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## Reading Education Issues: Principals' and Teachers' Perceptions

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*University of Tennessee - Knoxville*

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Sarah Ann Keller entitled "Reading Education Issues: Principals' and Teachers' Perceptions." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education, with a major in Education.

John R. Ray, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Lester N. Knight, Charles H. Hargis, C. Glennon Rowell

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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and recommend its acceptance:

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C. Glennon Rowell

Acceptance for the Council:

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Vice Chancellor and Dean of  
Graduate Studies

(Original signatures are on file with official student records)

**READING EDUCATION ISSUES:  
PRINCIPALS' AND TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS**

**A Dissertation  
Presented for the  
Doctor of Education  
Degree  
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville**

**Sarah Ann Keller  
August 2004**

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my sons, Jimmy and Andrew Keller, and my daughter, Leslie Suters. Getting to know them over the years has been an incredible experience and I'm so proud of all of them. They encouraged me to pursue this degree, but even more, they always inspire me to do my best.

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine middle school principals' and teachers' perceptions of the current issues in middle school reading education and to identify the sources of information that these educators use and find helpful to keep informed reading issues.

Participants were employed in the 14 middle schools of the Knox County School System (KCS) in Knoxville, Tennessee. Questionnaires were completed in March and April 2004 by the 14 middle school principals and 14 teachers who were reading chairpersons for their schools.

The questionnaire used in this study, Middle School Principals and Teachers: Knowledge of the Reading Program, consists of five tasks. A chi-square analysis was used for three of the tasks and percentages of responses were compared to analyze two tasks.

Principals and teachers agreed more than they disagreed on their responses to all tasks in the questionnaire. There were three items in which participants' responses showed statistically significant differences: (a) the two groups' *classification* and *ranking of importance* of one issue, providing a supportive learning community including teachers who serve as role models of active literacy via apparent relish for reading (teachers *classified* and *ranked* this as unresolved more often than did principals), and (b) one *source of information*, journals for educators (reported as used more by principals than teachers).

Principals and teachers agreed that three issues are unresolved: (a) meeting the criteria of No Child Left behind for “Highly Qualified” teachers, (b) effects of public accountability, which foster teaching to the test, on reading instruction, and (c) planning reading instruction for struggling readers. Analysis of participants’ *rating of understanding* of reading issues showed similarity in their reported level of understanding.

Participants identified three *sources of information* most often used in the last 12 months to keep informed about issues in reading education: (a) Informal contacts with specialists in the field, (b) formal contacts with specialists in the field, and (c) popular national magazines and/or newspapers. Participants rated the *helpfulness* of these sources of information similarly.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

### Introduction

Reading is an essential part of American education. There have always been issues surrounding American education, and reading as a subject of instruction is certainly no exception. Although American public schools have focused on reading almost from their inception, the issues concerning the reading curriculum in schools have changed over the years. Over the years, different viewpoints have held sway over what is taught and how reading instruction is conducted. Many factors, both internal and external, influence the school reading program.

One of the main purposes of colonial schools was to enable citizens to read the Bible. Other reading materials were scarce and seldom provided in school settings. For almost a century (1836 to 1930), *The McGuffey Readers* were the main text for reading instruction (Ballentine, 2001). Today there are numerous basal reading series for school systems to choose from in making selections for textbook adoptions. Issues concerning the use of whole language and trade books, for example, have entered the reading instruction sphere.

Reading is usually taught in elementary schools in self contained classrooms with one teacher in charge and delivering instruction. Middle schools usually include reading in the curriculum as a separate subject, making interdisciplinary instruction difficult, though not impossible. When the student



reaches high school, he/she is expected to have mastered reading; it is not generally taught as a separate subject. Whether or not reading is taught as a separate subject, it is a necessary skill used in the study of all other disciplines. Reading for information becomes increasingly important in the student's life as he/she progresses through school and is vital to functioning as an adult.

Middle school is, perhaps, the last chance for teachers to teach students how to read and to become lifelong readers. One goal of most reading programs is to encourage students to read. According to Sanacore, "Promoting the lifetime love of reading should be one of our most important goals in middle schools" (2000, p. 157). Most people, adults included, avoid doing things that are difficult or uncomfortable for them. If reading is a chore, students (and adults) will avoid it as a pleasure or recreational activity. Avoidance of reading can greatly affect school performance and thus ultimately affect the goal of having a literate American population.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Reading education is influenced by many factors. The following discussion focuses on some of the main factors currently affecting reading education.

#### ***NCTE/IRA Standards for the English Language Arts***

American education is noted for its diversity. While having a common goal of providing education for every child in America, the individual states have traditionally selected their own curriculum and textbooks. In an attempt to

provide for some consistency in core subjects, in 1992 Congress created a task force to examine the feasibility of national standards. Standards had previously been developed in science and math. On March 12, 1996, The National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE) and the International Reading Association (IRA) announced the jointly developed *Standards for the English Language Arts* (Economist, 1996).

The national standards for science and math included benchmarks to indicate progress toward mastery of each individual standard. The *Standards* as presented by NCTE and IRA do not include such benchmarks. Rather, the focus is on defining students' "opportunities and resources to develop the language skills they need to pursue life's goals and to participate fully as informed, productive members of society." (National Council for Teachers of English, 2003) The *Standards* are focused on the content and process of learning language arts. In the introduction to the *Standards* on the NCTE website, IRA and NCTE (2003) state that "They are not prescriptions for particular curriculum or instruction" and that, while the *Standards* are presented as a list, they are "interrelated and should be considered as a whole" (2003). The language arts were defined as consisting of reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and visually representing. A grounding in present knowledge about language and language learning was determined to be essential in the English language arts; however, the lack of nationally recognized benchmarks leaves individual school systems

and teachers to set the specific goals for the reading curriculum and for evaluating its effectiveness.

### ***No Child Left Behind (NCLB)***

The 2002 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) places a great deal of emphasis on standardized testing as proof of worth of the education provided to students and on having “highly qualified” teachers in every classroom.

The definition of what specifically makes a teacher highly qualified has caused much concern among teachers and administrators (Pearson, 2003). This is true of all levels of public education but has had a special effect on middle school teachers, many of whom are certified to teach elementary school and now may be required to have certification in the subject area they teach. While these teachers may have taught reading successfully in middle school for a number of years, they must now prove they are highly qualified. Each state is charged with determining exactly what procedures must be followed and what documentation must be provided to prove highly qualified status before the end of the 2005-2006 school year. Tennessee has determined that an existing teacher must be fully licensed to teach in Tennessee, have no licensure requirements waived, hold at least a bachelor’s degree, and demonstrate competency in each academic subject he/she teaches. The following list is approved for existing middle or secondary teachers to achieve the highly qualified status. The teacher must have:

- passed one of the NTE or Praxis teacher licensure tests [for their subject area], or

- an academic major in the subject area, or
- the coursework equivalent of an academic major (24 semester hours), or
- a graduate degree in the core subject area, or
- National Board Certification in the subject area, or
- demonstrated competence in all core academic subject areas via a highly objective uniform state standard of evaluation (HOUSSE). (Tennessee Department of Education, 2004, p. 4)

The HOUSSE option includes provisions to qualify under a professional matrix or by using teacher effect data based on Tennessee Comprehensive Performance System (TCAP) scores.

It should be noted that Tennessee elementary school certification (for grades one through eight) has previously allowed the currently employed teachers to teach any subject in those grades. Under NCLB, however, a teacher with elementary certification who has passed either the National Teacher Examination (NTE) or Praxis test is highly qualified to teach up to sixth grade in middle school. Elementary certified teachers, even if highly qualified to teach sixth grade, must now prove that they are highly qualified to teach grades seven or eight by one of the methods described above. Current middle school teachers holding middle school (seventh or eighth grade) or secondary subject area certification must also meet the requirements to be highly qualified to teach their subject area. Programs for teachers who are currently being trained and certified to teach are being changed to meet the new criteria, but the problem remains for those already teaching.

Under Tennessee's interpretation of NCLB, standardized test scores are to be used to determine whether or not each school is providing a "quality education" for each student. Given this current emphasis on accountability in education, the lack of benchmarks for the NCTE/IRA *Standards* may present a problem in implementing the *Standards* and proving progress or mastery in reading and the other language arts. This only adds to educators' concerns about their efforts to provide a high quality reading program for their students.

### ***Internal Factors Influencing the Reading Program***

The middle school setting is a unique part of American education with many internal factors that influence the school's program. Designed to meet the needs of students grades six through eight (ages 11-13), it resides between the elementary school years (ages 5-10) and the "grown up" world of high school (ages 14-18). As such, middle school has defined its role and curriculum to fit the needs of the students - one of the internal factors influencing the program. Principals and teachers are charged with meeting the curricular and instructional needs of students who are themselves in a rapidly changing state of emotional and physical maturity. Williamson (1996) stated that "the role of the middle level teacher is perhaps one of most vital in the educational continuum (p. 378). Middle level education focuses on young adolescence as a unique period in the child's development and requires a unique response from the educators who work with middle school students (Williamson, 1996). In addition to the unique needs of the adolescent, there are other internal factors that influence the

principal in making reading education program decisions. One of these factors is the population served by the school. The cultural setting of the school must also be considered: neighborhoods served, parental expectations and involvement, prevailing socio-economical conditions, and ethnic composition.

### ***External Factors Influencing the Reading Program***

The middle school principal, the instructional leader for the school, and teachers who deliver day-to-day instruction must understand the external factors that influence the reading program in their school. External factors include such influences as the instructional goals that the local school system has set for the reading program, the philosophical position of the school system regarding reading as a subject of instruction, the funding provided for the reading program, effects of NCLB on the reading program, and current issues in reading education. Of these external factors, the principals' and teachers' knowledge of current issues in reading education is the focus of this study. Both principals and teachers must have an understanding of the current issues in middle school reading education, effective reading instruction methods, and current research in the field in order to provide a high quality reading program in the school.

### ***Incorporation of Internal and External Factors***

With the advent of the NCLB legislation and its emphasis on high-stakes testing to determine adequate progress in reading, the pressure to provide a high quality reading program for students has become even more intense. Middle school principals and teachers must be aware of all of the internal and external

factors that influence their decisions about the programs in their school. They should be conversant with the current issues involved in reading education to provide the best possible reading program for the students they are trusted with educating.

### ***Sources of Information for Principals and Teachers***

There are many sources of information available to both the general public and to educators. Most adult Americans have participated in the American public school system; many currently are involved because they have children in the public school system. As such, having experienced the system first hand, many American adults believe they are very knowledgeable about what should and what does go on in public schools and about reading education specifically. In addition to their first-hand, personal knowledge of education, both educators and the general public gain information about reading education from a variety of sources. Opinions about public schools and reading education are expressed in popular national magazines and newspapers; in books published by the popular press; on radio and television broadcasts; and on the internet.

In addition to these sources of information about reading education available to the general public, educators, including principals and teachers, gain information from professionally available sources. These include formal and informal contacts with colleagues; college classes and textbooks; formal presentations such as those presented at professional conventions, workshops, and seminars; study groups; and staff development and training provided by the

local school system. Little is known about which of these sources are most frequently used by principals and teachers and which sources about reading education are most helpful to them.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Current issues in reading education influence the decisions made by teachers and administrators when planning the reading program for their school(s). These issues are among the external factors influencing decisions concerning the middle school reading program. Little is known about the level of understanding middle school teachers and principals have of these issues or about the sources of information each group of professional educators finds most helpful in keeping informed about current reading issues.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Reading is an important part of the middle school curriculum. The middle school principal and teachers must take into account both external and internal factors when designating instructional priorities for the school's reading program. This study proposed to examine one of these external factors - current issues in middle school reading education.

The purpose of the study was to examine the perceptions of current issues in middle school reading education held by selected middle school principals and teachers in the Knox County School System (KCS) in Knoxville, Tennessee. The study more specifically asked these educators to identify both



issues in reading education and sources of information they have found to be helpful in keeping informed about current issues in reading education.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions guided this research:

1. What are the critical and unresolved issues in middle school reading education as perceived by (a) middle school principals and (b) middle school reading teachers?
2. What level of understanding do (a) middle school principals and (b) middle school reading teachers perceive they have of each issue?
3. What sources do (a) middle school principals and (b) middle school reading teachers use and find helpful to inform themselves about current issues in reading education?

### **Significance of the Study**

A search of the current research base found many studies that examined various aspects of the principals' and teachers' roles in the elementary school reading program. One study was identified that addressed principals' perceptions of current issues in elementary school reading education and the sources of information these principals found helpful. This study did not address teachers' perceptions of the issues or their sources of information.

Few studies were identified that looked at middle school reading education specifically; therefore, less is known about principals' and teachers' perceptions and involvement at this level. There were no studies identified that specifically examined middle school principals' and teachers' perceptions of the current issues in reading education or their sources of information about these issues.

This survey focused on middle school principals and reading teachers to examine (1) their perceptions of the current issues in reading education and (2) the sources that they have found to be useful in keeping informed about reading education issues. This information should be of value to the school system studied in planning effective professional development in reading education for both principals and teachers at the middle school level.

### **Assumptions**

There are several assumptions that were made while developing plans for this survey research. One assumption was that perceptions of current issues in reading education influence decisions made by principals and teachers when they plan the reading program for their schools. A second assumption was that there are sufficient differences in elementary and middle school reading education to make this research of importance to educators. The final assumption was that there are similarities and differences between middle school principals' and reading teachers' perceptions of the critical issues in reading education as well as variations in the sources of information each has found to be helpful.

### **Limitations**

Limitations of this study include:

1. The study was limited to 28 participants from the 14 middle schools in the Knox County School System (KCS).
2. One group of participants was limited to principals or assistant principals in charge of reading curriculum in their school - one from each of the 14 middle

schools. The school principal designated which principal was to complete the questionnaire for his/her middle school if he/she did not choose to participate.

3. The second group of participants was limited to teachers who are department chairpersons for reading education in their schools - one from each of the 14 middle schools.

### **Definitions**

The following definitions were used to identify terms used in this study:

1. Issue – a commonly identified problem or problem area; a matter of dispute between concerned parties,
2. Middle school – grades six through eight in the public school system,
3. Reading Education – formal instruction in the processes and skills involved in reading,
4. Staff Development/Professional Development - training or retraining provided to principals and/or teachers to advance the educator's professional performance.

### **Summary**

Chapter One presented an introduction to the study, which included an examination of middle school principals' and teachers' perceptions of the current issues in reading education as well as the sources of information that each group of educators has used to keep informed about current issues in reading education. Middle school reading issues were categorized as part of the external factors that influence decisions about the middle school reading program. As such, it is important to examine what understanding principals and teachers have of the current issues.

Chapter Two presents a discussion of selected research and literature focused on middle school education, the role of principals and teachers in the

reading program, issues in elementary reading education, the impact of teacher beliefs on curriculum, and staff development as a source of information for principals and teachers.

Chapter Three describes the procedures used in selecting participants and developing the survey instrument as well as data collection and data analysis methods.

Chapter Four presents the findings of the study and discusses the significance of these results.

Chapter Five is a summary of the findings of this study. This chapter discusses conclusions and recommendations for further research.

## CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Introduction

Over the last 20 years, numerous studies have been undertaken that looked at the relationship of the principal, the teacher, and the reading program. A number of studies were found that examined the principal's knowledge of and/or role in the reading program. Several studies have pointed out that the quality of the school principals' knowledge of and involvement in the school reading program determines the success or failure of the school's reading program (Jacobson, Reutzel, & Hollingsworth, 1992; McNinch & Richmond, 1981; McWilliams, 1981). The majority of these studies have been conducted in elementary schools. One study was identified that examined the secondary principal's role in reading education (Wilhite, 1984), and no studies were found that specifically focused on the middle school principal's role. The only study to specifically examine the principal's understanding of issues in reading education was conducted with elementary school principals (Jacobson, Reutzel, & Hollingsworth, 1992). Studies were identified that reflected the teacher's influence on adolescent children's interest in reading (Campbell, 1989; Gettys & Fowler; Holt & O'Tuel, 1988; Kendrick, 1999; Smith Tracy, & Weber, 1998). Teachers' beliefs impact their decisions about curriculum goals and content. This is important to remember when considering principals' and teachers' perceptions of critical issues in reading education and the sources of information

they find useful. No studies were found where there was an examination of sources of information that middle school principals and teachers use and find helpful. One possible source of information for educators is staff development provided by the school system. Several studies were identified that examined effective staff development for reading instruction in the middle school setting.

### **Middle School Reading Education**

Teachers and principals in middle schools face different challenges and issues than those in elementary schools. There are different professional concerns as well as the challenge of working with children who are entering the teenage years with all of the accompanying adolescent issues.

As previously cited, the NCLB legislation has caused considerable emphasis on standardized test scores as a measure of educational progress and of students' learning. This is common to both elementary and middle schools. The NCLB mandate that each class be taught by a "highly qualified" teacher, however, has had a different effect on middle school teachers in general. Most middle school teachers have elementary certification, which has previously been considered sufficient by educators and school systems. Under NCLB, middle school teachers above the sixth grade must be certified in the subject area they teach by the 2006 school year to be considered highly qualified. Exactly what this means for reading education in the middle school is unclear. At one point the consensus was that if a teacher is highly qualified in language arts, he/she is automatically highly qualified to teach reading. This seems clear enough, but in

some middle schools every teacher teaches a reading class in addition to teaching their academic classes. To date, what will make these teachers highly qualified has not been specified.

Middle school principals and teachers are charged with meeting the curricular and instructional needs of students who are themselves in a rapidly changing state of emotional and physical maturity. The developmental and educational needs of elementary school children are very different from those of children in middle school. It is important that principals and teachers understand these differences and their impact on reading education.

Adolescents have new and different needs and demands on their lives both at home and at school than they had in elementary school. Age has been demonstrated as a factor that influences students' attitudes toward reading. Adolescents' lives out of school change and become more complex. As children grow older, their lives become increasingly involved with activities such as sports, video games, and other electronic pursuits that affect their choice of reading as a recreational activity (Holt & O'Tuel, 1988).

There have been gender differences regarding reading noted in the middle school years. Adolescent boys' attitudes toward reading are generally lower than those of girls of the same age (Fitzgibbons, 1997). Kendrick reported that, unless required by their teachers, middle grade boys do not read and most do not enjoy reading (1999). Kendrick went on to say that adolescent boys do not

usually read unless their teachers require them to do so and do not prefer the reading material that is typically assigned by teachers.

It has also been noted that positive role models and classroom environment are important in shaping the reading habits of adolescent readers. In a study of Sustained Silent Reading (SSR), Campbell (1989) reported that the teacher as a role model is crucial to the success of SSR. The school and classroom environment play an important role in producing positive attitudes toward reading (Gettys & Fowler, 1996; Smith, Tracy, & Weber, 1998) and teachers have been found to be powerful role models for life-long literacy (VanLeirsburg and Johns, 1994).

### **Principals, Teachers, and the Reading Program**

A number of research studies have examined the relationship of principals and/or teachers and their reading programs. The following is a review of some selected empirical studies.

#### ***Elementary Principals and Teachers and the Reading Program***

Research concerning the principal and the reading program on the elementary school level also has centered on identifying competencies and roles of these principals. A few studies have examined the principals' ideas of which aspects of reading were most important as instructional goals for their programs.

Vornberg and Sampson (1985) concluded that experienced teachers view principals as coordinating learning resources for the reading program rather than as taking an assertive role in directing the teachers' efforts in instruction.



However, new teachers were found to seek support for reading instruction strategies first from their principal and second from fellow teachers (Grace, 1991). McNinch and Richmond (1981) found that principals they surveyed would like to be more involved with the reading programs in their schools but also saw their professional roles as more administrative. This was supported by the findings of Mottley and McNinch (1984). Doan and Doan (1984) surveyed both principals and teachers as to perceptions of the principals' involvement in the reading program. Teachers perceived their principals as less involved in the reading program than did the principals themselves. Principals viewed the need for staff development in reading instruction to be greater than did the teachers and apparently felt that involvement in the reading program was administrative in nature.

