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# A Case Study of Attitudes and Perceptions of Leadership Characteristics as Perceived by Middle School Teachers and the Principals

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A Case Study of Attitudes and Perceptions of Leadership Characteristics as Perceived by  
Middle School Teachers and the Principals

By  
Theodore Benjamin Bowen

A Dissertation Submitted to the  
Gardner-Webb School of Education  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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2011

## Approval Page

This dissertation was submitted by Theodore Benjamin Bowen under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Gardner-Webb University School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Gardner-Webb University.

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## **Abstract**

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This dissertation determined the congruence with the order of importance concerning what middle school teachers and middle school principals value regarding the behavioral characteristics of effective middle school principals and if a relationship exists between those characteristics and the 2006/2008 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Surveys.

The indications and suggestions of this research were based on the data collected from many different middle schools representing different geographical areas within a large school system located within the piedmont-triad central region of North Carolina. Information was obtained from different multi-question surveys from middle school teachers and principals, open-ended questions, and focus group interviews. This component of the study identified any common behavioral characteristics that the teachers and principals, at the same school, have of themselves with an order of importance. This information was compared to the 2006 and 2008 results of the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Surveys information from the same middle schools to determine if a correlation existed between the total data collected.

The results of this research indicated that the younger teachers with less teaching experiences wanted their principal to have the traits of a manager and an instructional leader. The older teachers with more teaching experiences wanted their principal to have the traits of one who uses people skills and one who has a vision. The principals see themselves primarily as instructional leaders.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction and Problem Statement**

Just as middle school principals themselves possess convictions of effective and appropriate leadership skills, other groups within the education community also maintain their views of effective leadership proficiencies. Some of these groups include superintendents, central office directors, board of education members, parents, students, and teachers.

Considering that no group, aside from the teaching cadre, has a greater influence on the success of the educational process, teachers should realize, whether consciously or unconsciously, that leadership attitudes and abilities of principals, such as support, motivation, participation, and evaluation (DeRoche, 1985), are crucial in achieving the effectiveness of a school. Moreover, since principals by tradition were originally teachers, it stands to reason that the teacher who earns the qualifications and desires to eventually elevate to the position of a principal will possess knowledge of those particular skills and related styles that one would need as a principal to be an effective leader. Since teachers work closely with principals, and many of them may work with several principals during their teaching career, it appears that useful information could be obtained from teachers in helping to define principal leadership skills. As stated by DeRoche (1985), the school principal is the major influence on the quality of education in a school. The school principal, also known as the middle manager and the site administrator is the major influence on whether education is effective or ineffective; whether morale is high or low; whether the school climate is positive or negative; whether personnel are satisfied or dissatisfied; whether students achieve or don't achieve; whether the parents and the public are cooperative or uncooperative; and whether there is effective management and leadership (DeRoche, 1985, p. 5).

This study focused on the general behaviors that are key to what middle school teachers and middle school principals deem as the common themes or behavioral characteristics of effective middle school principals and if there is some agreement as to what each side deems important and to what extent. It also expanded on the order of importance. The researcher focused on the data collected from different middle schools located within distinct and different locations, but within one Local Education Agency within the North Carolina Public School System.

In 1997, Augustus L. “Skip” Little (2001) conducted a national research project on effective middle level principals. From his work, *How to Become an Exemplary Middle School Principal: A Three Step Professional Growth Handbook*, Little (2001) classified 37 characteristics of exemplary principals. From those characteristics he was able to group and classify them into seven key categories: the principal as (1) a person, (2) a visionary, (3) an instructional leader, (4) a leader of an educational organization, (5) a problem solver, (6) a manager, and (7) a school-community facilitator.

According to Little (2001), middle level education has been characterized as the nation’s “last best chance to make a difference in the future of our society. During the years between the ages of 10 and 15, adults develop the interests, attitudes, and personal standards that direct a student’s behavior for the years ahead” (p. 1). Little (2001) also stated that “middle level education helps adolescents define their future roles and responsibilities in society and thus helps to perpetuate the sense of community needed in this nation” (p. 1).

When implemented effectively, according to George & Shewey (1995), the middle school concept leads to substantial positive outcomes in virtually every area of concern for educators and parents, including academic achievement. Improvement is

noted in various aspects of student deportment such as attendance, tardiness, discipline referrals, theft, and vandalism. Middle school programs improve relationships between students of different racial and ethnic groups, parents and teachers, teachers and students, and teachers and other teachers (George & Shewey, 1995).

Making an impact on the academic achievement of all students, as it stands now, is a complex task; it entails understanding the students' individual learning styles, interests, and individual needs and then establishing a curriculum with aggressive teaching strategies to meet those needs as stated by Little (2001). Efficient middle schools have been specifically planned, staffed, and managed in ways that will provide a program that concentrates on rapidly changing learners who are in evolution from childhood to adulthood. These particular middle schools have the facilities, organization, curriculum, student services, and effective instructional strategies designed to meet the characteristics and needs of this unique student population. Middle school students are unlike other students in other grade-patterned campuses. These students require an atmosphere focused on their needs and adults who understand and meet those needs in the classroom and more. The middle level principal has a distinct significant role to perform in developing a successful middle level school as studied by Little (2001). Numerous studies have given evidence that an effective middle level principal is key to having a successful middle level school in *The Middle Level Principalship, Volume 1: A Survey of Middle Level Principals and Programs* (Valentine, Clark, Nickerson, & Keefe, 1981).

The school system under review is located in the piedmont-triad central region of North Carolina. According the Local Education Agency's (LEA) website, this school system was under its 49<sup>th</sup> year of merger with some remains of the rural and city systems

still visible. It was the fifth largest system in North Carolina and the 94<sup>th</sup> largest in the nation. The merged school system consisted of 40 elementary schools inside eight attendance zones, 15 middle schools inside six attendance zones, 11 high schools inside 11 attendance zones and eight special schools which served the entire school district. There were 74 schools that served approximately 51,000 students. District-wide, 47% of the students were White, 34% were Black, 14% were Hispanic, 2% were Asian, 3% were multiracial and less than 1% were American Indian with varying ranges of socioeconomic status from very low to very high.

Of the 15 middle schools, 14 of those that contained Grades 6, 7, and 8, were reviewed to be part of the study. The researcher reviewed in detail the 2005-2006 results of the biannual North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (NCTWC) (Hirsch & Emerick, 2007), and the 2007-2008 results of the biannual North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (Hirsch & Church, 2009). From that review, all middle schools were eliminated if their overall leadership responses for both years were more positive than the overall positive response for the LEA. Eliminations from this study were a result of any middle school performing above the state and LEA average in the category of overall leadership. If any remaining middle school had an overall more positive response in the 2005-2006 and 2007-2008 survey results than their LEA but during the 2007-2008 survey those middle schools results' dropped to become lower than their LEA and state average, those middle schools became the focus of this study.

This dissertation focused on an investigation of attitudes and perceptions of middle school teachers with respect to the leadership qualities of middle school principals and middle school teachers of those particular middle schools as tied to the NCTWC Survey. It determined if a correlation existed as to what both groups felt was important

in the total operation in a middle school and the principalship.

This study focused on the importance of leadership behavior values and how the values of the principal and teacher who work on the same campus align. It determined if the NCTWC Survey had any correlation of consistency to the local surveys presented to these three middle schools under investigation. The data was collected from any middle school located in the same school system but in distinct geographic areas of the Local Education Agency that meet the restricted criteria. Information for this study was obtained from *Middle Ground* (Little, 2000), using predetermined points associated with effective middle school leadership skills. Voluntary participants of the survey were given the opportunity to further explain their answers by using 10 open-ended questions in small focus group interviews.

This study focused on the attitudes and perceptions of middle school teachers and middle school principals from three different middle schools located within an LEA in the piedmont-triad central region of North Carolina. This study was to determine any common relationships of leadership behaviors with any consistency to the NCTWC Surveys.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to examine consistency between principals and teachers as to what factors both groups deem important as to effective middle school leadership. This study described any correlation of those factors which facilitate and contribute to the ultimate goal of academic student success. Once those leadership qualities were determined, a correlation was investigated with the NCTWC Surveys.

Early attempts to identify effective principals and specify leadership traits indispensable for school success were based on factors that have become known as the Effective Schools Model (Edmonds, 1979). Several later researchers have questioned the validity of the methods used for defining the effectiveness of schools. Good and Brophy (1986) pointed out that using student achievement on standardized tests as the chief measure of effectiveness is questionable. According to Wayson (1988), focusing primarily on those few behaviors of principals and teachers that seem to be most directly related to achieving high test scores can severely limit the scope of student learning activity, teacher performance, and educational outcomes. More recent studies of effective schools, including many of those rewarded for excellence, show that the character of these schools is far more complex and varied than previously recognized (Stedman, 1987).

In another review of research focusing on the leadership of principals, Leithwood and Montgomery (1982) concluded that effective principals could clearly be classified as proactive, while typical principals primarily tended to be responsive, or reactive, to the demands of the district and other sources of problems encountered every day. This research was established by giving attention to secondary school principals as one group and elementary school principals as a second group. Each group was required to develop

a profile of growth in principal effectiveness over a 2½-year period in which they met as groups approximately one-half day per month and worked as individuals or in pairs for an equivalent period between meetings. The first task addressed by the group was to agree on a shared definition of principal effectiveness; the second task was developed to review experiences; and the third task was to conduct intensive interviews of teachers, department heads, and other principals. From this data, profiles of growth in both elementary and secondary school principal effectiveness were produced by the two groups.

The principal occupies an important position in the school building. As the leader of a group of professional, certified teachers and the coordinator of a cadre of classified personnel, the principal establishes important relationships with the staff (Drake, 1992). If education is the major foundation for the future strength of this country (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), then teachers, as they come from various backgrounds, must be the cornerstone (Drake, 1992). The job of principal of a school is one of the most crucial in the educational system (McEwan, Carlisle, Knipe, & Neil, 2001). With shifts in the demographics of populations continuing to occur nationally and even worldwide, there is a need for different relationship paradigms to assist in the proper guidance of those we place in the classrooms. A consequence of globalization is the emergence of generic or ubiquitous expectations of leaders. There is now a cross-culture expectation that leaders should be more proactive in leading and managing school resources to secure improved performance of staff and students (Dimmock, 2003, p. 5). A study by Croghan and Lake (1984) addressed the competencies of both adequate and high-performing principals. This study concluded that the characteristics that distinguished high-performing principals described a proactive orientation. This included

motivation toward achievement; efforts to relate to others effectively and to have clear communication; persuasiveness; striving to be well informed and gather essential information for decision making; conceptual flexibility; managing staff interaction well; monitoring progress toward goals; promoting the welfare of students; and displaying concern for the feelings of teachers, parents, and students.

The school principal as a leader is responsible essentially for the management of the school and the school program, with the implementation of learning and overall school success. The success or failure of a school is explained by the success or failure of the school principal. The legal power and authority of the school principal, as the most authoritative person in the school, is not in itself enough to both manage and make the school successful. It can be stated that school principals have several competency areas. The school principals should be good leaders as well as instructional leaders. These results were developed from a qualitative case study using a semi-structured interview technique. The questions were asked of a group of 20 teachers, one from each elementary school in the district. The teachers were randomly selected for a one-on-one, face-to-face interview with 11 males and nine females. Overall it was felt that the teachers had distinct views on the evaluation of the instruction process and the students of school principals (Sissman, 2004). The principal's role as a leader, manager, and change agent is far reaching. Principals are responsible for working with the entire spectrum of stakeholders—from students to school board members, parents to policy makers, teachers to local business owners, support staff to union officials. Just when the principal's pot appears to be running over, another ingredient is added to the mix—the instructional teacher leader (Mangin, 2007). The instructional leader's role is that of an active, proper sounding board for the teacher to make his/her own decisions. The teacher has high

control and the leader has low control over the actual decisions (Glickman, 2002, p. 42). Shared instructional leadership involves the active collaboration of principals and teachers on curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Within this model, the principal seeks out the ideas, insights, and expertise of teachers in these areas and works with teachers for school improvement (Glickman, 1989). When an instructional leader listens to the teacher, clarifies what the teacher says, encourages the teacher to speak more about the concern, and reflects by verifying the teacher's perceptions, then he/she can understand clearly the teacher's participation in making the decisions about professional practice (Glickman, 2002, p. 42). Teachers' perceptions of principal support have been linked to teacher commitment, collegiality, and retention (Singh & Billingsley, 1998) and, conversely, lack of such support may render teachers vulnerable to job-related stress and burnout (Farber, 1984; Westman & Etzion, 1999). Teachers who perceive their principals as more supportive also report a greater willingness to participate in decision making regarding school policies as developed by using a survey of 116 elementary school teachers and secondary school teachers in one school district as an examination of the influences of different organizational and psychological factors on teachers' willingness to participate in decision making at the school level. Teachers vary in willingness to participate, but teacher-principal working relationships exert significant influence (Smylie, 1992); enthusiasm for such participation is nurtured when teachers view their input as having an effect (Pankake & Moller, 2007). Furthermore, supportive, collaborative, and mutually respectful principal-teacher relationships are also associated with student performance (Friedkin & Slater, 1994).

These new paradigms will be marked with servant leaders who empower, as opposed to delegate; build trust rather than demand loyalty; and instead of just hearing

and leading from the head, seek to understand and lead from the heart (DeSpain, 2000). Principal-teacher relationships vary greatly among schools and even among teachers at the same school. Furthermore, those relationships affect student achievement (Walsh, 2005). This phenomenon occurs because teachers who see principals as facilitators, supporters, and reinforcers for the jointly determined school mission, rather than as guiders, directors, and leaders of their own personal agenda, are far more likely to feel personally accountable for student learning (McEwan, 2003).

Across America both principals and teachers alike have to contend with matters such as student discipline. The principal is endlessly involved in dealing with discipline problems, but his/her role is somewhat different from that of a teacher. Yet in many respects, the teacher and principal work as a team on major discipline problems (Kritsonis, 2000). Parental issues are another area of great concern, especially during these times when parents demand schools adequately prepare their children (Cotton & Wikeland, 2001). Rising accountability standards and adequate yearly progress cause much contemplation among educators (Albritten, Mainzer, & Ziegler, 2004). It is important for principals and various faculty groups, i.e. teachers, to work together for mutual support. In addition, the manner in which faculty members work together as a group significantly influences student outcomes in schools (Wheelan & Kesselring, 2005).

Wheelan & Kesselring's (2005) study was centered around the relationship between teacher perceptions of faculty-group effectiveness and development of actual levels of productivity in 61 Ohio elementary schools. The research focused on two questions: (1) are there significant differences in the performance of fourth-grade students on standardized tests in schools in which faculty group members perceived their

faculty group as a whole to be functioning at the higher versus lower stages of group development; and (2) are there significant differences in the performance of fourth-grade students on standardized tests or in teachers' and principals' perceptions of their faculty groups on the basis of school demographics, including faculty size, rural or urban location, and district poverty level? Teachers and principals from those 61 Ohio elementary schools participated in this study during 1999-2000 or 2000-2001 school year. Only schools that contained fourth grades and were eligible for Title I services were asked and allowed to participate. Thirty-four of the schools were in urban locations; 27 schools were in rural areas. Faculty groups included seven to 56 persons and totaled 2,280 members. Of those 2,280 members, 2,245 (98.5%) participated in the study. The majority of faculty members taught a particular grade level within a self-contained classroom. While no individual demographics were included in this study, the great majority of faculty members were Caucasian women between the ages of 40 and 55. Eight school facilitators were trained to administer the Group Development Questionnaire (GDQ) and administered the instrument. The GDQ was designed to assess the developmental level of work groups. The 60-item GDQ contained four scales that corresponded to the first four stages of group development: dependency and inclusion, counter-dependency and fight, trust and structure, and work. Research exists that concludes that some aspects of school social environment clearly make a difference in the academic achievement of schools (Brookover, Schweitzer, Schneider, & Beady, 1978).

