THE PRINCIPAL'S ROLE IN DEFINING A STUDENT SUCCESS-BASED SCHOOL
CULTURE: THE IMPACT OF SPECIFIC BEHAVIORS ON SCHOOL-LEVEL
TEACHER WORKING CONDITIONS

A Dissertation
by
RICHARD DALE ELLIS

Submitted to the Graduate School
Appalachian State University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

August 2010
Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership
Reich College of Education

THE PRINCIPAL'S ROLE IN DEFINING A STUDENT SUCCESS-BASED SCHOOL

CULTURE: THE IMPACT OF SPECIFIC BEHAVIORS ON SCHOOL-LEVEL

TEACHER WORKING CONDITIONS

A Dissertation
by
RICHARD DALE ELLIS
August 2010

APPROVED BY

_____
Kenneth D. Jenkins, Ed.D
Chairperson, Dissertation Committee

_____
Susan Colby, Ed.D
Member, Dissertation Committee

_____
Monica Lambert, Ed.D
Member, Dissertation Committee

_____
Jim Killacky, Ed.D
Director, Doctoral Program

_____
Edelma D. Huntley, Ph.D
Dean, Research and Graduate Studies

ABSTRACT

THE PRINCIPAL'S ROLE IN DEFINING A STUDENT SUCCESS-BASED SCHOOL
CULTURE: THE IMPACT OF SPECIFIC BEHAVIORS ON SCHOOL-LEVEL
TEACHER WORKING CONDITIONS

Richard Dale Ellis, B.S., Appalachian State University

M.B.A., Gardner-Webb University

Dissertation Chairperson: Kenneth Jenkins, Ed.D

The purpose of this study was to examine principal behaviors that influenced

working conditions. Further, the relationship between those behaviors and student

success indicators was explored.

Qualitative research methods were used to explore the research questions related

to the study. First, detailed profiles of the schools were developed using historical student

success indicators. Second, detailed individual interviews with case study school

principals were conducted. Third, focus group interviews were conducted to collect data

from school certified staff.

According to principals and teachers at the case study schools, the school culture

influenced student success outcomes positively when a vision of high expectations was

realized in the schools, when the school subscribed to a learning-centered focus, and

when the school genuinely believed in parental involvement as a cornerstone of success.

Study participants revealed that specific behaviors of the principal influenced

teacher satisfaction levels. When the principals valued staff, including their planning and

instructional time, and when the principals listened to staff, their behaviors influenced teacher satisfaction. Principals influenced teacher satisfaction in a positive manner when they empowered staff, were visible within the school, and valued staff development, including the use of Professional Learning Communities.

Study participants also revealed that the work environment influenced student success indicators positively or negatively. The work environment influenced outcomes positively when the principal placed a high value on teacher satisfaction, when the principal valued and built positive relationships, and when the principal communicated positively within the educational environment.

A comprehensive analysis of student success indicators and qualitative data from principal and staff interviews revealed that principal behaviors influenced school culture and student success. Further, implications for practice and suggestions for further research are presented.

DEDICATION

To my wife, who has always placed my needs before her own. You are the love of my life.

To my children, when you get the choice to sit it out or dance, I hope you dance.

To my mother, you have always given everything so that I wanted nothing. No kid could have ever asked for more. Thank you.

To my father, you were there for every major accomplishment in my life. You were here for this one too. I have always tried to make you proud. I hope you are proud of this accomplishment too. This one was for you, Pops. I love you always. Tell them we'll be there in a minute.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this dissertation would not have been possible without the support and guidance of Dr. Kenneth Jenkins, who served as the chair of my dissertation committee. Despite being busy on several state committees and retiring, he decided to stay on and guide me through the process when he did not have to. He also kept me as a mentee despite my whining and constant badgering of him. For that I am grateful. I am also thankful for the work and support of Dr. Susan Colby and Dr. Monica Lambert. Although they did not know me before this process began, they made a conscious effort to accept a position on this committee and to provide valuable feedback in getting me through this process.

I am thankful to Dr. Kelly Clark-Keefe and Dr. Morgan Allwell. Although they were not able to serve on my dissertation committee, they were valuable mentors in class by teaching me the value of qualitative research and doing a fabulous job of teaching the qualitative research process.

I am grateful to Dr. Jim Killacky, Director of the Doctoral Program, for his calming influence as I progressed through this process. It did not matter how rattled I was, he was able to bring me to a sea of calm. It did not matter what time I called him, there seemed to be a return call to me within 10 minutes. For his diligence in making the doctoral program a bastion of excellence, I am eternally thankful.

I am grateful to the members of Cohort 14 for their support in completing the many classes necessary to complete the Ed.D. degree. There were many long Tuesday

nights that were made more manageable due to the lasting friendships that were developed among our team. Best of luck to you all as you seek to finish your own dissertation processes.

I am grateful to the staffs of Smythe County Schools, Jamestown County Schools, and Eastwood City Schools for opening up their schools to me. I am thankful for the support of Dr. Terry Holliday and Mr. Brady Johnson, past and current superintendents of Iredell-Statesville Schools for their support in helping me see this project through. It takes a lot of commitment from many people to make a dissertation dream come true.

I am eternally grateful to my family and friends for their constant support and encouragement during this process. It is through your love that all things are possible. There were many nights that I would have rather spent with my family, but they understood the urgency and importance of this quest.

Finally, I am grateful most for my wife Alisha. She is a constant bright light in my life. She has forsaken so much of what she has wanted so I could accomplish what I have wanted. For having the best wife in the world, I will always be thankful.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

x

LIST OF TABLES

Table

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1

The Problem

Introduction

The stakes for quality instruction in schools have never been higher. With the advent of the landmark No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001) legislation, schools are charged with closing the achievement gap and simultaneously establishing academic proficiency in all students. Proficiency means that students are on grade level in mathematics and reading. The level of 100% proficiency required by NCLB is unprecedented (Fritzberg, 2004). The salient question in the minds of most educators is, "How do we get the children to perform at such a level, particularly when they come to us with so many limitations?" That is a question that the legislation does not even attempt to answer. The key to answering this question remains with the principals and teachers, not with the students (Sunderman, Orfield, & Kim, 2006).

An important component in improving a school is ensuring that the school's culture is a positive one. One of the primary drivers of a positive school culture is teacher satisfaction. A teacher who is satisfied with his or her work assignment and environment can have a more substantial influence on the students they teach (Connolly & Myers, 2003). Ultimately it is the school leader, the principal, who is responsible for hiring these teachers, developing their professional capacities, and providing an environment for them

to work in that is positive and supportive. A positive and supportive environment is one in which a teacher feels empowered to accomplish the important task of teaching children. Such an environment should be felt by outside observers when they enter the building. It should be seen on the faces of the teachers and the students in viewing daily interactions. There is an added sense of urgency to create such an environment in North Carolina (NC) due to the new school executive standards for principals adopted by the State Board of Education. The standards require the principal to create such an environment as a part of the state's evaluation process. Specifically, the principal evaluation process includes an entire standard on cultural leadership, which focuses attention on the work environment (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning, 2008).

In North Carolina (NC), the preferred assessment tool in measuring the school environment, and the teacher's satisfaction with it, is the NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey (TWCS). This initiative is sponsored by the office of the Governor of the State of North Carolina. The survey is administered every two years so the school climate can be gauged and the principal can have time to make adjustments to increase teacher satisfaction before the next administration. Since the TWCS is used as a measure in the evaluation of the principal, it is important to use the data for school climate improvement and for principals to have practical tools to influence this important measure.

There is no practical, systematic framework for a principal to follow in influencing the school-level results on the TWCS. In this context the effort to influence the perception of the work environment is to make sure teachers are satisfied so they can

influence instruction positively in the classroom, not just artificially raise the

performance of principals on their own evaluation.

Problem Statement

The problem that this study addresses is the possible relationship between specific

actions of the principal and working conditions, satisfaction, and student success (see

Figure 1).

Figure 1

*PPA = Positive Principal Actions
PWE = Positive Work Environment
ITS = Increased Teacher Satisfaction
ISS = Increased Student Success

As outlined in Figure 1, it is proposed that a multi-linear, cyclical relationship

exists between actions of the principal, work environment, teacher satisfaction, and

student success. It is also proposed that positive principal actions (as viewed by teachers),

will lead to a positive work environment. This positive environment in turn leads to an

increase in teacher satisfaction, which leads to increased student success. Once higher

student success is attained, it will contribute to higher levels of teacher satisfaction and

build the teacher's sense of efficacy. That increased satisfaction enhances a more positive

work environment, and reinforces the principal in practicing those actions that positively

influences the school's culture. Through these interrelated and interdependent concepts, a positive, success-based school culture is developed.

In order to address the problem as stated, this study focuses on the following primary research questions:

1. Is there a relationship between school culture (with the important component of teacher satisfaction) and positive student outcomes?

2. Is there a relationship between principal behaviors and teacher satisfaction as a component of teacher working conditions and school culture?

3. Is there a relationship between specific principal behaviors that influenced the work environment and improved student success factors?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this research to the profession of educational leadership is that student success is the primary goal of any educational institution. The primary person who influences educational performance, other than the student, is the teacher (Baughman, 1996). This study examines the influence that a satisfied teacher has on student success. In turn, it is the principal who is charged with creating conditions of job satisfaction for teachers so they successfully perform the functions of the job. Thus, it is increasingly important that leaders identify specific behaviors that influence working conditions positively so that job satisfaction and student success will increase. Over time, these components work together to create a positive school culture (see Figure 1).

Further, there is a gap in educational knowledge of specific behaviors principals can perform to build a success-based school culture. In North Carolina, there is a measure

of teacher satisfaction with the work environment with the Teachers Working Conditions Survey. But, this instrument, while important in identifying those schools that have a positive work environment, does little to address specific behaviors of the principals in those schools. It is this gap in knowledge that this study seeks to address, to provide educational leaders with the skills needed to impact school culture positively.

Assumptions of the Study

This study was bounded by a set of assumptions and delimitations that not only help define the scope of the study, but also help make judgments as to what might or might not be included in the study. The key assumptions I used to guide this research were:

1. The data from the NCTWCS are valid and reliable.

2. The principal's actions that influenced satisfaction in one school in North Carolina could be utilized with similar influence in other schools in North Carolina.

3. The predictors of teacher satisfaction are similar across all school levels— elementary, middle, and high schools.

4. The predictors of teacher satisfaction identified in the literature are applicable to the public schools of North Carolina.

5. The principal was primarily responsible for the creation of school-level teacher working conditions.

6. School culture can be measured through analyzing the TWCS.

7. School culture can be understood by interviewing a school's certified staff and through triangulation of other data sources to include professional literature and school data.

Delimitations of the Study

The study was also bounded by several delimitations that I imposed on the study for the purposes of making the study more manageable. These delimitations included:

1. Schools selected to participate in the study were all located in the western part of North Carolina.

2. Only public elementary, middle, and high schools were used as data sources for the purpose of this study.

3. The study only included the certified staff and the principal as a measure of working conditions. Non-teaching staff are an important factor of the school culture but were not included in the study.

Key Terms

In addition to the boundaries suggested above, the study was bounded by some definitions of key terms whose clarity of meaning was critical to understanding this study and its findings and conclusions. Key terms are defined below:

1. Student Success– A measure of school factors that defined the progress and academic attainment of the student. For the purposes of this study these factors included North Carolina End of Grade (EOG) and End of Course (EOC) test

scores, school level aggregate attendance data, and school level aggregate disciplinary data.

2. North Carolina EOG – A test taken by all NC students at the end of grades 3 through 8. The tests measured proficiency in math and language arts.

3. North Carolina EOC – A test taken by all NC students in grades 9 through 12 in specific academic subjects (e.g., English 1, physical science, etc.).

4. Student Attendance – The percentage of time during a given period that a student is present at school. It was assumed that a student who was present at school has ample opportunity to learn and perform at grade level on the EOG and EOC when provided quality instruction by the teacher.

5. Student Discipline – The number of times in a given period of time that students were referred to the office for violation of school rules and regulations, including punishments such as out-of-school suspension (OSS). Also included data from the state crime and violence report.

6. Teacher Efficacy – The degree to which teachers felt they controlled student outcomes in their school (Morgan & O'Leary, 2004).

7. Teacher Working Conditions Survey – A survey administered by the state of North Carolina in each even year. The domains measured included: time, facilities and resources, empowerment, leadership, and professional development (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2008).

8. Working Conditions – The environment created by specific behaviors of the principal within a given school.

9. Teacher Satisfaction – The degree to which a teacher enjoyed the work environment created through the school working conditions.

10. School Culture – The set of shared beliefs, customs, and norms that drove action within the school environment. This culture occurred and is formed over an extended period of time (Jerald, 2006).

11. Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) – The expected yearly improvement in state test scores of subgroups of students in a given school or district that is called for by the No Child Left Behind legislation (NCLB, 2001).

Problem Narrative

In the past, the data from the TWCS were meant to be used in the School Improvement Plan (SIP) of the respective school to improve climate. However, there was no way to document that this expectation was met. Without such quality assurances in place, it was possible for the principal to totally disregard this important feedback from staff members. North Carolina implemented a new principal evaluation process that included the TWCS as an important evidence of performance for the principal (McRel, 2008). This new evaluation process makes such a poor leadership practice much less likely.

With knowledge of the importance of school culture and teacher satisfaction, natural questions about student outcomes arise among educators. Was there a relationship between a positive school culture and positive student outcomes? Could educators deduce, with any degree of confidence that an increase in one would likely result in an increase in the other? There was much research in this area that helped answer these

questions. By focusing on positive working conditions and the factors that affect teacher satisfaction, a compelling argument can be made that a positive school culture created as outlined in Figure 1 (p.3) can have an influence on teacher satisfaction and student performance outcomes.

Dissertation Organization

The dissertation is organized in a manner to facilitate explanations of the problem and the resultant research. Chapter one introduces the problem and establishes the basic framework for the study. Chapter two provides a comprehensive review of the national literature as it relates to the study topic. Chapter three provides the research design and methodology used in conducting the study. Chapter four provides detailed case study reports and quantitative and qualitative profiles of each case study school. Chapter five offers an analysis of the research and suggestions for further study.

Conclusion

There are many factors that combine to make a school successful. Teachers must be confident that their teaching has a positive influence on how well their students succeed. The work environment created by the principal in his/her interaction with staff is important in making sure teachers are satisfied and that their work is producing the kinds of effects and outcomes that influence student success. Driving school culture in either a positive way or a negative way is the overall result of teacher working conditions. In North Carolina, these conditions are measured in the Teacher Working Conditions Survey. Therefore, there is a measure of influence that principals have on their individual

school environments. The principal can influence student learning in the building by building a strong supportive culture in the school through a positive teachers working condition environment. It is proposed that the principal's behavior in building a positive environment with high expectations for student performance will ultimately influence student outcomes. A positive environment will lead to positive outcomes and a negative environment will lead to negative outcomes. Therefore, it is important to identify and address those specific behaviors that principals display that influence the teacher working conditions in their school. As noted by former NC Governor Michael Easley, "Teacher working conditions are student learning conditions" (Leithwood & McAdie, 2007, p.42). It was the purpose of this study to identify and verify those specific behaviors for principals that will positively influence the school culture as measured by performance on the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey and to determine the connections between working conditions and student success as determined by various student success indicators.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Introduction

The literature as it related to teacher satisfaction and school culture is very rich. Numerous recent studies were conducted to add to an already deep field of knowledge. It would appear that a renewed focus on school culture and its ultimate effect on success in schools has taken place on numerous research agendas.