Principals' perceptions of the instructional goals of their reading programs were the focus of other research. Shannon (1986) found no consensus as to the goals for reading instruction among 421 classroom teachers, 20 reading specialists, and 20 administrators in one school system. This study also found a difference in orientation toward reading instruction among these school personnel and that a high emphasis was placed on achievement test scores of reading. Shannon concluded that "results suggest that most administrators accepted student test scores as the appropriate goal and centralized planning and standard use of commercial reading materials as the appropriate means for instruction" (p. 31). Morrow (1986) found that elementary school principals

favored comprehension, word recognition skills, and study skills as appropriate goals of reading instruction and believed voluntary reading to be lowest in priority. This finding is interesting when compared with Bradtmueller and Egan's (1981) responses by principals that comprehension skills were greater or equal in importance to decoding skills in reading, and favored an eclectic approach to the teaching of reading. A broad approach to literacy development was also favored by principals in McNinch and Gruber's (1996) research that identified approval of the whole language approach to teaching reading. Diamantes and Collins (2000), in a survey of 20 elementary school principals, found that these principals did not all share the same definition of reading. They differed as to which aspects of reading were most important: one group of principals indicated that comprehension is most important and another group favored decoding or phonics.

The above research completed in elementary school settings indicated that there were differences in perceptions of the roles of principals in the reading program, that principals had different ideas about what goals are appropriate for the reading program, and that principals and teachers differed in their perceptions of the reading programs in their schools.

### ***Secondary Principals and the Reading Program***

Wilhite (1984) surveyed principals of 23 public secondary schools (grades 9-12) to examine the principals' leadership role. What emerged was a picture of the principal's role as being one comprised of administrative competencies,

operational competencies, and public relations practices. Staff development in reading was agreed to be very important; however reading was not a high priority inservice item. In the area of operational responsibility, program financing was listed as most important, but a majority of principals delegated the responsibility of implementing and evaluating the reading program to support personnel. Reading was not designated as being a priority in the public relations area of responsibility for these principals. Wilhite concluded that there is a need for administrative competence in reading and called for a greater commitment and innovative leadership for reading instruction (1984). This finding is not surprising since reading is generally not taught as a separate subject on the high school level. Wilhite cites resistance from content teachers on the secondary level who believe that they should not teach reading.

### **Issues in Elementary Reading Education**

Jacobson, Reutzel, and Hollingsworth (1992) conducted a national survey of elementary school principals' awareness of the issues concerning elementary school reading instruction. Eleven key issues in reading instruction were identified for this survey. The survey asked principals, in part, to identify both unresolved issues in their reading programs and sources of information that they use to keep current about reading education. The 581 respondents to this questionnaire identified six key issues that these principals viewed as unresolved: whole language approaches vs. use of basal readers, assessment of reading progress, tradebooks vs. use of basal readers in the curriculum, ability

grouping, screening tests to decide children's kindergarten entrance, and increased time in reading vs. practicing skills for at-risk readers.

Of the possible sources of information about reading issues, these principals indicated that they had used the following sources in the past twelve months: professional education magazines, personal contacts with specialists in reading, and newspapers. The least used information sources were: college or university reading courses, college textbooks on reading, articles in professional handbooks, and research reports from research agencies. Interestingly, even though college or university course work had been little used in the past twelve months, such courses were ranked in the top four reading information sources as being most helpful. These principals tended to use interpretive, informal, less technical items as sources of information. Least used were detailed research reports in texts, journals, handbooks, and reports from research agencies. The researchers concluded that information regarding reading issues and practices must be available to principals in easily accessible ways that are understandable.

### **Impact of Teacher Beliefs on Curriculum**

When considering teachers' perceptions about current issues in reading, it is important to consider how their beliefs and perceptions affect decisions made about the reading program. A number of reports conclude that teacher beliefs about both education and their instructional area shape teachers' curriculum decisions (Borg, 2001; Cheung & Wong, 2002; Nespor, 1987; Fisher, Fox, & Paille, 1996; Pajares 1992; Richardson, 1996; van Driel, Beijaard, & Verloop,

2001). According to Sprinthall, Reiman, and Thies-Sprinthall (1996), “teacher characteristics, conceptions of self, and intellectual and interpersonal dispositions in large measure determine both the explicit and the so-called hidden agenda of the classroom” (p. 666). Beliefs may be said to dispose people toward particular actions by filtering the complexities of a situation to make it more comprehensible. They may also be thought of as dispositions toward action (Ambrose, Clement, Philipp, & Chauvot, 2004) and as directly related to teachers’ behavior in the classroom (van Driel, Bejaard, & Verloop, 2001).

Researchers have found it difficult to agree on a definition of “beliefs” Borg (2001) identified four common features to be included in the definition of beliefs:

- The truth element – The content of a proposition is accepted as true by the individual holding it
- The relationship between beliefs and behaviour – beliefs guide people’s thinking and action
- Conscious versus unconscious beliefs – an individual may be conscious of some beliefs and unconscious of others
- Beliefs as value commitments – there is an evaluative aspect to the concept of belief. (p. 186)

Borg concluded by defining a belief as a “Proposition that may be consciously or unconsciously held, is evaluative in that it is accepted as true by the individual, and is therefore imbued with emotive commitment; further it serves as a guide to thought and behaviour” (p. 186).

Beliefs affecting teaching may develop from different sources: career influences, experience, and subject matter (Nespor, 1992). Closely paralleling Nespor is Richardson's (1996) conclusion that three forms of experience influence the development of beliefs and knowledge about teaching: "personal experience, experience with schooling and instruction, and experience with formal knowledge" (p. 105). One example that upholds Richardson's conclusion is found in research conducted by Hill (1983). Hill studied the use of round robin reading (RRR) as an instructional method. While this method is rarely taught in college methods classes and very few textbooks in reading instruction mention RRR as an instructional device, 46 percent of the teachers surveyed indicated daily use of RRR. Another 51 percent indicated they used RRR at least three times a week. Hill concluded that teachers teach in a manner they remember being taught themselves as children, recreating methods they remember from their school years. Teachers may also have been taught to use RRR by their cooperating teacher when he/she was in preservice training as an intern or student teacher. In this case beliefs, formed by personal experience as well as experience with schooling and instruction, shaped teacher decisions about reading practices and curriculum.

Whatever the source of the belief system, the "practical knowledge of experienced teachers consists of an integrated set of beliefs and knowledge" (van Driel, Beijaard, & Verloop, 2001, p. 151). These beliefs are directly related

to teachers' behavior in the classroom and exert a major influence on the decisions made by teachers about curriculum.

### **Staff Development as a Source of Information**

The variety of resources available to the general public and to educators provides information about reading and reading issues. These resources include newspapers and magazines; professional journals; college courses and textbooks; books published by the popular press; radio and television broadcasts; internet websites; as well as conventions, workshops, and seminars. Educators have additional sources available to them such as formal and informal contacts with other educational professionals and staff development provided by the school system. No studies were identified specifically examining the sources of information that middle school principals and teachers found to be useful in keeping informed about reading issues. A number of studies have, however, examined the need for staff development for middle school principals and teachers. Because of the unique needs of middle school educators, Williamson (1996) advocated continuing professional development in the form of inservice training and urged that middle schools develop strategies for the continuing professional growth of all staff.

Effective staff development techniques and practices have been the focus of several research studies concerning educational professionals. Six factors were identified as achieving results when planning and delivering effective staff development (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001). These factors

were divided by the researchers into structural features that set the context for professional development (form, duration, and participation) and core features (content focus, active learning, and coherence). The researchers concluded that sustained and intensive professional development was most likely to have an impact and that the most effective staff development focused on content, gave teachers opportunities for active learning, and was integrated into the daily life of the school. They advocated the encouragement of professional communication and collaborative learning among teachers to support change in teaching practices.

Collaborative learning was found to be a highly effective component of middle school staff development in reading education in several research studies (Anders, 1991; Humphrey, 1992; Norton, 2001; Parsad, Lewis, & Farris, 2001; Scroggins & Powers, 2004; Singh, 2002). Effective staff development allows teachers to assume more responsibility for their own growth and their students' learning (Morrow, Martin, & Kaye, 1996; Richards, 2001).

Novice teachers who have received standard preparation in teacher training classes are still in need of mentoring in reading methods for three to four years (Eberhard, Reindhardt-Mondragon, & Stottlemeyer, 2000) and benefit from organized support (Johnson & Kardos, 2002; Laughter, 1980) on an ongoing basis. Miller (1987) examined the attitudes of reading teachers to determine how they felt about their professional preparation for teaching. She found that the majority of the 52 practicing teachers surveyed did not feel well



prepared to teach reading as a result of their undergraduate preparation. A positive relationship was found between how well prepared for the classroom both novice and experienced teachers feel and the amount of professional development they receive (Parsad, Lewis, & Farris, 2001). These researchers found that “the number of hours teachers spent in professional development activities was related to the extent to which they believed that participation improved their teaching” (p. 6).

Additional research concerning middle school staff development in reading education advocated other components of effective training. The Professional Development School (PDS) model was studied by Frey (2002). Frey found the PDS model to be a promising school restructuring tool for developing literacy in adolescent students. The PDS model involves all stakeholders – students, school staff, and university faculty – in inquiry based practices and research based staff development to effectively raise literacy achievement. According to Sprinthall, Reiman, and Thies-Sprinthall (1996), “Teacher education is too important to be left either to the university or to the school. Alone both fail. Together both may grow” (p. 699).

Other factors that have been advocated for staff development include employing a research based approach (Taylor, 2002) and a focus on teacher beliefs to change instructional values through staff development (Richardson, 1996). The literacy development of sixth-grade “poor readers” was supported and improved through a staff development program that involved inservice

training based on a needs assessment (Speights, 1991). This training involved a parental involvement component that strengthened the ability of teachers and parents to work together to support students' learning.

Another vital component, administrative support, was found to be essential for building teacher confidence and competence (Laughter, 1980). Supportive administrators see teachers as experts, develop expertise together through professional dialogues and workshops and let teachers know they are special (Confer, 1999). Professional preparation of middle school principals has been found to be inadequate in preparing principals to provide credible leadership of reading programs (Laffey & Laffey, 1984). This indicates a definite need for staff development in reading education leadership for administrators as well as for teachers.

These studies conclude that purposeful, well planned staff development can be an effective tool in keeping principals and teachers informed about the current issues in reading education.

### **Summary**

Chapter Two focused on a review of selected literature relevant to middle school reading, reading issues, teacher beliefs, and staff development. Particular attention was focused on one study that examined elementary principals' perceptions of issues in reading education and the sources of information that they find helpful and informative. This chapter examined what is known about the importance of understanding teachers' beliefs about reading

education, since beliefs influence perceptions about educational issues. Staff development, one of the means for staff to keep informed about issues in reading education, was discussed.

Chapter Three explains the methodology applied in this study including participant selection, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis.

Chapter Four presents an analysis of data as related to the three research questions.

Chapter Five includes a summary of the study and a discussion of conclusions and recommendations for further research.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHOD**

### **Introduction**

Chapter Two presented a review of literature related to reading issues and sources of information. This review included information regarding empirical research studies concerning the role of elementary and secondary principals in the reading education program, issues in elementary reading education, staff development, and middle school reading education.

The method employed for the study is presented in this chapter. This section describes the organization of the study, participant selection, data collection procedures, instrumentation, and data analysis.

### **Participant Selection**

Twenty eight educators were asked to participate based on their current positions as principals or reading teachers in the 14 middle schools in Knox County Schools (KCS). Officials in this system granted their permission for this study (Appendix A). The fourteen middle school principals and fourteen teachers who are reading chairpersons were chosen for inclusion in this study because of their direct responsibilities with decision making for the reading curriculum and for the dissemination of information about the reading program to reading teachers in their schools.

The middle school principals included in this study have the responsibility of overseeing all instructional components of their school program, including

reading education. As the instructional leaders for their schools, middle school principals (and assistant principals) make curriculum decisions based on their knowledge of internal and external factors affecting their schools. They have ultimate responsibility for all programs in their schools including responsibility for the planning and delivery of the reading program.

The selected teachers, fourteen reading chairpersons representing each school, are kept informed of program issues by the KCS Language Arts Supervisor and by the Reading Consultant assigned to their school. They are responsible for conveying information about the reading program to other reading teachers in their building. These other reading teachers in the school often include content area teachers who also teach reading as an academic subject and as well as teaching reading in their content area. They depend on the reading chairperson for their school for guidance as to the goals of the reading program as well as knowledge of the curriculum content directed by the school system.

These 28 participants have the most direct responsibility for planning and implementing the reading education program in the KCS system for middle schools.

### **Instrumentation**

The survey instrument used in Jacobson, Reutzel, and Hollingsworth's, the *Elementary School Principal's Questionnaire*, was used as a model for the questionnaire for the current study (Hollingsworth, Reutzel, Sudweeks, &

Jacobson, n.d.). The original elementary school reading issues were replaced with nine issues identified by a panel of experts as significant in middle school reading education. The list of sources of information about reading education issues was redesigned and reorganized to reflect current resources.

Demographic information was redesigned to incorporate information about both principals and teachers to reflect the purposes of the current research. The resulting questionnaire (Appendix C) was field tested in November, 2003 by four reading teachers currently teaching in four different middle schools in KCS.

None of these teachers serves as a department chairperson for reading and thus was not asked to complete the final survey. The survey was completed in ten minutes or less by each of the teachers. Changes were made in the demographic information section to reflect suggestions by two of the teachers to make the sections for principals and teachers easier to identify. Both of these teachers had begun completing the principals' section before realizing that the teachers' section was located on the lower half of the page. The other two teachers indicated that no changes in the questionnaire were needed.

### ***Middle School Reading Issues***

Because of the needs of adolescent children and the program design of middle school, it is believed that the issues in reading education would be somewhat different for middle school than those in elementary school used in Jacobson, Reutzel, and Hollingsworth's research (1992). To identify the current issues in middle school reading education, a panel of eleven professionals in the

field of reading education was contacted by e-mail. These professionals were asked to list five issues that they consider to be current issues in middle school reading education. Nine of these experts responded to the request with e-mail responses received between 10/11/03 and 10/31/03. The panel consisted of the following: Dr. Amy Broemmel, University of Tennessee; Dr. William Brozo, University of Tennessee; Dr. Earl Cheek, Louisiana State University; Dr. Robert B. Cooter, Jr., University of Memphis; Dr. Gay Ivey, James Madison University; Dr. P. David Pearson, University of California, Berkeley; Dr. D. Ray Reutzell, Utah State University; Dr. Dorothy Strickland, Rutgers University; and Dr. Deborah Wooten, University of Tennessee. The panel's responses were analyzed to identify themes and were then grouped by subject. Nine issues were identified:

1. Planning reading instruction for struggling readers
2. Reading in the content areas - instruction, development, vocabulary, and purpose
3. Providing a supportive learning community including teachers who serve as role models of active literacy via apparent relish for reading
4. Teaching critical thinking skills
5. Meeting the reading needs of English Language Learners while allowing them to preserve their language of intimacy
6. Providing culturally sensitive reading materials for diverse, multi-cultural classrooms
7. Using multiple forms of reading assessment other than federal, state, and local sanctioned testing to determine reading needs/strengths of students

8. Meeting the criteria of No Child Left Behind for “Highly Qualified” reading teachers
9. Effects of public accountability, which foster teaching to the test, on reading instruction (i.e. testing under No Child Left Behind)

### **Sources of Information**

The sources of information listed in the Jacobson, Reutzel, and Hollingsworth (1992) research were reorganized into several categories for clarity and were revised to reflect current sources available in KCS. Both the Middle School Language Arts Consultant and the Middle School Reading Consultant in KCS were interviewed for assistance in identifying specific resources available to KCS middle school principals and teachers. Information supplied by these individuals was included in this section of the questionnaire. The following categories and sources of information were incorporated into the questionnaire designed for this study:

#### Personal Contacts:

1. Informal contacts with specialists in the field (e.g., friends, colleagues, professors, and educators who have specialized in reading education)
2. Formal contacts with specialists in the field (e.g., Language Arts Consultant Reading Consultant, Language Arts/Reading Supervisor)

#### Print Sources:

3. Popular national magazines and/or newspapers (e.g., *Atlantic Monthly*, *Time*, *Reader’s Digest*, *USA Today*)
4. Journals for educators (e.g., *Phi Delta Kappan*, *The Principal*, *National Leadership*, *Reading Research Quarterly*, *Journal of Educational Research*, *Reading Horizons*, *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*)
5. College textbooks focused on reading



6. Books published by popular press (e.g., *Cultural Literacy*, *Why Johnny Can't Read*, *All I ever Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*, *Closing of the American Mind*, *Illiterate American*)

Non-Print Sources:

7. Watching or listening to radio and television broadcasts about reading issues (e.g., news reports, documentaries, debates, interviews, commentaries)
8. Internet websites and on-line journals related to reading and reading issues

Participation:

9. Conventions of professional reading associations (e.g., local state, or national: International Reading Association, National Reading Conference)
10. Workshops, seminars, or organized study groups focused on reading issues
11. Staff development and training related to reading provided by the local school system
12. Enrollment in college or university courses related to reading education

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Data for this study were collected at two meetings: The Language Arts Department Meeting held on 3/30/04 and the KCS Middle School Principals' Meeting held on 4/7/04. Participants at both meetings were asked to read and sign an informed consent form (Appendix B) and were told that participation was voluntary. Thirteen questionnaires and informed consent forms were completed at each of these meetings. One teacher and one principal were absent from their respective meetings. The two absent participants completed questionnaires and informed consent forms that were delivered by and returned to the Middle School Reading Consultant (the reading teacher) and by the Middle School Coordinator's office (the principal). These last two questionnaires and informed

consent forms were then forwarded to the researcher and were filed randomly with the other responses to preserve the participants' anonymity. The survey results were then analyzed and the results will be made available to appropriate KCS personnel who have responsibility for planning and providing staff development for middle school principals and reading teachers.

### **Data Analysis**

The questionnaire includes five different tasks that were completed by the participants. The resulting responses were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques to look for similarities and differences in the responses given by middle school principals and teachers. Responses were totaled and the percentage and mean were calculated for each item in the tasks. Responses to individual questions within each task were compared using a chi-square analysis for Tasks 1, 2, and 4. Task 3 and Task 5 were analyzed by comparing the average of responses for each item in the task.

Table 1 identifies the questionnaire's five specific tasks, directions for each task, and the research question to which the task relates. Tasks 1 and 2 correspond to Research Question One and indicate participants' understanding of current issues in reading education and the relative importance that they place on unresolved issues. Task 3 corresponds to Research Question Two, participant's understanding of each unresolved issue. Tasks 4 and 5 ask participants to indicate sources of information that they have used recently and

**Table 1. Task/Research Question Correspondence**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Questionnaire Directions</b>	<b>Research Questions</b>
<b>1</b>	Nine reading education issues are listed below. In your mind, which of these are: UI: An <i>Unresolved Issue</i> (research is not conclusive) RI: A <i>Resolved Issue</i> (research is conclusive - was once an issue but is no longer) NI: <i>Never has been an issue as far as I am concerned</i> . Circle the letter which designates the category you selected.	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	After you have classified each statement, rank order the top three <i>Unresolved Issues</i> in terms of their relative importance to improving reading instruction from your point of view. 1 - the issue which you believe is the most important. 2 - the issue of second importance 3 - the issue of third importance Rank only the top three issues you classified as <i>Unresolved Issues</i> .	<b>1</b>
<b>3</b>	Please rate your understanding of each issue (including any issues you added) as follow: A - I understand this problem well enough to describe the underlying issues and can give a reasoned argument explaining my position. B - I believe that I understand most of the underlying issues, but I can't give a good rationale for taking one side or the other. C - I know that this problem exists, but I'm unsure of what the basic issues are. D - I'm not aware of any problems in this area.	<b>2</b>
<b>4</b>	Mark an "X" in the blank of each activity listed below you personally participated in during the past 12 months as a means of keeping yourself informed about current issues in reading.	<b>3</b>
<b>5</b>	After completing Task 4, rate the degree to which each source you have used was helpful by placing an "X" in the blank "Quite Helpful," "Moderately Helpful," or "Not Very Helpful." Rate only the sources that you have used in the last 12 months.	<b>3</b>

have found useful. These responses correspond to Research Question Three.

### **Summary**

Chapter Three explained and described organization of the study, participant selection, and instrumentation. Data collection and analysis procedures were discussed.

Chapter Four contains the findings of the study and a discussion of the significance of these results.

Chapter Five presents a summary of the findings of this study and offers conclusions and recommendations for further research.

## CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF DATA

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of current issues in middle school reading education held by selected middle school principals and teachers in the Knox County School System (KCS) in Knoxville, Tennessee. The study asked these educators to identify both issues in reading education and sources of information they have found to be helpful in keeping informed about current issues in reading education.

The *Elementary School Principal's Questionnaire* (Hollingsworth, Reutsel, Suddweeks, & Jacobson) was used as a model to develop the instrument Middle School Principals and Teachers: Knowledge of the Reading Program (Appendix C), used to collect data for this study. Questionnaires were completed by 28 middle school educators: 14 principals and 14 reading teachers. Individual responses by participants were analyzed and are reported here in an aggregate form to preserve confidentiality of the participants. This chapter presents demographic information and results of the statistical analysis of the data as they relate to the three study questions.

### Data Collection

Data were collected primarily at two meetings: the KCS Middle School Principals' Meeting (4/7/04) and the Language Arts Department Meeting (3/30/04). Participants at both meetings were asked to read and sign an

informed consent form (Appendix B) and were told that participation was voluntary. One participant was absent from each of the two meetings. These last two questionnaires and informed consent forms were delivered by and returned to the Middle School Coordinator's office (the principal) and by the Middle School Reading Consultant (the teacher), forwarded to the researcher, and filed randomly with the other responses to preserve the participants' anonymity.

### **Analysis of Data**

Participants completed five different tasks included in the questionnaire. Each task consisted of several items that required a response by the participant (Appendix E). Each of these responses was totaled and the percentage of responses for each item was computed. Responses to individual items were then compared using a chi-square analysis for Task 1, 2, and 4 (Appendix F). Task 3 and Task 5 were analyzed by comparing the averages of responses for each item in the task (Appendix G). Data from the completed questionnaire were analyzed to look for similarities and differences in the responses given by the two groups of participants. The following is a discussion of the analysis of the demographics and of responses to each task as it relates to the research questions of this study.

### **Analysis of Survey Demographics**

All participants were asked to provide information about their schools; their length of time in their educational careers and in their current positions; and the number of reading education classes that they have completed. In addition,

teachers were asked what grade they teach, the number of reading classes they teach, and what teaching certifications they hold. Principals were asked if they have ever taught reading. Summaries of the demographic information are reported in Appendix D.1 (principals' responses) and in Appendix D.2 (teachers' responses).

Only the first item on the demographic section of the questionnaire asked both principals and teachers to report the same information about their schools. Question 1 asked principals and teachers to indicate the size of their middle school as having 600 or fewer, 601 to 900, 901 to 1200, or 1201 or more students. Although the 28 participants in this study are from the same 14 middle schools, the total number of schools reported in each of the four categories is different. Three principals and two teachers reported their school as having 600 or fewer students. Four principals and five teachers indicated 601 to 900 students in their school. Six principals and five teachers reported 901 to 1200 students in their school. One principal and two teachers reported their school as having 1201 or more students.

Question 6 on the principals' demographic section and Question 7 on the teachers' section asked these educators to report how many semester hours of reading education classes they had completed. There are some similarities in the reported number of semester hours of reading education classes completed by the two groups of participants. Four principals and two teachers reported completion of three or less hours; two principals and two teachers indicated

completion of four to six hours; seven principals and four teachers reported completion of seven to 12 hours; and one principal and five teachers reported completion of more than 12 semester hours of reading education classes. One teacher did not answer this question. By collapsing these four categories into two, it is noted that 37% (six principals and four teachers of the 27 responding) reported having completed six semester hours or less of reading education classes and that 63% ( eight principals and nine teachers) reported completion of seven or more hours.

### ***Middle School Principals***

Principals were asked to report their years of experience, including this year, in three categories. The fourteen principals reported a range of years of experience as educators from 11 to 37.5 years (average 23 years). They reported having been principals from one to 31 years (average 8.3 years). The length of time these principals have been in their current position was one to six years (average 2.6 years). One principal reported the length of time in their current position to be six years, and six principals have been in their current position for one year. When asked if they have taught reading, 13 of the principals responded that they have taught reading.

### ***Middle School Teachers***

The fourteen middle school teachers reported from three to 33 years of teaching experience (average 24.2 years) and from three to 31 years in their current teaching positions (average 13.5 years) in response to Questions 2 and

3. One teacher responded N/A to the question about the number of years in the current teaching position.

Question 4 asked teachers to indicate the grade level they teach: three reported teaching sixth grade, six reported teaching seventh grade, and five reported teaching eighth grade. The number of reading classes taught ranged from one to six (Question 5). Of the 14 teachers in this study, eight teach one reading class, one teaches two classes, four teach five classes, and one teaches six classes.

Question 6 asked teachers to indicate their teaching certifications. Of the 14 teachers, 13 are certified to teach grades one to eight and ten teachers hold other teaching certifications as well. The one teacher who is not certified to teach grades one through eight holds a secondary English certification. One teacher wrote in that he/she is currently working on completion of special teacher of reading certification grades 7 - 12.

### **Analysis of Survey Tasks**

The survey consisted of five tasks to which participants were asked to respond. Tasks 1, 2, and 3 asked participants to classify the current reading issues, rank the issues they consider to be unresolved, and rate all of the issues as to their personal level of understanding respectively. Task 4 asked participants to identify sources of information that they have used in the last 12 months. Task 5 asked them to rate the usefulness of sources that they have used.



### ***Research Question One***

What are the critical and unresolved issues in middle school reading education as perceived by (a) middle school principals and (b) middle school reading teachers?

Task 1 and Task 2 relate to this question. Table 2 summarizes responses by principals to Task 1 and Table 3 presents those of teachers.

#### *Task 1*

Task 1 asked participants to classify nine reading issues as being an *Unresolved Issue*, *Resolved Issue*, or *Never Has Been an Issue* in their schools. The tenth item was listed as “Other” and only two participants, one principal and one teacher entered an issue for this item. The principal wrote in the issue of, “phonics vs. other approaches to the instruction of reading.” Entered as an issue by the teacher was, “motivating struggling readers.”

#### *Unresolved Issues (Task 1)*

As shown in Figure 1, the *unresolved* reading issues receiving the highest percentage of responses by principals were: Issue 8, meeting the criteria of No Child Left Behind for “Highly Qualified” reading teachers (86%); Issue 9, effects of public accountability, which foster teaching to the test, on reading instruction (79%); and Issue 6, providing culturally sensitive reading materials for diverse, multi-cultural classrooms (71%).

The two unresolved issues receiving the highest percentage of responses by teachers were: Issue 8, meeting the criteria of No Child Left Behind for “Highly

**Table 2. Principals' Classification of Reading Issues**

Task 1 Items – Classify Issues	Unresolved Issue		Resolved Issue		Never an Issue	
	# <sup>a</sup>	% <sup>b</sup>	#	%	#	%
1. Planning reading instruction for struggling readers	7	50	5	36	2	14
2. Reading in the content areas – instruction, development, vocabulary, and purpose	5	36	8	57	1	7
3. Providing a supportive learning community including teachers who serve as role models of active literacy via apparent relish for reading	1	7	5	36	8	57
4. Teaching critical thinking skills	4	29	8	57	2	14
5. Meeting the reading needs of English Language Learners while allowing them to preserve their language of intimacy	6	43	6	43	2	14
6. Providing culturally sensitive reading materials for diverse, multi-cultural classrooms	10	71	2	14	2	14
7. Using multiple forms of reading assessment other than federal, state, and local sanctioned testing to determine reading needs/strengths of students	2	14	7	50	5	36
8. Meeting the criteria of No Child Left Behind for “Highly Qualified” reading teachers	12	86	1	7	1	7
9. Effects of public accountability, which foster teaching to the test, on reading instruction (i.e., testing under No Child Left Behind)	11	79	1	7	2	14
10. Other	1 <sup>c</sup>	7	0	0	0	0

Note. Principals were given the following directions for completion of Task 1:  
 Nine reading education issues are listed below. In your mind, which of these are:  
**UI:** An *Unresolved Issue* (research is not conclusive).  
**RI:** A *Resolved Issue* (research is conclusive - was once an issue but is no longer).  
**NI:** *Never has been an issue as far as I am concerned.*  
**Circle the letter which designates the category you selected.**

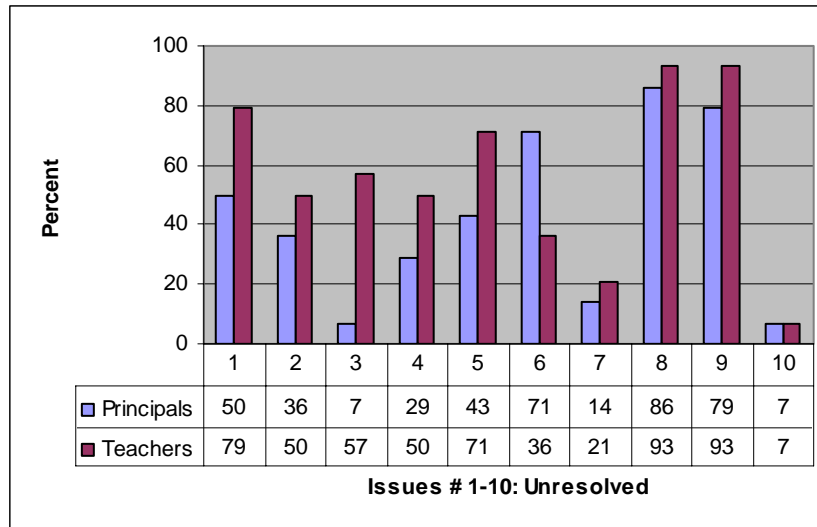
<sup>a</sup> Number of responses. <sup>b</sup> Percentage of respondents choosing item. <sup>c</sup> Phonics vs. other approaches to the instruction of reading.

**Table 3. Teachers' Classification of Reading Issues**

Task 1 Items – Classify Issues	Unresolved Issue		Resolved Issue		Never an Issue	
	# <sup>a</sup>	% <sup>b</sup>	#	%	#	%
1. Planning reading instruction for struggling readers	11	79	2	14	1	7
2. Reading in the content areas – instruction, development, vocabulary, and purpose	7	50	7	50	0	0
3. Providing a supportive learning community including teachers who serve as role models of active literacy via apparent relish for reading	8	57	4	29	2	14
4. Teaching critical thinking skills	7	50	6	43	1	7
5. Meeting the reading needs of English Language Learners while allowing them to preserve their language of intimacy	10	71	3	21	1	7
6. Providing culturally sensitive reading materials for diverse, multi-cultural classrooms	5	36	5	36	4	9
7. Using multiple forms of reading assessment other than federal, state, and local sanctioned testing to determine reading needs/strengths of students	3	21	9	64	2	14
8. Meeting the criteria of No Child Left Behind for “Highly Qualified” reading teachers	13	93	0	0	1	7
9. Effects of public accountability, which foster teaching to the test, on reading instruction (i.e., testing under No Child Left Behind)	13	93	1	7	0	0
10. Other	1 <sup>c</sup>	7	0	0	0	0

Note. Teachers were given the following directions for completion of Task 1:  
 Nine reading education issues are listed below. In your mind, which of these are:  
**UI:** An *Unresolved Issue* (research is not conclusive).  
**RI:** A *Resolved Issue* (research is conclusive - was once an issue but is no longer.)  
**NI:** *Never has been in issue as far as I am concerned.*  
**Circle the letter which designates the category you selected.**

<sup>a</sup> Number of responses. <sup>b</sup> Percentage of respondents choosing item. <sup>c</sup> Motivating struggling readers.



**Figure 1. Comparison of Principals' and Teachers' Classification - Unresolved Reading Issues.**

Qualified Teachers” and Issue 9, effects of public accountability, which foster teaching to the test, on reading instruction (both receiving 93%). Issue 1, planning reading instruction for struggling readers was rated as *unresolved* by 79% of the teachers responding.

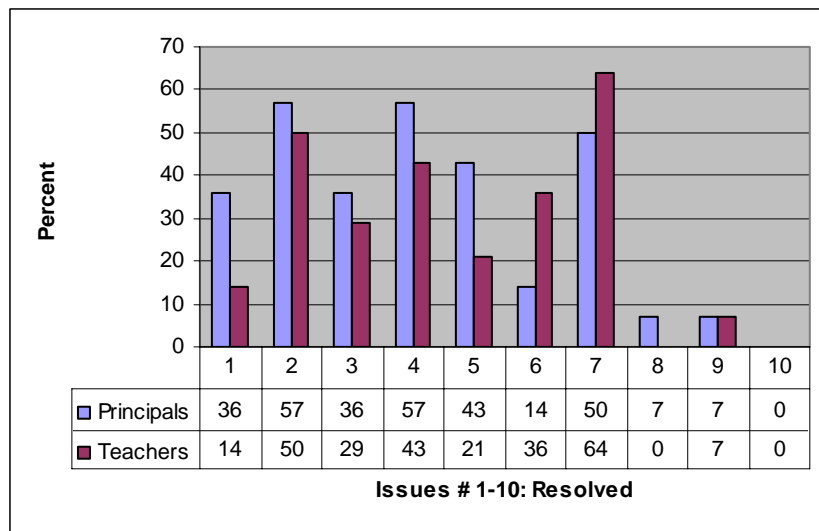
Figure 1 shows some relationships between responses given by principals and teachers as to their classification of issues as *unresolved*. Both principals and teachers classified Issues 8 and 9 as unresolved with the highest percentages of both groups choosing these issues. Both issues were chosen by 93% of teachers, Issue 8 by 86% of the principals, and Issue 9 by 79% of the principals. The third *unresolved* issue chosen most often by 79% of the teachers (Issue 1) was also chosen by 50% of the principals. Issue 5 was also highly chosen by teachers (71%) and to a lesser degree by principals (43%). In all four

of these instances, more teachers rated the issue as *unresolved* than did principals. It was noted that Issue 6 reversed this pattern with 71% of the principals choosing this as an unresolved issue while only 36 % of the teachers did so.

*Resolved Issues (Task 1)*

Figure 2 presents the percentages of issues reported as *resolved*. Of the 11 issues surveyed, 57% of the principals responding indicated that two issues were *resolved*: Issue 2, reading in the content areas – instruction, development, vocabulary, and purpose, as well as Issue 4, teaching critical thinking skills. Issue 7 was classified as *resolved* by 50% of these principals.

The highest percentage of teachers (64%) chose Issue 7, using multiple



**Figure 2. Comparison of Principals' and Teachers' Classification - Resolved Reading Issues**

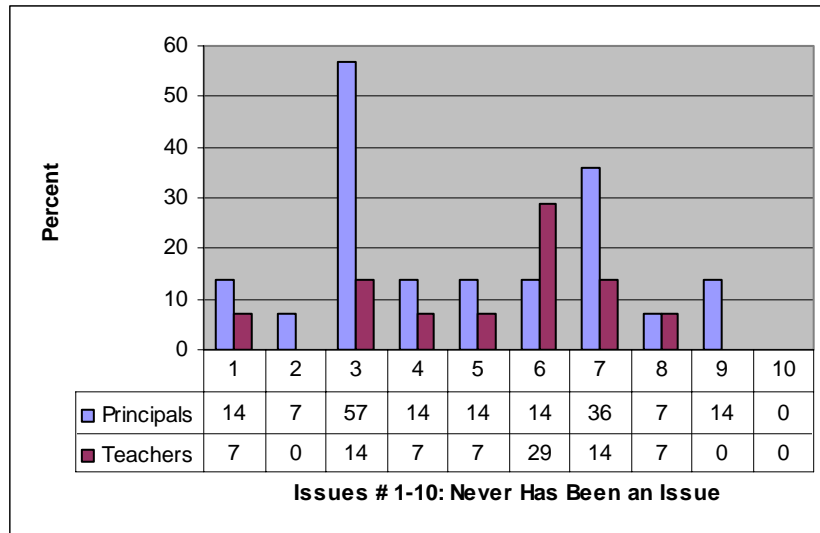
forms of reading assessment other than federal, state, and local sanctioned testing to determine reading needs/strengths of students. Somewhat less, 50%, of these teachers classified Issue 2, reading in the content areas – instruction, development, vocabulary, and purpose, as *resolved*. Issue 4, teaching critical thinking skills, was classified as *resolved* by 43% of the teachers.

Greater percentages of principals and teachers (Figure 2) chose three issues as *resolved*: Issues 2, 4, and 7. Principals felt most strongly that both Issues 2 and 4 (both 57%) were resolved with teachers agreeing but in lesser numbers (50% and 43% respectively). In six of the nine issues, larger percentages of principals classified the issues as *resolved* than did teachers. One of the three issues chosen more frequently by teachers than principals was Issue 7 (64%). Only 50% of the principals classified the issue as *resolved*.

#### *Never Has Been an Issue (Task 1)*

Items chosen as *never an issue* are represented in Figure 3. The two issues in this category chosen most often by principals were: Issue 3, providing a supportive learning community including teachers who serve as role models of active literacy via apparent relish for reading (57%), and Issue 7, using multiple forms of reading assessment other than federal, state, and local sanctioned testing to determine reading needs/strengths of students, (36%).

The issues most often classified by teachers as *never having been an issue* included: Issue 6, providing culturally sensitive reading materials for diverse, multi-cultural classrooms (29%); Issue 3, providing a supportive learning



**Figure 3. Comparison of Principals' and Teachers' Classification of Issues - Never Has Been an Issue**

community including teachers who serve as role models of active literacy via apparent relish for reading (14 %); and Issue 7, using multiple forms of reading assessment other than federal, state, and local sanctioned testing to determine reading needs/strengths of students (14%).

Seven of the issues, as shown in Figure 3, were designated *never an issue* either by a larger percentage of principals than teachers or were not chosen by teachers at all. Issue 6 was chosen by a larger percentage of teachers (29%) than by principals (14%) and Issue 8 was chosen equally by principals and teachers (7%).

*Statistical Significance of Data (Task 1)*

A chi-square analysis (Appendix F.1) was computed comparing the issues classified as unresolved and resolved between principals and teachers as

to whether issues are unresolved or resolved. A chi-square analysis may be safely used when “no more than 20% of the expected counts are less than 5 and all individual expected counts are 1 or greater” (Moore, 2000, p. 485). However, in using a 2X2 contingency table the researcher decided to compute chi-squares if cells were fewer than five, but more than “0”. Where appropriate the researcher was able to compute chi-squares for a number of combinations. As seen in Appendix F.1, Task 3, providing a supportive learning community including teachers who serve as role models of active literacy via apparent relish for reading (chi- square statistic, 4.00; p-value .05), was statistically significant at the .05 level of probability; there were no statistically significant differences at the .01 level of probability.

### *Task 2*

Task 2 asked participants to rank only unresolved issues in terms of their relative importance to improving reading instruction. Unresolved issues were ranked from one to three with “1” being the issue of *most importance*, “2” being the issue of *second importance* and “3” being the issue of *third importance*. Survey results of responses by principals are presented in Table 4 and those of teachers in Table 5.

#### *Issue of Most Importance (Task 2)*

Table 4 and Table 5 list the number of participants choosing each item and the corresponding percentages. Since the participants were asked to only rank the top three issues that they believe to be *unresolved*, the total number of



**Table 4. Principals' Ranking of Reading Issues**

Task 2 Items - Rank Issues	1		2		3		# Choosing Item	% Choosing Item
	# <sup>a</sup>	% <sup>b</sup>	#	%	#	%		
1. Planning reading instruction for struggling readers	4	29	3	21	1	7	8	57
2. Reading in the content areas – instruction, development, vocabulary, and purpose	1	7	2	14	1	7	4	29
3. Providing a supportive learning community including teachers who serve as role models of active literacy via apparent relish for reading	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4. Teaching critical thinking skills	0	0	1	7	2	14	3	21
5. Meeting the reading needs of English Language Learners while allowing them to preserve their language of intimacy	0	0	0	0	1	7	1	7
6. Providing culturally sensitive reading materials for diverse, multi-cultural classrooms	0	0	0	0	3	21	3	21
7. Using multiple forms of reading assessment other than federal, state, and local sanctioned testing to determine reading needs/strengths of students	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8. Meeting the criteria of No Child Left Behind for “Highly Qualified” reading teachers	5	36	1	7	1	7	7	50
9. Effects of public accountability, which foster teaching to the test, on reading instruction (i.e., testing under No Child Left Behind)	1	7	4	29	1	7	6	43
10. Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Note. Principals were given the following directions for completion of Task 2:

After you have classified each statement, rank order the **top three Unresolved Issues** in terms of their relative importance to improving reading instruction from your point of view.

