to evaluate leadership effectiveness reflects a researcher's explicit or implicit conception of leadership.

King and Blummer (2000) explain it this way:

In this period of unprecedented change and heightened expectations for education, communities rarely seek a candidate with a specific agenda. More commonly, they look for a leader who can bring people together, build coalitions, celebrate successes, help people work on problems, and make principled decisions based on

careful thought and research. In short, communities are seeking educational leaders who see their work as building strong communities. (p. 357)

### Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate by means of qualitative research methods, superintendents' perceptions regarding the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals.

Attempting to identify what makes principals effective is challenging, especially in light of the perception of those who stand in judgement of their effectiveness. Research has been unable to pinpoint the exact combination of traits, behaviors, personality types, or specific leadership styles that can serve as a model to adequately prepare a candidate for the principalship. Depending upon which constituency one is asking, one may yield different results in what an effective elementary school principal does. A vast amount of research has focused on the characteristics demonstrated by an effective instructional leader such as: (a) someone who has a vision, (b) someone who helps define and implement the mission the school, (c) someone who monitors instructional goals and sets high expectations for student achievement, (d) someone who engages teacher participation and the attainment of high expectations, (e) someone who is knowledgeable about curriculum, and finally (f) someone who can create a positive culture and climate within the school.

Uncovered in the findings of this study were the selected superintendents' perceptions of an effective elementary school principal. After reviewing related research it was anticipated that superintendents would spend time specifically discussing the role of the principal as the instructional leader, while at some point, alluding to their role as a building manager. Upon completion of the interviews and in summarizing the findings, it was noted that superintendents value common aspects of the principal's role differently and to varying degrees. If the principalship is about leadership and effective leadership is defined differently by different people, then what an effective principal does may be viewed differently. What one superintendent considers effective in one school district, may not be considered to be effective by a superintendent in another school district.

A principal's ability to communicate, to work with people to achieve agreed upon goals, and to do so in an open and honest manner, would probably be considered some of the most important behavioral characteristics cited by superintendents. Perhaps the most specific identifiable characteristic of the successful school leader is his or her ability to build relationships. If one simply looks at the behavioral characteristic of someone who can build strong, positive relationships with people, they may also be defining what most superintendents are looking for in an effective elementary school principal.

This concept was clearly stated by one superintendent who said, "We are looking for someone who can connect with people, be it administration, teachers, parents, students, etc., in a sincere and meaningful way that leads to good." Another stated, "We

are looking for someone who can help develop a set of goals with high expectations for success and use their ability to connect with people to achieve them."

This study tells us that while the ability to build relationships with people is of critical importance to the effective elementary school principal, it is not the only behavior one must exhibit in order to be considered effective. There are other areas such as being able to implement change and establish a culture conducive to learning that are also of importance. However, having identified several characteristics named in the study does not relieve the principal from acknowledging what his or her district or superintendent perceives to be effective. In the simplest context it can be stated, the effective elementary school principal or any principal for that matter, understands what is expected of them in terms of their superintendent's expectations, and fulfills those obligations first. The success of the principal's instructional agenda will depend upon their own definition of the type of principal they want to be and their ability to accommodate their superintendent's expectations in term of being effective to make it work. If a principal's goal is to be viewed as an effective instructional leader by their staff and community, but their superintendent's perception is that of an efficient manger, then the principal will have to decide how to make it work and if it can be done.

No matter where one is a principal, there is going to be a blend of management and leadership behaviors that lead the individual to be perceived as effective. The principal must understand and recognize that different superintendents have different

recipes for what makes the best blend of these behaviors. In the best situations, there is congruence between the superintendent's perception and the principal's perception concerning what that blend of behaviors is. If that perception is anchored in instructional leadership research, then the blend is a balance between being an efficient manager and effective instructional leader.

One other area to be discussed, is the principal's ability to deal with change. It is the principal's role in the change process that has profound impact on the perception of their role as manager or leader, effective or ineffective. In education, managing and initiating change is one of the most difficult aspects of the elementary school principalship. Whether one is trying to change a teacher's performance or simply trying to change a parent's mind, the ability to persuade someone to view things from a different disposition may be the biggest challenge a principal faces on a daily basis.