In order to make sense of this multitude of both historical and contemporary studies, it is necessary to develop a framework of dominant literature themes. I found three dominant themes that helped to focus this study. It is within this framework of the relationships between school culture, teacher satisfaction, and student success that I anchor this study. Like the metaphorical three-legged stool, the stool can only be functional for its purposes when all three legs are in place. Remove any of the three legs and the stool loses functionality and usefulness.

The first major area of focus in the literature deals with the principal's role in developing and maintaining culture. This theme is central to this study because I focused specifically on the principal and how his/her behavior directly influences working conditions, teacher satisfaction, and student success.

The second major focus area that emerged from the literature was the specific factors that influence teacher job satisfaction. With a focus on creating working conditions that are conducive to success for all, it is important to understand those factors that have the greatest effect on the satisfaction of teachers.

The final major focus area that emerged from the literature was the different models of success-based school cultures. As mentioned, there are many recent models developed that explain the influence of culture on schools. Central to this theme and the models developed was the principal, which proved relevant to this study.

Theme 1 – The Principal's Role in School Culture

The Principal's Role with NCLB

With the performance standards of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001) legislation toughening each successive year, it has become increasingly important for schools to transform to meet the demands. In order to meet the demands of increasing expectations, it is important for educational leaders to understand NCLB expectations and NC school performance standards in light of principal expectations and behaviors. In order to change schools as required by legislation, principals are the driving force behind the transformation effort through their influence on the school culture (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005).

Most critics agree that NCLB is not working (Fritzberg, 2004; Sunderman, Orfield, & Kim, 2006). The legislation is aggressive and the high-profile nature of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) makes it a flashpoint for those who would point out its

weaknesses (Fritzberg, 2004). The main issue critics point out in the legislation is that it views achievement and improvement in education as a regulatory issue instead of an educational issue. There is no accounting for differences in children who face poverty and other circumstances outside the school building (Sunderman, et al., 2006).

Regulatory pressure to perform is the norm under student achievement standards. The law gives a tremendous amount of responsibility and power to local education agencies to transform and meet the progressive requirements of AYP and growth for all children. To do so requires leadership that builds teaching capacity in the schools (Murnane, 2007). But, as Sunderman et al. (2006) note, "it is silent on the role of principals in fostering school improvement" (p.16). While the pressure lies squarely with the teachers under the legislation, it is the principal who drives the instruction in the school building through his/her influence on the instructional program.

The definition of student achievement and performance itself has changed drastically due to federal regulation. NCLB has increased stress on teachers and students with a seemingly endless stream of tests and other assessments aimed at keeping schools on track for meeting the rigorous demands of the law (Sunderman, et al., 2006). The testing component alone serves as a demoralizing factor for teachers tasked with improving student achievement (Nichols & Berliner, 2008). It is here, in direct work with teachers, that the principal's behaviors that influence teacher satisfaction and school culture can have the greatest effect in driving student success.

The Principal's Role in Student Success

The link between the leadership required by NCLB expectations and student success is established in numerous studies. The relationship between leadership and success has been explored in depth (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982; Hallinger & Heck, 1996, 1998; Kruger, Witziers, & Sleegers, 2007; Marzano et al., 2005; Pounder, Ogawa, & Adams, 1995). Despite the findings of these studies, which suggest a link between school leadership and student success, there continues to be gaps in the knowledge of exactly how principals directly influence student outcomes (Kruger et al., 2007).

When making the link between principal behaviors and student success, it is difficult to identify which behaviors have the most influence on achievement. Prioritizing the principal's job into what is essential for student learning is an absolute necessity (Waters & Kingston, 2005). Instructional leadership appears to be the most important aspect of the school leader's job, including the maintenance of an environment conducive to learning and a supportive climate for teachers (Alvy & Robbins, 2005; Jerald, 2006). This fact is further evidenced as an indirect link between leadership and school culture through the teacher's perception of a school's organization (Kruger et al., 2007).

If the principal can influence success through cultural variables, it is important that such behaviors are reinforced in the principal's practice. In North Carolina, a new principal evaluation instrument was developed that directly links cultural leadership to the performance of the school building administrator (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2008). In order to change the system for the betterment of students, it is important that principal evaluation systems align those behaviors that positively

influence student success with daily practice (Waters & Kingston, 2005). In North

Carolina, principals can already see this alignment has taken place with new standards for

school executives and the new evaluation process (McRel, 2008).

The Role of Principal Evaluation

The pressure placed on schools under state and federal standards is realized in

principal evaluations. As this focus on the behaviors of the principal in influencing

school performance increases, the principal evaluation for North Carolina now aligns to

influence on school culture. The school leader has come under more scrutiny in newer

iterations of evaluation instruments. The success and effectiveness of the principal in

attaining higher levels of school performance is now more pronounced because principals

are held accountable for increasingly more educational outcomes (Catano & Stronge,

2006).

Principal evaluation standards will play a role in measuring the influence of

principal behaviors on teacher and student performance. Numerous studies have formed

that link between the principal evaluation and school improvement (Davis & Hensley,

1999; Glasman & Heck, 2003; Thomas, Holdaway, & Ward, 2000 as cited in

Amsterdam, Johnson, Monrad, & Tonnsen, 2003).

Amsterdam, et al. (2003) did argue, however, that the principal evaluation should

not hinge on the personal characteristics or traits of the principal. The many standards

that are needed to measure the complexity of the principal's job suggest that many factors

should be used. One of these factors is the principal's actions that influence school

culture. It is in such actions that the behavior of the principal ultimately affects school

culture, teacher satisfaction, and student performance. As important as traits and/or characteristics might be in defining a principal's leadership style, it is what he/she actually does that seems to make the difference in these three variables (Catano, 2006).

Principal evaluations can also influence school culture indirectly from the pressure to perform. Ultimately, it is the principals who are held accountable in their own evaluation for school and student outcomes. Therefore, the principal would have good cause to reinforce good teaching in the school building and to confront incompetent teaching practices. According to Murphy and Pimental (2006), the principal should remove those teachers who are not suited for the role and should not hire those who are similarly unsuited for the profession from the start. Such decisions add to the difficulty of being a principal (Davis & Hensley, 1999).

The Principal's Role in School Culture

School culture could best be characterized as the "common set of expectations that…evolve into unwritten rules to which group members conform in order to remain in good standing with their colleagues" (Gruenart, 2008, p.57). Thus, these expectations and rules are powerful predictors of teacher behavior and satisfaction. The principal's role in influencing the culture is important in influencing teacher satisfaction through his/her own behaviors as leader in the school (Gruenert, 2008).

It is important to distinguish between culture and climate, as the terms are used interchangeably in the context of teacher satisfaction in most school environments. However, Gruenert (2008) pointed out the difference in his analysis when he noted that the line of reasoning that most educators subscribe to is that satisfied teachers were better

teachers and had a positive influence on achievement in their schools. He attributed this

morale effect to the climate, but not the culture (Gruenert, 2008).

Ultimately, it is the climate that drives the culture (Gruenert, 2008). Therefore, it

is easy to assume that by influencing climate in the short term, principals can influence

culture in the long term. Therefore, this review of the literature does focus on climate and

culture as two interchangeable and related characteristics of the organization that

principals may positively influence through specific behaviors. Student outcomes can

improve through these behaviors of the principal by their influence on teacher working

conditions and satisfaction, a finding which is validated by earlier studies (Kruger et al.,

2007). In light of this fact, there are particular dimensions that principals must understand

in order to positively transform the school culture (Waters & Kingston, 2005).

The Performance-Based Culture

Ultimately, actions of the principal lead to a long-term cultural shift in the school

where teachers are valued as professionals. It is at that point that the satisfaction

of teachers leads to a culture of high performance. It is easily assumed that this culture of

high performance relates just to the teachers in the building, but the extension of this

culture affects the students as well. The teachers become more productive and so do the

students. Thus, in the long term, keeping teachers satisfied will have a positive effect on

student outcomes (Ma & McMillan, 1999).There are several components in this analysis

that show the positive culture created by satisfied teachers and the influence they can

have on their students. The most direct influence to the school culture is the overarching

theme of teacher working conditions. It is through these working conditions that teachers

are ultimately job satisfied so a culture of high performance for students can be created

(Ma & McMillan, 1999).

The Principal and Teacher Working Conditions

Working conditions can impact school culture. The more positive the culture is,

the more likely an expectation of high performance will exist and students will achieve at

higher levels (Leithwood & McAdie, 2007).

For teachers who are new to the profession, the first experience in the school can

best be described as a culture shock (Jorissen 2002). An important extension of teacher

working conditions is that the principal is aware of this type of culture shock and the

effect that it can have on teachers, both personally and professionally. One of the first

duties in establishing positive working conditions for teachers is working to minimize

this shock, which can best be accomplished by the school leader (Ma & MacMillan,

1999).

Principals are the first key in influencing working conditions. No other single

person can have such an influence on the environment in the school. According to

Leithwood and McAdie (2007), the principal provides leadership in patterns that are both,

"alterable and significant" (p.44). Therefore, the principal can make changes as deemed

necessary to help his/her staff and to make sure transitions for new teachers are smooth

and seamless. As noted in another study, the job of the principal is to not only understand

satisfaction and how to support it as a working condition, but also to be able to identify

areas of dissatisfaction and provide support so that it does not negatively influence the

school (Woods & Weasmer, 2004). In fact, leaders should build into their plans a culture

that values employee happiness as a means to the accomplishment of important goals (Howard & Gould, 2000).

When evaluating the effect of teacher working conditions, it is important to note that teachers feel more competent in schools where they feel valued, are generally job-satisfied, and are happy (Henderson, 2000). This perception is perpetuated by the teachers themselves who feel that their own teaching competence is enhanced when they are satisfied at work (Ma & MacMillan, 1999). Teachers themselves perceive a difference in their own competence and confidence level when the leader has established an environment that is typical of having positive working conditions. The self-fulfilling prophecy of success appears to be abundant in such an environment. The reverse could also be true. As noted by Leithwood and McAdie (2007), if working conditions are inadequate, improvement efforts may not be as effective. Therefore, the principal should know these factors and utilize such knowledge to make working conditions at the school positive.

Creating a Positive TWC Culture

There are many factors that a principal can do to influence working conditions. Such activities lead principals to realize that long-term commitments to teacher satisfaction through the establishment of a positive teacher working condition environment can influence student performance through the strength of satisfied teachers. Due to the importance of a positive teacher-working-conditions environment in establishing a student-centered culture, some factors are repeated here for emphasis.

One of the first ways a principal can work to create positive working conditions at the school is to recognize employees for the good work they do. While this small step appears to do wonders for the working conditions for a teacher, it can be overlooked. Recognition for a job well done builds upon the self-efficacy of teachers and makes them more likely to influence the students they serve positively. Doing so tells teachers they are doing the job right, a fact that may catch on with other staff in the building (Jorissen, 2002).

According to a recent study, principals make the most prominent step in creating a positive work environment when they set the direction for the school (Leithwood & McAdie, 2007). By establishing a clear sense of direction, the principal sends a message of success for staff. By having a shared purpose of success, the staff drives students to success. Likewise, if there is no clear direction, or if work expectations are not realistic, staff are not satisfied and their work suffers (Leithwood & McAdie, 2007).

Working conditions are further influenced when the instructional program is valued as the most important aspect of the school. While certain aspects of the school must be managed, teachers expect the principal to be the instructional leader of the school. By being the instructional leader, the principal is sending the message to staff that they are valued and their primary job duty is valued. This message is one that teachers expect to hear on a consistent basis from their leader (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 1996).

Also important is the establishment of a collegial culture of shared leadership. This concept relates directly to the wellness and mattering concept and the empowerment concept, discussed later in Theme 2, and is important to overall teacher satisfaction.

Over time, shared leadership becomes a primary driver of work in the school's culture. Often, it is this idea of collaborative problem-solving that brings teachers a sense of satisfaction when other efforts to do so have failed (Ma & and MacMillan, 1999). Principals have a long-term gain in making sure that a collegial environment of teacher leadership is established to influence student performance. This concept is further reinforced through the teacher's feelings of being treated as a professional and is also a component in the NC school executive evaluation system (McRel, 2008).

Furthering the discussion of creating positive teacher working conditions is the concept of high expectations and academic focus for students (Leithwood & McAdie, 2007). This theme is apparent throughout the other factors. To have a positive teacher-working-condition environment, there has to be a student focus. Recalling the assumption of the self-fulfilling prophecy, students will rise to the expectations that are set for them. If teachers believe their students will be successful, students are more likely to be successful. Without a culture of high expectations, teachers will not thrive and they will not positively influence their students (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 1996).

There is considerable work outside the field of education that offers insight to this argument of high expectations. The work of Henderson (2000) is particularly salient in this discussion because she has identified several factors in a positive work environment that influence teacher satisfaction and overall working conditions. While her research is not specifically in the area of schools, her work is of interest to schools. She finds that the factors of "freedom, intellectual challenge, positive social atmosphere, and opportunity to find tangible meaning" are all found in positive work environments (p.311). Those conditions that have a positive influence on the work environment and worker

productivity in other fields are closely related to what works in schools according to the educational research outlined (Henderson, 2000).

The Principal and Time

One of the primary factors for principals seeking to change school culture is time. On top of the expected instructional duties, there are a tremendous number of managerial functions that dominate a principal's time. It is noted that principals are central to shaping and cultivating strong and vibrant cultures in their schools, which adds to the complexity of the job in general. In order to make such a change in school culture, it needs to be a priority for the leader. In context of student success, it is important for the principal to take the time necessary to cultivate a student success culture in the school (Peterson & Kelley, 2001).

A focus on school improvement is central to this issue with time. The principal wants to influence culture positively and wants to drive the school to improvement. Some researchers contend that the modern principalship has demands on time that make the essential functions of the position almost impossible to meet (Danielson, 2006). By falling back on the position that people will focus on and prioritize those job functions that they find important, principals have a duty to focus on the culture in their building. By not doing so, they will find difficulty in influencing teacher satisfaction, and difficulty in driving performance gains by their students, and will perform poorly on an evaluation instrument that is dedicated to the premise that cultural leadership is an important component of the school leader's job.

The principal should not be expected to tackle this task alone. Support is needed from within the school and from the central office to make sure the principal is able to prioritize time in a manner that is consistent with the district's assumed mission of high student performance. As Yeatts (2005) reports, building this learning culture in a school building, "takes time, patience, trust and assistance from others. Assistance is typically the missing component" (p.23). With this knowledge in mind, it is important for districts to provide the assistance needed to help principals develop the school culture needed to drive positive student performance gains. One way to do that is by allowing time to perform the job. Such transformation of the school's culture does not happen quickly (Yeatts, 2005).

When looking at the variables of time and support, it is important to note that school districts and leaders in general typically do not place the same emphasis on understanding culture that a new principal does, or needs to. Studies have found that new principals place a much higher value on reviewing and understanding school and staff traditions than their corresponding supervisors at the central office do (Hertting, 2008). In order to make the transformation necessary to meet the demands of NCLB, districts need to take a much more serious look at the culture in the building. According to Hertting, most new principals find a more calming and culture-focused level of support in their secretaries than they do in their central office supervisors.