**1** - the issue which you believe is the most important.

**2** - the issue of second importance.

**3** - the issue of third importance.

**Rank only the top three issues you classified as Unresolved Issues.**

<sup>a</sup>Number of responses. <sup>b</sup>Percentage of respondents choosing item.

**Table 5. Teachers' Ranking of Reading Issues**

Task 2 Items - Rank Issues	1		2		3		# Choosing Item	% Choosing Item
	# <sup>a</sup>	% <sup>b</sup>	#	%	#	%		
1. Planning reading instruction for struggling readers	6	43	3	21	1	7	10	71
2. Reading in the content areas – instruction, development, vocabulary, and purpose	2	14	1	7	1	7	4	29
3. Providing a supportive learning community including teachers who serve as role models of active literacy via apparent relish for reading	1	7	0	0	3	21	4	29
4. Teaching critical thinking skills	0	0	0	0	2	14	2	14
5. Meeting the reading needs of English Language Learners while allowing them to preserve their language of intimacy	0	0	1	7	0	0	1	7
6. Providing culturally sensitive reading materials for diverse, multi-cultural classrooms	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7. Using multiple forms of reading assessment other than federal, state, and local sanctioned testing to determine reading needs/strengths of students	0	0	1	7	1	7	2	14
8. Meeting the criteria of No Child Left Behind for "Highly Qualified" reading teachers	1	7	2	14	3	21	6	43
9. Effects of public accountability, which foster teaching to the test, on reading instruction (i.e., testing under No Child Left Behind)	3	21	5	36	2	14	10	71
10. Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Note. Teachers were given the following directions for completion of Task 2:

After you have classified each statement, rank order the **top three Unresolved Issues** in terms of their relative importance to improving reading instruction from your point of view.

**1** - the issue which you believe is the most important.

**2** - the issue of second importance.

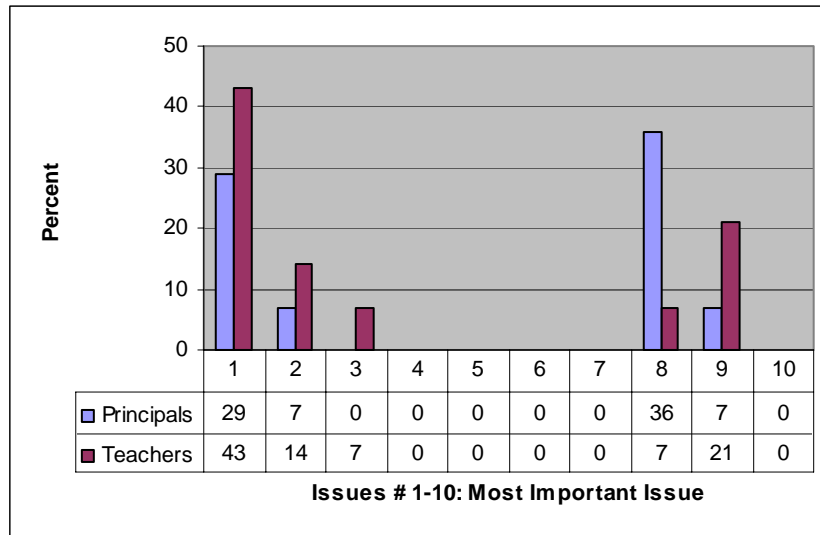
**3** - the issue of third importance.

**Rank only the top three issues you classified as Unresolved Issues.**

<sup>a</sup>Number of responses. <sup>b</sup>Percentage of respondents choosing item.

responses to each item is less than 14 on each of these tables.

Unresolved issues designated as being of most importance are presented in Figure 4. Of the issues chosen by the principals, Issue 8, meeting the criteria of No Child Left Behind for “Highly Qualified” reading teachers (36%) was indicated as being of most importance. Issue 1, planning reading instruction for struggling readers, was chosen by 29% of these principals. Teachers most frequently ranked Issue 1, planning reading instruction for struggling readers as the most important unresolved reading issue (43%). Issue 9, effects of public accountability, which fosters teaching to the test, on reading instruction, was chosen by 21% of these teachers as being the *most important* unresolved issue. Figure 4 shows graphically that the largest number of principals (36%) and the



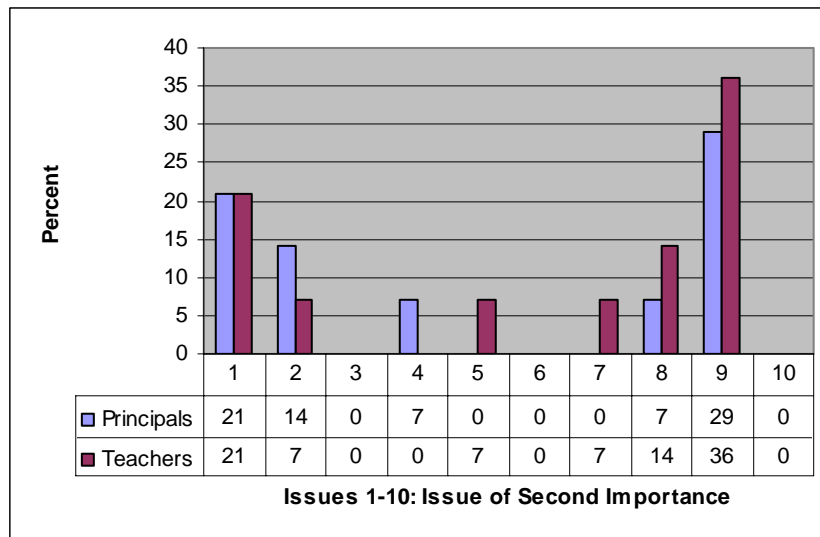
**Figure 4. Comparison of Principals' and Teachers' Ranking of Issues as "1", Issue of Most Importance**

lowest number of teachers (7%) ranked the same unresolved issue (Issue 8) as being of most importance. More teachers (43%) than principals (29%) gave this ranking to Issue 1.

*Issue of Second Most Importance (Task 2)*

Of the unresolved issues of second importance chosen by the principals, Issue 9, effects of public accountability, which foster teaching to the test, on reading instruction (29%), and Issue 1, planning reading instruction for struggling readers (21%), were chosen most often (Figure 5).

Teachers most often ranked Issue 9, effects of public accountability, which foster teaching to the test, on reading instruction (36%) as being of *second* importance with 21% choosing Issue 1, planning reading for struggling readers.



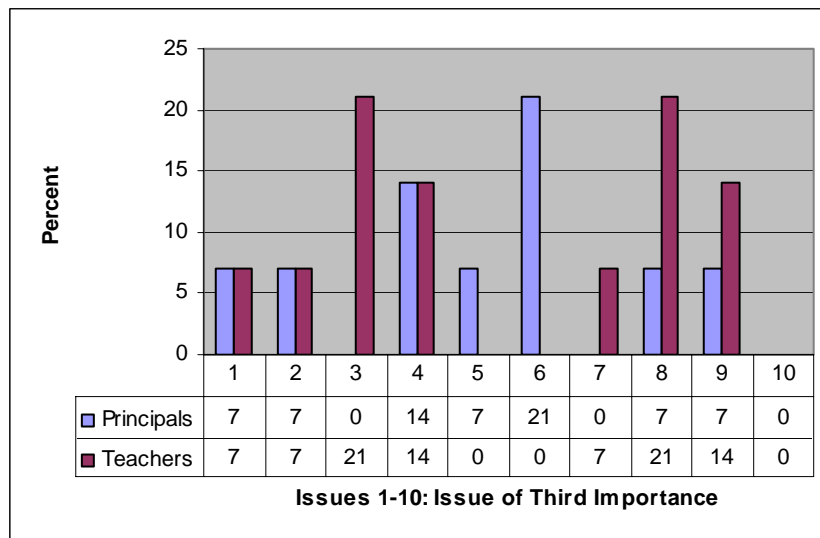
**Figure 5. Comparison of Principals’ and Teachers’ Ranking of Issues as "2" - Issue of Second Importance**

Figure 5 shows that the issue ranked of second importance most often by both principals' (29%) and teachers' (36%) was Issue 9. Issue 1 was chosen by an equal percentage of principals and teachers, 21%.

*Issue of Third Importance (Task 2)*

A comparison of principals and teachers ranking of unresolved issues as issue of *third importance* are presented in Figure 6. Principals indicated that Issue 6, providing culturally sensitive materials for diverse multi- cultural classrooms (21%), and Issue 4, teaching critical thinking skills (14%), were the unresolved issues of *least importance*.

Teachers most often chose Issue 8, meeting the criteria of No Child Left behind for "Highly Qualified" reading teachers, and Issue 3, providing a supportive learning community including teachers who serve as role models of



**Figure 6. Comparison of Principals' and Teachers' Ranking of Issues as "3"– Issue of Third Importance**

active literacy via apparent relish for reading (both 21%).

### *Statistical Significance of Data (Task 2)*

A chi-square analysis (Appendix F.2) was computed comparing the *unresolved issues* classified as ranked the most important between principals and teachers as to whether issues were rated most important or not rated as most important. A chi-square analysis may be safely used when “no more than 20% of the expected counts are less than 5 and all individual expected counts are 1 or greater” (Moore, 2000, p. 485). However, in using a 2X2 contingency table the researcher decided to compute chi-squares if cells were fewer than five, but more than “0”. Where appropriate the researcher was able to compute chi-squares for a number of combinations. Issue 3, providing a supportive learning community including teachers who serve as role models of active literacy via apparent relish for reading (chi-square statistic, 4.67; p-value .03), was statistically significant at the .05 level; there were no statistically significant differences at the .01 level of probability. Four of these teachers (29%) ranked this issue as one of the top three issues; no principals ranked this issue as one of the top three.

### ***Research Question Two***

What levels of understanding do (a) middle school principals and (b) middle school reading teachers perceive they have of each issue?

### *Task 3*

Task 3 related directly to this research question by asking principals and teachers to rate their understanding of the nine listed reading issues and any that they might have added from the following categories:

A - I understand this problem well enough to describe the underlying issues and can give a reasoned argument explaining my position,

B – I believe that I understand most of the underlying issues, but I can't give a good rationale for taking one side or the other,

C – I know that this problem exists, but I'm unsure of what the basic issues are, or

D – I'm not aware of any problems in this area.

Table 6 and Table 7 present results of principals' and teachers' responses respectively to this task. Two principals and one teacher did not provide ratings for all of the issues; therefore, the total number of responses is not 14 on all items. The percentages reported are percentages of the number of participants who marked that issue.

#### *Understand the Problem (Task 3)*

Principals indicated a 100% *understanding* of Issue 2 (see Figure 7), reading in the content areas – instruction, development, vocabulary, and purpose, and Issue 3, providing a supportive learning community including teachers who serve as role models of active literacy via apparent relish for reading. Issue 10, "Other," also was rated as A – *I understand this problem* by the one principal who wrote in "Phonics vs. other approaches to the instruction of

**Table 6. Principals' Rating of Reading Issues**

Task 3 Items - Rate Issues	A		B		C		D		Average <sup>c</sup>
	# <sup>a</sup>	% <sup>b</sup>	#	%	#	%	#	%	
1. Planning reading instruction for struggling readers	12	86	2	14	0	0	0	0	3.86
2. Reading in the content areas – instruction, development, vocabulary, and purpose	13	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	4.00
3. Providing a supportive learning community including teachers who serve as role models of active literacy via apparent relish for reading	12	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	4.00
4. Teaching critical thinking skills	10	77	3	23	0	0	0	0	3.77
5. Meeting the reading needs of English Language Learners while allowing them to preserve their language of intimacy	4	33	5	42	2	17	1	8	3.18
6. Providing culturally sensitive reading materials for diverse, multi-cultural classrooms	5	42	4	33	3	25	0	0	3.17
7. Using multiple forms of reading assessment other than federal, state, and local sanctioned testing to determine reading needs/strengths of students	10	83	2	17	0	0	0	0	3.83
8. Meeting the criteria of No Child Left Behind for "Highly Qualified" reading teachers	5	36	6	43	3	21	0	0	3.14
9. Effects of public accountability, which foster teaching to the test, on reading instruction (i.e., testing under No Child Left Behind)	6	50	3	25	3	25	0	0	3.25
10. Other	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	4.00

Note. Principals were given the following directions for completion of Task 3:

Please rate your understanding of each **issue** (including any issues you added) as follow:

**A** - I understand this problem well enough to describe the underlying issues and can give a reasoned argument explaining my position.

**B** - I believe that I understand most of the underlying issues, but I can't give a good rationale for taking one side or the other.

**C** - I know that this problem exists, but I'm unsure of what the basic issues are.

**D** - I'm not aware of any problems in this area.

<sup>a</sup>Number of responses. <sup>b</sup>Percentage of respondents choosing this item. <sup>c</sup>Average of responses when A=4; B=3; C=2; D=1.



**Table 7. Teachers' Rating of Reading Issues**

Task 3 Items - Rate Issues	A		B		C		D		Average <sup>c</sup>
	# <sup>a</sup>	% <sup>b</sup>	#	%	#	%	#	%	
1. Planning reading instruction for struggling readers	8	57	4	29	2	14	0	0	3.43
2. Reading in the content areas – instruction, development, vocabulary, and purpose	6	43	6	43	2	14	0	0	3.29
3. Providing a supportive learning community including teachers who serve as role models of active literacy via apparent relish for reading	8	57	3	21	2	14	1	7	3.29
4. Teaching critical thinking skills	8	57	3	21	1	7	2	14	3.21
5. Meeting the reading needs of English Language Learners while allowing them to preserve their language of intimacy	1	7	7	50	6	43	0	0	2.64
6. Providing culturally sensitive reading materials for diverse, multi-cultural classrooms	4	31	5	38	3	23	1	8	2.92
7. Using multiple forms of reading assessment other than federal, state, and local sanctioned testing to determine reading needs/strengths of students	7	54	4	31	1	8	1	8	3.31
8. Meeting the criteria of No Child Left Behind for "Highly Qualified" reading teachers	2	15	8	62	3	23	0	0	2.92
9. Effects of public accountability, which foster teaching to the test, on reading instruction (i.e., testing under No Child Left Behind)	4	31	7	54	2	15	0	0	3.15
10. Other	1	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	4.00

Note, Teachers were given the following directions for completion of Task 3:

Please rate your understanding of **each issue** (including any issues you added) as follow:

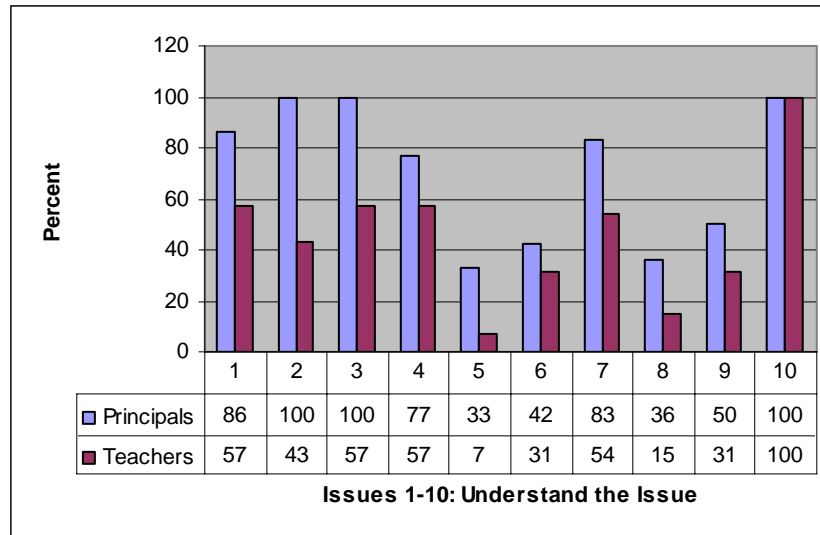
**A** - I understand this problem well enough to describe the underlying issues and can give a reasoned argument explaining my position.

**B** - I believe that I understand most of the underlying issues, but I can't give a good rationale for taking one side or the other.

**C** - I know that this problem exists, but I'm unsure of what the basic issues are.

**D** - I'm not aware of any problems in this area.

<sup>a</sup>Number of responses. <sup>b</sup>Percentage of respondents choosing this item. <sup>c</sup>Average of responses when A=4; B=3; C=2; D=1.



**Figure 7. Comparison of Principals' and Teachers' Rating of Issues as “A” – I Understand This Issue and Can Give a Reasoned Argument Explaining My Position**

reading.” And is reported as a 100% response. Issue 1, planning instruction for struggling readers (88%), Issue 7, using multiple forms of reading assessment (83%), and Issue 4, teaching critical thinking skills (77%) were also rated highly as being *understood* by principals.

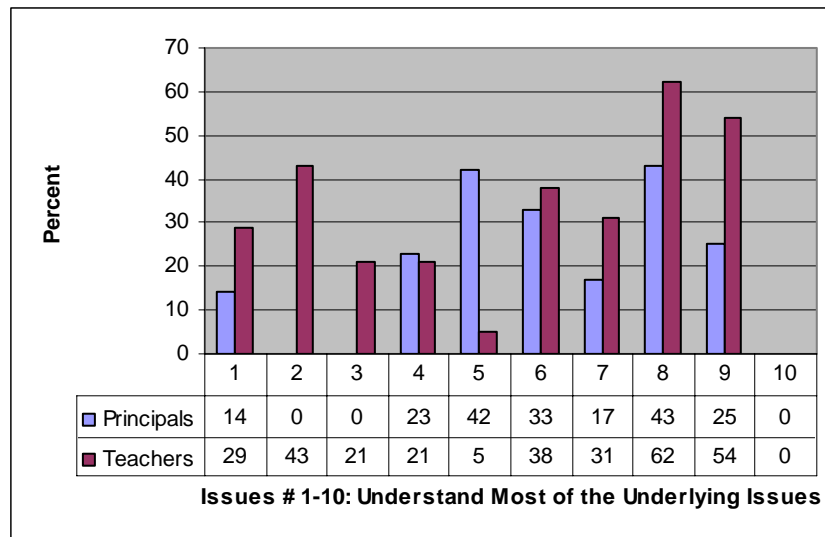
Teachers generally had lower percentages on this task for *understanding of issues*. Issue 3, providing a supportive learning community and Issue 4, teaching critical thinking skills, were both rated A - *I understand this problem* by 57% of the teachers marking the two items. Teachers rated Issue 7, using multiple forms of reading assessment, high as well with 54% marking this A - *I understand this issue*. As with the principals, one teacher wrote in a selection on

Issue 10, “Other”. This teacher rated it as an A thus giving it a 100% response as well.

Principals in this study rated their understanding of unresolved issues higher than did teachers (Figure 7). Principals’ ratings were in higher percentages on all of the nine listed issues. Only on Issue 10 was there an equal response (100%); however, only one principal and one teacher wrote in an unresolved issue in this space and each rated it as being *understood*.

*Understand Most of the Underlying Issues (Task3)*

Principals generally reported lower instances of *understanding most of the underlying issues* (Figure 8). Issue 8, meeting the criteria of No Child Left Behind for “Highly Qualified” reading teachers, was rated 43%. Close to this was



**Figure 8. Comparison of Principals' and Teachers' Rating of Issues as “B” – I Understand Most of the Underlying Issues, But I Can’t Give a Good Rationale for Taking One Side or the Other**

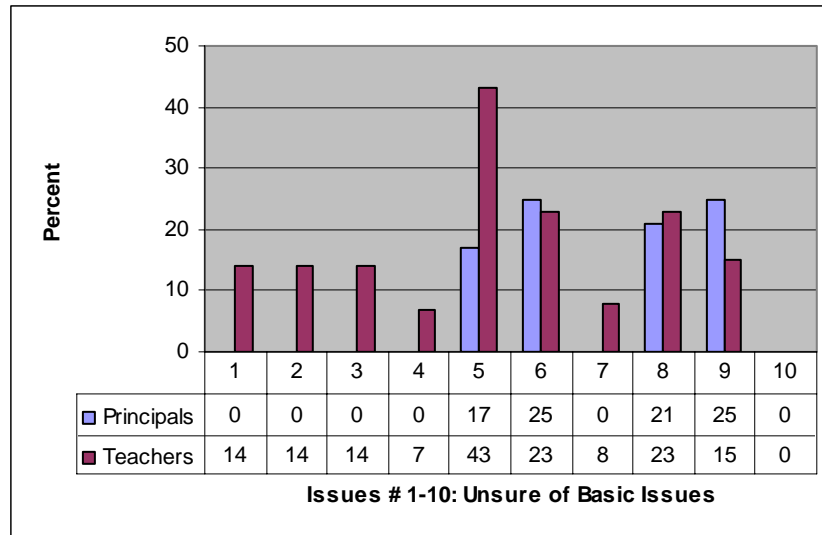
Issue 5, meeting the needs of English Language Learners, while allowing them to preserve their language of intimacy, with 42% of the principals indicating that they *understand most of the underlying issues*.