The principal at the middle school is unlike the administrators at the elementary/high school levels. Middle level principals have the unique responsibility of dealing with young adolescents; their growth, their needs, and their unique response to education (Eichorn, 1966). As one can imagine, they are young, needy children 1 day

and the next day they are fully-functioning adults with an attitude. Only during middle school is there such a time of tremendous maturation and growth (1) physically, (2) emotionally, and (3) psychologically (National Center of Educational Statistics (NCES), 2000).

The notion that early adolescents have social, physiological, and academic needs that are distinct from those of older and younger students has long been recognized (NCES, 2000). For the past 4 decades, middle school reform has been a primary issue in overall school reform. According to Keefe, Clark, Nickerson, & Valentine (1983), “when educators realized that students age 10-14 were not short adults, or short school students, junior high schools gave way and middle schools came to” (p. 12). There is no single generally agreed upon definition of *middle school* (NCES, 2000). The National Middle School Association (NMSA, 1982) defined a middle school as one that is specifically structured to meet young adolescents’ particular developmental needs. For the most part, middle schools do not include ninth grade, as the students are accountable for high school requirements and do not blend into the overall foundations of a middle school (NMSA, 1982).

Four publications are considered to be the foundation of the middle school movement and have paved the way for middle school change. These publications are *Successful Schools for Young Adolescents* (Lipsitz, 1984), *This We Believe* (NMSA, 1982), *Turning Points* (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989), and *Caught in the Middle* (Fenwick, 1987). *This We Believe: Developmentally Responsive Middle Schools* (NMSA, 1982), *Turning Points: Preparing America’s Youth for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989), and *Turning Points 2000: Preparing American Youth for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Carnegie Council on Adolescent

Development, 2000) are considered the key publications that gave rise to a practical and philosophical basis for the implementation and development of the middle school concept. *This We Believe* (NMSA, 1982) was so important to the nature and the needs of children that it was republished in 1995 and 2003. One common theme is found throughout these documents. A good middle school has a good leader with a faculty who has the same understanding and agrees with what good middle leadership is all about. A good middle school leader involves everyone in the decision-making process while not being the single leader controlling all aspects of the management of the school. The principal must function as an agent of change, seeking all the aspects going into a well-functioning school community that are in its place and working (Hipp, 1997).

Schools, whether they are on the elementary school level, middle school level, or high school level, are complex entities. Each requires leadership, supervisory, and administrative proficiencies (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2001).

According to Walsh (2005), the literature is complex with theories and studies that address the role of the principal in providing school leadership as it relates to what the faculty deems important. An emerging body of literature is focusing on the importance of the teacher-principal relationships as they relate to the NCTWC Survey, rather than merely leadership styles of behaviors (Walsh, 2005). Principals have the ability to improve teacher perceptions overall by simply attending to fundamental components inherent in quality relationships. As teachers begin to feel better about themselves and what their collective missions are as a result of significant interactions with their principals, they become more effective in the classroom (Edgerton, Kritsonis, & Herrington, 2006).

While middle school principals move about the school with verbal and nonverbal clues, signals and information, there is more activity taking place. Everything that a principal does has an importance beyond its surface appearance. It's the way you react, the things that you say, the style in which you do things, the effort you put in, the nurturing you give people, the stability people see in your decisions (Feirsen, 1992, as cited by Colvin (2002)).

Student achievement enters into the realm of accountability (Albritten et al., 2004). Student achievement is related to leadership behaviors. If a school is lacking successful scores within the established system of accountability, principals quickly recognize the urgent need to make changes for the vision of achievement, sometimes outside of traditional academic standards, in the high stakes game. When school climates become cold with a sense of being a noncommunity and teachers perceive principals as suspicious and negative, a reformation needs to occur before teachers are willing to modify instruction. How can principals ever hope to motivate their teaching staff to expand their repertoires of pedagogical skills unless some fundamental relational components have been established (Gimbel, 2003)?

As stated by Edgerton et al. (2006), daily interpersonal interactions of a principal are necessary to garner trust and support from teachers. In schools, this means that instead of constantly worrying about setting the direction and then engaging teachers and others in a successful march (often known as planning, organizing, leading, motivating, and controlling), the leader can focus more on removing blocking issues, providing material and emotional support, taking care of the management details that make any journey easier, sharing in the comradeship of the march and in the celebration when the journey is completed, and identifying a new, worthwhile destination for the next march.

The march takes care of itself (Sergiovanni, 1992).

Principals and teachers have different perceptions on whether working conditions are present and whether school leadership is making a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about their school environment. The greatest disparities between principals and teachers are in the areas of educator and school leadership (Hirsch & Church, 2009).

As researched by Gimbel (2003), faculties working together in healthy social environments support the need for behavioral relationships, as it relates to student performance on school campuses. Relationships have many components, both as a group and as individual in nature, which help to sustain them and add trust and value. Trust is one of the most valuable of all relationship components. It is important that school leaders promote and develop the trust factors so teachers will follow and support their efforts. The building and sustaining of one-to-one relationships with teachers by way of communicative and supportive behaviors is the overarching trust-promoting behavior of the principal (Gimbel, 2003).

Principals can influence the working patterns of teachers by arranging physical space and free time to promote norms of collegiality and experimentation (Wilson & Firestone, 1987). Effective collaboration is complex and is not always easy. On occasion it brings with it a sense of discomfort with its difficulty. Effective collaborations operate in the universe of ideas, seeking existing practices in a critical sense, looking for better alternatives and working hard together to bring about improvements, and assessing their worth. This is believed to be one of the key challenges for collaborative working and professional development in the future (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996). Fullan and Hargreaves's (1996) study was one of teachers as individuals and those of a 35- to 40-year career as the social and working conditions of

teachers and principals.

While reform measures have covered many issues, a central question requiring more analysis is exactly how principals influence the instructional work of their schools as increasing student achievement (Wilson & Firestone, 1987). Cultural connections include the system of meanings, beliefs, values, daily actions, and interpreting their surroundings (Wilson & Firestone, 1987).

With all of this in place, it is important to keep in mind that principals are the instructional leaders of the schools. All effective schools have this as a common theme. Principals must fulfill this role (Effective Schools Products, Ltd., 2001). While some shared decision-making attributes are present, certain leaders impose and direct events that need to occur. Promoting building trust and building relationships as an effort to assist student achievement should be our goal. If both principal and faculties have the same vision in mind, it is easier for that goal to be accomplished.

Ron Clark (2003), Disney's 2000 Outstanding Teacher of the Year, says life is all about experiences, the ones that you make for yourself and the ones you make for others. As he refers to students: guide them as they grow; show them in every way possible that they are cared for; and make special moments for them that will add magic to their lives; motivate them to make a difference in the lives of others; and most importantly, teach them to love life.

A common theme to all change initiatives is that relationships should improve. If the relationship improves, the situation will get better. If they remain the same or get worse, things will become stagnant or worse. Leaders must be consummate relationship builders with diverse people and groups, especially with people different than themselves. Effective leaders constantly foster purposeful interaction and problem

solving, and are wary of easy consensus (Fullan, 2001). The key person in the life of an effective growing school is the principal, whose role now requires an understanding and application of strategies that enable each school to develop and accomplish its unique mission. According to Sissman (2004), the instructional leadership roles of school principals are as follows: (1) definition of school mission; (2) management of instruction and school curriculum; (3) supervision and evaluation of instruction; (4) monitoring of student development; and (5) development of school climate. As stated by Lucas, Valentine, and Little (2001), there are six essential imperatives that, when practiced by principals, lead to authentic and long-lasting change: (1) eliciting the school's values, beliefs, and mission; (2) developing best practice knowledge and commitment; (3) shaping a collaborative vision and goals for the school; (4) collecting, analyzing, and interpreting a wide variety of school data; (5) developing plans to accomplish school goals; and (6) enabling and monitoring the school's action plans. Item number three (shaping a collaborative vision and goals for the school) is related to the previously described work of Dr. A. L. "Skip" Little (2000). The middle level principal, while critical to an effective school program, remains the least researched person on the faculty. Countless classes, workshops, and publications address the characteristics and behaviors of middle school teachers, but few explain the role of the chief administrator. Topics such as teaming, advising, interdisciplinary learning, and block scheduling can be found at almost every middle level conference, but rarely is the role of the principal in putting everything together discussed (Little, 2000).

There are many concepts that contribute to effective leadership. The leadership of a middle school is further unique in as much as the middle school concept itself is unique, unlike the educational format for the elementary school or high school (Kuzma, 2004). A

middle school leader must function as an agent of change (Hipp, 1997). A good leader involves everyone in the decision-making process. A middle school leader is no longer a single leader controlling all aspects of the management of the school; instead the principal must function as an agent of change, seeing that all the aspects going into a well-functioning school community are in place and working (Hipp, 1997).

Generational research shows that developing educational groups may be a more meaningful segmentation strategy for us to employ. Strauss and Howe (1991) observed, “as social category, a generation probably offers a safe basis for personality generalization” (p. 63). A generation is defined as a cohort of people born within a particular period of time. By most definitions, each generational interval is approximately 20 years in length. Twenty years represents the average length of time between birth and childbearing, or the beginning of the next generation. The 20-year interval also represents the division of an average human lifespan of roughly 80 years into four distinct phases: youth, rising adulthood, midlife, and elderhood (Strauss & Howe, 1991, p. 60). There are basic differences in the three generational age groups that comprise the majority of the educational workforce today: Baby Boomers, 1943/1960; Generation X, 1960/1980; and Millennials or Generation Y, 1980/2000. The latest group, Silent Generation or Generation Z, has not entered the workforce according to (Strauss & Howe, 1991, p. 60). Of the three functioning working groups within our nation, there are basic differences between each of the three groups: Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials or Generation Y. A generation’s world view or *peer personality* can be attributed to the social context that existed during the youth phase of each generation (Strauss & Howe, 1991, p. 63). As stated by Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson (2001), managers will face the daunting challenge of leading employees who will be the essential

resources of 21<sup>st</sup> Century organizations. These employees can be categorized into several generations, each with special motivational needs.

As stated by Strauss and Howe (1991, p. 305) and Thornhill and Martin (2007, p. 57), Baby Boomers have the following traits and influences in Table 1.

Table 1

*Traits and Influences of Baby Boomers*

---

Highly optimistic  
 Individualistic  
 Tend to reject authority  
 Value instant personal gratification  
 Spend on credit while not saving for retirement  
 Work long and hard hours with little leisure time while feeling stressed  
 Value education as a way to support professional identity  
 Because of the professional identity and little savings, most work beyond retirement  
 Highly career-focused and expect to have a salary with title and perks  
 Highly competitive, value visibility and recognition  
 Are not job hoppers as they feel job changing negatively affects one's career  
 Value face-to-face interactions, prefer meetings as a mode of communication

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As stated by Klein (2004) and Ritchie (1995, p. 146), and Strauss and Howe (1991, p. 324), Generation X individuals have the following traits and influences listed in Table 2.

Table 2

*Traits and Influences of Generation X*


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Experienced economic recessions and industries collapsing, observed parents lose jobs  
 Economic status decreased, one of five in poverty and home ownership declined  
 Birth rate declined and divorce rate increased  
 Crime, suicide, and incarceration rates increased  
 Defunding of public schools  
 Mothers entered the workforce which created *latch key kids*  
 Introduction of blended families  
 Less college educated but more politically and financially conservative  
 Grew up with computers  
 Plan to build a portable career while not being loyal to a single employer  
 See job changing as necessary and advantageous  
 Family oriented as they value leisure time  
 Desire feedback and appreciate professional development

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As stated by Howe and Strauss (2000, pp. 8, 85, & 336), Johnson (2006, p. 15),  
 Robinson (2008, p. 50), Van Dyk (2008, pp. 28-31), and Lancaster and Stillman (2002),  
 Millennials or Generation Y have the following traits and influences listed in Table 3.

Table 3

*Traits and Influences of the Millennials or Generation Y*


---

They are a pressured and achieving generation  
 Grew up with computers, internet, and cell phones  
 Highly networked and completely immersed in technology  
 They can take 20 hours of information in 7 hours  
 Multitask constantly  
 Have a preference for high-priced luxury branded goods  
 Very career oriented and expect rapid advancement and perks  
 Accustomed to being in the spotlight  
 Must receive recognition for practically every achievement no matter how trivial  
 Expect to be treated as special and catered to  
 Tend to appreciate mission-driven organizations  
 Motivated to help others and improve the environment  
 Appreciate continuous learning opportunities

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As stated by Hersey et al. (2001), expectations are the perceptions of appropriate behavior for one's own role or position or one's perception of the roles of others within the organization. The expectations of individuals define for them what they should do under various circumstances in their particular job and how they think others—supervisors, peers, and followers—should behave in relation to their positions. Although two individuals may have differing styles because their roles require different styles of behavior, it is imperative for an organization's effectiveness that they perceive and accept the institution's goals and objectives as their own. Within the generations studied, over 30-less experience and over 30-more experience, both groups had different needs. The results from the transcribed focus group interviews indicated that a principal who had the characteristics of being a person was most important; from the ANOVA of the seven characteristics, the teachers agreed with significance that the principal should be a visionary and a problem solver.

According to (Deal, 2007), the values of the Baby Boomers and the Generation X group have the same values, but the difference is how they express those values. The top three values as expressed by the two groups are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

*Top 3 Values by Generation*

Baby Boomers	Generation X
1. Family	Family
2. Integrity	Integrity
3. Love	Love

Leaders need to be aware of the difference in behaviors among generations. It is

not what people say they believe in that causes problems for members of different generations; it is what they do that causes the conflicts. Conflict of perceived values between people of different generations can arise in a number of ways. Conflicts are likely to happen to people of the same generation as with different generations. These conflicts can be resolved in one of several ways; compromise, one or more leaving the situation, or one or more changing their values. Values and behaviors are different; someone can have the same values but behave differently (Deal, 2007).

In the United States, the shape of the teacher workforce is changing. In the late 1960s and the early 1970s, a large cohort of new teachers entered the profession and stayed there, becoming today's seasoned veterans (National Educational Association, 2003). Over the past 10 years, this cohort has started to retire, prompting the hiring of a new crop of teachers. Due to this demographic change, the view of today's teacher workforce has a U-shaped curve, with many veteran teachers, many new teachers, and a few in between. According to the National Educational Association (2003), 38% of teachers are relatively new, with 0 to 9 years of experience; 38% of teachers are more seasoned, with more than 20 years of experience in the classroom; and only 24% lie in between. This leads to what has been described as a generation gap in teaching, with "independent, sometimes complacent, veteran teachers" struggling to understand each other (Johnson & Kardos, 2005, p. 10). While the generation gap is primarily due to recruitment into the profession, high attrition rates among new teachers have also prevented novices from becoming veterans. Nationally, almost 40% of new teachers leave the field within their first 5 years in the classroom (Ingersoll, 2003). The revolving door of new teachers into and out of the profession expands the generation gap, making the workforce more divided along generational lines. Teachers who entered the teaching

profession a generation ago, today's veterans, have certain common characteristics and perspectives on their careers. They selected teaching and remained in the classroom for clear reasons. Not all teachers from this generation hold the same perspective; individuals clearly embody a variety of complex understandings, but as a group these teachers joined the workforce during a particular social and political era. According to Johnson (2004), public service work was "respectable, even admired work" (p. 19).