In order to provide the support needed for principals to be successful, districts must take steps to address this cultural gap. The answer to this problem is once again focused on time. There are many things that a district can do to support a new principal. Among the solutions Hertting (2008) suggests is providing feedback as the year

progresses, providing a circle of support, providing mentors, spending time with the new principal, and being clear in helping new principals learn about the culture of their school. Principals need time and support in understanding, developing, and transforming the school culture into a culture expectant of high student performance.

Leadership for Learning

Being an educational leader is and always will be difficult for principals. The demands of the job have been established and time is a factor that diminishes the principal's ability to accomplish the many facets of the job on a daily basis. Therefore, the first cultural shift that must be made is with the individual who serves as the principal (Peterson & Kelley, 2001). There must be a shift from a manager to a learning leader. As outlined in the variable of time, a principal cannot make this shift alone any more easily than they can create more time (Yeatts, 2005). Therefore, sharing leadership within the school building makes the job easier for all of those involved. The cultural literature is rich in the area of how to do this through the use of professional learning communities (Eilers & Camacho, 2007; Johnson & Donaldson, 2007; Habegger, 2008; Weast, 2008).

The old leadership structure of the principal at the top is in peril in the educational environment of recent times. School leadership must change in order to meet the demands of the global economy for which educators are preparing students (Weast, 2008). It is hard to prepare students for a future that educational leaders today can only dream about, and do so with the same methodology that has been used for the last few decades. The current shift is toward the use of shared leadership through the power of the professional learning community (PLC). As noted by Weast (2008), use of the PLC is

difficult, particularly in a larger school system, but the benefits to student learning are worth it. In this instance, leaders transform themselves and share leadership while building the capacity of the teachers to lead, another transformation. This type of cultural leadership is what is needed to influence student outcomes positively and meet the requirements of NCLB (Wheatley & Frieze, 2007).

Another term for this idea of shared leadership is collaborative leadership. A study was conducted by Eilers and Camacho (2007) that ultimately validates the assertions set forth by Weast (2008). Eilers and Camacho find that collaborative leadership through the use of professional communities allows teachers to flourish and strengthens their commitment to setting high expectations. Professional learning communities (PLCs) are a cultural shift that a principal can make to influence working conditions, satisfaction and student performance. By establishing this type of collaborative culture in the school building, principals transform the school culture and themselves into instructional leaders (Eilers & Camacho, 2007).

Transforming the Culture

Cultural change is a prevalent topic in the literature, particularly in the last decade. An assumption can be made that NCLB and the drive to influence student performance through school culture change has come to the forefront of people's minds as a means to meet the demands of school leadership today. The aspects of change, both good and bad are prevalent in the literature. To look at change, the work of Wheatley and Frieze (2007) is of particular interest.

The largest misconception about change, and in this case transforming a school's culture, is that it must be a massive effort. Change requires only a small number of like-minded people. The kind of change needed to transform schools to meet NCLB will not happen due to federal legislation, but will happen when school districts change at the local level. Therefore, it is important for local schools to change and then districts, states, and the nation (Wheatley & Frieze, 2007).

Change cannot rely totally on legislation to happen. It may not be realistic to think that the federal government has the capacity to take over all the schools that they threatened to for not meeting AYP. If NCLB-type legislated change was going to work, it would have already done so; instead, it created a culture of testing that drives teachers from the profession (Wheatley & Frieze, 2007).

Change must be analyzed through its effect on people. If the change is too great, it can have unintended consequences. As leaders, principals must be tuned into the fact that they can make too many changes or the changes they make may not have the desired effect. New principals who have great ideas can be particularly vulnerable to this type of scenario. Wheatley and Frieze (2007) refer to this situation as the "perfect storm" (p.76). Principals must make decisions about the direction of the school on a daily basis and they must compare personal values to the values of everyone in the school that may be affected by such decisions (Tooms, 2003).

As an instructional leader in the building, the principal handles the people in a way that change happens and in a way that the people involved can deal with the change. Principals are faced daily with making decisions about what is right for children and what makes teachers happy (Tooms, 2003). In this context, the instructional leader must be

guided by what is right for children. Making such decisions is a cultural influence on the building, and PLC empowered structures can help in this endeavor. Teachers notice that leaders do what is right for children and they accept this fact when the decision is properly communicated. Otherwise the "perfect storm" can brew under the surface and hamper the principal's leadership capacity (Wheatley & Frieze, 2007).

Placing an Emphasis on Culture

Learning how to build a positive culture is important for the principal. However, placing an emphasis on culture is often difficult. Beyond the aforementioned time issue, teachers in general are skeptical of the type of shared leadership that is pushed upon them from new models, such as those outlined in the literature about PLCs. In one school, teachers felt that serving in a capacity of shared leadership meant they did not have the right to share concerns or complain when something did not go as expected (Mawhinney, 2005). As the leader, it is essential that the principal make it clear that teachers are leaders, they share leadership, and doing so will not hamper them from admitting that things can be improved. It is crucial that a culture be built so teachers understand that failure can be viewed as an opportunity to improve, not a stigma. Unfortunately, education is one profession in which failure in one area results in a belief that one will fail in another. However, the principal should encourage risk-taking in building a positive, success-based school culture (Mawhinney, 2005).

Theme 2 - Factors That Influence Teacher Satisfaction

Recently, there have been a number of relevant studies that explore what truly leads to workforce satisfaction among the nation's teachers, including multi-year arrangements (Burke, 1996), and wellness and mattering (Connolly & Myers, 2003). Also prevalent are the traditional modalities of thinking on teachers satisfaction which include congruence and social support (Harris, Moritzen, Robitschek, Imhoff, & Lynch, 2001), compensation (Morice & Murray 2003), and engagement/empowerment (Baughman, 1996; Davis & Wilson, 2000; Wu & Short 1996). The list above is not all-inclusive. In order to arrange the satisfaction studies in a manageable way, only those that appear to have a direct causal link to teacher satisfaction are explored.

Wellness and Mattering

Key measures of satisfaction are the holistic factors of wellness and mattering. 'Wellness' is defined as a state of well-being that goes beyond the absence of sickness and disease (Connolly & Myers, 2003). The researchers define 'mattering' as an "employee's perception of whether they matter to their supervisors, their organizations, and other aspects of their work settings…." (p. 154). While the Connolly and Myers study is not dedicated solely to teachers, it has value in exploring workforce satisfaction as a whole.

Several instruments were used to conduct the study, including the Wellness Evaluation of Lifestyle (Myers, Sweeney, & Witmer, 2000), the General Mattering Scale (Marcus, 1991), and the Job Descriptive Index (Balzer, Kihm, Smith, Irwin, Bachiochi, Robie, et al., 1997). The results of the study reveal that wellness and

mattering together influence job satisfaction. Independently, wellness and mattering show a significant relationship to job satisfaction and wellness is the strongest predictor (Connolly & Myers, 2003).

Based upon this study wellness and mattering were predictors of job satisfaction. Employees who generally feel well and are in a work environment that values them will be more satisfied. With that thought in mind, a natural argument arises that such an employee works harder and performs better (Connolly & Myers, 2003).

Congruence and Social Support

Another characteristic of workforce satisfaction is congruence and social support. Congruence is the match between employees' interests and their work environment (Harris, Moritzen, Robitschek, et. al., 2001). Congruence is important in measuring whether a teacher has successfully chosen the correct career path. For those who have chosen teaching as a career when it did not align with their overall life goals, satisfaction is harder to achieve. Likewise, there are many dimensions that make up social support, but mentoring is traditionally viewed as the primary component. In the educational field, both congruence and social support are viewed as important measures of teacher satisfaction (Harris et. al., 2001).

The results of the Harris et al., (2001) study revealed however that congruence does not significantly explain the variance in job satisfaction in either men or women. Social support influences satisfaction in women, but not in men. When viewed from the educational perspective, these results suggest that mentoring has a positive effect in measuring satisfaction of female teachers only. It is however noted that male teachers are

traditionally less satisfied than their female counterparts in additional studies, which make this finding not so surprising (Perie, Baker, & Whitener, 1997). The TWCS measures such overall satisfaction with the work environment and is not gender specific (NCDPI, 2008).

Engagement and Empowerment

Another important component of teacher satisfaction is that of teacher engagement and empowerment. For the purposes of this study, the empowerment definition outlined by Davis and Wilson (2000) of "teacher involvement in organizational decision-making" is utilized (p.350). This study focuses on the behaviors of principals, Principal Empowering Behaviors (PEB), that define an environment conducive to empowerment. An example of such behaviors by the principal include the creation of an open and trusting environment where staff feel free to express opinions and ideas (Baughman, 1996).

The results of this study reveal a notable difference in how principals rate their empowering behaviors and how they are rated by teachers. However, there is a positive correlation between PEB and teacher satisfaction (Davis & Wilson, 2000). The more principals engage in empowering behaviors, the more satisfied teachers are. It is logical to assume in this context that teachers who are involved in decision-making are ultimately more satisfied with their position and feel that they influence their students more by the nature of that decision making (Baughman, 1996).

Another study in this area was conducted by Baughman in 1996. Baughman focuses solely on teachers in secondary schools. However, his findings can be

generalized to teachers at all levels, particularly when taken in the context that secondary school teachers have historically been less satisfied than their peers in lower grades (Perie et al., 1997).

Baughman's (1996) study utilizes multiple instruments and focuses primarily on principal behaviors in relation to teacher empowerment. Of interest in the study is that an engaged teacher is a primary predictor of teacher satisfaction, accounting for 36% of variance in overall job satisfaction. According to the author, 'engaged' in this sentence refers to, "a supportive and collegial staff, friendship and trust among staff, teacher committed to student learning, and teachers having a sense of pride in the school" (p.20).

A final study in regard to empowerment is revealed in the work of Wu and Short (1996). Multiple instruments are used to measure employee satisfaction through empowerment in the study. Specifically, self-efficacy and professional growth are identified as the primary empowering factors in the study. The teachers' belief in their own ability to lead and grow professionally has a positive influence on satisfaction measures and ultimately performance (Wu & Short, 1996).

While it may be difficult to definitively conclude that one specific satisfaction factor leads to a more satisfied teacher than another, the research into teacher satisfaction suggests that there are specific behaviors that a principal can practice that influence teachers in this area. The research points out that these predictors lead to an increase in student performance through the improved practices of the satisfied teacher. A more in-depth look at the long-term culture created by principal actions that influenced satisfaction will reveal a much stronger relationship (Wu & Short, 1996).

Teacher Attitude

Another factor of satisfaction is the teacher's own attitude about the teaching profession. It is assumed by school leadership that teachers have a positive attitude and they will in turn have a positive influence on the students. The issue with such an assumption is that not all teachers have a positive attitude. If the school culture is positive and has a belief in high expectations for all, it would seem that teachers with a poor attitude toward the school or the students it served will eventually be cycled out of the organization. On the contrary, those positive teachers will be nurtured and the students will flourish in the environment of high expectations. When looking at a teacher's attitude it is not important what is taught, but also how it is taught. As noted by Eisner, "how it is taught influences how it is learned" (2006).

A teacher's attitude is going to be greatly influenced by his/her personal values. For teachers to grow professionally, they must want to improve and have a desire to improve for the betterment of their students. Those who teach with an undefined set of values and expectations for performance will not have the desired effect on their student populations (Mok, 2002). Therefore, it is important for the teacher to identify those values, the crucial insights into why they teach in reference to career congruence (Harris et al., 2001).

It is important for teachers to reconnect with the sense of excitement and joy that brought them to the profession in the first place. Most educators argue that they entered the profession for the right reasons, that they desire to work with children and they help them learn. But when working in an unsupportive cultural structure at the school, teachers begin to lose energy and enthusiasm. To reignite that passion for learning and

improve the collective attitude for working with children requires the principal to focus on the culture and move away from the sense of isolation that many teachers feel (Connolly, 2000).

Motivation

Another important factor of teacher satisfaction is the manifestation of the teacher's motivation. Motivation is also closely related to attitude. Motivation is different from attitude in that motivation is primarily influenced by the teacher's own internal state. To maintain motivation, relationships are very important. One of the internal states that can affect motivation is the teacher's desire to make lasting relationships. In one study, it is the relationship between the teacher and the administration, other teachers, and school community that is the primary predictor of satisfaction. If the school culture values the building of such relationships then the teacher remains motivated to do so and it positively influences teaching (Laabs, 2001).

Another personal motivation factor is the professionalism of the teacher. This professionalism can be described in many ways, but according to Cheng (1996), it is best described as the extent to which a teacher adheres closely to a code of ethics prescribed by the principal and/or the school's culture. By taking personal values one step further, to extend to ethical behavior in knowing and doing what is right over what is wrong, teachers can have a positive influence on the school and their students (Cheng, 1996).

By examining this idea of professionalism further, Cheng (1996) finds a positive relationship between teachers with the highest degree of professionalism and student

performance. Cheng defines a professional classroom as one in which students are open in discussions, an environment where trust is present, and where overall student performance is enhanced (1996).

Teachers are also motivated by the children they teach. Teachers want, based upon their own attitude and motivation, their children to be successful as an extension of their own efficacy. In schools where the children do not excel, teachers tend to lose motivation. It seems then that the teachers lose that expectation for high performance and children live up to lowered expectations, thus a self-fulfilling prophecy of failure is created. With that thought in mind, it remains critical that teachers keep their motivation so that the children can benefit. Otherwise, a culture of low expectations will lower the performance of students and teachers in a vicious cycle of defeat (Van Houtte, 2006).

Teacher Self-Efficacy

A final important characteristic of teacher satisfaction is teacher self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to the perception of teachers over how they feel their actions influence a given situation. In other words, if they feel they can make an influence on children, or if they feel they can do the job necessary to be good teachers (Morgan & O'Leary, 2004). It is a means by which teachers judge their own importance in a given situation. Those with high self-efficacy believe they have a great influence on students and those with low self-efficacy feel they have a minimal influence. Therefore, having those teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy should benefit school and student performance (Latham, 1998).

In fact, teachers who feel that they are not effective, those with low self-efficacy, are those who tend to have the most stress, and ultimately they drop out of the profession (Latham, 1998). As Morgan and O'Leary (2004) describe, "various aspects of teachers' self-efficacy have been shown to be powerful predictors of classroom performance and children's learning" (p.74). They find a substantial relationship in their study. Thus, if teachers feel they are important, they will be. If teachers do not feel important, teachers will not be. Therefore it is important to have a supportive culture where all teachers believe they can influence children in a positive way. Thus, self-efficacy is a characteristic of the overall school culture. The principal builds self-efficacy in teachers through actions that improve working conditions. It is in such principal behaviors that a success-based school culture is developed (Latham, 1998).

Theme 3 – Models of Success-based School Cultures

The literature is rich in recently published, specific studies and articles that offer much to the discussion of the importance of school culture and the principal's ability to influence that culture in a positive way. For that reason, these models offer much in this area of the need to validate specific behaviors that principals can perform to influence culture, drive teacher satisfaction, and influence student success. Due to their relevance to the topic, and in an effort to highlight these particular culture models in a concise format, detailed summaries are included below.