Teachers responded to this level of understanding with higher percentages. Issue 8, meeting the criteria of No Child Left Behind for “Highly Qualified” reading teachers, was marked B by 62% of the teachers. Issue 9, effects of public accountability, which foster teaching to the test, on reading instruction, was rated B by 54% of the teachers. The item that was rated third in this category was Issue 2, reading in the content areas – instruction, development, vocabulary, and purpose, with 43% indicating that they *understand most of the underlying issues*.

Some of these teachers gave this rating to their understanding of all nine listed issues. Principals gave this rating to seven of the listed issues but generally in lower percentages. In only two instances, did principals choose this rating in greater numbers than did teachers – Issue 4 and Issue 5.

#### *Unsure of What the Basic Issues Are (Task 3)*

Participants who were *unsure of what the basic issues are* indicated this level of understanding by rating the issue C. Fewer participants indicated this level of understanding of the nine reading issues as seen in Figure 9. The highest percent of response by principals was to Issue 9, meeting the criteria of No Child Left Behind for “Highly Qualified” reading teachers, and Issue 6, providing culturally sensitive reading materials for diverse, multi-cultural

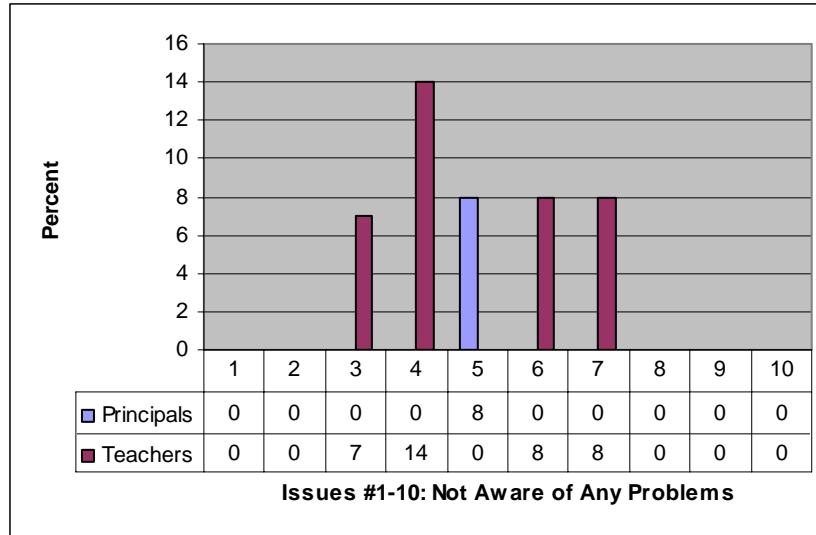


**Figure 9. Comparison of Principals' and Teachers' Rating of Issues as “C” – I Know This Problem Exists, But I’m Unsure of What the Basic Issues Are**

classrooms, (both 25%). Chosen most often by teachers was Issue 5, meeting the needs of English Language Learners while allowing them to preserve their language of intimacy, (43%). Issue 6, providing culturally sensitive reading materials for diverse, multi-cultural classrooms, and Issue 8, meeting the criteria of No Child Left Behind for “Highly Qualified” reading teachers both were chosen by 23%.

*Not Aware of Any Problems in This Area (Task 3)*

The last category in Task 3 was D – *I’m not aware of any problems in this area* (Figure 10). Principals only gave this rating to one issue. Issue 5, meeting the needs of English Language Learners while allowing them to preserve their language of intimacy, was chosen by 8% of the principals. Teachers also had



**Figure 10. Comparison of Principals' and Teachers' Rating of Issues as “D” – I’m Not Aware of Any Problems in This Area**

lower levels of this response; however, 14% indicated that they were *not aware of any problems* concerning Issue 4, teaching critical thinking skills.

#### *Analysis (Task 3)*

Task 3 asked participants to rate their understanding of each of the middle school reading issues. Averages of responses were computed by assigning numerical values to each choice (A = 4.00; B = 3.00; C = 2.00; D = 1.00); therefore, the closer to 4.00 the average is, the higher understanding the groups indicated they had of the issue (Appendix G.1). One teacher and two principals did not rate all of the issues; therefore, the average was computed using the number of total responses to each item and did not always equal 14. Principals and teachers in this group had averages above 3.00 on the following issues: Issue 1, planning reading instruction for struggling readers (principals

3.86; teachers 3.43); and Issue 2, reading in the content areas – instruction, development, vocabulary, and purpose (principals, 4.00; teachers, 3.29); Issue 3, providing a supportive learning community including teachers who serve as role models of active literacy via apparent relish for reading (principals, 4.00; teachers 3.29); Issue four, teaching critical thinking skills (principals 3.77); and Issue 7, using multiple forms of reading assessment other than federal, state, and local sanctioned testing to determine reading needs/strengths of students (principals, 3.83; teachers, 3.31).

### ***Research Question Three***

What sources do (a) middle school principals and (b) middle school reading teachers use and find helpful to inform themselves about current issues in reading education?

Both Task 4 and Task 5 are relevant to this question. Task 4 asked participants to indicate the sources of information about reading education that they use. Task 5 asked them to indicate how helpful each source has been.

#### ***Task 4***

##### ***Sources of Information Used by Principals and Teachers (Task 4)***

This task specifically asked participants to identify the activities they personally have participated in during the last 12 months as a means of keeping informed about current issues in reading. Details of participants' responses are found in Table 8 (principals) and Table 9 (teachers). As shown in Figure 11, at least one principal chose every listed source of information with the exceptions of

**Table 8. Principals' Identification of Information Sources**

<b>Task 4 Items – Identify Sources of Information</b>	<b>X<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>%<sup>b</sup></b>
1. Informal contacts with specialists in the field (e.g., friends, colleagues, professors, and educators who have specialized in reading education)	13	93
2. Formal contacts with specialists in the field (e.g., Language Arts Consultant, Reading Consultant, Language Arts/Reading Supervisor)	13	93
3. Popular national magazines and/or newspapers(e.g., <i>Atlantic Monthly</i> , <i>Time</i> , <i>Reader's Digest</i> , <i>USA Today</i> ) Popular national magazines and/or newspapers(e.g., <i>Atlantic Monthly</i> , <i>Time</i> , <i>Reader's Digest</i> , <i>USA Today</i> )	11	79
4. Journals for educators (e.g., <i>Phi Delta Kappan</i> , <i>The Principal</i> , <i>National Leadership</i> , <i>Reading Research Quarterly</i> , <i>Journal of Educational Research</i> , <i>Reading Horizons</i> , <i>Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy</i> )	14	100
5. College textbooks focused on reading	1	7
6. Books published by popular press (e.g., <i>Cultural Literacy</i> , <i>Why Johnny Can't Read</i> , <i>All I ever Needed to Know I Learned In Kindergarten</i> , <i>Closing of the American Mind</i> , <i>Illiterate American</i> )	8	57
7. Watching or listening to radio and television broadcasts about reading issues (e.g., news reports, documentaries, debates, interviews, commentaries)	12	86
8. Internet websites and on-line journals related to reading and reading issues	11	79
9. Conventions of professional reading associations (e.g., local, state, or national: International Reading Association, National Reading Conference)	5	36
10. Workshops, seminars, or organized study groups focused on reading issues	6	43
11. Staff development and training related to reading provided by the local school system	10	71
12. Enrollment in college or university courses related to reading education	0	0
13. Other	0	0

Note. Principals were given the following directions for completion of Task 4.

Mark an "X" in the blank of each activity listed below you **personally participated in during the past 12 months** as a means of keeping yourself informed about current issues in reading.

<sup>a</sup>Number of responses. <sup>b</sup>Percentage of respondents choosing item.



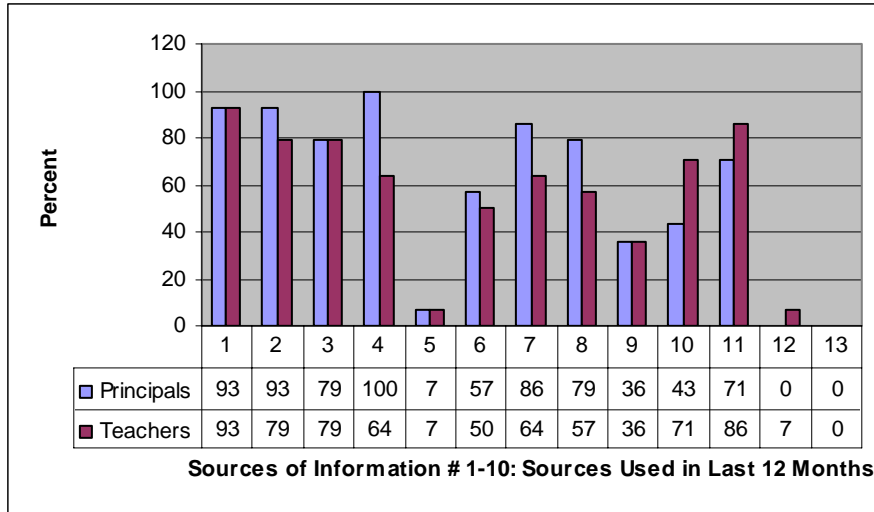
**Table 9. Teachers' Identification of Information Sources**

<b>Task 4 Items – Identify Sources of Information</b>	<b>X<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>%<sup>b</sup></b>
1. Informal contacts with specialists in the field (e.g., friends, colleagues, professors, and educators who have specialized in reading education)	13	93
2. Formal contacts with specialists in the field (e.g., Language Arts Consultant, Reading Consultant, Language Arts/Reading Supervisor)	11	79
3. Popular national magazines and/or newspapers (e.g., <i>Atlantic Monthly</i> , <i>Time</i> , <i>Reader's Digest</i> , <i>USA Today</i> ) Popular national magazines and/or newspapers(e.g., <i>Atlantic Monthly</i> , <i>Time</i> , <i>Reader's Digest</i> , <i>USA Today</i> )	11	79
4. Journals for educators (e.g., <i>Phi Delta Kappan</i> , <i>The Principal</i> , <i>National Leadership</i> , <i>Reading Research Quarterly</i> , <i>Journal of Educational Research</i> , <i>Reading Horizons</i> , <i>Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy</i> )	9	64
5. College textbooks focused on reading	1	7
6. Books published by popular press (e.g., <i>Cultural Literacy</i> , <i>Why Johnny Can't Read</i> , <i>All I ever Needed to Know I Learned In Kindergarten</i> , <i>Closing of the American Mind</i> , <i>Illiterate American</i> )	7	50
7. Watching or listening to radio and television broadcasts about reading issues (e.g., news reports, documentaries, debates, interviews, commentaries)	9	64
8. Internet websites and on-line journals related to reading and reading issues	8	57
9. Conventions of professional reading associations (e.g., local, state, or national: International Reading Association, National Reading Conference)	5	36
10. Workshops, seminars, or organized study groups focused on reading issues	10	71
11. Staff development and training related to reading provided by the local school system	12	86
12. Enrollment in college or university courses related to reading education	1	7
13. Other	0	0

Note. Teachers were given the following directions for completion of Task 4:

Mark an "X" in the blank of each activity listed below you **personally participated in during the past 12 months** as a means of keeping yourself informed about current issues in reading.

<sup>a</sup>Number of responses. <sup>b</sup>Percentage of responses.



**Figure 11. Comparison of Sources of Information Used by Principals and Teachers**

Source 12, enrollment in college or university courses related to reading education, and number 13, “Other”. Source 4, journals for educators, was indicated as being used in the last 12 months by 100% of the principals in this study. Source 1, informal contacts with specialists in the field, and Source 2, formal contacts with specialists in the field, both were used by 93% of the principals in the last 12 months. The third identified source of information was Source 7, watching or listening to radio and television broadcasts about reading issues, used by 86% of the principals. Two items in this list, Source 3, popular national magazines and/or newspapers, and Source 8, internet websites and on-line journals, both were used by 79% of the principals. Seventy-one percent of the principals used Source 11, staff development and training related to reading provided by the local school system.

At least one teacher has used each of the 12 listed sources of information in the last 12 months. The most widely used source of information by these teachers was Source 1, informal contacts with specialists in the field (93%). Teachers also indicated a high usage of Source 11, staff development and training related to reading provided by the local school system (86%). The third most widely used sources of information were Source 2, formal contacts with specialists in the field, and Source 3, popular national magazines and or newspapers, both used by 79% of these teachers.

#### *Statistical Significance of Data (Task 4)*

A chi-square analysis (Appendix F.3) was computed comparing the sources of information identified between principals and teachers as to whether sources were used or not used in the last 12 months. A chi-square analysis may be safely used when “no more than 20% of the expected counts are less than 5 and all individual expected counts are 1 or greater” (Moore, 2000, p. 485). However, in using a 2X2 contingency table the researcher decided to compute chi-squares if cells were fewer than five, but more than “0”. As shown in Appendix F.3, Source 4, journals for educators (chi-square statistic, 6.09; p-value .01), was statistically significant at the .01 level of probability. Fourteen principals (100%) reported having used this source more in the past 12 months than had teachers (9 teachers or 64%).

## Task 5

Participants were asked to rate the degree to which each source of information they used in the last 12 months was helpful to them as being *Quite Helpful*, *Moderately Helpful*, or *Not Very Helpful*. Since not all sources of information were used by all participants, the percentages reported in Table 10 and Table 11 represent the percent of participants who rated that source, not the total of participants in the study.

### *Quite Helpful (Task 5)*

As seen in Figure 12, four sources of information received high percentages as being quite helpful by principals. Source 2, formal contacts with specialists in the field, was rated quite helpful by 71% of the principals who had used this source of information. The second highest rating was Source 1, informal contacts with specialists in the field (50%). Source 11 (43%), staff development and training related to reading provided by the local school system, received the third highest response to this item.

A higher percentage of teachers found Source 1, informal contacts with specialists in the field, to be *quite helpful* (71%). Figure 12 also shows three sources of information were found to be *quite helpful* by 43 % of these teachers: Source 2, formal contacts with specialists in the field; Source 10, workshops, seminars, or organized study groups focused on reading issues; and Source 11, staff development and training related to reading provided by the local schools.

**Table 10. Principals' Rating of Information Sources**

Task 5 Items – Rate Sources of Information	Q		M		N		Average <sup>c</sup>
	# <sup>a</sup>	% <sup>b</sup>	#	%	#	%	
1. Informal contacts with specialists in the field (e.g., friends, colleagues, professors, and educators who have specialized in reading education)	7	50	5	36	0	0	2.58
2. Formal contacts with specialists in the field (e.g., Language Arts Consultant, Reading Consultant, Language Arts/Reading Supervisor)	10	71	2	14	0	0	2.83
3. Popular national magazines and/or newspapers(e.g., <i>Atlantic Monthly</i> , <i>Time</i> , <i>Reader's Digest</i> , <i>USA Today</i> ) Popular national magazines and/or newspapers(e.g., <i>Atlantic Monthly</i> , <i>Time</i> , <i>Reader's Digest</i> , <i>USA Today</i> )	0	0	10	71	1	7	1.91
4. Journals for educators (e.g., <i>Phi Delta Kappan</i> , <i>The Principal</i> , <i>National Leadership</i> , <i>Reading Research Quarterly</i> , <i>Journal of Educational Research</i> , <i>Reading Horizons</i> , <i>Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy</i> )	1	7	11	79	0	0	2.09
5. College textbooks focused on reading	0	0	1	7	0	0	2.00
6. Books published by popular press (e.g., <i>Cultural Literacy</i> , <i>Why Johnny Can't Read</i> , <i>All I ever Needed to Know I Learned In Kindergarten</i> , <i>Closing of the American Mind</i> , <i>Illiterate American</i> )	2	14	5	36	0	0	2.29
7. Watching or listening to radio and television broadcasts about reading issues (e.g., news reports, documentaries, debates, interviews, commentaries)	0	0	6	43	5	36	1.55
8. Internet websites and on-line journals related to reading and reading issues	1	7	8	57	1	7	2.00
9. Conventions of professional reading associations (e.g., local, state, or national: International Reading Association, National Reading Conference)	2	14	2	14	0	0	2.50
10. Workshops, seminars, or organized study groups focused on reading issues	3	21	2	14	0	0	2.60
11. Staff development and training related to reading provided by the local school system	6	43	3	21	0	0	2.67
12. Enrollment in college or university courses related to reading education	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
13. Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Note. Principals were given the following directions for completing Task 5:  
 After completing Task 4, rate the degree to which each source you have used was helpful by placing an “X” in the blank “Quite Helpful,” “Moderately Helpful,” or “Not Very Helpful. **Rate only the sources that you have used in the last 12 months**

<sup>a</sup>Number of responses. <sup>b</sup>Percentage of responses. <sup>c</sup>Average of responses when Q=3; M=2; N=1.

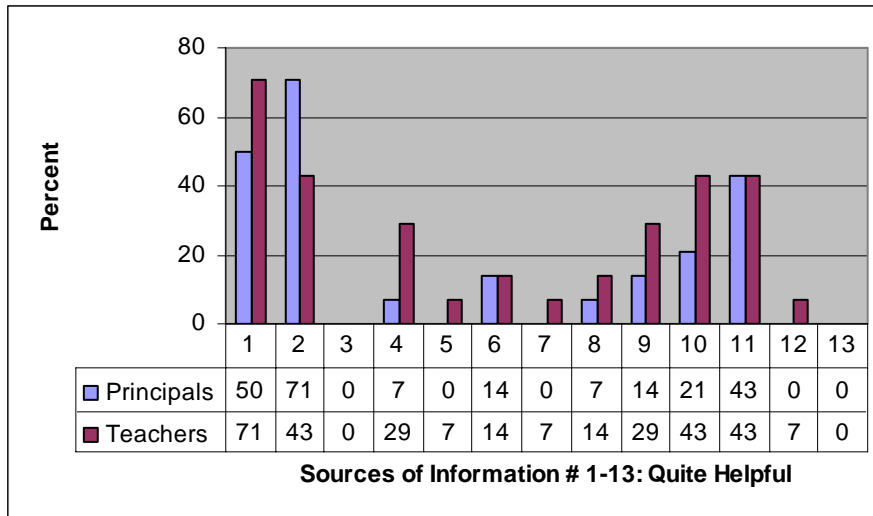
**Table 11. Teachers' Rating of Information Sources**

Task 5 Items – Rate Sources of Information	Q		M		N		Average
	# <sup>a</sup>	% <sup>b</sup>	#	%	#	%	
1. Informal contacts with specialists in the field (e.g., friends, colleagues, professors, and educators who have specialized in reading education)	10	71	3	21	0	0	2.77
2. Formal contacts with specialists in the field (e.g., Language Arts Consultant, Reading Consultant, Language Arts/Reading Supervisor)	6	43	5	36	0	0	2.55
3. Popular national magazines and/or newspapers(e.g., <i>Atlantic Monthly</i> , <i>Time</i> , <i>Reader's Digest</i> , <i>USA Today</i> ) Popular national magazines and/or newspapers(e.g., <i>Atlantic Monthly</i> , <i>Time</i> , <i>Reader's Digest</i> , <i>USA Today</i> )	0	0	10	71	1	7	1.91
4. Journals for educators (e.g., <i>Phi Delta Kappan</i> , <i>The Principal</i> , <i>National Leadership</i> , <i>Reading Research Quarterly</i> , <i>Journal of Educational Research</i> , <i>Reading Horizons</i> , <i>Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy</i> )	4	29	4	29	1	7	2.22
5. College textbooks focused on reading	1	7	0	0	0	0	3.00
6. Books published by popular press (e.g., <i>Cultural Literacy</i> , <i>Why Johnny Can't Read</i> , <i>All I ever Needed to Know I Learned In Kindergarten</i> , <i>Closing of the American Mind</i> , <i>Illiterate American</i> )	2	14	5	36	0	0	2.29
7. Watching or listening to radio and television broadcasts about reading issues (e.g., news reports, documentaries, debates, interviews, commentaries)	1	7	7	50	1	7	2.22
8. Internet websites and on-line journals related to reading and reading issues	2	14	6	43	0	0	2.25
9. Conventions of professional reading associations (e.g., local, state, or national: International Reading Association, National Reading Conference)	4	29	1	7	0	0	2.80
10. Workshops, seminars, or organized study groups focused on reading issues	6	43	4	29	0	0	2.60
11. Staff development and training related to reading provided by the local school system	6	43	5	36	0	0	2.55
12. Enrollment in college or university courses related to reading education	1	7	0	0	0	0	3.00
13. Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Note. Principals were given the following directions for completing Task 5:

After completing Task 4, rate the degree to which each source you have used was helpful by placing an "X" in the blank "Quite Helpful," "Moderately Helpful," or "Not Very Helpful. **Rate only the sources that you have used in the last 12 months.**

<sup>a</sup>Number of responses. <sup>b</sup>Percentage of responses. <sup>c</sup>Average of responses when Q=3; M=2; N=1.