Teachers' generational perspectives extend to their expectations and norms of professional learning within schools. In the previous generation, teachers traditionally taught in an egg crate-style classroom, with great isolation and little interaction with other teachers. Little (1990) examined the norms of privacy in teachers' work from this generation and found that teachers interacted with each other in social ways but rarely engaged in substantive or supportive work. The current teacher workforce in the United States is made up of two relatively distinct generations, those who entered the profession in the late 1960s and early 1970s and those who entered it during the last decade. The previous generation and the current generation have different perspectives with respect to the profession of teaching, teacher learning and generational needs being met (Rinke, 2009).

While different generations are currently in the educational workforce, the majority are the Baby Boomers. The workforce is constantly changing with the Baby Boomers retiring and those of the Generation X group becoming the largest group. As this new group emerges as the largest workforce, more changes will be needed to accommodate their different beliefs and needs.

While the purpose of this study was to investigate consistency between teacher perceptions of principal leadership behaviors, other factors appeared in the literature

review. Generational research showed that different needs between generations may exist. Another idea that was discovered was the difference in needs of an experienced older teacher in opposition to a less experienced, younger teacher. These two groups helped define what the principal's leadership role was. As this role was defined, it was discovered that the generational workforce was shifting from the Baby Boomers to the Generation X work force.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

The purpose of this study was to examine consistency between principals and teachers as to what factors both groups deem important as to effective middle school leadership. This study described any correlation of those factors which facilitate and contribute to the ultimate goal of academic student success. Once those leadership qualities were determined, a correlation was investigated with the NCTWC Surveys. Student achievement success can be measured by many factors. One of those factors is principalship leadership. Middle school principals possess convictions of effective and appropriate leadership skills. No other group, aside from the teaching cadre, has a greater influence on the success of the educational process (DeRoche, 1985). Although the importance of the instructional leadership responsibilities of the principal is recognized, the practice of these skills suffers from a lack of adequate information, training, and support in their daily practice. Hallinger (1989) claimed that there was little or no provision for supporting the skills associated with the instructional leadership area and the technical assistance needed to carry them out.

How middle schools function within the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey defines a correlation as to what middle school teachers and middle school principals deem as the components of an effective middle school. This should expand the understanding of how organizational learning approaches school leadership. With three iterations of the NCTWC Survey completed in 2004, 2006, and 2008, analyses have been consistent and clear. The conditions teachers face in schools and classrooms are essential elements to student achievement and teacher retention.

Of the five key components of the NCTWC Survey—leadership, professional development, facilities and resources, decision making, and time—the area under study is

leadership and the idea that teachers and administrators view working conditions differently (Hirsch & Emerick, 2007). The one component under this consideration was principal leadership qualities. The main focus of this study was to examine systematically through qualitative research, the value of importance of the characteristics of effective middle school principals as agreed upon by their faculties.

Using thematic analysis of this investigation, the researcher determined exactly the strands that both faculties and principals deemed important in middle school leadership. This process developed a detailed review of any similarities and differences of the characteristics described by middle school teachers along with the principal for whom they work.

The primary research question was, was there a relationship of teacher satisfaction to agreed leadership behaviors in a consistency of measured perceptions with the NCTWC Surveys from both 2006 and 2008?

### **Research Population**

Any middle school, with the same grade pattern of Grades 6 through 8, from one LEA within the piedmont-triad central region of North Carolina was under review. To provide total anonymity, these identified middle schools were assigned separate colors as the way to represent them while being unrecognized. These distinct and separate middle schools represented the rural areas and intercity areas of one of the largest metropolitan cities in North Carolina.

In order to complete this study, the researcher (1) sought and received a release from the NMSA to use the survey (Appendix A), (2) submitted a proposal to the Director of Research from this LEA for approval (Appendix B), and (3) sought approval from these three individual middle school principals within the LEA (Appendices C, D, E, &

F). After all three items were approved, the researcher introduced his proposal to each middle school at a mutually agreed upon faculty meeting. The researcher (1) discussed the purpose of the study, (2) left a cover letter which included an informed consent component, (3) left a survey for each potential participant, and (4) left a return envelope addressed to the researcher. Using this process ensured the complete anonymity and confidentiality of each participant. In the cover letter, it was explained that the participation in the process was voluntary. The principal at each middle school went through the entirely same process as the faculty. The overall process of investigation was repeated multiple times, once for each middle school.

The researcher compared the results of the NCTWC Surveys from both 2006 and 2008 from a Local Education Agency in the piedmont-triad central region of North Carolina. In this particular LEA, there are 17 middle schools. The researcher identified leadership qualities over the 4-year period. The NCTWC Surveys under review were conducted biannually at the end of the 2006 and 2008 school years of those 17 middle schools. The researcher determined if a pattern existed from the 2006 NCTWC Survey to the 2008 NCTWC Survey. The paradigm that the researcher focused on would indicate any middle school that (1) is performing below the North Carolina state average, (2) is performing below the LEA average, and (3) showed a decline in teacher satisfaction from 2006 to 2008. In order to narrow the field of study to a manageable number of less than 17 middle schools, a chart was developed by the researcher to show any middle school within this particular LEA that showed both surveys under the subcategory of leadership to be below the LEA average and the North Carolina State average. The researcher narrowed the number schools under the study to any middle school that had a decline or static percentage from 2006 NCTWC Survey to the 2008 NCTWC Survey. Those middle

schools that fit into this final category, after the results were reviewed, were used as the focus of the study. The results were the focus of the perception of leadership behaviors. The researcher surveyed each faculty and the principal, using 37 questions that fall under the seven key basic middle school themes of importance in successful middle school leadership as identified by Little (2001). By frequency of occurrence, these common perceptions gave significance in developing behaviors of leadership. After the results of the surveys were reviewed by categorizing the responses from teachers and principals, profiles were created for both the faculty and its principal. The profiles from both groups at identified schools were examined as the researcher developed common significant concepts. Using the common concepts as a baseline, the researcher interviewed individual middle school teachers and their principals. The researcher looked for common themes as related to perceived behaviors. From these interviews, the researcher established common occurrences and put that information from those interviews into narratives which developed a thematic analysis.

An article by Augustus L. “Skip” Little was published in a well-known periodical, *Middle Ground* (2000), by the National Middle School Association (NMSA). Another extension of his work, *How to Become an Exemplary Middle School Principal: A Three Step Professional Growth Handbook* by Augustus L. “Skip” Little and Suzanne F. Little, was published by the NMSA in 2001 and 2002. These documents served as the foundation in the study. Prior approval for the use of these validated surveys, as shown in a previous doctoral research project (Kuzma, 2004), was requested from the NMSA. Reviewing the intent of his original work, the researcher examined commonalities of middle school teachers and middle school principals. These commonalities became those perceptions deemed as most important by frequency of the teacher group and the

principal group as a way to determine what successful middle school leadership skills are, not a specific teacher's view of the specific principal that they work with. In developing the survey, the researcher asked the respondents to give value by ranking successful middle school leadership characteristics in order of which one would be more important than others. Similar to Little's work, the researcher determined the degree of similarity between his findings and the perceptions of the middle school teachers and principals with the seven broad general areas of critical attributes connected with the characteristics of a successful middle school principal. Those seven major areas or themes are a total of 37 subareas which support traits of a successful middle school principal with the following examples. The areas that were surveyed included the principal as (1) a person—builds confidence and inspires others, has effective oral, written, listening and interpersonal skills, generates enthusiasm, possesses high energy, and has a good sense of humor and a relentlessly positive nature; (2) a visionary—has a clear vision of a great school, possesses the will and desire to go after that vision, has a philosophy and set of beliefs that provide goals, objectives, and an agenda, is able to articulate the philosophy and vision to others, has the ability to persuade and lead others to support a vision of education for young adolescents that become the driving force for the school, is committed to developmentally responsive middle level education, holds high academic goals for every student, and is a dynamic force for the middle school concept; (3) an instructional leader—is thoroughly knowledgeable about middle level curriculum, programs, and practices, understands the unique nature of young adolescent learners, possesses the skills necessary for effective instructional leadership, is capable of engaging the school's faculty in the continuous process of middle school improvement, and promotes continuous staff development via one's own example and by supporting

relevant workshops, study groups, and attendance at conferences; and (4) a leader of an educational organization—exhibits leadership, is able to inspire teachers to go beyond the expected of the teachers, is accessible to staff, and is highly visible to faculty and students. The other three include the principal as (1) a problem solver; (2) a manager—knowledgeable and effective in planning and budgeting, possesses the ability to identify, hire, and evaluate staff members, and is able to get the job done; and (3) a school-community facilitator—has faculty, students, parents, and the community buy into the idea that “this is our school,” is sensitive to the needs of a racially and culturally diverse school and community population, and has the capacity to deal effectively with parents of gifted students and others who may challenge the mission of the school. Under these seven general areas of attributes, subareas varying from three to eight are imbedded. In this study, these subareas were ranked from least important to most important as to the perception of their importance by the principals and individual faculties.

Included in the survey were two open-ended questions. One open-ended question focused on the attributes of a successful middle school as reported by the results of the teacher surveys from their school. A second open-ended question focused on any one area not listed in the survey that the respondent deemed as an important attribute of a successful middle school principal. After review and collection of the surveys, the researcher conducted individual and focus group interviews (Appendix G) as a method to expand the thoughts of middle school leadership. These focus group interviews were transcribed. The transcription was subject to thematic analysis. The analysis was done in order to establish a degree of validity and to compare the teacher results with the principal results. The established degree of validity was essential in reaching any conclusions. This demonstrated the degree of validity of data and surveys to establish a

conclusion.

Specific demographic information was asked of the respondents which may lead to further research in this study. Those eight areas included (1) certification, (2) outside middle school experience, (3) age range, (4) gender, (5) current assignment, (6) contract status, (7) previous principals, and (8) total years of teaching experience. After disaggregation of data, additional studies could be studied in the areas of identified subgroups. Those subgroups would include age, years of service, or number of different principals worked under.

After all of the information was collected and individual and focus group interviews were held, the researcher created a frequency distribution table to show the percentages of common occurrences within the items of the seven major categories. This indicated any reoccurring themes as a way to show any trends and to develop a profile of each middle school. The researcher used the Chi-Square test and a Scheffe' test to show validity.

The researcher collected the information from the transcribed interviews and developed common themes as related to any perceived behavior. The focus group interviews also allowed the researcher to perform a chart of frequency on its contents. Using all sources of data (surveys, interviews, and focus groups), the researcher triangulated for any common occurrences of data as a way to indicate a relationship between the teacher and principal surveys and the past 2006 NCTWC Survey and the 2008 NCTWC Survey.

This study examined the key components of effective middle school leadership and how well a particular middle school's faculty agree on the perception of what the principal of that school deems as effective middle school leadership qualities. Along

with this study, a cross study occurred as to how these two viewpoints, whether seen as similar or dissimilar, are in any congruence with the 2006 NCTWC Survey and the 2008 NCTWC Survey. Data was reviewed from the results of the 2006 NCTWC Survey and the 2008 NCTWC Survey from one LEA located in North Carolina along with any schools that completed a local individual survey from teachers and principals on effective middle school leadership characteristics.

In order to support validity, the study included multiple measurement strategies. The strategies included surveys, focus group interviews, and individual interviews. Using the data, surveys, and focus group interviews, the researcher showed with graphic representation and tables any common occurrences of data. The researcher reported any common themes concerning consistency found in middle school resources as to what middle school teachers and middle school principals deem important in the area of effective characteristics of middle school principals.

## Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine the consistency between principals and teachers regarding what factors both groups deem important as to effective middle school leadership. This study described any correlation of those factors which facilitate and contribute to the ultimate goal of academic student success. Once those leadership qualities were determined, a correlation was investigated with the NCTWC Surveys.

According to DeRoach (1985), just as middle school principals themselves possess convictions of effective appropriate leadership skills, other groups within the education community also maintain their views of effective leadership proficiencies. Some of these groups include superintendents, central office directors, board of education members, parents, students, and teachers. Considering that no group, aside from the teaching cadre, has a greater influence on the success of the educational process, teachers should realize, whether consciously or unconsciously, that leadership attitudes and abilities of principals, such as support, motivation, participation, and evaluation, are crucial in achieving the effectiveness of a school. Moreover, since principals by tradition were originally teachers, it stands to reason that the teacher who earns the qualifications and desires to eventually elevate to the position of a principal will possess knowledge of those particular skills and related styles that one would need as a principal to be an effective leader (DeRoach, 1985). Since teachers work closely with principals, and many of them may work with several principals during their teaching career, it appears that useful information could be obtained from teachers in helping to define principal leadership skills. Also as stated by DeRoche (1985), the school principal is the major influence on the quality of education in a school. The school principal, also known as the middle manager and the site administrator, is the major influence on whether education is

effective or ineffective, whether morale is high or low, whether the school climate is positive or negative, whether personnel are satisfied or dissatisfied, whether students achieve or don't achieve, whether the parents and the public are cooperative or uncooperative, and whether there is effective management and leadership (DeRoche, 1985).

This study focused on the general behaviors that are key to what middle school teachers and middle school principals deem as the common themes or behavioral characteristics of effective middle school principals and if there is some agreement as to what each side deems important and to what extent. It also expanded on the order of importance. The researcher focused on the data collected from different middle schools located within distinct and different locations, but within one Local Education Agency within the North Carolina Public School System.

In 1997, Augustus L. "Skip" Little (2001) conducted a national research project on effective middle level principals. From his work, Little classified 37 characteristics of exemplary principals. From those characteristics Little was able to group and classify them into seven key categories: the principal as (1) a person—inspires confidence and inspires others, has good use of effective oral, written, listening and interpersonal skills, generates enthusiasm, possesses high energy and a relentless positive nature, and has a sense of humor; (2) a visionary—has a clear vision of what a great school looks like, possesses the will and the desire to go after his/her vision, has the ability to express philosophy and vision to others, has the ability to develop, communicate and persuade others to support a vision of education for young adolescents and have that vision become the driving force for the school, is committed to developmentally responsive middle level education, sets high academic goals for all students, has a clear philosophy, vision, and

agenda, and can articulate and communicate the middle school concept to others; (3) an instructional leader—is knowledgeable about middle level curriculum, programs and practices, understands the unique nature of the adolescent learner, has a deep understanding of curriculum, instruction, and the skills necessary for effective middle school leadership, engages the faculty in continual improvement, is knowledgeable about middle school curriculum and teaching, and promotes continual staff development through personal example and actions; and (4) a leader of an educational organization—exhibits leadership, inspires teachers to go beyond expectations, supports teachers, is accessible to staff, and remains highly visible to faculty and students. The remaining three are the principal as (1) a problem solver; (2) a manager—is knowledgeable and effective in planning and budgeting, can identify, lure, motivate, and evaluate other staff members who have the right stuff for middle school, and can get the job done; and (3) a school-community facilitator—enables parents, faculty, community, and students to buy into the belief that the school belongs to everyone, shows sensitivity to the needs of racially and culturally diverse school and community populations, and deals effectively with parents of gifted and talented students and others who may challenge the schools mission to serve all students well.