Eilers and Camacho's View of School Culture

Eilers and Camacho (2007) present a case study illustrating that a major shift in school culture can take place in a relatively short time period. Of particular interest in the case is that it follows a new principal as he institutes changes to the school and influences the educational environment for students. According to the research, this principal has three key assets that allow the change to take place which include establishment of professional learning communities, creative collaborative leadership, and making decisions based upon data.

Also relevant to the study is that the principal believes in teacher empowerment and that staff cannot and will not blame the students for failure. It is very convenient for adults to blame the circumstances that a child comes from in assigning blame for failure. However, the principal in this case will not let such a crutch creep into his faculty. In fact, as Eilers and Camacho (2007) point out, "his high expectations were a central strategy to a successful turnaround at Whitman" (p.620).

The principal in this case is very student-centered. His shared leadership belief also carries over to staff development. He has an instructional person who works closely with staff to offer professional development that teachers want, need, and that influence students (Eilers & Camacho, 2007). This total focus on success for every student is one example of specific things that a principal can do that influence working conditions, satisfaction, and improve student outcomes.

Habegger's View of School Culture

Habegger (2008) also presents a view of a principal's role that influences school culture for change. In order to grow and improve, students need to be surrounded by a positive culture. It is important to note that it is the school culture that is "the heart" of the school's improvement effort (p.42). Her study focuses on practical applications that drive a positive school culture forward that betters the success of all students.

The primary ingredient in creating a positive culture is the existence of confidence in the teaching staff that is driven by teacher empowerment (Habegger, 2008). The job of the principal is not getting easier. There are many tasks that prevent the principal from being an effective instructional leader in the building.

The focus on shared leadership revolves around the Professional Learning Community for teachers. In addition, specific behaviors of the principal create a sense of belonging and a clear direction (Habegger, 2008). Utilizing this shared leadership model with clear directions for a motivated staff has a positive effect on working conditions, teacher satisfaction, and achievement.

Habegger (2008) outlines several more strategies, most notably the creation of aligned staff development to a clearly communicated vision and mission statement. Once again, this fact relates directly to the idea of clear direction set forth by the author. Having all effort in the building aligned to the accomplishment of specific goals appears to be a clear step that improves the culture for performance at the school.

Alvy and Robbins's View of School Culture

Alvy and Robbins (2005) present a case study of a new principal who works and establishes learning leadership in his new building. The focus of the case study deals with the specific actions of the new principal as he attempts to learn about the building as he diagnoses what he needs to do. Without clearly understanding the culture in the beginning, it seems that change would be particularly hard for a staff. Taking his time to find out about the people and the school is beneficial to knowing exactly what needs to change.

The key to making changes resides in the relationship that the principal builds with the staff (Alvy & Robbins, 2005). To become an instructional leader, the principal knows his staff and uses the staff for the greater benefit of the children. In this line of reasoning is the idea of trust. According to Alvy and Robbins, trust is important for the new principal in that, "They must earn trust. And to earn trust, they must give it – that is, they must demonstrate faith in the independent skills and decision of others" (p.51).

Of important note here is that change will not occur without the relationship outlined by Alvy and Robbins (2005). Therefore, relationship-building and having a naturally trusting nature serves principals well and allows them to build a strong learning culture at their school. Such specific behaviors are good for a principal, but easier to explain than they are to do. Therefore, it is good to have practical behaviors that the principal can focus on to become a better instructional leader.

Johnson and Donaldson's View of School Culture

Johnson and Donaldson (2007) offer more advice to principals. The scholars focus on the idea of building teacher leadership in the school. However, their analysis is germane to the discussion because of the fact that shared leadership is a common theme that influences culture in the literature.

The primary focus of the article is what teachers and principals can do to overcome certain school culture norms, specifically autonomy, egalitarianism, and deference to authority (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007). If principals wish to establish a shared leadership system, they must realize these cultural norms are prevalent in most schools. Teachers like to be left alone; they want to feel that all decisions are arrived at equally, and they do not want authority. As outlined by Johnson and Donaldson, (2007), overcoming these barriers can be a "daunting challenge" (p.87).

To overcome barriers, it is important that the principal identify and acknowledge their existence. It is important that school leaders build the capacity for teacher leadership through structures that allow them to assume leadership and that they make decisions in an environment of support (Johnson & Donaldson, 2007). This idea relates directly to the relationship-building skills outlined earlier as a necessary trait of the principal. The relationship between support for building a strong learning culture and building relationships was outlined in the literature (Alvy & Robbins, 2005).

Jerald's View of School Culture

Jerald (2006) brings further insight into the school culture discussion. His study points out much of the history of the study of school culture, from the 1970's, when links

are made between culture and performance (Jerald, 2006). Jerald's primary study focuses on many of the same ideas noted earlier, that professionalism and collegiality are the cornerstones of a positive school culture.

This study also highlights the traits of relational trust, clear direction through vision and values, and the alignment of efforts in the building toward high expectations for student success (Jerald, 2006). All of these behaviors are measured in the NC principal's evaluation process. Jerald's work validates the work of others presented in the literature review. This research suggests that having different staff members headed in different directions related to expectations for student performance will not achieve the results needed to influence student achievement (Jerald, 2006).

The one area that is added to the discussion through the work of Jerald (2006) is the focus on professionalism. He cited studies from Marzano (2003) to Bryk and Schneider (2002) in that principals should establish a positive, professional environment and they should build the culture for learning that is needed to transform our schools to focus on student success.

Wilson's View of School Culture

The final case study to be highlighted is the work of Wilson (2007). The author interviews staff members of many schools and highlights those that are the best in that they build a culture for student learning. She highlights specific actions that are undertaken to build the kind of culture needed in schools, a learning culture of high expectations.

The author begins with the power of a clearly communicated vision and mission (Wilson, 2007). Providing clear direction for staff is the first thing that principals should do as they build a positive school culture. The key according to Wilson is "making sure everyone knows it and believes it" (p.38). Simply writing the vision and mission down or posting it is not enough.

Wilson (2007) also highlights the power of setting high expectations. Having high expectations aligned to a vision and mission that everyone believes in appears to have some merit in building a great American school. She also points out that empowerment is a third key to making the school culture equation work. These findings are well established in the literature; that vision and mission, positive relationships, and teacher empowerment are the keys to a learning culture, a culture that produces results.

"The" Model

All of these models of success-based school cultures had components that were salient to this dissertation. All had points that were worthy for the consideration of any practicing principal. I thought most educational leaders today would articulate how important empowerment was and how the Professional Learning community should be used to drive school improvement. Collaboration, collegiality, and professionalism are very important factors in establishing teacher satisfaction and building a positive culture.

I tended to side with the views advanced in the models of Jerald (2006) and Wilson (2007). While they are different in their focus and scope, they tended to be dependent on what is most important. For a success-based culture to be present and alive in a school building there must be a clearly communicated and articulated set of

expectations outlined in a vision/mission/core values statement. This statement set the framework for what is to be accomplished in the school. Aligned to that, there must be a feeling in the building that values success and sets high expectations for students and staff. Without a framework for success and high expectations for superior performance, the other factors explored in the success models may have little or no effect.

Summary of the Literature

To meet the demands of No Child Left Behind legislation, schools must transform to a success-based culture. The principal must lead in this effort (Marzano, et al., 2005). There is a strong link between school leadership and student success outlined in the literature (Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, & Lee, 1982; Hallinger & Heck, 1996, 1998; Kruger, Witziers, & Sleegers, 2007; Marzano et al., 2005; Pounder, Ogawa, & Adams, 1995).

Principals can influence student outcomes through their influence on teacher satisfaction and working conditions (Kruger, et al., 2007). Due to the importance of this fact, principal evaluations now align to school culture and a link between evaluation and school improvement has been established (Davis & Hensley, 1999; Glasman & Heck, 2003; Thomas, Holdaway, & Ward, 2000 as cited in Amsterdam, Johnson, Monrad, & Tonnsen, 2003). Over the long term, satisfied teachers form a positive school culture and have a positive impact on student outcomes (Ma & McMillan, 1999; Henderson, 2000; Howard & Gould, 2000; Jorissen, 2002; Woods & Weasmer, 2004; Leithwood & McAdie, 2007).

A factor for the principal to consider in making this transformation is time (Yeatts, 2005; Danielson, 2006). It cannot happen overnight and rushing the change can

cause issues (Wheatley & Frieze, 2007). It is important in this process that principals be supported by the appropriate staff at the central office (Hertting, 2008). One way to maximize time and use school resources effectively in utilizing teacher leadership is to use the Professional Learning Community (Eilers &Camacho, 2007; Johnson & Donaldson, 2007; Wheatley & Frieze, 2007; Habegger, 2008; Weast, 2008).

There are several factors that impact teacher satisfaction. One important factor is wellness and mattering (Connolly & Myers, 2003). Congruence and social support was another (Harris et al., 2001).

Several studies were available on the importance of the principal providing the teacher with engagement and empowerment (Baughman, 1996; Wu & Short, 1996; Perie, et al., 1997; Davis & Wilson, 2000, Connolly & Myers, 2003). Other important factors of satisfaction included teacher attitude, motivation, and self-efficacy (Cheng, 1996; Latham, 1998; Harris et al., 2001; Laabs, 2001; Mok, 2002; Morgan & O'Leary, 2004).

There were several models of school culture in the literature that provided specific examples of important factors of a positive culture. These models provided examples of both new and experienced principals and how they could impact teacher satisfaction and help form a success based school culture (Alvy & Robbins, 2005; Jerald, 2006; Eilers & Camacho, 2007; Johnson & Donaldson, 2007; Wilson, 2007; Habegger, 2008).

.

Conclusion

Based upon the review of the literature it is evident that No Child Left Behind has validated the need for school reform to meet the rigorous mandates of the legislation. The literature is not rich in the area of specific behaviors that a principal can display that

change culture, outside of three primary areas: vision and mission, empowerment, and relationship building. Although principals are not specifically tasked with the role of remedying what ails public schools, they often find themselves in this role. Driven by the fact that a principal's behavior influences working conditions, satisfaction, and student success, cultural leadership becomes an important component of the principal's evaluation. It is incumbent upon principals to make cultural understanding a tool in their repertoire. It is also important to understand specific behaviors that influence satisfaction and student success and that those behaviors be validated as a means to help principals be successful in their own evaluation system. Specific guidelines and behavioral expectations can be provided that help principals be more successful in this area and help them provide leadership where it is the most important, in student success outcomes. This study addresses the gap in knowledge about specific guidelines and behavioral expectations for principals to be successful.

CHAPTER 3

Research Methodology

Introduction

The problem this study addressed was the possible relationship between specific actions of the principal and working conditions, satisfaction, and student success. The following research questions were explored:

1. Is there a relationship between school culture (with the important component of teacher satisfaction) and positive student outcomes?

2. Is there a relationship between principal behaviors and teacher satisfaction as a component of teacher working conditions and school culture?

3. Is there a relationship between specific principal behaviors that influence the work environment and improve student success factors?

In addition, the primary model that drove the research is outlined in figure 1 below:

Figure 1
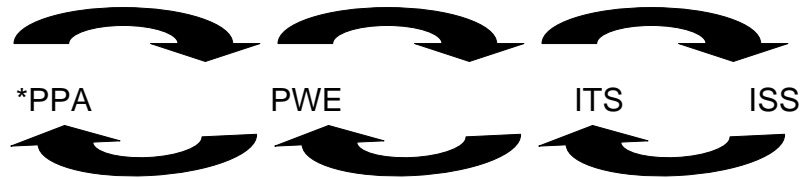
*PPA = Positive Principal Actions
PWE = Positive Work Environment
ITS = Increased Teacher Satisfaction
ISS = Increased Student Success

As outlined in Figure 1, it was proposed that a multi-linear, cyclical relationship existed between actions of the principal, work environment, satisfaction, and student success. It was also proposed that positive principal actions (as viewed by teachers), led to a positive work environment. This positive environment in turn led to an increase in teacher satisfaction, which led to increased student success. Once higher student success was attained, it would contribute to higher levels of teacher satisfaction and build the teacher's sense of efficacy. That increased satisfaction enhanced a more positive work environment and reinforced the principal in practicing those actions that positively influence the school's culture. Through these interrelated and interdependent concepts, a positive success-based school culture was developed.

The Power of the Case Study Method

The study used a multiple-case case study format in an attempt to answer the research questions. When selecting a research design, researchers must analyze their own orientation to the world and have a vision for how meaning is created in the world. According to Maxwell (2005), this view of the world leads to a fundamental belief about how people will understand the world. This understanding is called an epistemology.

Most qualitative research designs have a view of the world that is explained through an interpretivist epistemology. This view is founded upon the premise that meaning is constructed by the people who are involved in that world's reality (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2005). For this study, this view of the world and how humans construct meaning was valid for several reasons.

First, people know and believe what they can see, feel, and touch. The physical reality of the world allowed humans to interpret meaning based upon tangible inputs. In an educational environment, it stands to reason that teachers will see and perceive the world through the eyes of an educator and act accordingly. The variable in this equation was the teacher's working conditions, the actual working environment. This environment was manifested in culture, the meaning, beliefs and attitudes that could clearly be seen in the school building. With an interpretivist view, I attempted to capture these feelings, perceptions, and beliefs about the tangible world through the use of the case study.

In analyzing the findings of research, I used an interpretivist epistemology and developed a keen insight into the specific case through the understanding of the people and their world. For that reason, the case study method was a powerful look into that educator's world for the period of time that the study was conducted. While this time frame may just be a brief snapshot, great meaning was derived from that snapshot with the knowledge that the school's culture had been formed over a long period of time and would continue well after I was gone. Therefore, the case study method provided a much deeper view of the environment of the case and meaning could be validated through the combined view of the participants (Yin, 2003; Glesne, 2006).

Why Case Study Worked for this Dissertation

A case study approach worked for this dissertation because of the expected outcomes of this important research. Based upon the research proposal, I attempted to analyze principal actions and how they influenced working conditions, teacher satisfaction, and student success within the school culture. The case study method allowed me to fully understand these behaviors based upon their effect on the members of the individual cases. It was this effect on the members of the case that defined and sustained school culture.

This dissertation study also sought to explain principal behaviors so their importance could be analyzed for implementation and/or importation in public schools in North Carolina. By studying specific behaviors and how they affected school culture, I viewed data across multiple cases. This type of design was an attempt to identify and explain patterns across the data (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2005). It was through these patterns that conclusions were drawn as to what specific behaviors influenced culture and how these behaviors positively influenced student success. Based upon this intended goal, the research was necessary and added to the body of educational knowledge for future educators.

Finally, the case study method worked for this dissertation because of the purpose of this study. Central to any research design was what the researcher was attempting to understand (Maxwell, 2005). Data gathered in this qualitative manner provides a rich depth of knowledge not usually achieved through other methodological approaches. This richness and contextual depth affords the opportunity for clear understanding and transmission of knowledge about effective principal behaviors.

Utilization of Multiple Cases

When deciding upon the case study method as a means to address research questions, I was faced with numerous questions. The first of these was the case study protocol which guided everything that was done and kept the focus on the intended goals of the study (Yin, 2003). This protocol was evident very early in the study as a guiding force. The use of multiple cases was the hallmark of this study.