Change may be directed from the central office in regard to a policy or aspect of the curriculum. The change then becomes the principal's responsibility to implement whether they agree with it or not. Some view the principal as a middle manager whose responsibility is to make sure everything in the school runs well. Some view the principal as the instructional leader in charge of promoting and implementing any change that improves teaching and learning. In reality it depends on the circumstance and the perception of those wanting the change to take place, as well as those effected by the

change. This is where the need to communicate and to be a relationship builder is critical.

In most circumstances concerning the principal's role in regard to change and how a principal proceeds with it, will align them with people's perception of them be that of a leader or a manager, but most of all, but that which considers them to be effective.

It will always be the challenge of the principalship to perform as a leader and be considered an effective one by the superintendent. A leader is not afraid to commit, to share their vision, and to be considered an expert on a topic. An effective principal has a strong ability to influence climate and culture in a way they think is best. Whether they are the initiators or implementers of change, they never surrender their leadership role. As long as he or she works to be an effective principal they will have to deal with change, and change will always be viewed differently by those who initiate it as well as those who are the recipients of it. While the principal strives to balance the appropriate blend of leadership and management behaviors, they will continue to have to work with the concept of change, whether they are the implementer or initiator of change and strive to be considered effective during the process.

In summary of the discussion and the researcher's desire to generate a list of the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals as determined by this study, the following is offered:



Superintendents' Perceptions of the Behavioral Characteristics of Effective Elementary School Principals

1. The effective elementary school principal is an effective communicator. The effective elementary school principal is able to work with different groups (teachers, parents, students, and central office). The effective elementary school principal is able to maintain an open, honest, and effective channel of communication that facilitates the achievement of agreed upon goals.

2. The effective elementary school principal is a positive influence upon the climate of the school. The effective elementary school principal acknowledges the need to celebrate student and faculty successes. The effective elementary school principal demonstrates a sense of enthusiasm and pride, as he/she remains visible throughout the building, aiding and supporting all under-takings that make the school a place conducive to learning.

3. The effective elementary school principal is able to promote a professional culture among faculty that motivates and inspires them to function as a community of leaders and one that sets the example for students in reference to continuous learning.

4. The effective elementary school principal is engaged in the monitoring of the stated reliable indicators of leading and managing an effective school. The indicators could be the dropout rate, number of incidents of violence, or academic achievement, but

no matter what they are, the principal stays in touch with the benchmarks leading to their attainment.

5. The principal is an agent of change when the need for improvement or reform dictates it, whether his/her role is that of an initiator or an implementer. The effective principal leads and understands the role of the change process and is able to implement it with the faculty.

6. The effective elementary school principal is able to articulate his or her vision through the mission of the school. The effective elementary school principal's daily interactions with teachers, parents, students, and central office personnel must align with the mission of the school.

7. The effective elementary school principal is a team player and focuses on the best way to achieve desired results with the participation of all stakeholders.

8. The effective elementary school principal is knowledgeable about curriculum and instruction and is able to acquire resources and staff development opportunities as needed.

9. The effective elementary school principal is a relationship builder and applies his/her knowledge regarding the importance of establishing and maintaining quality relationships to the mission of being an effective elementary school principal.

### Recommendations for Future Research

As a result of this study, the investigator offers the following considerations for future research.

1. This study should be replicated using teachers as a response group. Most superintendents have served as principals and certainly present a different perspective in reference to what is considered being effective. This suggests a need for interviewing groups of dissimilar orientation that exist in order to validate the effective behavioral characteristics associated with the principalship. As a means of validating the qualifications of teachers as a viable interview group, the investigator offers the following rationale. Teachers work more closely with principals than any other group, and as such, work with a number of principals during the course of their careers. They may have worked with principals who may have been considered to be more effective than others are. Therefore, teachers would be well prepared to define the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals as well as superintendents.