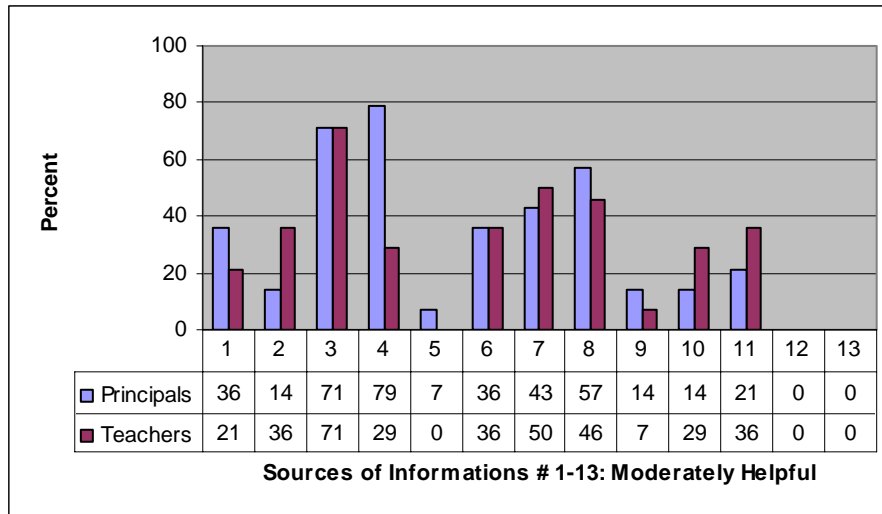


**Figure 12. Comparison of Principals' and Teachers' Rating Sources of Information - Quite Helpful**

*Moderately Helpful (Task 5)*

Principals, as shown in Figure 13, reported that Source 4, journals for educators (79%), was *moderately helpful* as was Source 3, popular national magazines and/or newspapers, (71%). Source 8, internet websites and on-line journals related to reading and reading issues, was given this rating by 57%. The source rated *moderately helpful* by the fourth largest percentage of principals was Source 7, watching or listening to radio and television broadcasts about reading issues (43%). Source 1, informal contacts with specialists in the field, and Source 6, books published by popular press, were rated *moderately helpful* by 36% of these principals.

Teachers reported that Source 3, popular national magazines and/or newspapers (71%), was *moderately helpful*. Fifty percent of the teachers using



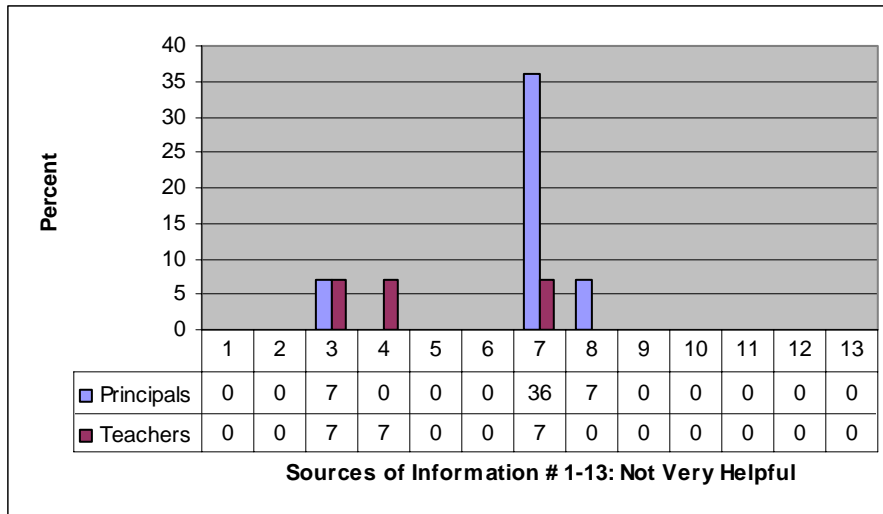
**Figure 13. Comparison of Principals' and Teachers' Rating Sources of Information - Moderately Helpful**

Source 7, watching or listening to radio and television broadcasts about reading issues, found these to be *moderately helpful* and Source 8, internet websites and on-line journals related to reading and reading issues, was *moderately helpful* to 46%.

*Not Very Helpful (Task 5)*

Few of the participants rated the sources of information that they have used in the last 12 months to be *not very helpful* (Figure 14). Principals and teachers each rated three of the sources as being *not very helpful*. Principals rated Source 7, watching or listening to radio and television broadcasts about reading issues (36%); Source 3, popular national magazines and/or newspapers (7%); and Source 8, internet websites and on-line journals related to reading and reading issues (7%), as *not very helpful*.





**Figure 14. Comparison of Principals' and Teachers' Rating Sources of Information - Not Very Helpful**

Teachers also rated three sources of information as being *not very helpful* all being chosen by 7%: Source 3, popular national magazines and/or newspapers; Source 4, journals for educators; and source 7, watching or listening to radio and television broadcasts about reading issues.

*Analysis (Task 5)*

Participants were asked to rate the usefulness of each source of information they had used in the last 12 months in Task 5. The number responding to each source did not always equal 14 since participants used different sources (Appendix G.2). Each rating was assigned a number for purposes of computing an average with the highest average being the closest to 3.00 (i.e., *Quite Helpful*, 3.00; *Moderately Helpful*, 2.00; and *Not very Helpful*, 1.00). As seen in Appendix G.2, no source of information received an average of

3.00. Five sources were highly rated with averages of 2.50 or higher by both groups of participants: Source 1, informal contacts with specialists in the field (principals 5.58; teachers, 2.77); Source 2, formal contacts with specialists in the field (principals 2.83; teachers, 2.55); Source 9, conventions of professional reading associations (principals, 2.50; teachers, 2.80); Source 10, workshops, seminars, or organized study groups focused on reading issues (principals 2.60, teachers 2.60); and Source 11, staff development and training related to reading (principals, 2.67; teachers, 2.55).

### **Summary**

Chapter Four has presented the findings of this study including an analysis of participant demographics and responses to the five tasks on the survey instrument. Participants responded to two demographic questions in common: size of their school and number of semester hours of reading education courses completed. The balance of the requested demographic information was also discussed.

An analysis was completed of participants' responses to the five tasks in the questionnaire. A chi-square analysis was completed of responses to Task 1, 2, and 4. Task 3 and Task 5 were analyzed by comparing the averages of responses to the individual items on the task. Data were discussed in relationship to this study's three research questions.

Conclusions dealing with these data appear in Chapter Five.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **Introduction**

The first four chapters have presented the following: Chapter One explained the purpose of the study; Chapter Two examined a selection of related literature and research relevant to the study; methodology was explained in Chapter Three; and data and findings of the research were presented in Chapter Four. In this chapter, the findings will be summarized and conclusions to the study as well as recommendations for future research and application of the findings will be discussed.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine middle school principals' and teachers' perceptions of the current issues in middle school reading education. A second purpose was to identify the sources of information about reading education that these educators use and find helpful to keep informed about the current issues in reading education. Three research questions were investigated in this study. The findings of the study will be discussed in relationship to the three research questions that guided this research.

The questionnaire used in this survey, *Middle School Principals and Teachers: Knowledge of the Reading Program*, was developed using as a model the *Elementary School Principals' Questionnaire* (Hollingsworth, Reutzel, Suddweeks, & Jacobson, n.d.). The *Elementary School Principals'*

*Questionnaire* does not include provisions for inclusion or examination of responses by both teachers and principals. In addition, issues in reading education in the middle school curriculum are different from those in the previously developed questionnaire that included only issues relevant to elementary school reading education. Sources of information were updated to reflect those currently available to principals and teachers in the Knox County School System (KCS) where the survey was conducted.

### **Sample and Procedure**

Participants in this study were 28 educators employed by the Knox County School System (KCS) – 14 middle school principals and 14 middle school reading teachers. The reading teachers were the reading chairpersons for their individual middle schools. Permission was obtained from officials in this system before beginning the study. Participants completed informed consent forms before participating in the study.

Data were collected at two monthly meetings, the Middle School Principals' Meeting held on 4/7/04 and the Language Arts Department Meeting held on 3/30/04. One participant was absent from each of the meetings and informed consent forms and questionnaires were delivered by and returned to the Middle School Coordinator's office (the principal) and the Middle School Reading Consultant (the teacher). The completed forms were forwarded to the researcher by those offices and filed randomly with the questionnaires completed in the two meetings. Following receipt of the two final questionnaires, data from

the instruments were analyzed in relationship to the three research questions. Similarities and differences in the responses given by middle school principals and teachers were analyzed for the five tasks on the questionnaire. A chi-square analysis was completed for responses to items on Tasks 1, 2, and 4. Tasks 3 and 5 were analyzed by comparing the averages of responses to individual items.

### **Summary of Findings**

The following summary is made in response to the three questions considered in this study. The first question asked what middle school principals and teachers perceive to be the *unresolved issues* in middle school reading education.

Three issues emerged as *unresolved* from an analysis of the data: (a) meeting the criteria of No Child Left behind for “Highly Qualified” reading teachers; (b) effects of public accountability, which foster teaching to the test, on reading instruction (i.e., testing under No Child Left Behind); and (c) planning reading instruction for struggling readers. A statistically significant difference for Issue 3, providing a supportive learning community including teachers who serve as role models of active literacy via apparent relish for reading, was found by a chi-square analysis of *unresolved* and *unresolved* issues between principals and teachers (p-value .05). The three issues classified as *unresolved* by the highest percentages of principals and teachers were also ranked as being the top three unresolved issues. There was a statistically significant difference in ranking of

the top three *unresolved* issues and those not chosen between principals and teachers at the .03 level of probability for Issue 3, providing a supportive learning community including teachers who serve as role models of active literacy via apparent relish for reading.

The second research question asked what *level of understanding* middle school principals and teachers have of issues in middle school reading education. When asked to rate their *level of understanding* of the critical issues, principals as a group tended to rate *understanding* of issues higher than did teachers. Principals reported that they *understand and can explain* two issues (with averages of 4.00 out of 4.00): (a) reading in the content areas – instruction, development, vocabulary, and purpose and (b) providing a supportive learning community including teachers who serve as role models of active literacy via apparent relish for reading. Teachers also indicated a high level of *understanding* these issues but with lower averages than principals. Both groups of participants had two unresolved issues in common rated as being highly *understood*: (a) planning reading instruction for struggling readers and (b) using multiple forms of reading assessment other than federal, state, and local sanctioned testing to determine reading needs/strengths of students.

Two of the three issues classified as *unresolved* by the largest percentage of both groups of participants were among the lowest rated as being *understood*: (a) meeting the criteria of No Child Left Behind for “Highly Qualified” reading

teachers and (b) effects of public accountability, which foster teaching to the test, on reading instruction (i.e., testing under No Child Left Behind).

The last research question was concerned with the *sources of information* used by middle school principals and teachers. Both groups of participants identified three *sources of information* in common in their top four choices: (a) informal contacts with specialists in the field, (b) formal contacts with specialists in the field, and (c) popular national magazines and/or newspapers. Principals also indicated a high use of (a) journals for educators and (b) watching or listening to radio and television broadcasts about reading issues in their top four choices. Teachers included two other, different *sources* in their top four: (a) workshops, seminars, or organized study groups focused on reading issues and (b) staff development and training related to reading provided by the local school system. A statistically significant difference at the .01 level of probability was found in participants' responses to one item: the use of journals for educators as a source of information. This was the highest identified source for principals and fifth on the list chosen by teachers.

Highest rated in *usefulness* as a source of information by principals was informal contacts in the field while teachers rated conventions of professional reading associations highest in *usefulness*. Principals and teachers both rated five sources highly: (a) informal contacts with specialists in the field, (b) formal contacts with specialists, (c) conventions of professional reading associations, (d) workshops, seminars, or organized study groups focused on reading issues, and

(e) staff development and training related to reading provided by the local school system.

Although few principals indicated that they had used (a) staff development and training related to reading provided by the local school system or (b) workshops, seminars or organized study groups focused on reading issues in the last 12 months, this group gave high ratings to the usefulness of these sources of information. Teachers indicated that they had both used these two sources of information in the last 12 months and found them to be *useful*. Neither group identified a high participation in conventions of professional reading associations in the last 12 months, but both groups indicated that this was a *useful* source of information to them.

This study was limited to participants from the fourteen KCS middle schools. It is uncertain whether these findings could be generalized to other school systems and school populations.

## **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions held by middle school principals and teachers of the current issues in middle school reading education and the sources of information that they use to keep informed about current issues in reading education. Most of the research reviewed for this study concerned elementary school principals and teachers and their relationship to the reading education curriculum. Little research has focused on the middle school setting, which is unique in its educational program and in the needs of its



students. Underlying the current research was the assumption that the perceptions of educators influence their decisions when they make curriculum decisions concerning the reading education programs for their schools. Since the middle school years are traditionally the last time students receive formal instruction in reading, it is important to examine the factors that influence the decisions principals and teachers make about the reading program.

Several internal factors were discussed that influence curriculum decisions. These factors include the unique needs of adolescents, the population served by the individual school, the cultural setting of the school including neighborhoods served, parental expectations and involvement, prevailing socio-economic conditions, and ethnic composition. External factors include the school system's instructional goals and philosophical position concerning reading education, school funding for reading programs, effects of the No Child Left Behind legislation (NCLB) on the reading program, and current issues in reading education. While this study focused on the external factor of issues in reading education, the effects of both internal and external factors have influenced these current issues.

. Perceptions of current issues in reading education held by middle school principals and teachers were the first focus of this study. Participants were middle school principals and reading education chairpersons for the 14 middle schools in the Knox County School System (KCS). An example of external factors that affect the school's program is apparent in the length of time these

principals and teachers have been in their current positions. While these principals have an average of 23 years as educators, the average number of years as principals is 8.3 and the average time in their current position (including this year) is 2.6 years. Teachers averaged 24.2 years teaching and 13.5 years (including this year) in their current teaching positions. The length of time principals have been at their current school is a reflection of the many administrative assignment changes that KCS has undergone over the past five years. The effect of these KCS middle school administrative moves on the reading education curriculum may be balanced somewhat by the fact that 13 of the 14 principals have taught reading and that eight have completed seven or more semester hours of reading education classes.

Of the ten issues in middle school reading education identified by a panel of experts and included in the questionnaire for this study, two issues directly relate to NCLB: (a) meeting the criteria of No Child Left Behind for “Highly Qualified” reading teachers and (b) effects of public accountability, which foster teaching to the test, on reading instruction (i.e., testing under No Child Left Behind). Both of these issues were chosen as unresolved issues by the largest percentages of both principals and teachers included in this study. The third issue chosen by these educators was planning reading instruction for struggling readers, an internal factor affecting curriculum decisions since it is based on the needs of students in the school. These same three unresolved issues were ranked highest in importance by these educators. While the issue of planning

reading instruction for struggling readers was rated high as being understood by participants, the other two issues scored among the lowest percentages indicating a lack of understanding of the issue. It appears that the effect of NCLB on the reading program is a cause of concern to these middle school principals and teachers and that they are not as sure that they understand how this issue will impact their schools' reading programs.

The second focus of interest in this study concerned the sources of information used by educators as well as the identification of information sources that principals and teachers have found to be most helpful to them. Principals and teachers have indicated a need for further staff development after beginning their educational careers (Eberhard, Reindhardt-Mondragon, & Stottlemeyer, 2000; Johnson & Kardos, 2002; Lauffey & Laffey, 1984; Laughter, 1980; Parsad, Lewis, & Farris, 2001) and middle school educators in particular need continuing professional growth opportunities (Williamson, 1996). The highest numbers of principals and reading teachers in the current study have indicated that they had used three of the same sources of information about reading education issues in the last 12 months: (a) informal contacts with professionals in the field, (b) formal contacts with professionals in the field, and (c) popular national magazines for educators. Principals listed journals for educators first on their list of sources of information. Teachers in the second largest numbers indicated they had participated in staff development and training related to reading provided by the local school system.

The sources of information used in the last 12 months were rated by participants as to their helpfulness. Both groups rated several sources high in helpfulness: informal and formal contacts with specialists in the field; conventions of professional reading associations, workshops, seminars, or organized study groups; and staff development and training related to reading provided by the local school system. Principals indicated a low participation in staff development, but it placed second in helpfulness. Conventions of professional reading associations were low in participation but rated high in usefulness by both groups. It appears that these educators recognize the need for staff development and utilize a variety of sources to keep informed about reading education issues. Although KCS is in a university town, only one teacher out of the 28 participants indicated enrollment in college or university courses related to reading education as a source of information. This teacher is pursuing a certification as special teacher of reading. Although the reason this teacher is taking reading education classes was not indicated on the teachers' questionnaire, it is possible that this is due to the need for "Highly Qualified" reading teachers under NCLB, another example of this external factor affecting educators and the reading program.

## **Conclusions**

### ***Research Question One***

What are the critical and unresolved issues in middle school reading education as perceived by (a) middle school principals and (b) middle school

reading teachers?

The principals and teachers in this study agreed strongly that three issues were unresolved. Statistically significant differences were found in responses to (a) classification of one issue and (b) difference in ranking of one issue. These principals and teachers agreed on the unresolved issues more than they disagreed.

### ***Research Question Two***

What level of understanding do (a) middle school principals and (b) middle school reading teachers perceive they have of each issue?

Principals' and teachers' ratings of their levels of understanding of reading issues were very similar. Principals tended to rate their level of understanding higher than did teachers but most participants gave themselves high ratings on understanding issues in reading education.

### ***Research Question Three***

What sources do (a) middle school principals and (b) middle school reading teachers use and find helpful to inform themselves about current issues in reading education?

Most participants had used three sources of information about reading issues in common in the last 12 months. Principals and teachers had a strong degree of agreement in their responses and a statistically significant difference was found on their use of journals for educators. These two groups rated the usefulness of these sources of information in a very similar manner. They

tended to agree that the sources of information they had used were quite helpful to moderately helpful as shown in the average ratings given.

### **Recommendations for Future Research and Practice**

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this study:

1. This study should be replicated and/or extended to include teachers who teach reading in the content areas. These teachers receive information on reading education from the reading chairpersons included in this study, and it would be helpful to determine what their perceptions are of the current issues in reading education as well as to identify the sources of information that they find most helpful.
2. This study should be replicated using a wider population of principals and teachers to determine if the findings concerning unresolved issues and helpful sources of information may be generalized to educators beyond KCS.
3. Each school should be encouraged to provide journals for educators, which include information on reading education issues, as resources in the school library for use by both principals and teachers (i.e., *Phi Delta Kappan*, *The Principal*, *National Leadership*, *Reading Research Quarterly*, *Journal of Educational Research*, *Reading Horizons*, *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, *The Reading Teacher*). Journals for educators were highly rated as being used and being helpful by principals. Teachers did not choose this item as frequently, possibly because they do not have access easily to such journals.
4. Opportunities should be provided for principals and teachers to attend conferences of professional reading associations. This was a highly rated source of information about reading issues identified by this group of educators; however, few had participated in such professional development in the last 12 months.
5. Staff development in KCS should be planned to allow more formal and informal contacts with specialists in the field of reading education. This source of information was one of the highest rated in helpfulness identified by these participants.