That first decision on whether to focus on a single case or multiple cases really drove the direction of this study. As I analyzed the literature relating to case study method and design, Robert Yin (2003) was generally recognized as the leading academic authority based upon his body of work on the topic. Yin did not appear to have a preference between the two methods, but proposed that multiple case methods are generally found to be stronger studies in the academic world unless the single case is focused on a rare or unusual event that may not be represented across multiple cases. Based upon my own protocol and orientation, the phenomena studied had the potential to be represented across multiple cases, so the use of multiple cases would add to the strength of the study.

A final decision that I faced when the multiple case format was chosen is exactly how many cases should be used in an effort to validate the points of the study (Yin, 2003). In any study, there must be an ending point for the presentation of the data. In qualitative inquiry, there are much data generated on any given case, so it was important to limit the number of cases, but also to identify a workable number so the strength of the findings would stand in the face of academic scrutiny.

In this study, I decided that the number of cases for the inquiry would be three. I chose to study schools at the elementary, middle, and high school level in three different school districts. The protocols listed below were used to identify the schools in the given geographic region of the study. Using multiple levels across the cases would provide a much more valuable insight into the answering of the research questions. It was assumed that the culture of the schools by nature of their serving multiple levels would be different and this difference would add to the dynamics of the data analysis.

Parameters of the Case Study

The selection of the proposed cases for the study was the most important parameter at the outset. The first variable in this selection process was geographic location. For the proposed study, specifically selected schools in the region surrounding Iredell County, North Carolina were used. The primary reason for the selection of this geographic area was convenience. This area was in close proximity to my residence of and led to a situation in which multiple visits were possible at the case sites for the gathering of data. Beyond being a convenience sample, this geographic area was also assumed by the researcher to be representative of northwest North Carolina schools.

The second variable in this selection process was the actual reason for the selection. Cases were initially selected based upon the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (TWCS) data. I analyzed survey results from 2006 and 2008 extensively [this standard state survey is administered every two years (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2008)] to identify specific schools in the proposed geographic region that realized significant gains in composite scores on the survey. The

composite score was an average of the scores in each of the five domains of the survey. It was assumed in this analysis that these gains were realized for some specific reason. The purpose of the study was to determine if these gains were based upon the specific behaviors of the principal that led to a gain in the survey.

For the purpose of this study, a "significant gain" was defined as a 5% increase in the school's composite score on the North Carolina Teacher Working Condition Survey. Overall, the state witnessed an average of a 1.7% gain in the survey composite score. Therefore, the 5% gain for the selected cases was approximately three times that of the state average increase. The summary TWCS findings for the selected schools in 2006 and 2008 are presented below in Figures 2, 3, and 4.

Figure 2
Cooper Elementary School TWCS Data

Year	Number	%	Time	F & R	Emp.	Lead.	PD	Comp.
2006	31 of 43	72%	3.02	3.57	3.5	3.78	3.51	3.48
2008	38 of 42	90.5%	3.75	4.35	3.04	4.34	4.23	3.94
								Up 11.68%

Figure 3
Mansfield Middle School TWCS Data

Year	Number	%	Time	F & R	Emp.	Lead.	PD	Comp.
2006	36 of 57	63%	2.69	3.08	2.78	3.03	2.97	2.91
2008	53 of 57	93%	3.69	4.1	3.0	4.14	3.75	3.74
								Up 22.19%

Figure 4
Eastwood High School TWCS Data

Year	Number	%	Time	F & R	Emp.	Lead.	PD	Comp.
2006	32 of 37	86%	3.35	3.4	3.66	3.88	3.39	3.54
2008	35 of 41	85.3%	3.69	4.0	3.5	4.46	3.82	3.89
								Up 9.00%

To explain these selections, Figure 2 shows the summary findings for the first

case study school, Cooper Elementary in Smythe County, North Carolina. The row

beginning with "31 of 43" told me that in 2006, 72% of Cooper Elementary teachers

actually took the TWCS. Looking further into that row for 2006, the individual domain

scores are presented in 'time', 'facilities and resources', 'empowerment', 'leadership',

and 'professional development'. The composite results, the average of the five domains,

are also included. The next row showed the same data for the 2008 administration of the

survey. At the bottom right, the increase in the composite score was calculated and

illustrated. For Cooper Elementary, the increase was 11.68%. Figures 3 and 4 were

interpreted in the same manner and showed that Mansfield Middle School (Figure 3) and

Eastwood High School (Figure 4) had increases of 22.19% and 9% respectively. Thus, all

three selected case schools were well above the 5% needed for inclusion in the study.

The third major parameter for the study was that the principal of the selected case

school had to be new or relatively new. For the purposes of the study, the principals

ideally were hired in April 2006 or thereafter. The TWCS was administered in March of

2006 and 2008. The reason for this parameter was straight-forward. It was assumed that

the significant increase in the school's TWCS composite score was influenced by the behaviors of the new principal.

However, it was acknowledged that this final parameter created a possible issue for the study. Therefore, I did ease this restriction to principals hired at the case school in April 2005 or thereafter. This factor was realized in just one of the case schools. It was therefore assumed that the lower composite score in 2006 was based upon the previous principal's leadership or the poor leadership practices of the new principal, since it took time for the new principal to develop positive practices that influenced school culture. Further, increases in 2008, were presumably based upon the new principal's behaviors which improved since the initial hire date. It is acknowledged in either case that the new principal's behavior that positively influenced the TWCS composite score in 2008 would be based in total on leadership from the onset of their tenure or improved practice from the onset of their tenure at the case school.

A fourth parameter that was reviewed was the staff selected for inclusion in the study. School culture went beyond just the administrator and the teaching staff. However, only the certified staff actually completed the TWCS and only the principal and the certified staff were used for the purposes of the study. Ideally, only teachers who were at the case school in both 2006 and 2008 would be included because they possibly would have completed the survey in both years. However, it was acknowledged that such a step would limit the scope of the case. Therefore, all teachers who were at the case school in at least 2008 were invited to participate. In two of the case schools, the principal had moved on to a new challenge at another school in the district. Therefore, it was not

feasible to have any new teachers included in the study as they were not familiar with the practices of the principal that were in place in 2008.

Interviewing Methodology

To the extent possible, focus group interviews were utilized to gather the qualitative data for this study. While no individual teachers were turned away as the data were gathered for the study, it was assumed that the synergy of a group of teachers would add to the richness of the data. There were two individual interviews with teachers and three individual interviews with school principals. Gathering the data in focus groups also made the teachers feel at ease and added to their convenience in providing data in an established group at an established time. There were several methodological advantages to using focus groups to gather data.

The selection of the participants in a focus group was very important because of common characteristics, knowledge, perceptions, and understanding on a given topic (DeMarrais& Lapan, 2004). In this study, by focusing solely on groups of teachers, I was able to capitalize on the collective knowledge of the group except in those two cases that an individual interview had to be utilized. This fact allowed me to provide a series of findings across multiple cases in a concise and understandable manner. As outlined by Gall, Gall, & Borg (2005), "because the respondents can talk to and hear each other, they are likely to express feelings or opinions that might not emerge if they are interviewed individually" (p. 26).

Ethics of the Research

Using focus groups either exclusively or in major part does create issues to consider. The major issue was the perception of the group about the interviewer's perceived bias in the collection of the data. If the group felt the data they were giving was going to be somehow compromised by the interests of the interviewer, the process may have been ineffective (DeMarrais & Lapan, 2004). This issue was easily overcome by the subject's informed consent before the data was gathered. It was important for potential participants to know that the data were safe and were going to be used for the sole intent of improving educational practice. Their participation was also voluntary in the interviewing stage. This issue was further reduced by the very nature of the case study method. Meaning and worth of the data were totally controlled by those who were providing the information.

A further issue was my own role as observer participant. Every attempt was made to not inject personal thoughts or ideology into the study. There was always the chance that I could have utilized personal biases or that the group may have perceived that I had. Such perceptions could have limited the confidence of the focus group in my intentions and in the validity for conducting the study. To my knowledge, this limiting factor did not happen, as the groups and individuals appeared free and open as they provided data. This limiting factor was further reduced in the two case studies where the principals had moved on which meant that the teachers did not have any risk associated with such a study. The previous principal was no longer supervising the teacher.

The principal was not involved in the focus group stage of interviewing. Data were gathered from the principal in individual interview sessions about their perceptions and opinions on their own behavior and what they felt they had done to influence school culture in a positive way. These data were used to inform the focus group interviews and provided guidance to me in the development of specific content-related questions for that specific case school. Allowing the leader to be involved in the focus group sessions would have limited the data that teachers were willing to provide. With the principal kept separate, teachers felt much freer to provide data, both good and bad, that have shaped the school's culture over the course of the principal's tenure.

Interview Protocol

Developing the interview protocol aligned to the research questions was a very important step in focusing the interviews toward gathering the intended data and making sure the sessions did not vary from the intended purpose. While specific questions did naturally arise as the interviews were conducted— questions to clarify and to expand on the knowledge of the case subjects— I started the process with the following questions that served as the initial set to guide understanding of the case school's culture and growth. The question set was used as an initial guide for both the individual session with the school leader and the focus group sessions with teachers. The questions served as a basis in understanding the school's culture and in understanding the behavior of the principal that influenced the school's student-success centered culture. The research was approved by the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to conducting the study.

Focus Group and Individual Principal Interview Questions

Research Question 1**:** Is there a relationship between school culture (with the important component of teacher satisfaction) and positive student outcomes?

1. How would you describe the culture in this school? In 2006? In 2008?

2. Do you feel students are successful or have a chance of success at this school? Why or why not?

3. Do you feel the culture at this school values student success? In 2006? In 2008?

Research Question 2**:** Is there a relationship between principal behaviors and teacher satisfaction as a component of teacher working conditions and school culture?

1. Why do you think there was such an increase in TWCS composite from 2006 to 2008?

2. What were the specific behaviors by the principal that led to increased satisfaction and/or improved the working conditions at the school? By TWCS Domain?

Research Question 3**:** Is there a relationship between specific principal behaviors that influenced the work environment and improved student success factors?

1. Do you feel that having a positive work environment influences student success? How so?

2. Do you feel that a principal can influence student success? How so?

In addition to the general questions above, the following questions were used solely with the principals and established historical context for his/her leadership at the school.

Additional Individual Principal Interview Questions

1. When did you come to the school?

2. What did you know about the school?

3. Were there any staff dynamics that you were aware of or became aware of at your school?

4. What was your leadership history and the history of leadership at this school?

5. Were you given a specific charge by the superintendent when you took over?

6. Were you aware of the TWCS scores for the school?

7. Did you have a plan to address specific issues with the TWCS scores?

8. If so, what did the plan entail?

9. Who was involved with the plan?

10. What was your timeline for addressing staff issues, if applicable?

11. In looking specifically at the results for this school (2006 and 2008 TWCS results provided by researcher), what did you do to influence the TWCS scores in each of the five domains?

Secondary Data Sources

Other documents that were reviewed in the study included ABC student performance results as outlined in the NC School Report Cards data for the individual schools, school-level aggregate attendance data, and school-level discipline data. Not all success data were collected and tracked in all schools. The specific documents reviewed by me are outlined in the specific case reports in Chapter 4. Through the use of the

multiple data sources, a clear picture of the school culture and student success

performance was derived for this analysis.

Data Collection Protocol

Before any information was collected, both the superintendent of the school

district and the specific principal being studied at the school were contacted. Specific

letters were sent to the superintendent (see Appendix A) and the principal (see Appendix

B) that outlined the study and the benefits of the study. Once permissions were granted,

specific plans were developed to visit the schools and get the data collections under way.

Two of the case sites provided a unique study opportunity because the principals who

were at the school in 2008 had moved on to a larger school in the same district. It

appeared that they had been asked to move to a bigger challenge because of their

previous success. This dynamic required additional communication with the new

principal at the target school.

Prior to collecting any information at the school level from certified staff, I

attended a faculty meeting at the school and discussed the proposed study and answered

any questions. A flier was prepared that asked faculty members for help and support as

the required data was collected (see Appendix C). Once the faculty meetings were

complete, specific dates were set for conducting focus group interviews at the school.

Principals were interviewed on a separate schedule and were not allowed to participate as

part of the focus group interview as outlined in the study parameters.

The three principal interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 1 hour and 30 minutes. The three principals were interviewed individually. The certified staff focus groups ranged from 23 minutes to 40 minutes. There were three individual interviews and 15 focus group interviews for a total of 43 staff at the three schools interviewed. Due to a reorganization of Cooper Elementary from a K-8 to a K-6 School, one focus group was conducted at Fontana Middle School, whose teachers taught at Cooper prior to the school's reorganization.

The focus group and principal interview data were collected with both a digital tape recorder and interviewer field notes for later analysis. This method of data collection was validated when the digital recorder malfunctioned in some of the interviews and detailed written back-ups were used to recreate the interview accurately in the transcripts. The data were transcribed for analysis with NVivo software and dominant key themes were identified as outlined in Chapter 4. Dominant behaviors of the principal were identified as they related to influencing working conditions, satisfaction, and achievement in a positive way for ultimate conclusions and discussion of the cases.

Data Analysis

The first step in data analysis was the development of a coding structure that aligned to the research questions. For the purposes of this study, there were three primary research questions which led to three overarching categories that managed the data. The major categories aligned to the research questions were as follows: 'school culture', 'principal behaviors and satisfaction', and 'work environment and outcomes'.

The second step in data analysis was the development of subcategories that placed specific comments within the larger framework described above. Figure 5 below illustrates the subcategories that emerged during data analysis.

Figure 5- Data Analysis Subcategories

Category	Subcategory
School Culture	Empowerment
	Satisfaction
	Learning-focused
	Parental involvement
	High expectations
	Vision/mission
Principal Behaviors and Satisfaction	Empowerment
	Communication
	Listening
	Learning-focused
	Values staff and time
	PLCs
	Staff development
	Respect
	Planning time
	Relationships
	Professionalism
	High expectations
Work Environment and Outcomes	Learning-focused
	Relationships
	Professionalism
	Vision/mission
	High expectations
	Communication

These subcategories were narrowed down once the statements of interview participants were coded to the categories in NVivo.

The third step in the process was entering the data into the NVivo software. The software accepted the transcripts as source documents and allowed me to catalogue all interview transcripts. Also during the process, nodes were created and aligned to the categories mentioned above. Parent nodes were created for the overarching categories and child nodes were created for the subcategories. All transcripts were then coded and assigned to the appropriate node based upon the topic of the individual comment. After this sequence was completed, dominant themes were evident in the data as discussed in chapter 4. To be considered dominant, the theme needed to have 15% of the references in that category. For example, if there were 100 interview comments in the principal and teacher satisfaction category, 15 comments would be needed in the engagement subcategory for engagement to be considered a dominant theme for the purposes of this study.

Concluding the Case Study Reports

A final change was made to mask the names of the individual principals, the schools, the school systems and their websites in the case study reports. Any mention of an individual's name, a school name, school system, or town is a pseudonym in the case study reports.

Upon completion of the case study reports, the superintendents and principals involved in the study were emailed copies of the individual case reports to check for accuracy of the data. Once receiving approval from both the Superintendent and the

principal, the case study reports were considered final. No substantive changes were made to the case study reports after this approval.