According to Little (2001), middle level education has been characterized as the nation's "last best chance to make a difference in the future of our society. During the years between the ages of 10 and 15, adults develop the interests, attitudes, and personal standards that direct student's behavior for the years ahead" (p. 1). Little (2001) also stated that "middle level education helps adolescents define their future roles and responsibilities in society and thus helps to perpetuate the sense of community needed in this nation" (p. 1).

When implemented effectively, according to George and Shewey (1995), the middle school concept leads to substantial positive outcomes in virtually every area of concern for educators and parents, including academic achievement. Improvement is noted in various aspects of student deportment such as attendance, tardiness, discipline referrals, theft, and vandalism. Middle school programs improve relationships between students of different racial and ethnic groups, parents and teachers, teachers and students, and teachers and other teachers (George & Shewey, 1995).

Making an impact on the academic achievement of all students is a complex task; it entails understanding the students' individual learning styles, interests, and individual needs and then establishing a curriculum with aggressive teaching strategies to meet those needs as stated by Little (2001). Efficient middle schools have been specifically planned, staffed, and managed in ways that will provide a program that concentrates on rapidly changing learners who are in evolution from childhood to adulthood (Little, 2001). Little (2001) also described that these genuine middle schools have the facilities, organization, curriculum, student services, and effective instructional strategies designed to meet the characteristics and needs of this unique student population. Middle school students are unlike other students in other grade-patterned campuses. These students require an atmosphere focused on their needs and adults who understand and meet those needs in the classroom. The middle level principal has a distinct significant role to perform in developing a successful middle level school as studied by Little (2001). Numerous studies have given evidence that an effective middle level principal is key to having a successful middle level school (Valentine et al., 1981).

The research examined perceptions of middle school teachers and middle school principals as related to effective leadership behaviors. The research was also specific as

to the request that the middle school teachers not relate these leadership behaviors to their current principal.

An initial review of 17 middle schools in a school district located in the piedmont-triad central region of North Carolina by using a comparison of the leadership section of the 2006 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey to the 2008 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey revealed three middle schools that had averages over a 4-year period below the system level and state level from 2006 to 2008. Table 5 compares the leadership section from 2006 to 2008 within all three middle schools to the system and the state.

Table 5

*Averages of Teacher Responses to the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey-Leadership Section 2006 and 2008 within a 1 to 5 scale*

School/Reporting Entity	2006	2008	Change
School Blue	3.74	3.27	-.47
School Red	3.13	3.17	+.04
School Yellow	3.73	3.62	-.11
System	3.64	3.83	+.19
State	3.60	3.82	+.22

The above results, listed as a summary, provide a snapshot of the results from the 2006 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey and the 2008 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey while showing which schools increased or decreased in the leadership section of the NCTWC over a period of 4 years. These represent the averages of the 10 questions from the leadership section of the surveys that were most important in explaining the presence of leadership conditions that contribute to

trusting, supportive, empowering environments and sustained efforts to address teacher concerns of leadership behaviors. All averages above are on a 1 to 5 scale with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest. The system and state improved; the red school improved very little; and the other two schools, blue and yellow, performed at a lower level.

From Table 5, the researcher was able to choose three middle schools in this school system from 17. These three schools were isolated for this study because of their performance in both the 2006 and 2008 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Surveys and because each of those three middle schools had the same principal for the entire time period of the two North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Surveys used.

Data collected in this study were obtained from a variety of different sources including (1) written surveys designed with a Likert scale examining common perceptions of behavioral characteristics that reflect effective middle school leadership; (2) focus group discussions with all teachers from all three school sites; and (3) in the areas pertaining to leadership, analysis of the 2006 and 2008 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Surveys.

As stated by Hirsch (2005), positive and supportive leadership by principals matters to teachers. Leadership, “identified by more than one quarter of teachers as the most crucial working conditions in making their decisions about whether to stay in a school was significantly predictive of teacher retention” (Hirsch, 2005, p. 12). When comparing schools with high and low teacher turnover rates, the greatest variation in leadership and empowerment was determined by Hirsch & Emerick (2007). While states and districts are experimenting with various programs to encourage retention, one body of research focused on experimenting with various programs to encourage the importance

of supportive working conditions. Hirsch & Emerick (2007) stated that factors such as time, leadership, professional development, access to resources, and teacher empowerment all exert a significant influence on the degree of satisfaction teachers felt in their jobs. Recent research indicated that “teachers with positive perceptions about their working conditions are much more likely to stay at their current school than educators who are more negative about their conditions at work, particularly in the areas of leadership and empowerment” (Hirsch & Emerick, 2007, p. 14). Hirsch and Emerick (2007) also found that more than half of those who left the teaching profession in 2004-2005 indicated that they received better recognition and support from administration in their new jobs, as did 41% of teachers who left the classroom for a noninstructional position in the field of education (Marvel, Lyter, Peltola, Strizek, & Morton, 2007). As stated by Hirsch and Emerick (2007), one recent survey highlighted the importance of trust between administrators and teachers and found it to be strongly correlated with teacher turnover. Among the attributes associated with trust were the communication of clear expectations to parents and students, a shared vision among faculty, consistent administrative support for teachers, and processes for group decision making and problem solving (Hirsch & Emerick, 2007). Administrative support for student discipline also is an issue of considerable importance to leaving the profession (Coggshall, 2006). Principals as instructional leaders can enhance workplace conditions by attending to teachers’ professional needs for clear and consistent discipline policies, instructional support, and recognition.

Effective principals influence a variety of school outcomes, including student achievement, through their recruitment and motivation of quality teachers (Harris, Rutledge, Ingle, & Thompson, 2006; Jacob & Lefgren, 2005; Sergiovanni, 1992), their

ability to identify and articulate school vision and goals, their effective allocation of resources, and their development of organizational structures to support instruction and learning (Brewer, 1993; Eberts & Stone, 1998; Knapp, Copland, Plecki, & Portin, 2006; Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004).

Data reported in Chapter 4 includes responses to the following guiding question: What do middle school teachers and middle school principals believe to be common themes or behavioral characteristics specific to effective leadership behaviors?

The research questions were:

1. Across the cases, is there alignment of the teachers and principals of their reported perceptions regarding behavioral characteristics of effective middle school principals?

The school principal is the major influence on the quality of education in a school (DeRoche, 1985). The school principal, also known as the middle manager and the site administrator, is the major influence on whether education is effective or ineffective; whether morale is high or low; whether the school climate is positive or negative; whether personnel are satisfied or dissatisfied; whether students achieve or don't achieve; whether the parents and the public are cooperative or uncooperative; and whether there is effective management and leadership (DeRoche, 1985).

2. What values of importance as explained by the data do middle school teachers and middle school principals place on those traits deemed important in characterizing a middle school principal?

The following questions were answered by examination of the teacher/principal relationship and these three middle schools:

1. Were there similarities in perceived importance of the effective characteristics

of middle school principals among middle school teachers?

2. Were there similarities in perceived importance of the effective characteristics of middle school principals among various demographic groups of middle school teachers?

3. Were there similarities in perceived importance of the effective principals between middle school principals and middle school teachers of these three middle schools?

4. Were there similarities in perceived importance of characteristics of effective middle school principals as identified by the respondents?

In looking at the seven main divisions of effective characteristics, a one-way ANOVA was performed to establish more detailed information on the numbers collected on the most important and to establish if there was a statistical difference in the rankings of these characteristics among respondents from different middle schools. Data was obtained using a research instrument published by the National Middle School Association (1982). Additional questions were designed and included by the researcher. The data collected were statistically explained using the SPSS software program.

The three middle schools were identified in the following way; blue as city-rural, red as rural and yellow as city, included within three different geographical areas of one school system located in the piedmont-triad central region in North Carolina. The Director of Research and Evaluation of the school system was contacted, and a written request was submitted asking to perform research, by means of a survey and follow-up focus group interviews. After receiving written permission from the Director of Research and Evaluation, the principals of the three identified middle schools were contacted seeking to conduct the survey and focus group interviews. The request for research was

explained and complied with the guidelines of the Gardner-Webb University Institutional Research Board (IRB). The middle school principals were given information describing the researcher's affiliation with Gardner-Webb University, proof of review and approval by the University's IRB Committee, and proof of review and approval by the school system, granting permission to conduct the research.

After meeting separately with each of the three middle school principals, an agreed upon time for introduction and survey distribution was established. At each of the three middle schools, the researcher explained the purpose of the research and distributed a copy of a packet for every certified faculty member and principal. Each packet contained a cover letter explaining the purpose of the research, statement of affiliation with Gardner-Webb University, and guidelines as to informed voluntary consent on the part of the participant.

Upon voluntary completion of the survey, the participants placed the finished document in the envelope provided. Each envelope was address to the researcher to ensure privacy of those who responded.

### **Analysis**

The blue middle school had 57 certified faculty. Of the 57 certified faculty, 38 (66.67%) returned the survey. The red middle school had 78 certified faculty. Of the 78 certified faculty, 52 (66.66%) returned the survey. The yellow middle school had 61 certified faculty. Of the 61 certified faculty, 45 (73.77%) returned the survey. The same survey was completed by the principal in each middle school.

Various demographic data was collected from those who responded, including gender, years of experience, tenure status, number of principals worked for, position, and age. The purpose of collecting the various forms of demographic data was to allow

disaggregating by groups.

A frequency distribution table was completed consisting of gender, experience, and age. A frequency distribution table is a tabulation of the values that one or more take in a sample. Each entry in the table contains the frequency of the occurrences of values within a particular group. The table summarizes the distribution of values in the sample. The frequency report represents first priority of important characteristics of a principal for all three middle schools.

Table 6

*Gender Distribution of the Three Middle Schools*

School	Male		Female		Total
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N
Blue	2	5.26	36	94.74	38
Red	22	42.30	30	57.70	52
Yellow	10	22.22	35	77.78	45

Table 6 indicates the number of male and female respondents to the survey from each of the three schools.

Table 7 represents the first choice selection of males and females by gender.

Table 7

*Middle School Aggregate First Choice Principal Characteristics by Gender*

Characteristic	Male		Female		Total N
	N	Percent	N	Percent	
As a Person	13	33.00	27	67.00	40
As a Visionary	5	31.00	11	69.00	16
As an Inst. Leader	2	29.00	5	71.00	7
As a Leader of an Edu Org.	4	36.00	7	64.00	11
As a Problem Solver	2	100.00	0	0.00	2
As a Manager	0	0.00	17	100.00	17
As a Sch.-Comm. Facilitator	0	0.00	4	100.00	4

In Table 7, the data suggests that both males and females desire the same trait.

Both groups feel that the characteristic of a principal as a person is the most important of the seven characteristics.

The next item of demographic information relates to the number of years of teaching experience from each of the three middle schools. In Table 8, the data is divided into seven groups of experience.

Table 8

*Years of Experience of the Three Middle Schools*

Experience	Blue		Red		Yellow	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
First Year of Teaching	4	10.53	10	19.23	2	4.44
2-3 Years of Teaching	8	21.05	6	11.54	0	0.00
4-9 Years of Teaching	6	15.79	16	30.77	16	35.56
10-14 Years of Teaching	12	31.58	0	0.00	11	24.44
15-20 Years of Teaching	4	10.53	6	11.54	5	11.11
21-25 Years of Teaching	2	5.26	4	7.69	4	8.89
25+ Years of Teaching	2	5.26	10	19.23	7	15.56

Table 8 represents the choices included: (a) first year of teaching, (b) 2-3 years of teaching, (c) 4-9 years of teaching, (d) 10-14 years of teaching, (e) 15-20 years of teaching, (f) 21-25 years of teaching, and (g) greater than 25 years of teaching. The data shows that school blue had the most responses to the survey in the 10-14 years of experience teaching band, while schools red and yellow had the most responses to the survey in the 4-9 years of experience teaching band. All three schools had the most response in the 4-14 years of experience teaching band.

Table 9 indicates which principalship characteristic is most important. A comparison is made to the 0-9 years of experience band to the 10+ years of experience band.

Table 9

*Middle School Aggregate First Choice Principal Characteristics by Experience*

Characteristic	0-9 Years of Experience		10+ Years of Experience	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
As a Person	0	0.00	14	100.00
As a Visionary	3	19.00	13	81.00
As an Inst. Leader	12	60.00	8	40.00
As a Leader of an Edu. Org.	15	63.00	9	37.00
As a Problem Solver	0	0.00	2	100.00
As a Manager	19	83.00	4	17.00
As a Sch.-Comm. Facilitator	6	75.00	2	25.00

The data in Table 9 indicates that those teachers with less than 10 years of experience value a principal who has the trait of a manager. Teachers who have 10 years of experience or more value the principal characteristic of one who exhibits the skills of being a person.

The next item of demographic information represents the distribution of respondents in the category of age. Respondents were asked to indicate whether he/she was (a) 30 or under, or (b) over 30.

Table 10

*Age Distribution of the Three Middle Schools*

Age	Blue		Red		Yellow		Total
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	
30 or under	8	21.05	16	30.77	5	1.11	29
Over 30	30	78.95	36	69.23	45	98.89	111

The data in Table 10 indicates that the responses to the survey were overwhelmingly completed by those who were over 30 years of age. This data was consistent for all three middle schools.

The information in Table 11 represents the frequency report of first priority of important characteristics of a principal for all three middle schools. This information was classified by groups of 30 years of age and younger and groups of those who were over 30 years of age.

Table 11

*Middle School Aggregate First Choice Principal Characteristics by Age*

Characteristic	30 Years of Age and Under		Over 30 Years of Age	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
As a Person	4	28.00	36	72.00
As a Visionary	2	12.50	14	87.50
As an Inst. Leader	6	30.00	14	70.00
As a Leader of an Edu. Org.	4	16.70	20	83.30
As a Problem Solver	2	33.30	4	66.70
As a Manager	6	26.00	17	74.00
As a Sch.-Comm. Facilitator	4	50.00	4	50.00

The information in Table 11 indicates that those teachers who were 30 years or

younger were looking for a principal who uses the skills of a school-community facilitator, problem solver, and an instructional leader. Those teachers who were over 30 years of age were looking for a principal who possesses the skills of a visionary, a manager, and a person.

The information in Table 12 represents whether or not an individual has achieved tenure at each of the middle schools. This would be an indicator of a school of teachers with more or less experience.

Table 12

*Tenure Distribution of all Three Middle Schools*

School	Tenure - Yes		Tenure - No		Total
	N	Percent	N	Percent	
Blue	26	68.42	12	31.58	38
Red	28	53.85	24	46.15	52
Yellow	35	77.78	10	22.22	45

Table 12 indicates that all 3 middle schools had more tenured teachers respond to the survey than nontenured teachers. The yellow school had the most difference between the tenured teachers and nontenured teachers who responded to the survey.