6. Staff development and training should be provided to principals and teachers concerning the unresolved issues that were rated as being least understood. Two of these issues are (a) meeting the criteria of No Child Left behind for “Highly Qualified” reading teachers and (b) effects of public accountability, which foster teaching to the test, on reading instruction (i.e., testing under No Child Left Behind).
7. Staff development and training should be provided for principals and teachers on meeting the reading needs of English Language Learners. This was classified third as being unresolved by the teachers and fifth by the principals. It was rated as lower in understanding than most of the other issues.
8. Staff development and training should be provided for principals and teachers on providing culturally sensitive reading materials for diverse, multicultural classrooms. This was also classified by many principals as unresolved and was rated low in understanding of the issue by both groups.

### **Summary**

This study was designed to examine the perceptions of principals and teachers of the current issues in reading education and to explore the sources of information about reading issues that these two groups of educators use and find helpful. Chapter Five summarized the findings, presented conclusions of the study, provided a discussion of the study, and presented recommendations for future research as well as practice.

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## APPENDICES



## **Appendix A: Knox County Permission to Conduct Survey**

KNOX COUNTY SCHOOLS  
ANDREW JOHNSON BUILDING

Dr. Charles Q. Lindsey, Superintendent

February 24, 2004



Sarah Keller  
10508 Blakewood Dr.  
Knoxville, TN 37922

Dear Ms. Keller:

You are granted permission to contact appropriate building-level administrators concerning the conduct of your proposed research study entitled, "Reading Education Issues: Middle School Principals' and Teachers' Perceptions." In the Knox County schools final approval of any research study is contingent upon acceptance by the administrators at the sites where the study will be conducted. Include a copy of this permission form when seeking approval from the administrators.

In all research studies names of individuals, groups, or schools may not appear in the text of the study unless *specific* permission has been granted through this office. The principal researcher is required to furnish this office with one copy of the completed research document.

Good luck with your study. Do not hesitate to contact me if you need further assistance or clarification.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Mike S. Winstead".

Mike S. Winstead, Ph.D.  
Coordinator of Research and Evaluation  
Phone: (865) 594-1740  
Fax: (865) 594-1709

Project No. 2704

## **Appendix B: Informed Consent Form**

**Informed Consent Form**  
**Reading Education Issues:**  
**Middle School Principals' and Teachers' Perceptions**

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to identify (1) middle school principals' and reading teachers' perceptions of current issues in middle school reading education and (2) the sources which they have found to be useful in keeping informed about reading education issues.

Your participation in this study consists of completion of a questionnaire concerning middle school reading issues and possible sources of information about these issues. Completion of the questionnaire should require about ten minutes of your time.

Risk of Participation/Confidentiality

There is minimal risk involved in participating in this study. Your identity will be kept confidential. No individual responses will be revealed and all data will be reported in a composite form.

Benefits

This study will provide specific information about the issues which middle school principals and reading teachers in Knox County Schools (KCS) perceive as being of current importance. It will also identify the sources of information which middle school principals and reading teachers find useful in keeping informed about reading issues. Information gathered from this study will be available to KCS for use in planning effective professional development in reading education for middle school principals and reading teachers.

Contact

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Sarah Keller, at Cedar Bluff Middle School, (865) 539-7891, or by e-mail (skeller2@utk.edu). If you have questions about your rights as a participant, contact the compliance section of the Office of Research at (865) 974-3466.

Participation

Your participation in this study is voluntary; you may decline to participate without penalty. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time.

Consent

I have read the above information and agree to participate in this study. I have received a copy of this form.

Participant's name (print) \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C: Survey Instrument

**MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS:  
KNOWLEDGE OF THE READING PROGRAM**

**SECTION 1 - Demographic Information**

**PRINCIPALS** - Please complete the following:

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Number of students in your school -   | 600 or fewer <input type="checkbox"/> |
|  | 601-900 <input type="checkbox"/>      |
|  | 901-1200 <input type="checkbox"/>     |
|  | 1201 or more <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Total years as an educator (including this year) -                              | _____                                 |
| 3. How many years have you been a principal (including this year)?                 | _____                                 |
| 4. How many years have you been in your current position (including this year)?    | _____                                 |
| 5. Have you taught reading?  | Yes <input type="checkbox"/>          |
|  | No <input type="checkbox"/>           |
| 6. Number of college or university semester hours completed in reading education - | 3 or fewer <input type="checkbox"/>   |
|  | 4-6 <input type="checkbox"/>          |
|  | 7-12 <input type="checkbox"/>         |
|  | more than 12 <input type="checkbox"/> |

**TEACHERS** - Please complete the following:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Number of students in your school -   | 600 or fewer <input type="checkbox"/>                          |
|  | 601-900 <input type="checkbox"/>                               |
|  | 901-1200 <input type="checkbox"/>                              |
|  | 1201 or more <input type="checkbox"/>                          |
| 2. How many years have you been teaching (including this year)?                          | _____  |
| 3. How many years have you been in your current teaching position (including this year)? | _____  |
| 4. What grade(s) are you teaching? (Check all that apply)                                | 6th <input type="checkbox"/>                                   |
|  | 7th <input type="checkbox"/>                                   |
|  | 8th <input type="checkbox"/>                                   |
| 5. How many reading classes do you teach?  | _____  |
| 6. Teaching Certification(s) -   | 1-8 (001) <input type="checkbox"/>                             |
|  | Special Teacher of Reading K-8 (075) <input type="checkbox"/>  |
|  | Special Teacher of Reading 7-12 (076) <input type="checkbox"/> |
|  | Other certification(s) (list) _____                            |
| 7. Number of college or university semester hours completed in reading education -       | 3 or fewer <input type="checkbox"/>                            |
|  | 4-6 <input type="checkbox"/>                                   |
|  | 7-12 <input type="checkbox"/>                                  |
|  | more than 12 <input type="checkbox"/>                          |

**SECTION 2 - Issues in Reading Education**

Task 1 Classify	Task 2 Rank	Task 3 Rate
<p>Nine reading education issues are listed below. In your mind, which of these are:</p> <p><b>UI:</b> An <i>Unresolved Issue</i> (research is not conclusive)  <b>RI:</b> A <i>Resolved Issue</i> (research is conclusive - was once an issue but is no longer)  <b>NI:</b> <i>Never has been an issue as far as I am concerned.</i></p> <p><b>Circle the letter which designates the category you selected.</b></p>	<p>After you have classified each statement, rank order the <b>top three Unresolved Issues</b> in terms of their relative importance to improving reading instruction from your point of view.</p> <p>1 - the issue which you believe is the most important.                  2 - the issue of second importance                  3 - the issue of third importance</p> <p><b>Rank only the top three issues you classified as <i>Unresolved Issues</i>.</b></p>	<p>Please rate your understanding of <b>each issue</b> (including any issues you added) as follow:</p> <p><b>A</b> - I understand this problem well enough to describe the underlying issues and can give a reasoned argument explaining my position.  <b>B</b> - I believe that I understand most of the underlying issues, but I can't give a good rationale for taking one side or the other.  <b>C</b> - I know that this problem exists, but I'm unsure of what the basic issues are.  <b>D</b> - I'm not aware of any problems in this area.</p>

Issues in Reading Education	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3
1. Planning reading instruction for struggling readers	UI RI NI	_____	_____
2. Reading in the content areas - instruction, development, vocabulary, and purpose	UI RI NI	_____	_____
3. Providing a supportive learning community including teachers who serve as role models of active literacy via apparent relish for reading	UI RI NI	_____	_____
4. Teaching critical thinking skills	UI RI NI	_____	_____
5. Meeting the reading needs of English Language Learners while allowing them to preserve their language of intimacy	UI RI NI	_____	_____
6. Providing culturally sensitive reading materials for diverse, multi-cultural classrooms	UI RI NI	_____	_____
7. Using multiple forms of reading assessment other than federal, state, and local sanctioned testing to determine reading needs/strengths of students	UI RI NI	_____	_____
8. Meeting the criteria of No Child Left Behind for "Highly Qualified" reading teachers	UI RI NI	_____	_____
9. Effects of public accountability, which foster teaching to the test, on reading instruction (i.e. testing under No Child Left Behind)	UI RI NI	_____	_____
10. Other: _____	UI RI NI	_____	_____

### SECTION 3 - Reading Information Sources

**Task 4 Sources Used**

Mark an "X" in the blank of each activity listed below you **personally participated in during the past 12 months** as a means of keeping yourself informed about current issues in reading.

**Task 5 Rate the Source**

After completing Task 4, rate the degree to which each source you have used was helpful by placing an "X" in the blank "Quite Helpful," "Moderately Helpful," or "Not Very Helpful." **Rate only the sources that you have used in the last 12 months.**

Sources of Reading Information	Task 4	Task 5		
		Quite Helpful	Moderately Helpful	Not Very Helpful
<b>Personal Contacts:</b>				
1. Informal contacts with specialists in the field (e.g., friends, colleagues, professors, and educators who have specialized in reading education)	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. Formal contacts with specialists in the field (e.g., Language Arts Consultant, Reading Consultant, Language Arts/Reading Supervisor)	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Print Sources:</b>				
3. Popular national magazines and/or newspapers (e.g., <i>Atlantic Monthly</i> , <i>Time</i> , <i>Reader's Digest</i> , <i>USA Today</i> )	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. Journals for educators (e.g., <i>Phi Delta Kappan</i> , <i>The Principal</i> , <i>National Leadership</i> , <i>Reading Research Quarterly</i> , <i>Journal of Educational Research</i> , <i>Reading Horizons</i> , <i>Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy</i> )	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. College textbooks focused on reading	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. Books published by popular press (e.g., <i>Cultural Literacy</i> , <i>Why Johnny Can't Read</i> , <i>All I ever Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten</i> , <i>Closing of the American Mind</i> , <i>Illiterate American</i> ).	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Non-Print Sources:</b>				
7. Watching or listening to radio and television broadcasts about reading issues (e.g., news reports, documentaries, debates, interviews, commentaries)	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. Internet websites and on-line journals related to reading and reading issues	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Participation:</b>				
9. Conventions of professional reading associations (e.g., local, state, or national: International Reading Association, National Reading Conference)	_____	_____	_____	_____
10. Workshops, seminars, or organized study groups focused on reading issues	_____	_____	_____	_____
11. Staff development and training related to reading provided by the local school system	_____	_____	_____	_____
12. Enrollment in college or university courses related to reading education	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other: 13. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____



## Appendix D: Demographic Information

**Appendix D.1: Principals' Demographic Information**

Principals' Demographic Questions													
Principals	1. 600 or Fewer Students in School	601-900 Students in School	901-1200 Students in School	1201 or More Students in School	2. # Years as an Educator	3. # Years as a Principal	4. # Years Current Position	5. Yes - Has Taught Reading	No - Has Not Taught Reading	6. 3 or Fewer Semester Hours Reading Education	4 to 6 Hours Reading Education	7 to 12 Hours Reading Education	More Than 12 Hours Reading Education
P1		X			23	3	3	X				X	
P2	X				29	8	1	X				X	
P3			X		31	19	5	X		X			
P4		X			26	8	1	X				X	
P5			X		17	4.5	2.5	X		X			
P6			X		17	6	6	X				X	
P7				X	37.5	31	2	X				X	
P8	X				17	5	5	X		X			
P9		X			19	12	4	X			X		
P10			X		23	1	1	X					X
P11			X		14	5	1	X				X	
P12	X				34	1	1	X				X	
P13			X		11	5	1	X			X		
P14		X			27	13	4		X	X			
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>a</b>	<b>b</b>	<b>c</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>

<sup>a</sup> Average = 23 years. <sup>b</sup> Average = 8.3 years. <sup>c</sup> Average = 2.6 years.

**Appendix D.2: Teachers' Demographic Information**

Teachers' Demographic Questions																								
Teachers	1. 600 or Fewer Students in School			2. # Years Teaching			3. # Years in Current Position			4. Currently Teaching 6th Grade			5. # Reading Classes			6. Certified Grades 1 to 8			7. 3 or Fewer Semester Hours Reading Education			8. More Than 12 Semester Hours Reading Education		
	601 - 900 Students in School	901 - 1200 Students in School	1201 or more Students in School	2. # Years Teaching	3, # Years in Current Position	4. Currently Teaching 6th Grade	Currently Teaching 7th Grade	Currently Teaching 8th Grade	5. # Reading Classes	6. Certified Grades 1 to 8	Special Teacher of Reading K – 8	Special Teacher of Reading 7 – 12	Other Certifications <sup>a</sup>	7. 3 or Fewer Semester Hours Reading Education	4 to 6 Semester Hours Reading Education	7 to 12 Semester Hours Reading Education	More Than 12 Semester Hours Reading Education							
T1	X			31	24		X		2	X				X										
T2		X		8	5		X		5	X			X				X							
T3		X		33	20			X	1	X					X									
T4			X	25	5			X	1	X			X											
T5	X			25	12		X		5	X			X				X							
T6			X	21	14			X	1	X	X	X	X				X							
T7			X	27	9			X	1				X			X								
T8			X	31	N/A	X			1	X			X			X								
T9			X	9	6		X		5	X				X										
T10			X	31	31	X			1	X			X				X							
T11			X	27	11	X			1	X			X				X							
T12		X		30	12		X		1	X			X		X									
T13		X		3	3		X		6	X						X								
T14		X		28	23			X	5	X			X			X								
Total	2	5	5	2	<sup>b</sup>	<sup>c</sup>	3	6	5	13	1	1	10	2	2	4	5							

<sup>a</sup>Other certifications listed: T2 – home economics education; T4 – English; T5 – special education; T6 – English; T7 – English; T8 – library science; T 10 – English; T11 – English, guidance; T12 – English, history; T14 – health, physical education, sociology.

<sup>b</sup> Average = 24.2 years. <sup>c</sup> Average = 13.5 years.

## Appendix E: Survey Data Tables

**Appendix E.1: Issues Classified – Principals**

Principals' Classification of Issues															
Issues <sup>a</sup>	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12	P13	P14	
1	U	R	U	N	N	R	U	U	R	U	U	R	R	U	
2	R	R	R	U	N	R	U	R	R	U	U	U	R	R	
3	R	U	R	N	N	N	N	N	R	N	N	R	R	N	
4	R	R	R	U	R	N	U	N	U	R	R	R	R	U	
5	R	R	U	U	R	N	U	U	U	R	N	R	R	U	
6	R	R	U	U	N	N	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	
7	R	R	R	N	N	N	N	N	R	R	R	U	R	U	
8	U	U	R	U	N	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	
9	U	U	U	U	N	U	U	U	U	N	U	U	U	R	
10							U								
<b>Total</b>	<b>U</b>	3	3	4	6	0	2	8	5	5	4	5	5	3	6
	<b>R</b>	6	6	5	3	5	2	0	1	4	3	2	4	6	2
	<b>N</b>	0	0	0	0	2	5	2	3	0	1	2	0	0	1

Note. U = An *Unresolved Issue* (research is not conclusive); R = A *Resolved Issue* (research is conclusive - was once an issue but is no longer); N = *Never has been an issue as far as I am concerned*.

<sup>a</sup>Issues: 1- Planning reading instruction for struggling readers. 2- Reading in the content areas – instruction, development, vocabulary, and purpose. 3- Providing a supportive learning community including teachers who serve as role models of active literacy via apparent relish for reading. 4- Teaching critical thinking skills. 5- Meeting the reading needs of English Language Learners while allowing them to preserve their language of intimacy. 6- Providing culturally sensitive reading materials for diverse, multi-cultural classrooms. 7- Using multiple forms of reading assessment other than federal, state, and local sanctioned testing to determine reading needs/strengths of students. 8- Meeting the criteria of No Child Left Behind for “Highly Qualified” reading teachers. 9- Effects of public accountability, which foster teaching to the test, on reading instruction (i.e., testing under No Child Left Behind). 10- Other.

**Appendix E.2: Issues Classified – Teachers**

Teachers' Classification of Issues															
Issues <sup>a</sup>	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	T10	T11	T12	T13	T14	
1	U	U	U	R	U	U	U	U	U	U	N	U	R	U	
2	R	R	R	R	U	U	U	R	U	U	U	U	R	R	
3	N	U	U	R	U	U	U	R	U	U	N	R	U	R	
4	R	R	R	U	R	U	R	U	U	R	N	U	U	U	
5	U	N	U	R	U	U	U	U	U	U	R	U	U	R	
6	R	N	R	N	U	R	U	U	R	N	N	U	U	R	
7	N	U	R	R	R	R	U	R	R	R	N	R	U	R	
8	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	N	U	U	U	U	
9	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	R	U	U	U	U	
10													U		
<b>Total</b>	<b>U</b>	4	5	5	3	7	7	8	6	7	4	3	7	8	4
	<b>R</b>	3	2	4	5	2	2	1	3	2	3	1	2	2	5
	<b>N</b>	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	5	0	0	0

Note. U = An *Unresolved Issue* (research is not conclusive); R = A *Resolved Issue* (research is conclusive - was once an issue but is no longer); N = *Never has been an issue as far as I am concerned*.

<sup>a</sup>Issues: 1- Planning reading instruction for struggling readers. 2- Reading in the content areas – instruction, development, vocabulary, and purpose. 3- Providing a supportive learning community including teachers who serve as role models of active literacy via apparent relish for reading. 4- Teaching critical thinking skills. 5- Meeting the reading needs of English Language Learners while allowing them to preserve their language of intimacy. 6- Providing culturally sensitive reading materials for diverse, multi-cultural classrooms. 7- Using multiple forms of reading assessment other than federal, state, and local sanctioned testing to determine reading needs/strengths of students. 8- Meeting the criteria of No Child Left Behind for “Highly Qualified” reading teachers. 9- Effects of public accountability, which foster teaching to the test, on reading instruction (i.e., testing under No Child Left Behind). 10- Other.

**Appendix E.3: Issues Ranked – Principals**

Principals' Ranking of Issues														
Issues <sup>a</sup>	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12	P13	P14
1	2	1	2				1	1		1	3			2
2		2					3			2	1			
3														
4				3			2							3
5			3											
6		3								3			3	
7														
8	1			1		1		3			2		1	1
9	3		1	2		2		2					2	
10														
<b># Responses</b>	3	3	3	3		2	3	3		3	3		3	3

Note. 1 = Most Important Issue; 2 = Issue of second importance; 3 = Issue of third Importance.

<sup>a</sup>Issues: 1- Planning reading instruction for struggling readers; 2- Reading in the content areas – instruction, development, vocabulary, and purpose; 3- Providing a supportive learning community including teachers who serve as role models of active literacy via apparent relish for reading; 4- Teaching critical thinking skills; 5- Meeting the reading needs of English Language Learners while allowing them to preserve their language of intimacy; 6- Providing culturally sensitive reading materials for diverse, multi-cultural classrooms; 7- Using multiple forms of reading assessment other than federal, state, and local sanctioned testing to determine reading needs/strengths of students; 8- Meeting the criteria of No Child Left Behind for “Highly Qualified” reading teachers; 9- Effects of public accountability, which foster teaching to the test, on reading instruction (i.e., testing under No Child Left Behind); 10- Other.

**Appendix E.4: Issues Ranked - Teachers**

Teachers' Ranking of Issues														
Issues <sup>a</sup>	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	T10	T11	T12	T13	T14
1	3	1	1		2	2	1	1	1			2		1
2					1				2		1	3		
3		3	3						3				1	
4				3				3						
5	2													
6														
7							3	2						
8				1	3	3					2		3	2
9	1	2	2	2		1	2				3	1	2	3
10														
<b># Responses</b>	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3		3	3	3	3

Note. 1 = Most Important Issue; 2 = Issue of second importance; 3 = Issue of third Importance.

<sup>a</sup>Issues: 1- Planning reading instruction for struggling readers; 2- Reading in the content areas – instruction, development, vocabulary, and purpose; 3- Providing a supportive learning community including teachers who serve as role models of active literacy via apparent relish for reading; 4- Teaching critical thinking skills; 5- Meeting the reading needs of English Language Learners while allowing them to preserve their language of intimacy; 6- Providing culturally sensitive reading materials for diverse, multi-cultural classrooms; 7- Using multiple forms of reading assessment other than federal, state, and local sanctioned testing to determine reading needs/strengths of students; 8- Meeting the criteria of No Child Left Behind for “Highly Qualified” reading teachers; 9- Effects of public accountability, which foster teaching to the test, on reading instruction (i.e., testing under No Child Left Behind); 10- Other.