Chapter Summary

By using multiple cases, I was able to provide ample data for data analysis relative to the three research questions. A comprehensive interview protocol was developed for both focus group and individual principal interviews. The interview protocol was deployed across three schools in North Carolina that were identified by analyzing TWCS data from 2006 and 2008.

CHAPTER 4

Case Presentations and Findings Related to the Research Questions

Introduction

This study examined three schools in northwestern North Carolina that witnessed a significant increase in the composite score of the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey. The problem that this study addressed was the possible relationship between specific actions of the principal on working conditions, satisfaction, and student success. The following research questions were explored:

1. Is there a relationship between school culture (with the important component of teacher satisfaction) and positive student outcomes?

2. Is there a relationship between principal behaviors and teacher satisfaction as a component of teacher working conditions and school culture?

3. Is there a relationship between specific principal behaviors that influence the work environment and improve student success factors?

Qualitative Data

The school profiles of the three schools involved in the study illustrated that schools that have witnessed an increase in teacher satisfaction as measured by performance on the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey also have shown increases and improvement in indicators of student success. In looking at indicators of success, it was important to look beyond just proficiency levels on standardized state tests. Multiple factors were explored so that a clearer definition of success could be achieved. One focus of this study was to identify whether satisfaction led to increased student success. Since all three of the case schools witnessed significant increases in the TWCS, it was assumed that the teachers at the school were satisfied. As the data were analyzed, it appeared in the school profile that the students were as, or more, successful in many ways than they were in previous years.

The purpose of this study was to identify the specific behaviors of the principal that led to teacher satisfaction. This link was most important because increased teacher satisfaction could lead to increased student success. These qualitative data are presented for each case school below following the quantitative summary.

Focus group and individual interviews were used to gather qualitative data for this study. Themes emerged from these data that aligned to the three research questions that this study sought to address. Interviewees were engaged by me in answering the question sets that were developed. (see Chapter 3)

The first research question centered on the possible relationship between school culture and positive student performance. This question was based upon the assumption that there was a positive correlation between the two. Statements derived from individual

principal interview and focus group staff interview participants were organized as themes as follows:

    1. School culture influenced student performance when there was a vision/mission based on high expectations.

    2. School culture influenced student performance when it was sincerely learning-focused.

    3. School culture influenced student performance when it valued parental involvement.

    The second research question centered on the possible relationship between principal behaviors and school culture and teacher satisfaction. This question was based upon the assumption that a principal could influence school culture through personal action. Statements derived from interview participants were organized as themes as follows:

    1. The principal influenced satisfaction when he/she valued staff, with a particular emphasis on staff planning and time.

    2. The principal influenced satisfaction when he/she genuinely listened to and communicated with his/her staff.

    3. The principal influenced satisfaction when he/she empowered the staff to accomplish work for themselves, which helped the teachers build a sense of efficacy.

    4. The principal influenced satisfaction when he/she was visible in the school.

    5. The principal influenced satisfaction when he/she valued staff development and encouraged it through job embedded means, like the Professional Learning Community (PLC).

The third research question in the study centered on the possible relationship between the work environment and positive student outcomes. This question was based upon the assumption that a positive work environment should lead to higher levels of student success. Statements derived from interview participants were organized as themes as follows:

    1. The work environment influenced student outcomes when there was a high level of teacher satisfaction, driven by the principal in the school.

    2. The work environment influenced student outcomes when there were clearly established relationships, driven by the principal in the school.

    3. The work environment influenced student outcomes when there was a great amount of positive communication within that environment, driven by the principal in the school.

Case Site Profiles

A description of each site is provided. This study focused on principal behaviors that influence satisfaction and ultimately influence student success factors. A brief biography of the school is followed by a comprehensive analysis of student success data. Statements from interview participants are added for clarity where needed. The data were taken from school system websites, the North Carolina School Report Card, and the individual and focus group interviews. Utilization of multiple data sources allowed for dominant themes to emerge through triangulation of the data.

Cooper Elementary School Profile

Cooper Elementary School is a small K-6 school located in southern Smythe County, North Carolina. It is a part of the larger Smythe County Schools System. Cooper was a K-8 school at the completion of the 2008-09 school year. At that time, Smythe County Schools moved to a middle school model and opened Fontana Middle School for 2009-2010. With this change, the 7th and 8th grade students and teachers from Cooper Elementary made the move to the new school. The school system consisted of 14 schools, of which eight were elementary, two were middle, and four were high, including an alternative school and an early college (School System website masked, 2010).

The school had a total of 309 children in grades K-6. The average class size hovered around 19-20 students per class, and was in line with the other schools in the county and the state. The school had more books per student than the district average, and was comparable to the district in number of students per computer. All classes were taught by fully-licensed teachers, 95% of whom had met the federal designation of 'highly qualified'. Cooper boasted a low teacher turnover rate, and was above both district and state averages as far as teachers with 4-10 years of experience and 10+ years of experience (NC School Report Card, 2009).

Mrs. Kathy Mack was the principal at Cooper Elementary School during the primary dates of this study, from July 2005 to her appointment to Fontana Middle School, which opened at the beginning of 2009-2010. Mrs. Darlene Jenkins was the principal at the time that the data were collected. There was a time during that construction period that she was actually the principal of both schools. She admitted to making no changes that first year when she was appointed to Cooper in 2005. Therefore, the TWCS results

for 2006 would have been based upon the processes of the previous principal. According to Ms. Mack, the superintendent at that time was not really concerned about the TWCS results at the school. As noted by Mrs. Mack:

> I don't remember Dr. Daye being a stickler about the Teacher Working Conditions Survey. You know, you've got to get it up. You've got to do this or you've got to do that. I don't recall her taking that approach with it. Now I do remember her bringing me a copy of all of the scores in a red notebook. I remember us sitting there and talking about it, and I remember looking and comparing the scores and trying to figure out why was this low or why was this high. But, she wasn't dead-set that we needed to address the scores. And also, with being a first-year principal, that could explain why some things weren't as high as they could have been. I remember talking about the survey in some of my principal classes and researching it. So, I knew about the importance of the survey. (K. Mack, personal communication, February 15, 2010)

Cooper Elementary School Quantitative Profile

The student success indicators are presented below for Cooper Elementary School. The data are presented in tables so that a clear synthesis of their meaning can be explored. The data in the tables are from the North Carolina Schools report cards (NC School Report Card, 2009).

Table 1
Cooper Elementary School Grades 3-5 EOG

	Grade 3		Grade 4		Grade 5	
	Reading	Math	Reading	Math	Reading	Math
2005-06	73.9%	54.3%	67.3%	60.4%	84.3%	90.2%
2006-07	68.6%	54.9%	70.8%	64.6%	81.3%	62.5%
2007-08	41.7%	52.1%	67.4%	71.7%	38.0%	68.0%
2008-09	53.3%	73.3%	57.8%	73.3%	75.0%	84.1%

Table 1 shows the student testing data for Cooper Elementary School for grades 3 through 5 in reading and math for school years 2005 to 2009. In grade 3, reading scores declined in one year noticeably in 2007-08. This was a year in which the state re-normed the reading test. That re-norm effect was noticeable in many of the grade levels. After the re-norming, the school appeared to have recovered in 2008-09. In grade 3 math, there was improvement from 2005 to 2009.

In grade 4, reading was more stable and did not show a substantial drop during the re-norming year or overall. Scores were slightly lower than in 2005, but the drop was not as large as what was seen in the 3rd grade. Once again, math in grade 4 showed an increase from 2005 to 2009.

In grade 5, there was a noticeable drop in 2007-2008 due to the re-norming. The majority of this decrease was recovered by the next year. There was a decline in math from 2005-2006 to 2006-2007. Based upon the data, the school made gains and has grown in this area over the last three consecutive years.

Table 2
Cooper Elementary School Grades 6-8 EOG

	Grade 6		Grade 7		Grade 8	
	Reading	Math	Reading	Math	Reading	Math
2005-06	94.5%	89.1%	83.3%	62.5%	94.8%	75.9%
2006-07	88.6%	81.8%	84.7%	67.8%	81.3%	52.1%
2007-08	52.3%	68.2%	37.5%	66.7%	62.3%	66.0%
2008-09	60.9%	80.4%	48.0%	58.0%	51.0%	63.3%

In table 2, grade 6 reading was stable until the re-norming of 2007-2008. After that drop, the school performed much better in 2008-2009. Math in grade 6 also saw a decline after the 2007-08 school year. Once again, the school made a gain the following year.

In grade 7, reading saw the same trend as in the other grade levels. After the drop in 2007-2008, there was an increase in performance the following year. Also for grade 7, math performance was consistent over the years with only a slight decline from 2005 to 2009.

In grade 8, there was consistent decline in reading from 2005 to 2009. This subject and grade level was the only one in which a decline was noted in all four years without a corresponding increase at some point. In grade 8, math was more consistent. After a decline in 2006-2007, there was an increase the following year and consistent performance there after.

Table 3

Cooper Elementary School Overall EOG Composite

	Reading	Math
2005-06	83.7%	72.9%
2006-07	79.2%	63.8%
2007-08	49.8%	65.4%
2008-09	57.3%	71.7%

In Table 3, the overall student proficiency composite is presented. Overall, reading was consistent in the first two years and then dropped in 2007-2008. However, there was a corresponding increase correcting that drop in 2008-2009. The overall math numbers were more consistent. Whenever a drop occurred, it was quickly corrected and the overall percentage proficient from 2005 to 2009 has not changed a great deal. In fact, the school found a renewed focus under the leadership of Ms. Mack. As noted by one teacher at Cooper:

> I think it had been a long time since we had had an administrator that was coming in and was so focused on what the kids needed rather than what might have been staff-friendly. There were a lot of us that, in the beginning couldn't believe the things that we were doing that was different and new like parent nights, but it all ended up being geared toward the kids and their learning. Even though at first we were kind of bucking it, it ended up being something that was very successful. (personal communication, March 10, 2010)

Table 4

Cooper Elementary School Computer Skills Test

8th Grade Computer Skills	
2005-06	78.0%
2006-07	87.5%
2007-08	92.5%
2008-09	93.9%

In Table 4, the 8th grade computer competency test results are presented. There was a consistent steady growth in this competency test from 78% in 2005-2006 to 93.9% in 2008-2009. During this time, there was an increase in the number of computers in the school. As students became more accustomed to using these computers and as the staff focused on improving test scores, success in this area followed.

Table 5

Cooper Elementary School ABC Designation

	ABC Designation
2005-06	School of Progress - Expected Growth
2006-07	School of Progress - Expected Growth
2007-08	School of Progress - Expected Growth
2008-09	School of Progress - Expected Growth

The North Carolina Accountability, Basics, and Local Control (ABC) accountability program designation is presented in Table 5. During all four of the years,

the school maintained the designation as a school of progress and they met expected growth. Although the proficiency scores presented in Tables 1, 2, and 3 varied somewhat, it is important to note that expected growth was met across the different groups of students across the years. It may not be plausible to increase every year when working with different children each year. That is why, when examining success factors, more than just proficiency scores must be used.

Table 6
Cooper Elementary School AYP Results

	AYP	
2005-06	16 of 17	94%
2006-07	14 of 17	82%
2007-08	12 of 17	71%
2008-09	13 of 13	100%

In Table 6, Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets are illustrated. The school had a decrease in the number of overall targets. The school met a low of 12 of 17 targets in 2007-2008. At the end of the time period, Cooper met AYP by hitting on 13 of 13 AYP targets. This fact is important because it is AYP that the federal government looks to as the measure of success. It is important also in the fact that Cooper Elementary met the growth needs of all of its various populations. In other words, they were working for and attained success for more subgroups of children.

Table 7
Cooper Elementary School Attendance

	Attendance
2006-07	95.95%
2007-08	96.39%
2008-09	96.83%

In Table 7, the attendance for the school is illustrated. Cooper witnessed an

increase in all three years for the data that were available. Attendance for 2005-2006, Ms.

Mack's first year at the school, was not available. Attendance was a major leading

indicator for academic success. In short, if the students arre not in attendance, they may

not learn. The data showed that the school witnessed higher levels of student attendance

in each year of Ms. Mack's leadership.

Table 8
Cooper Elementary School Crime and Violence

Year	Acts of Crime or Violence	Short Term Suspensions	Long Term Suspensions
2005-06	0	5	0
2006-07	0	4	0
2007-08	3	6	0
2008-09	0	6	0

In Table 8, the overall behavior and discipline data are presented. As witnessed in

the data, during the four years presented, there were only three acts of crime or violence

and they all occurred in the same year, 2007-2008. That was corrected the following year with a return to zero acts of crime or violence. Also, there were consistently low numbers of short-term suspensions and no long-term suspension in any of the years studied. When asked about the discipline at the school, Ms Mack commented, "There really weren't any discipline issues at Cooper" (personal communication, February 15 2010). Further, Ms. Jenkins, the current principal at Cooper stated, "We don't really have discipline issues here, unless you're talking about gum or something like that" (personal communication, March 10, 2010)

Cooper Elementary School Qualitative Profile

Research Question 1

Is there a relationship between school culture (with the important component of teacher satisfaction) and positive student outcomes?

School culture influenced student performance when there was a vision/mission based on high expectations. High expectations were a common theme at Cooper Elementary School. According to Principal Kathy Mack:

> I think as the principal of the school you set the expectations for the staff and you set the expectations for the students. You have to make sure that everyone is following through with those expectations. And if someone is not following through with that then you take the proper steps to make sure it happens. We must set high expectations for ourselves and set the bar high. They need to know where that bar is so they can meet the expectations. Really, that is the key to success,

high expectations for all. (K. Mack, personal communication, February 2010)

Her teachers at Cooper agreed with her assessment of high expectations. High expectations were acknowledged as a necessity to keep the school moving forward. According to one veteran teacher, "The principal has to have high expectations, has to monitor them. It keeps people on their toes. Complacency can breed apathy" (personal communication, March 10, 2010).

School culture influenced student performance when it was sincerely learning-focused. Learning-focused has taken on many meanings in terms of schools. All schools should be learning-focused. According to the teachers at Cooper Elementary, there was a particular emphasis placed on the learning environment that led to a very positive culture.

Cooper Elementary School was learning-focused in that the principal made sure teachers had what they needed to work positively with the children. According to principal Kathy Mack:

> You know, the art teacher always had whatever the art teacher needed. They
>
> asked for it and I pretty much did what I could do to get it. They didn't ask for
>
> anything that was really out of the way. We were able to get SMART boards for
>
> them, we started doing that. I worked with the PTO to start that process and now
>
> every classroom has one. We tried to bring in more technology. (K. Mack,
>
> personal communication, February 15, 2010)

That attitude of doing whatever can be done to supply the teachers with what they needed was appreciated by the staff at Cooper Elementary. Added one teacher:

> I know for me that I was new to first grade and I was able to take Scholastic book

orders to her and she helped me get it. I didn't have any books for that grade

level, nothing. She helped me build my classroom library when I moved to first

grade. (personal communication, March 10, 2010)

All teachers who participated in the interviews acknowledged Ms. Mack's

willingness to get the teachers what they needed. One teacher stated, "Whenever you

needed anything, if it was for the classroom, she made sure you got it. I don't know how

she did it, but she got it. If it was for academics, she got it" (personal communication,

March 10, 2010). Another chimed in, "Ask and you shall receive" (personal

communication, March 10, 2010).