This study was first obtained from an article, *Middle Ground* (Little, 2000), published through the National Middle School Association (NMSA), using predetermined points associated with effective middle school leadership skills.

In 1997, Augustus L. “Skip” Little (2001) conducted a national research project on effective middle level principals. From his work, Little (2001) classified 37 characteristics of exemplary principals. From those characteristics he was able to group

and classify them into seven key categories: the principal as (1) a person, (2) a visionary, (3) an instructional leader, (4) a leader of an educational organization, (5) a problem solver, (6) a manager, and (7) a school-community facilitator.

According to Little (2001), middle level education has been characterized as the nation's "last best chance to make a difference in the future of our society. During the years between the ages of 10 and 15, adults develop the interests, attitudes, and personal standards that direct student's behavior for the years ahead" (p. 1). Little (2001) also stated that "middle level education helps adolescents define their future roles and responsibilities in society and thus helps to perpetuate the sense of community needed in this nation" (p. 1). Those who responded to the survey were asked to rank the seven main characteristics of an effective middle school principal with 1 being the most important or highest priority and 7 being the least need of those characteristics listed. The survey and the researcher stressed the importance of the concept that the respondents were not supposed to rank his/her current principal, but rather the value of that characteristic as needed by a middle school principal. In reviewing the seven main divisions of effective middle school principal characteristics, a frequency distribution for each division of all three middle schools was created, a Chi-Square test on all three middle schools was performed, and an ANOVA was performed for responses from all three middle schools.

Table 13

*Principal as a Person by all Three Schools*

All Three Middle Schools	N	Percent
1 = Most Important	40	29.4
2 = Second Most Important	11	8.1
3 = Third Most Important	13	9.6
4 = Fourth Most Important	19	14.0
5 = Fifth Most Important	10	7.4
6 = Sixth Most Important	16	11.8
7 = Least Important	27	19.9
Total	136	100.0

Table 13 indicates that the principal as a person was ranked first as most important. This was in order of 1 out of 7 characteristics.

Table 14

*Principal as a Visionary by all Three Schools*

All Three Middle Schools	N	Percent
1 = Most Important	16	11.8
2 = Second Most Important	26	19.1
3 = Third Most Important	18	13.2
4 = Fourth Most Important	18	13.2
5 = Fifth Most Important	15	11.0
6 = Sixth Most Important	29	21.3
7 = Least Important	14	10.3
Total	136	100.0

Table 14 indicates that the principal being a visionary was ranked as sixth as most important. This was in order of 6 out of 7 characteristics.

Table 15

*Principal as an Instructional Leader by all Three Schools*


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All Three Middle Schools	N	Percent
1 = Most Important	20	14.7
2 = Second Most Important	16	11.8
3 = Third Most Important	20	14.7
4 = Fourth Most Important	25	18.4
5 = Fifth Most Important	30	22.1
6 = Sixth Most Important	17	12.5
7 = Least Important	8	5.9
Total	136	100.0

---

Table 15 indicates that the principal being an instructional leader was ranked as fifth as most important. This was in order of 5 out of 7 characteristics.

Table 16

*Principal as a Leader of an Educational Organization by all Three Schools*


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All Three Middle Schools	N	Percent
1 = Most Important	24	17.6
2 = Second Most Important	20	14.7
3 = Third Most Important	28	20.6
4 = Fourth Most Important	19	14.0
5 = Fifth Most Important	17	12.5
6 = Sixth Most Important	18	13.2
7 = Least Important	10	7.4
Total	136	100.0

---

Table 16 indicates that the principal being a leader of an educational organization was ranked as third as most important. This was in order of 3 out of 7 characteristics.

Table 17

*Principal as a Problem Solver by all Three Schools*

All Three Middle Schools	N	Percent
1 = Most Important	6	4.4
2 = Second Most Important	30	22.1
3 = Third Most Important	23	16.9
4 = Fourth Most Important	26	19.1
5 = Fifth Most Important	30	22.1
6 = Sixth Most Important	17	12.5
7 = Least Important	4	2.9
Total	136	100.0

Table 17 indicates that the principal being a problem solver was ranked as second and fifth as most important. This was in order of 2 and 5 out of 7 characteristics.

Table 18

*Principal as a Manager by all Three Schools*

All Three Middle Schools	N	Percent
1 = Most Important	23	16.9
2 = Second Most Important	20	14.7
3 = Third Most Important	24	17.6
4 = Fourth Most Important	13	9.6
5 = Fifth Most Important	13	9.6
6 = Sixth Most Important	18	13.2
7 = Least Important	25	18.4
Total	136	100.0

Table 18 indicates that the principal being a manager was ranked as seventh as most important. This was in order of 7 out of 7 characteristics.

Table 19

*Principal as a School-Community Facilitator by all Three Schools*

All Three Middle Schools	N	Percent
1 = Most Important	8	5.9
2 = Second Most Important	3	9.6
3 = Third Most Important	11	8.1
4 = Fourth Most Important	16	11.8
5 = Fifth Most Important	22	16.2
6 = Sixth Most Important	20	14.7
7 = Least Important	46	33.8
Total	136	100.0

Table 19 indicates that the principal being a school-community facilitator was ranked as fifth as most important. This was in order of 5 out of 7 characteristics.

Table 20 represents by school the first choice selection of the seven principal characteristics. Each school's first choice is compared to the choice of all three middle schools.

Table 20

*Middle School Aggregate First Choice Principal Characteristics by all Three Schools*

Characteristic	Blue Percent	Red Percent	Yellow Percent	Total Percent
As a Person	26.30	26.90	34.80	29.40
As a Visionary	10.50	15.40	8.70	11.80
As an Inst. Leader	21.10	15.40	17.40	14.70
As a Leader of an Edu. Org.	5.30	19.20	26.10	17.60
As a Problem Solver	5.30	3.90	4.30	4.40
As a Manager	26.30	17.30	8.70	16.90
As a Sch.-Comm. Facilitator	5.30	11.50	0.00	5.90

Table 20 indicates that all three middle schools are looking for a principal who exhibits the main characteristic trait of being a person. These results are congruent with the overall request.

A Chi-Square analysis was administered by using the SPSS software. This information was needed to show whether the responses to the survey demonstrated a likeness of fit of responses. The Chi-Square analysis indicated whether the responses would likely be similar if multiple surveys were to be given to the same population. This would also allow the researcher to address of the validity the findings.

Table 21 represents whether the results would be the same if taken again by other groups.

Table 21

*Chi-Square Value of the Seven Principal Characteristics from all Three Schools*

Characteristic	Chi-Sq Value	df	Asym. Sig.
As a Person	9.39	12	.676
As a Visionary	20.958	12	.051
As an Inst. Leader	25.597	12	.006
As a Leader of an Edu. Org.	20.174	12	.064
As a Problem Solver	31.324	12	.002
As a Manager	15.047	12	.239
As a Sch.-Comm. Facilitator	31.653	12	.002

The information in Table 21 indicates that the results of the characteristics of a principal being an instructional leader, a problem solver, and a school-community facilitator would be repeated if the survey was administered again to other groups. While these three characteristics have not been reported as most important, to others taking the same survey the results are likely to be repeated.

In review of the results of the Chi-Square test, the following areas were observable. Considering the variable of age, the item most significant was the principal as a manager with a  $p$  of  $> .096$ . With the variable of gender, the items of most significance were the principal as a problem solver with a  $p$  of  $< .000$  and the principal as a leader of an educational organization with a  $p$  of  $< .046$ . With the variable of tenure, the item of most significance was the principal as a leader of an educational organization with a  $p$  of  $< .006$ . In the last variable, the area of experience, the item of most significance was the principal as a leader of an educational organization with a  $p$  of  $> .075$ .

The ANOVA (analysis of variance) was performed to indicate whether any statistically significant difference in the rankings of these characteristics among the respondents from the three different middle schools occurred.

Table 22

*ANOVA Values of all Three Schools by Age*

All Three Schools	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Person-Between Groups	.947	1	.947	.175	.676
Visionary-Between Groups	.007	1	.007	.002	.967
Inst. Leader-Between Groups	6.540	1	6.540	2.071	.152
Edu. Organization-Between Groups	1.765	1	1.765	.495	.483
Problem Solver-Between Groups	2.773	1	2.773	1.148	.286
Manager-Between Groups	12.773	1	12.773	2.817	.096
School Community-Between Groups	3.160	1	3.160	.837	.362

The results of the ANOVA provided insight to the question: What is the difference in value ranking of the effective characteristics of middle school principals among various groups of middle school teachers by age?

For the ANOVA between the three middle schools and the characteristic of being a person, the F value is equal to .175 and is not significant at a  $p$  of  $> .676$ . In regard to vision, the F value is equal to .002 and is not significant at a  $p$  of  $> .967$ . In regard to instructional leader, the F value is equal to 2.071 and is not significant at a  $p$  of  $> .152$ . For the variable of leader of an educational organization, the F value is equal to .495 and is not significant at a  $p$  of  $> .483$ . When the variable of problem solver is reviewed, the F value is equal to 1.148 and is not significant at a  $p$  of  $> .286$ .

When the category of manager is reviewed the F value is equal to 2.817 and is significant at a  $p$  of  $< .096$ . For the last variable, school-community facilitator, the F value is equal to .837 and is not significant at a  $p$  of  $> .362$ .

Table 23

*ANOVA Values of all Three Schools by Gender*

All Three Schools	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Person-Between Groups	3.207	1	3.207	.594	.442
Visionary-Between Groups	1.420	1	1.420	.365	.547
Inst. Leader-Between Groups	.008	1	.008	.003	.960
Edu. Organization-Between Groups	14.107	1	14.107	4.065	.046
Problem Solver-Between Groups	30.799	1	30.799	13.961	.000
Manager-Between Groups	4.053	1	4.053	.881	.350
School Community-Between Groups	.001	1	.001	.000	.986

The results of the ANOVA provided insight to the question: What is the difference in value ranking of the effective characteristics of middle school principals among various groups of middle school teachers by gender?

For the ANOVA between the three middle schools and the characteristic of being a person, the F value is equal to .594 and is not significant at a  $p$  of  $> .442$ . In regard to

vision, the F value is equal to .365 and is not significant at a  $p$  of  $> .547$ . In regard to instructional leader, the F value is equal to .003 and is not significant at a  $p$  of  $> .960$ . For the variable of leader of an educational organization, the F value is equal to 4.065 and is significant at a  $p$  of  $< .046$ . When the variable of problem solver is reviewed, the F value is equal to 13.961 and is significant at a  $p$  of  $< .000$ . When the category of manager is reviewed, the F value is equal to .881 and is not significant at a  $p$  of  $> .552$ . For the last variable, school-community facilitator, the F value is equal to 1.454 and is not significant at a  $p$  of  $> .230$ .

Table 24

*ANOVA Values of all Three Schools by Tenure Status*

All Three Schools	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Person-Between Groups	6.426	1	6.426	1.196	.276
Visionary-Between Groups	.300	1	.300	.007	.782
Inst. Leader-Between Groups	1.462	1	1.462	.457	.500
Edu. Organization-Between Groups	26.042	1	26.042	7.702	.006
Problem Solver-Between Groups	1.315	1	1.315	.542	.463
Manager-Between Groups	1.644	1	1.644	.356	.552
School Community-Between Groups	5.464	1	5.464	1.454	.230

The results of the ANOVA provided insight to the question: What is the difference in value ranking of the effective characteristics of middle school principals among various groups of middle school teachers by tenure status?

For the ANOVA between the three middle schools and the characteristic of being a person, the F value is equal to 1.196 and is not significant at a  $p$  of  $> .276$ . In regard to vision, the F value is equal to .007 and is not significant at a  $p$  of  $> .782$ . In regard to instructional leader, the F value is equal to .457 and is not significant at a  $p$  of  $> .500$ .

For the variable of leader of an educational organization, the F value is equal to 7.702 and is significant at a  $p$  of  $< .006$ . When the variable of problem solver is reviewed, the F value is equal to .542 and is not significant at a  $p$  of  $> .463$ . When the category of manager is reviewed, the F value is equal to .356 and is not significant at a  $p$  of  $> .552$ . For the last variable, school-community facilitator, the F value is equal to 1.454 and is not significant at a  $p$  of  $> .230$ .

Table 25

*ANOVA Values of all Three Schools by Experience*

All Three Schools	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Person-Between Groups	44.343	6	7.391	1.398	.220
Visionary-Between Gro	22.075	6	3.679	.948	.464
Inst. Leader-Between Groups	19.363	6	3.227	1.014	.419
Edu. Organization-Between Groups	40.216	6	6.703	1.970	.006
Problem Solver-Between Groups	23.876	6	3.979	1.697	.127
Manager-Between Groups	37.870	6	6.312	1.398	.220
School Community-Between Groups	24.687	6	4.115	1.096	.368

The results of the ANOVA provided insight to the question: What is the difference in value ranking of the effective characteristics of middle school principals among various groups of middle school teachers by experience?

For the ANOVA values of the three middle schools and the characteristic of being a person, the F value is equal to 1.398 and is not significant at a  $p$  of  $> .220$ . In regard to vision, the F value is equal to .948 and is not significant at a  $p$  of  $> .464$ . In regard to instructional leader, the F value is equal to 1.014 and is not significant at a  $p$  of  $> .419$ . For the variable of leader of an educational organization, the F value is equal to 1.970 and is significant at a  $p$  of  $< .006$ . When the variable of problem solver is reviewed, the F

value is equal to 1.697 and is not significant at a  $p$  of  $> .127$ . When the category of manager is reviewed, the F value is equal to 1.398 and is not significant at a  $p$  of  $> .220$ . For the last variable, school-community facilitator, the F value is equal to 1.096 and is not significant at a  $p$  of  $> .368$ .

Table 26

*ANOVA Values of all Three Schools*

All Three Schools	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Person-Between Groups	2.818	2	1.409	.259	.772
Visionary-Between Groups	47.472	2	23.736	6.640	.002
Inst. Leader-Between Groups	14.104	2	7.052	2.256	.109
Edu. Organization-Between Groups	9.197	2	4.599	1.302	.276
Problem Solver-Between Groups	27.586	2	13.793	6.139	.003
Manager-Between Groups	2.058	2	1.029	.221	.802
School Community-Between Groups	.980	2	.490	.128	.880

The results of the ANOVA provided insight to the question: What is the difference in value ranking of the effective characteristics of middle school principals among various groups of middle school teachers?

For the ANOVA between the three middle schools and the characteristic of being a person, the F value is equal to .259 and is not significant at a  $p$  of  $> .772$ . In regard to vision, the F value is equal to 6.640 and is significant at a  $p$  of  $< .002$ . In regard to instructional leader, the F value is equal to 2.256 and is not significant at a  $p$  of  $> .109$ . For the variable of leader of an educational organization, the F value is equal to 1.302 and is not significant at a  $p$  of  $> .276$ . When the variable of problem solver is reviewed, the F value is equal to 6.139 and is significant at a  $p$  of  $< .003$ . When the category of manager is reviewed, the F value is equal to .221 and is not significant at a  $p$  of  $> .802$ . For the

last variable, school-community facilitator, the F value is equal to .128 and is not significant at a  $p$  of  $> .880$ .