2. This study should be replicated using principals as the response group. Principals own perceptions of what may be considered effective may be in contrast to what the literature states. In question may also be the fact they know what to do to be an effective principal, but are unable to carry out the behaviors to do other constraints on their time and opportunity.

3. This study should be replicated comparing the principals of schools that are

site-based managed and those that operate in a centralized management system. A site based managed school can offer a dramatic change in the role of the principal in terms of their opportunity to demonstrate effective leadership behaviors.

4. This study should be replicated by interviewing superintendents in different district factor groups. A study such as this would provide critical information in determining if the perceptions of the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals are district factor group driven or can be attributed to other factors. It may also be beneficial to consider the effective behavioral characteristics of the urban-based principal compared to the suburban or rural-based principals.

5. This study should be replicated limiting school size. There may be an increased need for management behaviors in a school of 600 students, as compared to a school of 300 students. The quality of supervisory practices may also be affected by the number of instructional staff to be evaluated. The number of observations a principal must conduct may impact their opportunity to function as an instructional leader in terms of time per teacher and quantity of observations that need to be completed.

6. This study should be replicated using secondary school principals as the focus of superintendents' perceptions.

7. This study should be replicated using principals of independent schools as the focus of superintendents' perceptions or those persons in charge of formally evaluating the principal.

8. This study should be replicated by focusing on the clear distinction between the principal's role as a manager and the principal's role as a leader. In this type of study the inferences drawn from superintendents' responses would serve as the descriptors for effective managers and effective leaders. Also, in a future study, one may want to design an interview instrument that specifically addresses the principal's role as a manager or a leader in each area of the principalship (i.e., staff development, dealing with change, culture building and knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment).

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**Appendix A**

**Request Letter**

Dear Superintendent:

My name is Rick Fair and I am completing a doctoral dissertation in Education Administration and Supervision at Seton Hall University College of Education and Human Services on the subject of the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals. The title of this study is "A Study of New Jersey Public School Superintendents' Perceptions Regarding the Behavioral Characteristics of Effective Elementary School Principals". I would like to interview you in person, using open-ended questions, so that we may discuss this very important issue and so that I may gain your perspective on this topic. The focus areas of my interview will include the effective behavioral characteristics of the elementary school principal in reference to curriculum, instruction, assessment, goal setting, managing change, and creating climate and culture. It is my hope that your participation will cause you to examine your viewpoints of the effective behavioral characteristics of the elementary school principal and your consideration of them an effective leader, manager, or combination of both. The interview would last approximately one hour.

The interview would be held at your office or at a mutually convenient place and at a mutually convenient time. I will make notes of your responses and would like your permission to tape record our conversation. The confidentiality and anonymity of all interviewees and of all schools and districts will be preserved. This information would be used solely for purposes of analysis and both tape recording and written transcripts will be destroyed upon completion of the study. All recorded and documented responses will be kept in a secure cabinet in my office. Your participation would be voluntary and could be withdrawn at any time. All participants in this study will receive a copy of the abstract upon request.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research. The IRB believes that the research procedures adequately safeguard the subject's privacy, welfare, civil liberties, and rights. The Chairperson of the IRB may be reached through the office of Grants and Research Services. The telephone number of the Office is (973) 275-2974.

It is my hope that this study will enhance our understanding of the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals. Whether or not you decide to participate in this study, I would appreciate it if you would complete and return the enclosed reply so I will know who contact for participation in the study. If you indicate you are willing to participate in this study, I will contact you to arrange for our conversation. Thank you in for taking time to help with this study.

Sincerely,

Rick Fair  
Mt. Olive Township Public Schools  
Phone: (973) 252-2922 (home)  
(973) 691-4032 (work)

**Appendix B**

**Reply Form**

**REPLY FORM****A STUDY OF NEW JERSEY PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS'  
PERCEPTIONS REGARDING THE BEHAVIORAL CHARACTERISTICS OF  
EFFECTIVE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**

Please check:

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to participate                      \_\_\_\_\_ I do not wish to participate

Name \_\_\_\_\_

School District \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Best time of day to be contacted: \_\_\_\_\_

A stamped, self-addressed envelope is enclosed for your response. Thank you.