School culture influenced student performance when it valued parental

involvement. The teachers at Cooper Elementary felt the school was very conducive to

drawing in parental support. One teacher stated, "Overall, I would say that the school was

very inviting. Parents came in to the school and felt like they were wanted. It hadn't

always been that way. Along with that, I think it helped parents not to be afraid, to get

involved in the school" (personal communication, March 10, 2010).

Another teacher added, "I think they felt comfortable, too. And parents were able

to give feedback. They felt like they were included on what the school was doing. I think

the school was very student and parent-centered" (personal communication, March 10,

2010).

Research Question 2

Is there a relationship between principal behaviors and teacher satisfaction as a component of teacher working conditions and school culture?

The principal influenced satisfaction when he/she valued staff, with a particular emphasis on staff planning and time. This particular theme was very broad in nature. The concept of value was expressed in many different ways. At Cooper Elementary School, the principal was very cognizant of the influence her decisions had on her staff. As noted by Ms. Mack:

> What I'm saying is that I did those things because that is what I believed was in
> the best interest of my school, the teacher, the kids and learning in general. And,
> I'm glad to see that this was the outcome. I don't really like to say oh yeah I did a
> great job, I mean I'm not one of those types of people to do that, but when you
> show it to me this way it does make me feel good about what we did. I believe
> like you do that teachers respond better when they feel support. I would say that
> the teachers at Cooper would say that I cared about kids and the teachers and
> that I wanted to see students learn. They would say that I cared for them not only
> as a teacher, but as a person. I know I feel more empowered when I have the
> central office folks on my side and the superintendent believes in me and
> understands that I have other things beyond the operation of the school. (K. Mack,
> personal communication, February 15, 2010)

One area teachers at Cooper Elementary felt consistent support in was the area of planning time and scheduling. One teacher stated:

> Coming from my point of view, I know I didn't have to make my schedule anymore. It was made for me. That was nice. And I think when she made the schedule she tried to double up on planning time because they had back-to-back enhancements and that meant longer planning times for the teachers. (personal communication, March 2010)

As noted by another teacher:

> I think it was the first time we had common planning time. I mean, during the school day, and not after. And having that block of time really helped with planning and organizing and doing individual work one on one with some of the students. (personal communication, March 10, 2010)

> The master schedule was viewed as a positive step by all the staff members who participated in the interviews. They felt that it was a very positive action on the part of the principal and it led to satisfaction among the Cooper teaching staff. As stated by another teacher:

> She made it where we had common planning time and asked for our input. Again, that was the first time that the master schedule was put out. A lot of times, before that, it was just the first teacher that could make up the schedule, you know. And then hand it out to the rest of us. (personal communication, March 10, 2010)

> Another teacher summed up the feeling of Ms. Mack's valuing of their time through the master schedule by stating, "That was the best planning I ever had. I had good planning time. It was a good schedule" (personal communication, March 10, 2010).

The principal influenced satisfaction when he/she genuinely listened to and communicated with his/her staff. Closely aligned with the sense of value, teachers felt it was important for the principal to listen to them. Principals valued the opinion of the teachers and used feedback from staff in making decisions. At Cooper Elementary, this theme was apparent in the budget process. According to Kathy Mack:

> I worked with the School Improvement Team and told them that we got to create a budget and that we would look at what our needs were. The budget was only used to fill needs. We were going to use what money we have for teachers. I'm not really sure they had done that before. I had them tell us what was needed. The budget had purpose. We were actually able to fulfill what they wanted and actually spend less than what we would have spent if we had not asked what they needed. (K. Mack, personal communication, February 15, 2010)

According to teachers, they felt as if the principal listened and valued their opinion. It was a behavior they had not seen in some time at the school. Added one teacher, "When Ms. Mack came that was the first time that I have ever been asked if I needed anything in my classroom. Ever. And had worked there at that point for six years" (personal communication, March 10, 2010). It was important for the principal to capitalize on this feeling and follow through. In this case, it appeared that she did. As noted by another teacher:

> We actually got money allotted to us for supplies in our classroom, which had never happened before. I thought that was the greatest thing ever. She was very open with the budget and how much money was available and what we could spend it on. It wasn't strictly I'm going to make all these decisions and I'm going

to buy what I think we need. It was definitely input from teachers. (personal

communication, March 10, 2010)

The principal influenced satisfaction when he/she empowered the staff to

accomplish work for themselves, which helped the teachers build a sense of efficacy.

Having the principal trust the teacher to make decisions for their own students was a clear

desire shared by the teachers. At Cooper Elementary, the principal identified key staff to

place into leadership roles. She stated, "I had key staff members that I believed, still do

believe, that were tremendous leaders on that staff and could motivate other staff

members. I tried to put them in empowering roles…I encouraged them" (K. Mack,

personal communication, February 15, 2010).

The teachers at Cooper felt they were also empowered to make decisions that

influenced their classroom. According to one teacher:

There was nobody dictating to us, we were making the decisions that affected our

own students. We did what we felt was best. And she would come in and she

would want to see what we were doing and why we thought that was important.

She was very receptive. I remember her saying, "I'm for you trying different

things. Whatever works for you. If it works and it's all about kids learning good.

If it doesn't work then try something different. Take a risk." (personal

communication, March 10, 2010)

The teachers appreciated the attitude of the principal that they should try new and

different things. They found it to be very empowering. When asked about Ms. Mack's

exhorting of staff to try new things, one teacher added, "She says that still. If you try

something and you fall flat on your face then you can get up and try something again. Try something else, you're learning by falling on your face" (personal communication, March 10, 2010).

The principal influenced satisfaction when he/she was visible in the school. It was important for the principal to be available and to be seen in the school during the school day. At Cooper Elementary, if anything were going to happen during the day, the principal wanted to be the first there. She wanted the staff and the students to see her and feel her presence in the building. As noted by Ms. Mack:

> Well I have always believed it is important to be out and be visible in the school. One, I want to be where things are happening. If you have a bunch of kids in the Cafeteria, I should be down there where they are because that's where things are happening. And so, I tried to be there when something happened. (K. Mack, personal communication, February, 15 2010)

The principal influenced satisfaction when he/she valued staff development and encouraged it through job-embedded means, like the Professional Learning Community (PLC). Teachers felt valued when time and effort was placed into staff development. The efforts the principal put forth to develop staff influenced the satisfaction of the teacher. At Cooper Elementary, the principal used both in-house professional development and gave the flexibility to staff to go to outside conferences. According to Ms. Mack:

> One thing that I tried to stick to was if you went to a conference when you came back you needed to come back and share with everyone else. We also provided

professional development at the school with those staff members that were

leaders that we talked about earlier. We tried to send people to the elementary

school conference, the middle school conference, the math conference, you know

those big conferences, really tried to get those covered. I also required them to be

up on current practices. I tried to keep them up on new and fresh ideas. We did

summer book studies to keep them engaged and learning. We had staff

development and year-long book studies too. (K. Mack, personal communication,

February 15, 2010)

The teachers at Cooper agreed with Ms. Mack's efforts to give them staff

development. As stated by one teacher, "We could go to workshops if we needed to.

If it was content-related, she would let you go. If it would benefit me, that was great. She

wanted you to go and bring it back for others" (personal communication, March 10,

2010). They appreciated her openness to getting them whatever training they needed. As

noted by another teacher, "She was always open to sign us up" (personal communication,

March 10, 2010).

Cooper Elementary recently moved to a new model of professional development,

utilizing Professional Learning Communities. According to the teachers, this move was a

step in the right direction. The PLC model led to a feeling of empowerment at the school

as well. One teacher stated, "I think she tried to pull more people into leadership roles.

With the Professional Learning Communities, some of us have roles in that and that's the

first time that some of us have had roles at all" (personal communication, March 10,

2010).

Research Question 3

Is there a relationship between specific principal behaviors that influence the work environment and improve student success factors?

The work environment influenced student outcomes when there was a high level of teacher satisfaction, driven by the principal in the school. All teachers were constant on one theme— that happy teachers made a difference in student success. The teachers at Cooper Elementary certainly felt that way. In fact, to one it did not really matter if a principal was there at all. The teacher stated:

> If the teachers are not happy, I know they will do what they are supposed to do. Teachers do what they are supposed to do whether the principal is here or not. As a mother, I am more concerned with my son's teacher than I am any principal at any school. I think it has to have an influence. I mean, if they are happy they are going to do their job better. (personal communication, March 10, 2010)

In discussing the effect of satisfaction on job performance, another teacher stated:

> That goes with any job. If you are happy with that job then you're going to go above and beyond, maybe you will do a little bit better. It makes you happier to get up in the morning and go to work. If somebody says here I need this by three, you know if you're happy, it helps you do it better. (personal communication, March 10, 2010)

The work environment influenced student outcomes when there were clearly established relationships, driven by the principal in the school. The teachers felt there

needed to be a positive relationship developed with the principal and the principal needed

a positive relationship with the students. At Cooper Elementary, principal Kathy Mack

stated:

> I stressed to the staff a lot about positive relationships and tried to maintain a
>
> positive relationship with them. At Cooper, we were working with the rural
>
> poor. A lot of these kids didn't have support at home. We tried to ensure that
>
> support first. You can do so much more when you have that positive relationship.
>
> I think relationship building was a positive thrust at the school. (K. Mack,
>
> personal communication, February 15, 2010)

The teachers at Cooper felt they had a very positive relationship with the

principal. This relationship manifested itself in numerous ways, from gift-giving to the

principal's understanding of life's circumstances. One teacher noted, "She was always

giving us little gifts all the time. Mugs, laptop carriers, t-shirts, flash drives. We felt

appreciated I guess you would say" (personal communication, March 10, 2010). Another

added, "If you had to leave early, for a doctor's appointment or whatever, you could just

go in the office and tell her. She understood. It was the little things like that" (personal

communication, March 10, 2010).

The teachers knew building the relationship also extended to the children. As one

teacher noted, "You know, the chief cared. She would always be down in the lunch room

talking to the kids. Stuff like that influences the students" (personal communication,

March 10, 2010).

The work environment influenced student outcomes when there was a great amount of positive communication within that environment, driven by the principal in the school. The school was very concerned about the communication skills of the leader and felt that open, honest communication was a must to ensure student success. The teachers at Cooper appreciated the communicative style of their principal. As noted by one teacher, "I think there was better communication. We shared ideas all the time. She listened to us. If it benefitted children she was willing to give it a try. She was very open and honest" (personal communication, March 10, 2010).

That communication was also directed toward the parents as well. As stated by one teacher, "Communication picked up more. We had a weekly agenda. We had the newsletters that went home with the students that had all of the assemblies and stuff in it – the fundraisers and such" (personal communication, March 10, 2010). When asked what worked really well at the school, another teacher said:

Communication. You always know what's going on. Either it's on the agenda or it's on the whiteboard, you talked about it , and she's told you about it, you always know what's happening. And it's very black and white. You know there are no gray areas in communication with her. We don't need any of the fluff. We don't need any reason, tell me why and we'll take care of it. She doesn't get caught up in the minutia. (personal communication, March 10, 2010)

Cooper Elementary School Summary

By all measures of student success available, Cooper Elementary School was successful. There were standard variations in proficiency scores across the grade levels in

reading and math as was evidenced in the data tables. However, the school was an increasing success under the leadership of Ms. Mack. The 8th grade computer skills test showed constant improvement. The school met expected growth every year, and most importantly made AYP in her last year at the school, something that had not been done up until her final year there. Attendance consistently improved while she was there and there were few discipline issues at the school. When taking into account the 11.68% increase in the TWCS at Cooper Elementary School, Ms. Mack's leadership had a positive effect on teacher satisfaction and student success indicators.

Mansfield Middle School Profile

Mansfield Middle School is a small 6-8 school located in northern Jamestown County, North Carolina. It is a part of the larger Jamestown School System. Mansfield was located in close proximity to its feeder school, Mansfield Elementary and the school it fed, Mansfield High School. All three are located in the small town of Sullivan, North Carolina. The school system consists of 38 schools, of which 22 are elementary, eight are middle, and eight are high, including an alternative school and an early college (School System website masked, 2010).

At the time of this study, the school had a total of 561 children in grades 6-8. The average class size hovered around 19 students per class, and was smaller than the other schools in the county and the state. The school had more books per student than the district average and was comparable to the district in number of students per computer. Most classes (83%) were taught by fully-licensed teachers, and 100% of classes were taught by teachers who had met the federal designation of 'highly qualified'. Mansfield

Middle had moderate teacher turnover and was above both district and state averages for

teachers with 0-3 years of experience and 4-10 years of experience (NC School Report

Card, 2009).

The principal at the school at the time data were gathered was Mr. Allen Collins.

Mr. David McDonald was the principal at Mansfield Middle School during the primary

dates of this study, from January 2007 until his appointment to Mansfield High School in

July of 2009. Mr. McDonald was not really aware of any issues with the TWCS upon

taking the helm at the school. His primary focus was on moving the school forward to

focusing on student success. He admitted that he had to facilitate a few changes during

that first semester in the school to get things moving in the direction that he needed to

ensure student success for all children. As noted by Mr. McDonald:

> I always start with two things. I look at things as loose/tight. If that makes sense
>
> to you. I give them some freedom to grow but I have a very clear structure. That
>
> is an important piece of building a positive climate. You have to have a certain
>
> clarity of expectations. Not everyone agreed with me. In fact, if I remember
>
> correctly, we lost three teachers during my first semester. They did not meet my
>
> expectations and they did not want to. They decided to leave all on their own. We
>
> lost several more that summer. Basically, I looked at it like the people who
>
> needed to leave just left. Now, the superintendent was kind of worried. But I
>
> said, "Just give me time, it will be fine." Anyway, I went and made all new hires.
>
> There was a sense of entitlement to those jobs here. The staff had an attitude that
>
> no one wants to be here anyway. So, I can do whatever. I had to work on that first.
>
> I filled in those spots quickly with some good people. Half of them were BT's

(beginning teachers). I liked that though because they brought in a lot of

enthusiasm and creativity. (personal communication, February 15, 2010)

Mansfield Middle School Quantitative Profile

The student success indicators are presented below for Mansfield Middle School.

The data are presented in tables so that a clear synthesis of their meaning can be

explored. The data in the tables are from the North Carolina Schools report cards (NC

School Report Card, 2009).

Table 9
Mansfield Middle School Grade 6-8 EOG

	Grade 6		Grade 7		Grade 8	
	Reading	Math	Reading	Math	Reading	Math
2005-06	71.3%	44.1%	77.8%	38.4%	78.2%	36.4%
2006-07	71.2%	50.0%	75.6%	44.1%	81.1%	41.1%
2007-08	39.0%	47.8%	37.8%	51.6%	36.4%	39.4%
2008-09	53.4%	63.5%	43.6%	58.1%	46.9%	62.6%

As indicated in Table 9, the grade 6 reading scores were adversely affected by the

state's re-norming of the reading test in 2007-2008. The scores rebounded immediately in

the year following the re-norming. In grade 6 math, there was growth from 2005 to 2009,

which was Mr. McDonald's final year.

In grade 7, much the same trend was apparent as was witnessed in grade 6. There

was a sharp decline in 2007-2008, which was immediately followed by an improvement

in 2008-2009. Grade 7 math also showed a noticeable improvement across the years from 2005 to 2009.