Focus group interviews were held at each of the three middle schools. The research generated several traits of middle school leaders that were the beginning of discussion and then the participants were asked to add their own thoughts. Transcribed focus group interviews were analyzed for theme emergence and displayed in Table 30. Theme emergence in the transcripts were noted, identified, and counted for frequency of times emerging.

In review of the emerging significance in Tables 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, and 26, the researcher applied the use of a Scheffe' test. This was implemented because each sample was unequal in size to the others.

Table 27

*Scheffe' Test of Multiple Comparisons*

Dependent Variable	School	School	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Person	Blue	Red	.04858	.49781	.995
	Blue	Yellow	.32952	.51134	.813
	Red	Yellow	.28094	.47214	.838
Visionary	Blue	Red	1.38158	.40352	.004
	Blue	Yellow	.37071	.41448	.671
	Red	Yellow	-1.01087	.38271	.033
Instructional Leader	Blue	Red	-.70445	.37729	.179
	Blue	Yellow	-.08238	.38754	.978
	Red	Yellow	.62207	.35783	.224
Leader of an Edu. Org.	Blue	Red	.37045	.40115	.654
	Blue	Yellow	.66476	.41205	.276
	Red	Yellow	.29431	.38047	.742
Problem Solver	Blue	Red	-.89474	.31989	.022
	Blue	Yellow	-1.09039	.32858	.005
	Red	Yellow	-.19565	.30340	.813
Manager	Blue	Red	-.26316	.46017	.849
	Blue	Yellow	-.28490	.47267	.834
	Red	Yellow	.02174	.43644	.999
Sch.-Comm. Facilitator	Blue	Red	.19636	.41707	.895
	Blue	Yellow	.17963	.42841	.916
	Red	Yellow	-.01672	.39557	.999

In Table 27, the results of the Scheffe' test indicate a significance between schools blue and red and schools red and yellow under the characteristic of visionary. Also a significance occurs under the category of problem solver between schools blue and red and schools blue and yellow.

Table 28 indicates the themes from the focus group interviews. The frequency is listed from most occurring to least occurring.

Table 28

*Frequency of Themes Needed to Support Sustainability from Focus Group Interviews*

Theme	N
Meaningful kindness to everyone	5
Humor	5
Looking at each other's strengths and weaknesses while not judging	1
Appreciation for everyone's talents and abilities	2
Respecting what teachers do	3
Meaningful feedback	2
Role model for students	2
Professionalism	1
Trustworthy and straightforward	4
Teaming	2
Mentee/mentor relationships	1
Visibility	1
Shared leadership	3
Shared vision	3
Encouraging leadership in others	3
Flexibility	5
Not quick to judge	1
Understands the culture of the school	1
Represents everything in the school	2
Accountability	1
Equal policies and treatment for all	1
Making positive connections	5
Good communicator to everyone with positives and negatives	1
Walk the talk	1
Consistency	1
Integrity	1
Able to equally delegate	1
Knowing staff strengths	1
Cultivates good teaching practices	1

The researcher created a frequency distribution of common themes from the focus group interviews.

Table 29

*Seven Characteristics Ranked in Order of Importance from the Focus Group Interviews*

Seven Characteristics	N	Cumulative N	Percent of N
Principal as Person	31	31	50.8
Principal as a Visionary	10	41	16.4
Principal as an Instructional Leader	8	49	13.1
Principal as a Manager	5	54	8.2
Principal as a Leader of an Educational Organization	5	59	8.2
Principal as a School-Community Facilitator	2	61	3.3
Principal as a Problem Solver	0	61	0.0

The researcher ranked the results from most important to least important.

Table 30

*Seven Characteristics Ranked in Order of Importance from the ANOVA of all Schools and all Seven Characteristics*

Seven Characteristics	Significance	Ranking
Principal as a Visionary	.002	1
Principal as a Problem Solver	.003	2
Principal as an Instructional Leader	.109	3
Principal as a Leader of an Educational Organization	.276	4
Principal as a Person	.772	5
Principal as a Manager	.802	6
Principal as a School-Community Facilitator	.880	7

Table 31

*Principal Rankings of the Seven Characteristics*

Seven Characteristics	Average of 3 Principals	Ranking
Principal as an Instructional Leader	1.7	1
Principal as a Visionary	2.3	2
Principal as a Leader of an Educational Organization	3.0	3
Principal as a Problem Solver	3.3	4
Principal as a Person	5.3	5
Principal as a School-Community Facilitator	5.3	5
Principal as a Manager	7.0	7

Based on the order of themes, the principals view themselves as instructional leaders, visionaries, and leaders of educational organizations.

**Summary**

At the outset of this research, it was intended that this study would determine, in order of importance, the congruence of characteristics that middle school teachers value regarding the behavioral characteristics of effective middle school principals. The study did examine the degree of congruence as to how the principals determine their order of importance. The indications and suggestions of this research are based on data collected from the researcher and examined commonalities of middle school teachers and middle school principals. These commonalities were those perceptions deemed as most important by frequency of the teacher group and the principal group as a way to determine what successful middle school leadership skills are, not a specific teacher's view of the specific principal that they work with. Information was obtained by distribution of a survey published through the National Middle School Association. As a

way to determine the findings and implications obtained by use of this data, various statistical analyses were done using the SPSS software. Testing included correlation studies, ANOVA, and Scheffe' testing. Participants were also given the opportunity to expand upon the information presented in the survey by using focus group interviews along with open-ended questions. Some questions were used as prompts, as a way to generate initial dialogue while encouraging open-ended thoughts to complement their answers as to items not previously discussed. In the survey, the researcher asked the respondents to give value by ranking successful middle school leadership characteristics in order of which characteristic would be more important than others. The researcher determined through the initial survey the degree of similarity between his findings and the perceptions of the middle schools teachers and principals with the seven broad general areas of critical attributes connected with the characteristics of successful middle school principals. Those seven major areas or themes are a total of 37 subareas which support traits of a successful middle school principal with the following examples.

The areas surveyed included the principal as (1) a person—builds confidence and inspires others, has effective oral, written, listening and interpersonal skills, generates enthusiasm, possesses high energy, and has a good sense of humor and a relentlessly positive nature; (2) a visionary—has a clear vision of a great school, possesses the will and desire to go after that vision, has a philosophy and set of beliefs that provide goals, objectives, and an agenda, is able to articulate the philosophy and vision to others, has the ability to persuade and lead others to support a vision of education for young adolescents that becomes the driving force for the school, is committed to developmentally responsive middle level education, holds high academic goals for every student, and is a dynamic force for the middle school concept; (3) an instructional leader—is thoroughly

knowledgeable about middle level curriculum, programs, and practices, understands the unique nature of young adolescent learners, possesses the skills necessary for effective instructional leadership, is capable of engaging the school's faculty in the continuous process of middle school improvement, and promotes continuous staff development via one's own example and by supporting relevant workshops, study groups, and attendance at conferences; (4) a leader of an educational organization—exhibits leadership, is able to inspire teachers to go beyond the expected of the teachers, is accessible to staff, and is highly visible to faculty and students; (5) a problem solver; (6) a manager—knowledgeable and effective in planning and budgeting, possesses the ability to identify, hire, and evaluate staff members, and is able to get the job done; and (7) a school-community facilitator—has faculty, students, parents, and the community buy into the idea that “this is our school,” is sensitive to the needs of a racially and culturally diverse school and community population, and has the capacity to deal effectively with parents of gifted students and others who may challenge the mission of the school. Under these seven general areas of attributes, subareas varying from three to eight were imbedded. In this study, these subareas were ranked from least important to most important as to the perception of their importance by the principals and individual faculties.

Included in the survey were two open-ended questions. One open-ended question focused on the attributes of a successful middle school principal as reported by the results of the teacher surveys from their school. A second open-ended question focused on any one area not listed in the survey that the respondent deemed as an important attribute of a successful middle school principal. This data was incorporated within the reoccurring themes from the focus group interviews.

After review and collection of the surveys, the researcher conducted focus group interviews as a method to expand the thoughts of middle school leadership. These focus group interviews were transcribed. This was done in order to establish a degree of validity and to compare the teacher results with the principal results. The established degree of validity was essential to reaching any conclusions. This demonstrated the degree of validity of data and surveys to establish a conclusion.

Specific demographic information was asked of the respondents which may lead to further research in this study. Those eight areas will include (1) certification, (2) outside middle school experience, (3) age range, (4) gender, (5) current assignment, (6) contract status, (7) previous principals, and (8) total years of teaching experience. After disaggregating the data, additional studies could be studied in the areas of identified subgroups. Those subgroups would include age, years of service, or number of different principals worked under.

After all of the information was collected, and focus group interviews held, the researcher created a frequency distribution table to show the percentages of common occurrences within the items of the seven major categories. This indicated any reoccurring themes as a way to show any trends and to develop a profile of each middle school.

The researcher collected the information from the transcribed interviews and developed common themes as related to any perceived behavior. The focus group interviews allowed the researcher to perform a chart of frequency on its contents. Using all sources of data (surveys, interviews, and focus groups), the researcher triangulated for any common occurrences of data.

This study examined the key components of effective middle school leadership

and how well a particular middle school's faculty agreed on the perception of what the principal of that school deemed as effective middle school leadership qualities.

The research suggested that the importance placed on various characteristics of an effective principal by way of the survey is in conflict with the information provided by the reoccurring themes produced in the focus group interviews, the seven characteristics ranked in order of importance from the ANOVA of all three schools, and the information provided by the principal group survey results. The researcher reviewed all of the information produced by the review of the reoccurring themes from the focus group interviews as shown in Table 29. In that information, the principal as a person was rated as most important and the principal as a visionary was rated as second most important. The researcher then reviewed the information by the results of the ANOVA from the participant completed survey as shown in Table 26. In that information, the principal as a visionary was most statistically significant at a p value of  $< .002$  and the principal as a problem solver was statistically second most significant at a p value of  $< .003$ .

In Table 7, the information was separated from male and female respondents. Of the seven major characteristics, both males and females ranked the principal as a person as most important. In the category separated by 0-9 years of experience and 10 years or more experience, those teachers with less than 10 years of experience wanted a principal who was an instructional leader, a leader of an educational organization, a manager, and a school-community facilitator (see Table 9). Those teachers with 10 years of experience or more wanted a principal who was a person, a visionary, and a problem solver (see Table 9).

In the category separated by 30 years of age or younger and older than 30 years of age, those teachers who were older wanted a principal who was a person, a visionary, an

instructional leader, a leader of an educational organization, a problem solver, and a manager (see Table 11). Under the category of a principal as a school-community facilitator, both age groups agreed to its importance.

The results from the transcribed focus group interviews, Table 29, indicated that a principal who had the characteristics of being a person was most important and from the ANOVA of the seven characteristics, Table 30, the teachers agreed with significance that the principal should be a visionary and a problem solver.

The results from the Scheffe' test in Table 27 indicated that within uneven numbers, the data indicated a significant difference between schools blue and red and schools red and yellow under the characteristic of visionary. Also a significance occurred under the category of problem solver between schools blue and red and schools blue and yellow. In opposition, the survey results from the principal's group, Table 31, indicated that the group saw themselves as instructional leaders and as visionaries.

## **Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to examine consistency between principal and teachers as to what factors both groups deem important as to effective middle school leadership. This study described any correlation of those factors which facilitate and contribute to the ultimate goal of academic student success. Once those leadership qualities were determined, a correlation was investigated with the NCTWC Surveys. The researcher investigated general behaviors that are key to what middle school teachers and middle school principals deem as the common themes or behavioral characteristics of effective middle school principals and if there was some agreement as to what each group deemed important and to what extent. It also expanded on the order of importance. The researcher focused on the data collected from different middle schools, located within distinct and different locations, but within one Local Education Agency within the North Carolina Public School System.

Data for this study was collected from a variety of sources: (1) written surveys examining seven leadership qualities administered to every certified teacher at the three middle school sites, (2) written surveys examining seven leadership qualities administered to each principal at the three middle school sites, (3) focus group interviews with teachers from each of the three middle schools, and (4) analysis of the 2005-2006 overall leadership section results of the biannual North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey, along with the 2007-2008 results.

After the results were reviewed, the researcher used those middle schools that fit into this final category as the focus of the study. The results were based on the perception of leadership behaviors. The researcher then surveyed each faculty and the

principal using 37 questions that fall under the seven characteristics that are part of the seven key basic middle school themes of importance in successful middle school leadership as identified by Little (2001). By frequency of occurrence, these common perceptions gave significance in developing behaviors of leadership.

After the results of Chapter 4 were reviewed by categorizing the responses from teachers and principals, profiles were created for both the faculty and principals. The profiles from both groups at identified schools were examined as the researcher developed common significant concepts. Using the common concepts as a baseline, the researcher interviewed individual middle school teachers. The researcher looked for common themes as related to perceived behaviors. From these interviews, the researcher established common occurrences and put that information from those interviews into narratives which developed a thematic analysis. Based on these data the conclusion was that middle school principals themselves possess convictions of effective and appropriate leadership skills; other groups within the education community also maintain their views of effective leadership proficiencies. Some of these groups include superintendents, central office directors, board of education members, parents, students, and teachers. Considering that no group, aside from the teaching cadre, has a greater influence on the success of the educational process, teachers should realize, whether consciously or unconsciously, that leadership attitudes and abilities of principals, such as support, motivation, participation, and evaluation, are crucial in achieving the effectiveness of a school; moreover, because principals by tradition have been teachers (DeRoche, 1985).

According to the research of (DeRoche, 1985), it stands to reason that the teacher who earns the qualifications and desires to eventually elevate to the position of a principal will possess knowledge of those particular skills and related styles that one

would need as a principal to be an effective leader. Since teachers work closely with principals, and many of them may work with several principals during their teaching career, it appears that useful information could be obtained from teachers in helping to define principal leadership skills. As stated by DeRoche (1985), the school principal is the major influence on the quality of education in a school. The school principal, also known as the middle manager and the site administrator, is the major influence on whether education is effective or ineffective, whether morale is high or low, whether the school climate is positive or negative, whether personnel are satisfied or dissatisfied, whether students achieve or don't achieve, whether the parents and the public are cooperative or uncooperative, and whether there is effective management and leadership (DeRoche, 1985).

In 1997, Augustus L. "Skip" Little (2001) conducted a national research project on effective middle level principals. From his work, Little (2001) classified 37 characteristics of exemplary principals. From those characteristics Little was able to group and classify them into seven key categories: the principal as (1) a person, (2) a visionary, (3) an instructional leader, (4) a leader of an educational organization, (5) a problem solver, (6) a manager, and (7) a school-community facilitator.

In the initial outset of this research, it was determined that this study would determine the congruence, in order of importance, concerning what middle school teachers value regarding the behavioral characteristics of effective middle school principals and how that information relates to how the principals determine their order of importance. The indications and suggestions of this research were based on data collected from the researcher who examined commonalities of middle school teachers and middle school principals. These commonalities were those perceptions deemed as

most important by frequency of the teacher group and the principal group as a way to determine what successful middle school leadership skills are, not a specific teacher's view of the specific principal that they work with. Information was obtained by distribution of a survey published through the National Middle School Association. As a way to determine the findings and implications obtained by use of this data, various statistical analyses were done using the SPSS software. Testing included correlation studies, ANOVA testing, and a Scheffe' test.