Return to:

Richard W. Fair  
12 Jessica Lane  
Succasunna, NJ 07876

Please respond by December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1999

**Appendix C**

**Consent Letter**



CONSENT LETTER

I understand that I am agreeing to participate in Rick Fair's study of superintendents' perceptions of the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals.

I understand that I have agreed to be interviewed, and with my permission, the researcher will make notes of my responses as well as tape record our conversation and that the tapes will be destroyed upon completion of the study.

I understand that this information will be used solely for purposes of analysis and that the confidentiality of the interview and of the school district will be preserved.

I understand that all recorded and documented responses will be kept in a secure cabinet in the researcher's office and that my participation in this study is voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time.

I understand that after my interview my participation in the study is complete. I also understand that a copy of the study's abstract is available upon request.

I understand that this project has been reviewed and approved by the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects Research. The IRB believes that the research procedures adequately safeguard the subject's privacy, welfare, civil liberties, and rights. The Chairperson of the IRB may be reached through the office of Grants and Research Services. The telephone number of the Office is (973) 275-2974.

I have read the material above, and any questions I asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this activity, realizing that I may withdraw without prejudice at any time.

---

Participant

---

Date

**Appendix D**  
**Interview Instrument**

### Statement of Problem and Sub Problems

The purpose of this study is to determine the perceptions of New Jersey public school superintendents' regarding the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals. These perceptions can serve as a knowledge base for superintendents and elementary school principals. This study will add to the growing body of research on behavioral characteristics of effective school leadership.

There are a series of nine questions:

#### Superintendent Background

- a.) How many students are enrolled in your district?
- b.) Why did you enter the field of education?
- c.) Why did you become a superintendent?
- d.) Were you ever a principal; is so what level of education?

#### Area 1: Self-Perceptions of Leadership

- 1.1 How would you describe yourself as a superintendent?
- 1.2 What do you see as the most difficult part of the principal's job?
- 1.3 What do you perceive as the ideal relationship between a principal and a superintendent?
- 1.4 Do you have any additional comments related to self-perceptions of the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals?

**Area 2: The Reliable Indicators of Effective Elementary School Principals**

- 2.1 What do you perceive as reliable indicators of an effective principal?
- 2.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the reliable indicators of an effective elementary school principal?

**Area 3: The Principal's Role in Regard to Creating Culture and Climate**

- 3.1 What do you perceive the principal's role to be in regard to creating culture and climate?
- 3.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role in creating culture and climate?

**Area 4: The Principal's Role in Regard to Change**

- 4.1 How do you perceive the principal acting as an initiator of change?
- 4.2 How do you perceive the principal acting as an implementor of change?
- 4.3 Do you have any additional comments related to the principal's role with regard to change?

**Area 5: The Principal's Role in Regard to Goal Setting**

- 5.1 What is the principal's role in regard to the mission statement of a school?
- 5.2 What is the principal's role in regard to educational objectives of the school?
- 5.3 What is the principal's role in regard to the educational objectives of the teachers?

**Area 6: The Principal's Role in Regard to Staff Development**

- 6.1 What is the principal's role in regard to staff development?

- 6.2 Do you have any additional comments in regard to the principal's role and staff development?

**Area 7: The Principal's Role in Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment**

- 7.1 What is the principal's responsibility in regard to the administration of standardized tests?
- 7.2 What is the principal's responsibility in regard to the interpretation of assessment data?
- 7.3 What is the principal's responsibility in regard to the attainment of the state core curriculum content standards?

**Area 8: Superintendent's Advice to a Search Committee**

- 8.1 What advice would you give to a search committee seeking a principal candidate?

**Area 9: Additional Comments Concerning the Behavioral Characteristics of Effective**

**Elementary School Principals**

- 9.1 What additional comments do you have related to the behavioral characteristics of effective elementary school principals?