:



**Appendix E.5: Issues Rated – Principals**

Principals Rating of Issues															
Issues <sup>s</sup>	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12	P13	P14	
1	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	B	A	A	B	A	A	A	
2	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A		
3	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	A		A	A		
4	A	A	A	A	B	A	A	A	B	A		A	A	B	
5	B	A	B	C	B	C	B	B	D	A		A	A		
6	B	A	C	C	A	B	B	C	B	A		A	A		
7	B	A	A	A	A	A	B	A	A	A		A	A		
8	C	C	A	B	A	B	C	A	A	B	B	B	A	B	
9	C	C	A	B	B	B	C	A	A	A		A	A		
10							A								
<b>Total</b>	<b>A</b>	4	7	7	5	6	5	5	6	6	8	1	8	9	1
	<b>B</b>	3	0	1	2	3	2	3	2	2	1	2	1	0	2
	<b>C</b>	2	2	1	2	0	2	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
	<b>D</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Note. A = I understand this problem well enough to describe the underlying issues and can give a reasoned argument explaining my position; B = I believe that I understand most of the underlying issues, but I can't give a good rationale for taking one side or the other; C = I know that this problem exists, but I'm unsure of what the basic Issues are; D = I'm not aware of any problems in this area.

<sup>s</sup>Issues: 1- Planning reading instruction for struggling readers; 2- Reading in the content areas – instruction, development, vocabulary, and purpose; 3- Providing a supportive learning community including teachers who serve as role models of active literacy via apparent relish for reading; 4- Teaching critical thinking skills; 5- Meeting the reading needs of English Language Learners while allowing them to preserve their language of intimacy; 6- Providing culturally sensitive reading materials for diverse, multi-cultural classrooms; 7- Using multiple forms of reading assessment other than federal, state, and local sanctioned testing to determine reading needs/strengths of students; 8- Meeting the criteria of No Child Left Behind for “Highly Qualified” reading teachers; 9- Effects of public accountability, which foster teaching to the test, on reading instruction (i.e., testing under No Child Left Behind); 10- Other.

**Appendix E.6: Issues Rated Teachers**

Teachers' Rating of Issues															
Issues <sup>a</sup>	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	T10	T11	T12	T13	T14	
1	A	A	A	B	A	B	B	A	A	A	A	C	B	C	
2	A	A	A	B	A	B	C	B	A	B	A	C	B	B	
3	A	A	A	B	A	C	C	B	A	A	A	D	A	B	
4	A	A	D	A	A	A	D	A	B	B	A	C	A	B	
5	B	C	C	C	A	C	B	B	B	B	B	C	C	B	
6	B	A	D	C	A	B	C	B	A		A	C	B	B	
7	A	A	A	B	A	B	C	A	A		A	D	B	B	
8	C	B	C	B	A	B	C	B	B		B	A	B	B	
9	C	A	B	B	A	A	C	B	B		B	A	B	B	
10													A		
<b>Total</b>	<b>A</b>	5	7	4	1	9	2	0	3	5	2	6	2	3	0
	<b>B</b>	2	1	2	6	0	5	2	6	4	3	0	6	8	
	<b>C</b>	2	1	1	2	0	2	6	0	0	0	5	1	1	
	<b>D</b>	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	

Note. A = I understand this problem well enough to describe the underlying issues and can give a reasoned argument explaining my position; B = I believe that I understand most of the underlying issues, but I can't give a good rationale for taking one side or the other; C = I know that this problem exists, but I'm unsure of what the basic Issues are; D = I'm not aware of any problems in this area.

<sup>a</sup>Issues: 1- Planning reading instruction for struggling readers; 2- Reading in the content areas – instruction, development, vocabulary, and purpose; 3- Providing a supportive learning community including teachers who serve as role models of active literacy via apparent relish for reading; 4- Teaching critical thinking skills; 5- Meeting the reading needs of English Language Learners while allowing them to preserve their language of intimacy; 6- Providing culturally sensitive reading materials for diverse, multi-cultural classrooms; 7- Using multiple forms of reading assessment other than federal, state, and local sanctioned testing to determine reading needs/strengths of students; 8- Meeting the criteria of No Child Left Behind for “Highly Qualified” reading teachers; 9- Effects of public accountability, which foster teaching to the test, on reading instruction (i.e., testing under No Child Left Behind); 10- Other.

**Appendix E.7: Sources Identified - Principals**

Principals' Identification of Sources of Information														
Source <sup>a</sup>	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12	P13	P14
1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
2	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
3	X		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
4	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
5					X									
6		X		X	X	X	X	X	X				X	
7		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
8		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X
9		X	X		X		X					X		
10		X	X				X		X	X			X	
11		X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X
12														
13														
<b>Total</b>	4	9	9	7	9	7	10	8	9	8	6	2	9	7

<sup>a</sup>Sources of Information: 1 - Informal contacts with specialists in the field; 2 - Formal contacts with specialists in the field; 3 - Popular national magazines and/or newspapers; 4 - Journals for educators; 5 - College textbooks focused on reading; 6 - Books published by popular press; 7 - Watching or listening to radio and television broadcasts about reading issues; 8 - Internet websites and on-line journals related to reading and reading issues; 9 - Conventions of professional reading associations; 10 - Workshops, seminars, or organized study groups focused on reading issues; 11 - Staff development and training related to reading provided by the local school system; 12 - Enrollment in college or university courses related to reading education; 13 - Other.

**Appendix E.8: Sources Identified - Teachers**

Teachers' Identification of Sources of Information														
Source <sup>a</sup>	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	T10	T11	T12	T13	T14
1	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
2		X	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X
3	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X		X	X
4	X	X	X	X	X		X		X		X			X
5		X												
6		X	X		X					X		X	X	X
7		X		X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X
8			X	X	X	X		X			X		X	X
9						X				X	X		X	X
10			X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X
11		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
12		X												
13														
<b>Total</b>	3	9	8	7	8	5	5	5	6	7	9	6	9	10

<sup>a</sup>Sources of Information: 1 - Informal contacts with specialists in the field; 2 - Formal contacts with specialists in the field; 3 - Popular national magazines and/or newspapers; 4 - Journals for educators; 5 - College textbooks focused on reading; 6 - Books published by popular press; 7 - Watching or listening to radio and television broadcasts about reading issues; 8 - Internet websites and on-line journals related to reading and reading issues; 9 - Conventions of professional reading associations; 10 - Workshops, seminars, or organized study groups focused on reading issues; 11 - Staff development and training related to reading provided by the local school system; 12 - Enrollment in college or university courses related to reading education; 13 - Other.

**Appendix E.9: Sources Rated – Principals**

Principals Rating of Sources of Information														
Source <sup>a</sup>	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10	P11	P12	P13	P14
1	M		Q	M	Q	M	M	Q	Q	Q	M		Q	Q
2	Q		Q	Q	M	Q	M	Q	Q	Q	Q		Q	Q
3	M		M	M		M	M	N	M	M	M		M	M
4	M		M	M	M	M	Q		M	M	M	M	M	M
5					M									
6				M	Q	M	Q	M	M				M	
7			M	N	N	M	M	N	N	M	N		M	M
8			M	M	N	M	Q	M	M	M			M	M
9			Q		M		M					Q		
10			Q				M		Q	Q			M	
11			Q		Q		M	Q	Q	Q	Q		M	M
12														
13														
<b>Total</b>	<b>Q</b>	1	0	5	1	2	1	3	3	4	4	2	1	2
	<b>M</b>	3	0	4	5	4	6	7	2	4	4	3	1	7
	<b>N</b>	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	1	0	1	0	0

Note. Q = Quite Helpful; M = Moderately Helpful; N = Not Very Helpful.

<sup>a</sup>Sources of Information: 1 - Informal contacts with specialists in the field; 2 - Formal contacts with specialists in the field; 3 - Popular national magazines and/or newspapers; 4 - Journals for educators; 5 - College textbooks focused on reading; 6 - Books published by popular press; 7 - Watching or listening to radio and television broadcasts about reading issues; 8 - Internet websites and on-line journals related to reading and reading issues; 9 - Conventions of professional reading associations; 10 - Workshops, seminars, or organized study groups focused on reading issues; 11 - Staff development and training related to reading provided by the local school system; 12 - Enrollment in college or university courses related to reading education; 13 - Other.

**Appendix E.10: Sources Rated – Teachers**

Teachers' Rating of Sources of Information <sup>b</sup>														
Source <sup>s</sup>	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	T10	T11	T12	T13	T14
1	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q	Q		Q	Q	M	M	Q	M
2		Q	Q	M	Q		M	M	Q		Q	M	Q	M
3	M	M	M		M		M	M	M	M	N		M	M
4	Q	Q	M	N	Q		M		M		M			Q
5		Q												
6		M	M		Q					M		M	Q	M
7		M		N				M	M	Q	M	M	M	M
8			Q	M	M	M		M			M		M	Q
9						M				Q	Q		Q	Q
10			Q	Q	Q	M		M		M	Q	M	Q	Q
11		Q	Q		Q	M	M		Q	Q	M	M	M	Q
12		Q												
13														
<b>Total</b>	<b>Q</b>	2	4	5	2	6	1	1	0	3	4	3	0	5
	<b>M</b>	1	3	3	2	2	4	4	5	3	3	5	6	4
	<b>N</b>	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0

Note. Q = Quite Helpful; M = Moderately Helpful; N = Not Very Helpful.

<sup>a</sup>Sources of Information: 1 - Informal contacts with specialists in the field; 2 - Formal contacts with specialists in the field; 3 - Popular national magazines and/or newspapers; 4 - Journals for educators; 5 - College textbooks focused on reading; 6 - Books published by popular press; 7 - Watching or listening to radio and television broadcasts about reading issues; 8 - Internet websites and on-line journals related to reading and reading issues; 9 - Conventions of professional reading associations; 10 - Workshops, seminars, or organized study groups focused on reading issues; 11 - Staff development and training related to reading provided by the local school system; 12 - Enrollment in college or university courses related to reading education; 13 - Other.

## **Appendix F: Statistical Analyses - Tasks 1, 2, and 4**

**Appendix F.1: Chi-Square – Task 1**

Task 1 – Classify Issues							
Issues		Observed		Expected		chi-square	p-value
		U <sup>a</sup>	R <sup>b</sup>	U	R		
1	Principals	7	5	8.64	3.36	2.14	.14
	Teachers	11	2	9.36	3.64		
2	Principals	5	8	5.78	7.22	.36	.55
	Teachers	7	7	6.22	7.78		
3	Principals	1	5	3	3	4.00	.05
	Teachers	8	4	6	6		
4	Principals	4	6	5.28	6.72	1.07	.30
	Teachers	7	8	5.72	7.28		
5	Principals	6	6	7.7	4.3	1.96	.16
	Teachers	10	3	8.3	4.7		
6	Principals	10	2	8.2	3.8	2.79	.09
	Teachers	5	5	6.8	3.2		
7	Principals	2	9	2.1	9.1	.02	.88
	Teachers	3	7	2.9	6.9		
8	Principals	12	0	13	.5	1.04	.31
	Teachers	13	1	13	.5		
9	Principals	11	1	11	.9	.01	.91
	Teachers	13	1	13	1.1		
10	Principals	1	0	1	0		
	Teachers	1	0	1	0		

<sup>a</sup>U = Unresolved Issue. <sup>b</sup>R = Resolved Issue.



**Appendix F.2: Chi-Square – Task 2**

Task 2 – Rank Issues							
Issues		Observed		Expected		chi-square	p-value
		NR <sup>a</sup>	1 <sup>b</sup>	NR	1		
1	Principals	6	8	5	9	.62	.43
	Teachers	4	10	5	9		
2	Principals	10	4	10	4	0	1.00
	Teachers	10	4	10	4		
3	Principals	14	0	12	2	4.67	.03
	Teachers	10	4	12	2		
4	Principals	11	3	11.5	2.5	.24	.62
	Teachers	12	2	11.5	2.5		
5	Principals	13	1	13	1	0	1.00
	Teachers	13	1	13	1		
6	Principals	11	3	12.5	1.5	3.36	.07
	Teachers	14	0	12.5	1.5		
7	Principals	14	2	13	1	2.15	.14
	Teachers	12	0	13	1		
8	Principals	7	7	7.5	6.5	.14	.70
	Teachers	8	6	7.5	6.5		
9	Principals	8	6	6	8	2.33	.13
	Teachers	4	10	6	8		
10	Principals	14	0	14	0		
	Teachers	14	0	14	0		

<sup>a</sup>NR = No response marked for this issue. <sup>b</sup>1 = Participants marked as the unresolved issue of most importance.

**Appendix F.3: Chi-Square – Task 4**

Task 4 – Identify Sources							
Issues		Observed		Expected		chi-square	p-value
		X <sup>a</sup>	BL <sup>b</sup>	X	BL		
1	Principals	13	1	13	1	0	1.00
	Teachers	13	1	13	1		
2	Principals	13	1	12	2	1.17	.28
	Teachers	11	3	12	2		
3	Principals	11	3	11	3	0	1.00
	Teachers	11	3	11	3		
4	Principals	14	0	11.5	2.5	6.09	.01
	Teachers	9	5	11.5	2.5		
5	Principals	1	13	1	13	0	1.00
	Teachers	1	13	1	13		
6	Principals	8	6	7.5	6.5	.14	.71
	Teachers	7	7	7.5	6.5		
7	Principals	12	2	10.5	3.5	1.71	.19
	Teachers	9	5	10.5	3.5		
8	Principals	11	3	9.5	4.5	1.47	.23
	Teachers	8	6	9.5	4.5		
9	Principals	5	9	5	9	0	1.00
	Teachers	5	9	5	9		
10	Principals	6	4	8	6	2.33	.13
	Teachers	10	8	8	6		
11	Principals	10	4	11	3	.85	.36
	Teachers	12	2	11	3		
12	Principals	0	14	.5	13.5	1.04	.31
	Teachers	1	13	.5	13.5		
13	Principals	0	14	0	14		
	Teachers	0	14	0	14		

<sup>a</sup>X: Source of information used in last 12 months. <sup>b</sup>BL: Blank – Source of information not marked as used in last 12 months

## Appendix G: Rating Comparisons – Tasks 3 and 5

**Appendix G.1: Comparison of Ratings – Task 3**

<b>Comparison of Principals' and Teachers' Understanding of Issues</b>										
<b>Issues</b>	<b>Principals</b>					<b>Teachers</b>				
	<b># A<sup>a</sup> (4)</b>	<b># B<sup>b</sup> (3)</b>	<b># C<sup>c</sup> (2)</b>	<b># D<sup>d</sup> (1)</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b># A (4)</b>	<b># B (3)</b>	<b># C (2)</b>	<b># D (1)</b>	<b>Average</b>
<b>1. Planning reading instruction for struggling readers</b>	12	2	0	0	3.86	8	4	2	0	3.43
<b>2. Reading in the content areas – instruction, development, vocabulary, and purpose</b>	13	0	0	0	4.00	6	6	2	0	3.29
<b>3. Providing a supportive learning community including teachers who serve as role models of active literacy via apparent relish for reading</b>	12	0	0	0	4.00	8	3	2	1	3.29
<b>4. Teaching critical thinking skills</b>	10	3	0	0	3.77	8	3	1	2	3.21
<b>5. Meeting the reading needs of English Language Learners while allowing them to preserve their language of intimacy</b>	4	5	2	1	3.18	1	7	6	0	2.64
<b>6. Providing culturally sensitive reading materials for diverse, multi-cultural classrooms</b>	5	4	3	0	3.17	4	5	3	1	2.92
<b>7. Using multiple forms of reading assessment other than federal, state, and local sanctioned testing to determine reading needs/strengths of students</b>	10	2	0	0	3.83	7	4	1	1	3.31
<b>8. Meeting the criteria of No Child Left Behind for “Highly Qualified” reading teachers</b>	5	6	3	0	3.14	2	8	3	0	2.92
<b>9. Effects of public accountability, which foster teaching to the test, on reading instruction (i.e., testing under No Child Left Behind)</b>	6	3	3	0	3.25	4	7	2	0	3.15
<b>10. Other</b>	1	0	0	0	4.00	1	0	0	0	4.00

<sup>a</sup> A = I understand this problem well enough to describe the underlying issues and can give a reasoned argument explaining my position. <sup>b</sup> B = I believe that I understand most of the underlying issues, but I can't give a good rationale for taking one side or the other. <sup>c</sup> C = I know that this problem exists, but I'm unsure of what the basic issues are. <sup>d</sup> D = I'm not aware of any problems in this area.

## Appendix G.2: Comparison of Ratings – Task 5

Comparison of Principals and Teachers Rating of Sources of Information								
Sources of Information	Principals				Teachers			
	# Q <sup>a</sup> (3)	# M <sup>b</sup> (2)	# N <sup>c</sup> (1)	Average	# Q (3)	# M (2)	# N (1)	Average
1. Informal contacts with specialists in the field (e.g., friends, colleagues, professors, and educators who have specialized in reading education)	7	5	0	2.58	10	3	0	2.77
2. Formal contacts with specialists in the field (e.g., Language Arts Consultant, Reading Consultant, Language Arts/Reading Supervisor)	10	2	0	2.83	6	5	0	2.55
3. Popular national magazines and/or newspapers (e.g., <i>Atlantic Monthly</i> , <i>Time</i> , <i>Reader's Digest</i> , <i>USA Today</i> ) Popular national magazines and/or newspapers(e.g., <i>Atlantic Monthly</i> , <i>Time</i> , <i>Reader's Digest</i> , <i>USA Today</i> )	0	10	1	1.91	0	10	1	1.91
4. Journals for educators (e.g., <i>Phi Delta Kappan</i> , <i>The Principal</i> , <i>National Leadership</i> , <i>Reading Research Quarterly</i> , <i>Journal of Educational Research</i> , <i>Reading Horizons</i> , <i>Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy</i> )	1	11	0	2.09	4	4	1	2.22
5. College textbooks focused on reading	0	1	0	2.00	1	0	0	3.00
6. Books published by popular press (e.g., <i>Cultural Literacy</i> , <i>Why Johnny Can't Read</i> , <i>All I ever Needed to Know I Learned In Kindergarten</i> , <i>Closing of the American Mind</i> , <i>Illiterate American</i> )	2	5	0	2.29	2	5	0	2.29
7. Watching or listening to radio and television broadcasts about reading issues (e.g., news reports, documentaries, debates, interviews, commentaries)	0	6	5	1.55	1	7	1	2.22
8. Internet websites and on-line journals related to reading and reading issues	1	8	1	2.00	2	6	0	2.25
9. Conventions of professional reading associations (e.g., local, state, or national: International Reading Association, National Reading Conference)	2	2	0	2.50	4	1	0	2.80
10. Workshops, seminars, or organized study groups focused on reading issues	3	2	0	2.60	6	4	0	2.60
11. Staff development and training related to reading provided by the local school system	6	3	0	2.67	6	5	0	2.55
12. Enrollment in college or university courses related to reading education	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3.00
13. Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

<sup>a</sup>Q = Quite Helpful. <sup>b</sup>M = Moderately Helpful. <sup>c</sup>N = Not Very Helpful.

## VITA

Sarah Ann Keller was born in Manchester, New Hampshire. She attended the public schools of Arkadelphia, Arkansas and graduated from Arkadelphia High School in 1963. She graduated from Henderson State College (now Henderson State University) in Arkadelphia, Arkansas in 1967 with a Bachelor of Science in Education degree in Vocational Home Economics. In 1976, she received her Master of Arts degree in Early Childhood Education from Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville, Tennessee. She was employed by Knox County Head Start from 1978 to 1980 as the Education and Nutrition Coordinator and in 1981 taught home economics at the Florence Crittendon Agency. From August 1983 to August 1999 she was employed by the Tennessee Department of Human (now Children's) Services where her responsibilities included preparing and placing special needs children for adoption and teaching courses in foster/adoptive parent training. Since August 1999 she has been employed by the Knox County School System at Cedar Bluff Middle School teaching language arts and reading, (two years in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and three years in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade.) She was admitted to the doctoral program in Teacher Education with a concentration in Literacy in 2003. Her Doctor of Education degree was conferred in August 2004.