Participants were also given the opportunity to expand upon the information presented in the survey by using focus group interviews along with open-ended questions. Some questions were used as prompts, as a way to generate initial dialogue while encouraging open-ended thoughts to complement their answers as to items not previously discussed. In the survey, the researcher asked the respondents to give value by ranking successful middle school leadership characteristics in order of which characteristic would be more important than others. The researcher determined through the initial survey the degree of similarity between his findings and the perceptions of the middle school teachers and principals with the seven broad general areas of critical attributes connected with the characteristics of a successful middle school principal. Those seven major areas or themes are a total of 37 subareas which support traits of a successful middle school principal with the following examples.

The areas surveyed included the principal as (1) a person—builds confidence and inspires others, has effective oral, written, listening and interpersonal skills, generates enthusiasm, possesses high energy, and has a good sense of humor and a relentlessly positive nature; (2) a visionary—has a clear vision of a great school, possesses the will and desire to go after that vision, has a philosophy and set of beliefs that provide goals,

objectives, and an agenda, is able to articulate the philosophy and vision to others, has the ability to persuade and lead others to support a vision of education for young adolescents that becomes the driving force for the school, is committed to developmentally responsive middle level education, holds high academic goals for every student, and is a dynamic force for the middle school concept; (3) an instructional leader—is thoroughly knowledgeable about middle level curriculum, programs, and practices, understands the unique nature of young adolescent learners, possesses the skills necessary for effective instructional leadership, is capable of engaging the school’s faculty in the continuous process of middle school improvement, and promotes continuous staff development via one’s own example and by supporting relevant workshops, study groups, and attendance at conferences; (4) a leader of an educational organization—exhibits leadership, is able to inspire teachers to go beyond the expected of the teachers, is accessible to staff, and is highly visible to faculty and students; (5) a problem solver; (6) a manager—knowledgeable and effective in planning and budgeting, possesses the ability to identify, hire, and evaluate staff members, and is able to get the job done; and (7) a school-community facilitator—has faculty, students, parents, and the community buy into the idea that “this is our school,” is sensitive to the needs of a racially and culturally diverse school and community population, and has the capacity to deal effectively with parents of gifted students and others who may challenge the mission of the school. Under these seven general areas of attributes, subareas varying from three to eight are imbedded. In this study, these subareas were ranked from least important to most important as to the perception of their importance by the principals and individual faculties.

Included in the survey were two open-ended questions. One open-ended question focused on the attributes of a successful middle school principal as reported by the results

of the teacher surveys from their school. A second open-ended question focused on any one area not listed in the survey that the respondent deemed as an important attribute of a successful middle school principal.

After review and collection of the surveys, the researcher conducted focus group interviews as a method to expand the thoughts of middle school leadership. These focus group interviews were transcribed. This was done in order to establish a degree of validity and to compare the teacher results with the principal results. The established degree of validity was essential to reaching any conclusions. This demonstrated the degree of validity of data and surveys to establish a conclusion.

Specific demographic information was asked of the respondents which may lead to further research in this study. Those six areas will include (1) certification, (2) outside middle school experience, (3) current assignment, (4) contract status, (5) previous principals, and (6) total years of teaching experience.

After all of the information was collected, and focus group interviews held, the researcher created a frequency distribution table to show the percentages of common occurrences within the items of the seven major categories. This indicated any reoccurring themes as a way to show any trends and to develop a profile of each middle school. The researcher used the Chi-Square test. The Chi-Square test is any statistical hypothesis in which the sampling distribution of the test statistic is a chi-square distribution when the null hypothesis is true. If a sample size  $n$  is taken from a population having a normal distribution, then there is a well known result which allows a test to be made of whether the variance of the population has a predetermined value as a way to determine any significant probability of responses of the same group. The researcher collected the information from the transcribed interviews and developed

common themes as related to any perceived behavior. The focus group interviews allowed the researcher to perform a chart of frequency on its contents. Using all sources of data (surveys, interviews, and focus groups), the researcher triangulated for any common occurrences of data.

This study examined the key components of effective middle school leadership and how well a particular middle school's faculty agreed on the perception of what the principal of that school deemed as effective middle school leadership qualities along with how the middle school principals viewed their roles with a level of importance.

### **Conclusions**

The data indicate that the importance placed on various characteristics of an effective principal is not consistent when comparing teacher perceptions with principal perceptions. This result is a result of examining the reoccurring themes produced in the focus group interviews, the seven characteristics ranked in order of importance from the ANOVA and Scheffe' test of all three schools, and the information provided by the principal group survey results. The researcher reviewed all of the information produced by the review of the reoccurring themes from the focus group interviews as shown in Table 11. In that information, the principal as a person was rated as most important and the principal as a visionary was rated as second most important. This would show that strong interpersonal skills with positive interactions would create a nonfailing environment. This would indicate to any middle school principal, based on this data, that interpersonal relationship skills are most important. The researcher then reviewed the information by the results of the ANOVA from the participant completed surveys as shown in Table 12. In that information, the principal as a visionary was most statistically significant at a  $p$  of  $< .002$  and the principal as a problem solver was statistically second

most significant at a  $p$  of  $< .003$ . Again, this is in opposition to what the principals group felt was most important. Table 30 (teacher rankings of perceived leadership characteristics—what they need) does not align itself with Table 31 (principal rankings of perceived leadership characteristics—what they provided). This is explained by the fact that the results of the tables indicate that further study is needed in the areas of (1) effective collaboration, (2) different value systems, (3) research in the area of common goals and objectives, and (4) barriers to full effectiveness.

In Tables 11 through 17, the information was separated between male and female respondents. Of the seven major characteristics, both males and females ranked the principal as most important. In the category separated by 0-9 years of experience and 10 years or more experience, those teachers with less than 10 years of experience wanted a principal who was an instructional leader (Table 13), a leader of an educational organization (Table 14), a manager (Table 16), and a school-community facilitator (Table 17). Those teachers with 10 years of experience or more wanted a principal who was a person (Table 11), a visionary (Table 12), and a problem solver (Table 15). In the category separated by 30 years of age or younger and older than 30 years of age, those teachers who were older wanted a principal who was a person (Table 19), a visionary (Table 20), an instructional leader (Table 21), a leader of an educational organization (Table 22), a problem solver (Table 23), and a manager (Table 24). Under the category of a principal as a school-community facilitator, both age groups agreed to its importance. Based on the information gathered from Tables 10-17, the largest difference occurs between the under 10 years of experience and the more than 10 years of experience along with the age groups of under 30 years of age versus those who are older than 30 years of age. Those teachers who were younger with less experience wanted a principal who was

(1) an instructional leader, (2) a leader of an educational organization, (3) a manager, and (4) a school-community facilitator. Those teachers who were older with more experience wanted a principal who was a (1) person, (2) visionary, and (3) problem solver. This data aligns itself with the generational research information that indicated that the needs of the younger, less experienced teachers were different than the needs of those teachers who were older and had more experience.

These tables are supported by the focus group interviews. The group of 30 years of age or younger with less experience made comments such as, “gives meaningful feedback, has awareness and practices themes from middle school theory, supports teachers in the mentee/mentor process, uses a shared leadership/vision process, has a vision process within the school improvement plan, holds everyone accountable, cultivates good teaching practices, uses a strong School Improvement Plan, and is involved in school spirit activities.”

The over 30 years of age group with more experience made comments such as, “offers meaningful kindness, has a sense of humor, looks at strengths and weaknesses while not judging, appreciates the talents of others, is a model for students and professionals, make his presence around the school, is trustworthy and straightforward with all stakeholders, is flexible, and develops positive relationships.”

The survey results from the principal’s group (Table 31) indicated that the group saw themselves as instructional leaders and as visionaries. This is not exactly aligned with the information from the teachers’ surveys.

The researcher can see from the surveys and focus group interviews that the teachers are looking for leadership of someone who has the characteristics of being a visionary, a problem solver, and an administrator, and who possesses personal skills; this

is not in direct agreement with the results provided by the principal surveys. The principal surveys indicated that the principals view themselves as instructional leaders, visionaries, and leaders of educational organizations.

In comparison of this study to one completed by Kuzma (2004), which followed the research of Little (2000), the data presented itself, to some degree, in similar terms. According to Kuzma (2004) there were no statistically significant patterns in the area of age or gender. Teachers with less than 10 years of experience placed a higher value on education leadership, which this study also determined; those with or greater than 10 years of experience, placed the highest value on that of a problem solver; and the results of study determined that that group of teachers wanted the traits of a principal as a person.

While there was insufficient data from the focus group interviews to be statistically significant or to be statistically analyzed, the researcher can determine that the teachers were looking for leadership that had the characteristics of being a visionary, a problem solver, and an administrator who possessed personal skills which were not in direct alignment to the results provided by the principal surveys. The data suggested that there are generational divides with clear indications that the teachers needs do vary. The teachers respected the system and administrative styles. It is indicated in the data that there are differences in needs of leadership styles. This data, when compared to the literature, supports what the younger, less experienced teachers desire in a principal as compared to a more mature, experienced group of teachers. This is consistent with the previous literature on generational research theory. As the Baby Boomers continue to age out of the teaching profession, Generation X will continue to take their place. Administrators will need to be retooled for this changing group of teachers.

## **Recommendations**

While some research has been done on leadership and working conditions in public schools as described by public school teachers, more specific research needs to be expanded in the areas of teacher/principal congruence. According to Little (2000), the middle level principal, while critical to an effective school program, remains the least researched person on a faculty. Many classes, workshops, and publications address the characteristics and behaviors of middle level teachers, but few explain the role of the chief administrator. In comparison from the teachers, through shared values, common goals, and collaboration, individual's performance on the individual school's results on the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey will improve. While the researcher has shown that beginning teachers and those with years of experience have different needs of supervision and management, principals must recognize and work with all types of faculties.

Staff development is recommended to these three schools and the other schools in the school system in the area of agreed principal leadership traits. While both the teachers' group and the principals' group may not agree upon the leadership roles of the building administrator, it could be the beginning of honest dialogue between the younger, less experienced teachers, the older, more experienced teachers, and the principals. The results of this study could have direct implications for improvement in the preparation of middle school principals as the instructional leaders of their organizations.

## **Recommendations for Further Research**

Continued use of the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey is a way to study how teachers feel about their workplace and the perceptions of their leaders. It has been said that working conditions are equal to student learning conditions. As a

way to target schools for specific needs, consideration must be given to following the trends within the NCTWC Survey, especially in the leadership section. If a pattern exists and begins to show a downward trend, both school level teachers and principals should seek staff development to counteract that trend. Successful leadership, to a great extent, depends upon the readiness level of its followers (Hersey et al., 2001). It is suggested that the leader should attempt to influence different people under different situations.

If this study were to be replicated, it could include a more diverse geographical area to examine if these findings still exist as the research expands. A second replication could be done to include the opinions and rankings of superintendents in regards to the effective characteristics of middle school principals. A third replication of this study could include whether or not a variance occurs between female and male principals to exhibit a difference in the teacher perception of effective middle school principal characteristics in the gender supervisory relationship.

According to McEwan et al. (2001), “there appears to be an inverse relationship between what principals do and what they value” (p. 49). McEwan et al. (2001) further asserted that principals spend the majority of their time doing things for which they hold little value. A fourth study could be replicated focusing primarily on building level administrators, asking them first to rank in importance the identified characteristics used in this research, then to rank these same characteristics as to the amount of time that he/she actually dedicates on a daily basis to each of these traits. Its value would be to determine the congruence, if any, in what principals value and how they spend their time. A fifth study could include a subgroup to include the number of administrators that each teacher might have worked for. The anticipation of some form of variation could change the administration’s opinion of importance.

Additional research should address any facet that affects a teacher's view on the behavior of the leadership at that school. Anything that affects the teacher's perception, whether it is real or not, will have an outcome. Outcomes can either be positive or negative.

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Appendix A

NMSA Communication Granting Permission to Use Instrument

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NATIONAL MIDDLE SCH

PAGE 01

**National Middle School Association**

Headquarters Office: 4111 Somerset Parkway, Suite 200, Cincinnati, Ohio 45241  
Tel: 614-886-5130 FAX: 614-886-4700 1-800-528-NMSEA www.nmsa.org  
Washington, DC Office: 1910 Dolbe Street, 2nd Floor, Alexandria, Virginia 22314

DATE: October 8, 2008  
NAME: Ted Bowen/Atkins High School, NCDPI  
FAX: 336-748-3565  
SUBJECT: Copyright Permission

Dear Ted:

I am pleased to grant you permission to use pp. 25-28 of the August 2000 issue of *Middle Ground* as a survey for your doctoral research.

Please give proper credit in your dissertation.

Thank you for your interest in National Middle School Association.

Sincerely,

Cher Howman  
Assistant Editor

*National Middle School Association is dedicated to improving the educational experiences of young adolescents by providing vision, knowledge, and resources to all who serve them in order to develop healthy, productive, and ethical citizens.*

Appendix B

School System Permission to Conduct Research

Proposal to Conduct Research within the [School System Unidentified]

- A1. A Case Study of Attitudes and Perceptions of Leadership Characteristics as Perceived by Middle School Teachers and Principals  
 Theodore B. Bowen – Home - 107 Mink Drive Salisbury, NC 28146 704-856-0011, Work – NCDPI @ Atkins High School – 3605 Old Greensboro Road Winston-Salem, NC27107 336-703-6754 ext. 70947, tbowen@wsfcs.k12.nc.us Gardner-Webb University
2. Begin Date January 2010 – End Date May 2010
  3. This study will determine the congruence, in order of importance, concerning what middle school teachers and middle school principals value regarding the behavioral characteristics of effective middle school principals. The indications and suggestions of this research will be based on the data collected from three different middle schools representing three different geographical areas within the [school system unidentified]. Information will be obtained by: surveys from teachers and principals, open-ended questions, and focus group interviews.
- B1. The study will identify what common behavioral characteristics teachers and principals, at the same school, have of themselves.
2. At each site, teachers from grades six, seven, eight, the exploratory elective group, and the building level principal will be exposed to a survey and a focus group interview separately. The survey was originally published through the National Middle School Association (NMSA) using predetermined characteristics associated with effective leadership. The survey consists of 48 questions which should take approximately 30 minutes to answer and focus group interviews which should last approximately 45 minutes. Various statistical analyses will be done using the SPSS software. Testing will include correlation studies, ANOVA testing with post hoc testing, and other mean analysis tests.
  3. The total time from any [school system unidentified] employee will be less than two hours over separate sessions. All distribution, collection, and processing will be done by a non-[school system unidentified] employee.
  4. Copies of the survey and participant letter are attached.
  5. The confidentiality and anonymity of all respondents, the school and the school district will be preserved. All documents, with the exception of the dissertation, will be destroyed within three years of the publication of the dissertation.
  6. All funding costs of this study will be incurred by the researcher and none by the [school system unidentified] or the three individual schools.
  7. Surveys and focus group interviews during January 2010 and reporting of preliminary and/or final results to [school system unidentified] and participants during July/August 2010.

Project ID 2009-53

*Approval Form for Research Project to be Conducted  
In the County Schools*

Name of Principal Investigator: Theodore B. Bowen

Advisor's Name (if student): Doug Eury

Research/Educational Institution: Gardner-Webb University

Research Title: The Characteristics of Effective Middle School Principals As Perceived By Middle School Teachers and the Principals For Whom They Work

The above project has been approved by the County Schools Administrative Offices. Stipulations to this approval, if any, are noted below. *The investigator understands that the principals have the authority to grant or deny permission for the study to be conducted in their schools.*

Project Timeline: January, 2009 – May, 2009

Stipulations:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Marty Ward, Ph.D.  
Research & Evaluation

December 10, 2008  
Date

Appendix C  
Teacher Letter

January 2010

Dear Middle School Educator:

I am a graduate student at Gardner-Webb University within the College of Education in the department of Educational Leadership and am doing research for my doctoral dissertation within the Ed D Program.

My doctoral research involves effective characteristics of middle school principals and I am seeking volunteers from middle level education to participate in my research. It will take between 60 and 75 minutes of your time. The focus of my study is to investigate those characteristics associated with an effective middle school principal and the corresponding values placed on those characteristics by both the middle school staff and middle school principals.

Information will be obtained by a pre-designed survey, published by the National Middle School Association (used with permission) and originally published in "Middle Ground" in August 2000. The information seeks quantifying specific characteristics and does not request information about any specific individual. Participants will be asked to rank predetermined characteristics. For example: Listing the characteristics: (A) Generates enthusiasm, (B) Possesses high energy, (C) Has a sense of humor – you would be asked to place a number (1) for what you deem most important and (3) for what you deem as least important from these stated characteristics.

Participation on your part is voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time.

The confidentiality and anonymity of all respondents, your school, and your school district will be preserved.

All information will be kept in a locked file in my home and will be destroyed within three years after the publication of my study. It is my aim to complete my research and present my findings during September 2010.

The only identifying information in the survey will be of a demographic nature, which will be used to assist in the statistical analysis of the research. At no time will any participation pose a risk or a benefit to job security on the part of any individual. No supervisor will have access to any of your responses.

Your entire participation is the completion of the survey and a focus group interview with no foreseeable risks to you in any way.

Similarly, there are no specific benefits to you for your participation, other than deep gratitude.

If you have any questions, I may be contacted at my office at 336-703-6754 x 70947 or [tbowen@wsfcs.k12.nc.us](mailto:tbowen@wsfcs.k12.nc.us) at Atkins High School where I am a Regional Education Facilitator for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Again, please be advised, your anonymity to any other participants will be maintained.

If it is the desire to participate in this study, and understand the aspects of informed consent, please complete the enclosed survey. Return of the survey will imply your voluntary participation in this study and understanding of the conditions.

Thank you for your consideration,

Theodore B. Bowen  
Doctoral Student, Gardner-Webb University

Appendix D  
Teacher Survey

### Teacher Survey

The following survey will ask you to rank critical attributes of a middle school principal. This is not asking you to rank YOUR principal, but rather, what characteristics you deem important in an effective middle school principal.

Please rank the following areas in order of importance:  
(1 most important 7 least important)

The principal as a person	
The principal as a visionary	
The principal as an instructional leader	
The principal as a leader of an educational organization	
The principal as a problem solver	
The principal as a manager	
The principal as a school – community facilitator	

The following asks you to rank specific critical attributes within the main characteristics. When ranking, please consider each section individually. **Remember, you are ranking the importance of the characteristics, not the demonstration of this characteristic in any specific administrator.**

1) The principal as a person

Please rank (1 most important within this category & 5 least important within this category)

Inspire confidence and inspire others	
Use of effective oral, written, listening and interpersonal skills	
Generate enthusiasm	
Possess high energy and a relentlessly positive nature	
Have a sense of humor	

2) The principal as a visionary

Please rank (1 most important within this category & 8 least important within this category)

Have a clear vision of what a great school is like (not a good school, but a great school)	
Possess the will and the desire to go after his/her vision	
Ability to express philosophy and vision to others – including parents	
Have ability to develop, communicate and persuade others to support a vision of education for young adolescents, and have that vision become the driving force for the school	
Committed to developmentally responsive middle level education	
Set high academic goals for all students	
Have a philosophy, vision and a clear agenda	
Can articulate and communicate the middle school concept to others	

3) The principal as an instructional leader

Please rank (1 most important within this category & 6 least important within this category)

Is knowledgeable about middle level curriculum, programs and practices	
Understands the unique nature of the adolescent learner	
Have a deep understanding of curriculum, instruction and the skills necessary for effective middle school leadership	
Engages the faculty in continual improvement	
Is knowledgeable about middle school curriculum and teaching	
Promotes continual staff development through personal example and actions (will teachers to workshops/conferences)	

4 The principal as a leader of an educational organization

Please rank (1 most important within this category & 5 least important within this category)

Exhibits leadership	
Inspires teachers to go beyond expectations	
Supports teachers	

Is accessible to staff	
Remain highly visible to faculty and students – in the hallway, in the classroom, in the lunchroom	

5) The principal as a manager

Please rank (1 most important within this category & 3 least important within this category)

Knowledgeable and effective in planning and budgeting	
Can identify, lure, motivate, and evaluate other staff members who have the “right stuff” for middle school	
Gets the job done	

6) The principal as a school-community facilitator

Please rank (1 most important within the category & 3 least important within this category)

Enables parents, faculty, community, and students to buy into the belief that the school belongs to everyone	
Shows sensitivity to the needs of racially and culturally diverse school and community population	
Deals effectively with parents of gifted and talented students and others who may challenge the schools mission to serve all students well	

What one characteristic of all 30 listed do you feel is the most important?

---

What one characteristic that is not listed do you feel is vital for a middle school leader to possess?

---

Some information about yourself:

1) I am a: male    female

2) I have taught for (not just your current position)

\_\_\_ this is my first year of teaching

\_\_\_ 2-3 years of teaching

\_\_\_ 4-9 years of teaching

- \_\_\_ 10-14 years of teaching
- \_\_\_ 15-20 years of teaching
- \_\_\_ 21-25 years of teaching
- \_\_\_ Greater than 25 years of teaching

3) I have    do not have    tenure

4) I have worked for \_\_\_\_\_different principals

5) I would best describe my assignment as:

- a. Core/team/subject area \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Elective/subject area \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Certified non-classroom assignment \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Other (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

6) My approximate age:

- a. 30 or under \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Over 30 \_\_\_\_\_

7) I have    have not    had all of my teaching experience in a middle school

- 8) I am:
- a. elementary certified \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. secondary certified \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. subject area certified \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. certified specifically for middle school \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. both elementary & subject certified \_\_\_\_\_
  - f. both secondary & subject area certified \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix E  
Principal Letter

January 2010

Dear Middle School Principal:

I am a graduate student at Gardner-Webb University within the College of Education in the department of Educational Leadership and am doing research for my doctoral dissertation within the Ed D Program.

My doctoral research involves effective characteristics of middle school principals and I am seeking volunteers from middle level education to participate in my research. It will take between 60 and 75 minutes of your time. The focus of my study is to investigate those characteristics associated with an effective middle school principal and the corresponding values placed on those characteristics by both the middle school staff and middle school principals.

Information will be obtained by a pre-designed survey, published by the National Middle School Association (used with permission) and originally published in "Middle Ground" in August 2000. The information seeks quantifying specific characteristics and does not request information about any specific individual. Participants will be asked to rank predetermined characteristics. For example: Listing the characteristics: (A) Generates enthusiasm, (B) Possesses high energy, (C) Has a sense of humor – you would be asked to place a number (1) for what you deem most important and (3) for what you deem as least important from these stated characteristics.

Participation on your part is voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time.

The confidentiality and anonymity of all respondents, your school, and your school district will be preserved.

All information will be kept in a locked file in my home and will be destroyed within three years after the publication of my study. It is my aim to complete my research and present my findings during September 2010.

The only identifying information in the survey will be of a demographic nature, which will be used to assist in the statistical analysis of the research. At no time will any participation pose a risk or a benefit to job security on the part of any individual. No supervisor will have access to any of your responses.

Your entire participation is the completion of the survey and a focus group interview with no foreseeable risks to you in any way.

Similarly, there are no specific benefits to you for your participation, other than deep gratitude.

If you have any questions, I may be contacted at my office at 336-703-6754 x 70947 or [tbowen@wsfcs.k12.nc.us](mailto:tbowen@wsfcs.k12.nc.us) at Atkins High School where I am a Regional Education Facilitator for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Again, please be advised, your anonymity to any other participants will be maintained.

If it is the desire to participate in this study, and understand the aspects of informed consent, please complete the enclosed survey. Return of the survey will imply your voluntary participation in this study and understanding of the conditions.

Thank you for your consideration,

Theodore B. Bowen  
Doctoral Student, Gardner-Webb University

Appendix F  
Principal Survey

## Principal Survey

The following survey will ask you to rank critical attributes of a middle school principal. This is not asking you to rank YOURSELF, but rather, what characteristics you deem important in an effective middle school principal.

**Please rank the following areas in order of importance:**

(1 most important 7 least important)

The principal as a person	
The principal as a visionary	
The principal as an instructional leader	
The principal as a leader of an educational organization	
The principal as a problem solver	
The principal as a manager	
The principal as a school – community facilitator	

The following asks you to rank specific critical attributes within the main characteristics. When ranking, please consider each section individually. **Remember, you are ranking the importance of the characteristics, not the demonstration of this characteristic in any specific administrator.**

1) The principal as a person

Please rank (1 most important within this category & 5 least important within this category)

Inspire confidence and inspire others	
Use of effective oral, written, listening and interpersonal skills	
Generate enthusiasm	
Possess high energy and a relentlessly positive nature	
Have a sense of humor	

2) The principal as a visionary

Please rank (1 most important within this category & 8 least important within this category)

Have a clear vision of what a great school is like (not a good school, but a great school)	
Possess the will and the desire to go after his/her vision	
Ability to express philosophy and vision to others – including parents	
Have ability to develop, communicate and persuade others to support a vision of education for young adolescents, and have that vision become the driving force for the school	
Committed to developmentally responsive middle level education	
Set high academic goals for all students	
Have a philosophy, vision and a clear agenda	
Can articulate and communicate the middle school concept to others	

3) The principal as an instructional leader

Please rank (1 most important within this category & 6 least important within this category)

Is knowledgeable about middle level curriculum, programs and practices	
Understands the unique nature of the adolescent learner	
Have a deep understanding of curriculum, instruction and the skills necessary for effective middle school leadership	
Engages the faculty in continual improvement	
Is knowledgeable about middle school curriculum and teaching	
Promotes continual staff development through personal example and actions (will teachers to workshops/conferences)	

4 The principal as a leader of an educational organization

Please rank (1 most important within this category & 5 least important within this category)

Exhibits leadership	
Inspires teachers to go beyond expectations	
Supports teachers	

Is accessible to staff	
Remain highly visible to faculty and students – in the hallway, in the classroom, in the lunchroom	

5) The principal as a manager

Please rank (1 most important within this category & 3 least important within this category)

Knowledgeable and effective in planning and budgeting	
Can identify, lure, motivate, and evaluate other staff members who have the “right stuff” for middle school	
Gets the job done	

6) The principal as a school-community facilitator

Please rank (1 most important within the category & 3 least important within this category)

Enables parents, faculty, community, and students to buy into the belief that the school belongs to everyone	
Shows sensitivity to the needs of racially and culturally diverse school and community population	
Deals effectively with parents of gifted and talented students and others who may challenge the schools mission to serve all students well	

What one characteristic of all 30 listed do you feel is the most important?

---

What one characteristic that is not listed do you feel is vital for a middle school leader to possess?

---

Some information about yourself:

1) I am a: male    female

2) I have taught for (not just your current position) or in education for:

\_\_\_ this is my first year of teaching

\_\_\_ 2-3 years of teaching

- \_\_\_ 4-9 years of teaching
- \_\_\_ 10-14 years of teaching
- \_\_\_ 15-20 years of teaching
- \_\_\_ 21-25 years of teaching
- \_\_\_ Greater than 25 years of teaching

3) I have worked at \_\_\_\_\_ different schools as a middle school administrator

4) My approximate age:

- a. 30 or under \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Over 30 \_\_\_\_\_

5) I have have not had all of my administrative experience in a middle school

Appendix G

Focus Group Orienting Questions

### Focus Group Orienting Questions

(Subjects will be given an identifying number/letter for identification and will be encouraged to elaborate on their responses.)

First, please tell me about yourself.

1. List the number of years that you have been teaching\_\_\_\_\_?
2. List the number of years that you have been teaching at this school\_\_\_\_\_?
3. Specify the highest earned degree(s) and certification(s)\_\_\_\_\_?
4. Name the teaching position(s) that you have held at this school\_\_\_\_\_?
5. Please describe your views of your relationship between you and your principal?

I would like to know some things about your perception of the following abilities of leadership skills of principals. Please define your perceptions of these skills as they:

- A. apply to your personal convictions, and
- B. are portrayed through observations of your principal.

1. Problem Analysis
2. Judgment
3. Organizational Ability
4. Decisiveness
5. Leadership
6. Sensitivity
7. Stress Tolerance
8. Oral Communication
9. Written Communication
10. Range of Interest
11. Personal Motivation
12. Educational Values

Next, please respond to the following statements with a yes or no answer.

The principal of my school.....

1. Analyzes and investigates data in order to provide information to teachers as they plan their work effectively.\_\_\_\_\_
2. Reaches logical conclusions in order to make decisions based upon available information.\_\_\_\_\_

3. Demonstrates the ability to plan, schedule, and supervise the work of the staff in an organized manner. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Recognizes when a decision is required and acts quickly. \_\_\_\_\_
5. Interacts effectively with the staff to guide them to the accomplishment of a task. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Demonstrates the ability to perceive the needs, concerns, and personal problems of the staff. \_\_\_\_\_
7. Performs under pressure and during periods of opposition. \_\_\_\_\_
8. Establishes regular and clear channels of oral communication either formally or informally. \_\_\_\_\_
9. Displays the skills necessary to express ideas clearly in writing. \_\_\_\_\_
10. Exhibits the desire to actively participate in school and school-related event. \_\_\_\_\_
11. Shows evidence of excitement about future possibilities to staff, parents, and Students. \_\_\_\_\_
12. Shows a receptiveness to new and innovative ideas. \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to know your views about your views about the school in which you teach. Please answer the following with a yes or no considering your responses in a general nature and NOT based upon any one or two specific occurrences that could influence your reply.

1. I am provided information that is needed to plan my work effectively. \_\_\_\_\_
2. Advice is sought from me in making decisions. \_\_\_\_\_
3. The administration deals with the heavy volume of paperwork and heavy demands on their time. \_\_\_\_\_
4. I feel that I share in the successes and failures of the school after having had the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process. \_\_\_\_\_
5. If I had an idea for a good proposal or program, the principal listens and supports it. \_\_\_\_\_
6. In this school, I am respected. \_\_\_\_\_
7. Disagreements occur because we (teachers) frequently compete with each other. \_\_\_\_\_

8. I receive a lot of attention. \_\_\_\_\_
9. Communication in our school is frequent and informal. \_\_\_\_\_
10. I have a sense of loyalty to my school. \_\_\_\_\_
11. In this school, I have the feeling that I can invent, create, and solve. \_\_\_\_\_
12. I seem to have similar values and ideas with other members of the teaching staff with regards to what my school should be doing. \_\_\_\_\_

I appreciate the time and thoughts that you have given. Are there any other items or reflections, such as additional leadership skills that have not been discussed, that you deem relevant to this study?