In grade 8, reading saw the largest decline of any area of the school during the years studied. As with the other grade levels at the school, there was a noticeable increase in the scores in 2008-2009 to account for some of the decline. Math in grade 8 also saw the same noticeable increase as seen in the other grade levels from 2005 to 2009.

Table 10
Mansfield Middle School Overall EOG Composite

	Reading	Math
2005-06	75.9%	39.5%
2006-07	75.9%	45.1%
2007-08	37.7%	46.2%
2008-09	48.0%	61.4%

In Table 10, the overall composite scores for Mansfield Middle School are presented. The overall proficiency scores mirror the effects seen in the individual grade levels. In 2007-2008, there was a decline in the reading scores due to re-norming of the test by the state. This decline was followed by a corresponding increase the following year in 2008-2009. During the time of this study, from 2005 to 2009, there was an increase in math proficiency scores in the school. According to some staff members, Mr. McDonald gave the freedom to make crucial decisions that influenced learning and corrected learning gap areas as was needed. Improvement was a team effort. As noted by one teacher:

Professionalism was at a good point when he got here. You weren't allowed to be

here if you weren't professional. I think this goes along more with empowerment,

but I think teachers were given opportunities to advance and grow and use their

time wisely and make their own decisions, their own calls in planning. And I

didn't see it being used incorrectly. Teachers were planning and collaborating and

working together. (personal communication, March 2, 2010)

Table 11
Mansfield Middle School Computer Skills Test

8th Grade Computer Skills	
2005-06	53.9%
2006-07	75.7%
2007-08	67.0%
2008-09	72.4%

In Table 11, the 8th grade computer competency skills test data are presented.

There was a slight decline in the test in 2007-2008, but the scores recovered in 2008-

2009. The scores showed an increase from 2005 to 2009, while the highest score came in

2006-2007 when Mr. McDonald first arrived.

Table 12

Mansfield Middle School ABC Designation

	ABC Designation
2005-06	Priority School - Expected Growth
2006-07	School of Progress - Expected Growth
2007-08	Priority School - High Growth
2008-09	Priority School - Expected Growth

In table 12, the data for the state's ABC Designation are presented. The school has remained a state priority school for three of the four years of the study. Of special note is Mr. McDonald's first year at the school, 2006-2007, when the school was designated a school of progress and met expected growth. Also, the following year, which would have been his first full year in the school, the school was once again a priority school, but they met high growth. In the latest year, 2008-2009, the school continued to be a priority school but they made expected growth. It was important to note that, despite the fact that proficiency scores of the schools will fluctuate, the school continued to meet state growth expectations. In one year (2007-2008), those growth expectations were exceeded.

Table 13

Mansfield Middle School AYP Results

	AYP	
2005-06	14 of 21	67%
2006-07	15 of 21	71%
2007-08	12 of 21	57%
2008-09	19 of 21	90%

In Table 13, the AYP targets for Mansfield Middle School are presented. There has been some variation on the number of targets that have been met per year. The school met a low of 12 of 21 targets in 2007-2008. But, in the latest year that the data are available, 2008-2009, the school met 19 of 21 targets. That is the highest percentage noted in any of the years presented in the table. This information was significant because it showed that the school was doing a better job of meeting the needs of its diverse population as defined by the No Child Left Behind legislation.

Table 14

Mansfield Middle School Attendance

	Attendance
2006-07	94.12%
2007-08	93.54%
2008-09	94.47%

In Table 14, the attendance data for the school are presented. The attendance percentage for the final year available, 2008-2009, showed an increase over Mr. McDonald's first year in 2006-2007. There was a slight dip during the middle of his tenure, but it was clear that more students were in attendance at school at the conclusion of his tenure than they were when he started.

Table 15
Mansfield Middle School Crime and Violence

Year	Acts of Crime or Violence	Short Term Suspensions	Long Term Suspensions
2005-06	7	83	1
2006-07	7	60	0
2007-08	7	77	1
2008-09	1	68	0

In Table 15, the overall discipline data are presented. During the time period of the study, the number of acts of crime or violence was consistent with a total of seven per year until 2008-2009. In 2008-2009, the number plummeted to one. Also, the short-term suspensions were reduced from 2005 to 2009, as were the long-term suspensions.

Mansfield Middle School Qualitative Profile

Research Question 1

Is there a relationship between school culture (with the important component of teacher satisfaction) and positive student outcomes?

School culture influenced student performance when there was a vision/mission based on high expectations. High expectations were a common theme with the teachers and staff at Mansfield Middle School. According to principal David McDonald, "We valued high expectations. We had a clarity of purpose" (personal communication, March 2, 2010).

The teachers felt that value and that clarity of purpose as well. They focused and strived as hard as they could to meet the needs of all students in the school. One teacher stated:

> We knew what we needed to do to be successful. We knew the curriculum and his expectations …Now just go in the classroom and do what was expected of you. You guys know what you are supposed to do, now go and do what you are paid to do with a spirit of excellence. He used to always have this saying, to get the good out of them. You know, you get the best you can get out of them, then keep moving. (personal communication, March 2, 2010).

School culture influenced student performance when it was sincerely learning-focused. The teachers at Mansfield Middle school felt there was a learning-focused attitude at their school. That attitude for a learning climate was set by the leader, David McDonald. When asked about the leadership of the school, one teacher noted:

> I think good leaders lead by example. If you expect success then you need to radiate that to your teaching staff. And once that's radiated to your teaching staff, you expect that radiates to the students. You expect that because they are in the

trenches. If you do right by your staff and you check in on them and you do right

by them and you treat them as professionals, then they are going to go into the

classroom and you have empowered them and they are going to go in there and do

their best for you. Once those expectations are in place, and they are clear and

they are concise and they are conducive to learning, that's all going to go to the

classroom. And you're going to keep your staff and they're going to get better

every year. You are working together with them and the kids are going to benefit.

(personal communication, March 2, 2010)

Another teacher added:

They set the climate for their building. If you set a climate that is friendly and

safe, a climate that is conducive to learning in different styles and in different

ways, it is going to help in student learning. Mr. McDonald gave those freedoms

to his staff. He set that climate. (personal communication, March 2, 2010)

Another teacher summed up his thoughts on Mr. McDonald's leadership and

learning focus as he stated:

Yes, I have always believed in leadership. They are the head. Whatever is in the

head is going to show up in the body. If you have a leader that is adamant about

learning, he is going to want what's best for you. And in turn, you're going to

want what's best for your students. Whatever you need, he's going to get it for

you. That was Mr. McDonald. (personal communication, March 2, 2010)

School culture influenced student performance when it valued parental

involvement. At Mansfield Middle School, getting parents involved was a school priority.

When asked if students had a chance for success at the school, it was clear that chance came through the involvement of the school's parents. According to principal David McDonald:

> We treated parents with respect. We capitalize on that, we got them into the building. That leads to success. You know I have a coaching background. I showed the same care and the same passion to everyone at the school. We want to win. It's very dynamic when you have kids and teachers that want to be there. That's what we had when I left. So, yes they had a chance of success. It was a successful school. Parent participation was higher than it had ever been. That buy-in from teachers came with those parents. (D. McDonald, personal communication, February 18, 2010)

Research Question 2

Is there a relationship between principal behaviors and teacher satisfaction as a component of teacher working conditions and school culture?

The principal influenced satisfaction when he/she valued staff, with a particular emphasis on staff planning and time. This particular theme was very broad in nature. The concept of value was expressed in many different ways. The value for staff and time can be seen through the dialogue at Mansfield Middle School. According to the principal, the staff valued their after-school time as much as their time during the day. For that reason, he focused on getting the necessary business of running the school over and done with during the day. According to principal David McDonald:

We met with grade-level PLC's. That's so easy at the middle school. You do your

professional development 1-2 days per week. I've never been big on meeting after

school. We did it during their planning. I know they would rather do it that way. I

guess that helped. (D. McDonald, personal communication, February 18, 2010)

The teachers were appreciative of the fact that fewer meetings were taking place.

As noted by one teacher:

We had fewer meetings. And when we did have meetings they seemed to be

longer. But, teacher's time is really valuable, so when you don't have as many

meetings, that helps. The turnover rate decreased so we were here longer, we

knew each other so our collaborative time was better. So we did a lot of that.

Having pointless meetings set up where administration watches over your

shoulder was a thing of the past. (personal communication, March 2, 2010)

The teachers felt that Mr. McDonald valued them and their time. This value of

time was shared by many staff members as it related to meetings and personal time.

According to one staff member, less time for after school meetings was especially

appreciated, "He did have considerably less meetings after school. That was true. There

was more time after school" (personal communication, March 2, 2010). This sentiment is

further encapsulated by the following statement from a teacher:

You knew when the meetings were going to take place. You knew about how

long you were going to be there. You knew they were going to last about an hour

and a half on occasion. There was a schedule and there was hardly ever anything

scheduled after school which was nice. We have long hours anyway. We have

lives after school and I think a good administrator recognizes that. Our jobs are

important, these kids are important, the vision and mission of the school are

important. We don't forget that, but we do know that having a family is priority

one. I think Mr. McDonald recognized that and he had a family and was a family

man. So, he allowed teachers a little more freedom and there was more gray area.

(personal communication, March 2, 2010)

The principal influenced satisfaction when he/she genuinely listened to and

communicated with his/her staff. Closely aligned with the sense of value, teachers felt it

was important for the principal to listen to them. Principals should have value for the

opinion of the teacher and should use feedback from staff in making decisions. The

teachers at Mansfield Middle School really felt the principal listened to them. When they

felt that the principal listened to them, they felt they were supported and they could help

others, adding to their sense of empowerment. As noted by one teacher:

Mr. McDonald was a good listener. I think if you came to him and said this is an

area that I'm struggling in, he would try and get you some help. I had issues with

keeping up with my paperwork, so he paired me up with someone to help me

grow there. I'm going to get the good out of you he would say. He paired me up

and I got better. So much in fact that before he left he made me the department

chair. It was like a big transformation. That empowered me so that now I could

empower others to improve. That is what he was really good at. He would

empower you not so much for your benefit but so you could benefit others. That's

just great leadership in my opinion. (personal communication, March 2, 2010)

The teachers felt that he would seek out and ask for the opinion of others as well. They felt Mr. McDonald exhibited sound leadership by not always waiting for others to volunteer opinions. As stated by one teacher, "One thing that I liked about his leadership was that he asked our opinion, instead of saying this is how it's going to be. This is how I'm going to have it done. He always involved us first" (personal communication, March 2, 2010). This feeling also extended to students and parents. Another teacher continued the thought by saying, "And considered the opinion. And incorporated a lot of our ideas. He didn't seem threatened by ideas from staff. He seemed to welcome it. And from parents and students" (personal communication, March 2, 2010)

The principal influenced satisfaction when he/she empowered the staff to accomplish work for themselves, which helped the teachers build a sense of efficacy. Having the principal trust the teacher to make decisions for their own students was a clear desire shared by the teachers. The teachers at Mansfield likened the empowerment to choose how they wanted to teach to freedom. According to one teacher, "He allowed the teachers to teach, to choose how to do it. He gave the teachers freedoms that just weren't there before. Things just loosened up quite a bit and the kids sensed it too. I think it was a very positive thing" (personal communication, March 2, 2010).

By empowering teachers, a sense of efficacy and professionalism was built. As stated by one teacher, "We met on our own, we planned together, we were the ones that did it rather that it being dictated to us. We decided on things rather than having it all set for us. I think people were a lot happier because they felt like they were professionals" (personal communication, March 2, 2010)

The principal influenced satisfaction when he/she was visible in the school. It was important for the principal to be available and to be seen in the school during the school day. The teachers at Mansfield Middle School felt Mr. McDonald was positive in being visible in their school. According to one teacher:

I think he was a real positive leader. The atmosphere was always real positive in the school. People were happy to be here. People were smiling, students included. We enjoyed coming to work, really. We were happy and that is important. And he had a really strong work ethic. He wasn't the kind of principal that you saw in his office all the time hiding. He was out and about and you were always welcome if you had an issue that you needed to talk with him about. (personal communication, March 2, 2010)

The principal influenced satisfaction when he/she valued staff development and encouraged it through job-embedded means, like the Professional Learning Community (PLC). At Mansfield Middle School, staff development had also been a priority of the school. They also utilized the PLC model as a means to provide needed staff development. According to principal David McDonald, "We met with grade-level PLCs. That's so easy at the middle school. You do your professional development one to two days per week." (personal communication, February 18, 2010).

According to teachers, the school had always been friendly for staff development for teachers. As stated by one teacher:

This school has always been a learning laboratory. If you want to learn how to

teach here, you can. I think we've had excellent professional development from the administrators that I've worked with, Mr. McDonald included. They seem to pinpoint the problem and use the data and it's addressed. That's been good. (personal communication, March 2, 2010)

Having that professional development at the school level in PLCs was appreciated by the staff, however, having flexibility to take some outside professional development is appreciated as well. A good balance was needed according to some teachers. As noted by another teacher:

The professional development was brought in. We got credit for our grade level meetings. We were encouraged to take professional development. He always went to the Teacher Academy. There were a number of teachers that went with him and they would share that knowledge when they came back. (personal communication, March 2, 2010)

Research Question 3

Is there a relationship between specific principal behaviors that influence the work environment and improve student success factors?

The work environment influenced student outcomes when there was a high level of teacher satisfaction, driven by the principal in the school. All teachers were constant on one theme— that happy teachers made a difference in student success. The principal at Mansfield Middle School felt that it was important to keep teachers satisfied in order to

make positive changes at the school. It was through the morale of the staff that growth

was able to happen. As stated by principal David McDonald:

Students wanted to be involved. Everyone grew. Academics grew, athletics grew,

because kids were eligible to participate now. That builds morale. I always tell my

teachers we have to get the good out of them. And I think we did. With that

morale, people feel good. They are part of something important and they don't

feel like they're beat up by the job anymore. The whole school improved. You

just got to keep the ball rolling. (D. McDonald, personal communication,

February 18, 2010)

The teachers at Mansfield Middle School were emphatic that excitement and

enthusiasm was a 'must' for reaching the students at the middle school grade level.

Satisfaction was at the core of that enthusiasm. As stated by one teacher:

I think when teachers are given the freedom to explore how they want to teach,

rather than being told how to teach and what to teach, I think you build a certain

sense of excitement. When a teacher has excitement, when you're in that

classroom and you have excitement, the students can sense that. They can sense

when you are happy, they can sense when you are sad. They can sense when you

are uninterested in what you are teaching. They can sense when you are boiling

over with excitement. They can pick up on that. So, when you're excited, that

definitely permeates within the students. (personal communication, March 2,

2010)

All teachers at the school agreed with that sentiment. One teacher summed up the

thoughts on teacher satisfaction well by saying, "I think it makes all the difference in the

world. And it creates more ownership in the whole school. I think it makes students and teachers take more pride in the school and glad to be a part of the school" (personal communication, March 2, 2010).

The work environment influenced student outcomes when there were clearly established relationships, driven by the principal in the school. The staff at Mansfield Middle School also understood there needed to be a positive relationship with the principal. According to one teacher:

> If you do right by your staff and you check in on them and you do right by them and you treat them as professionals, then they are going to go into the classroom and you have empowered them and they are going to go in there and do their best for you. (personal communication, March 2, 2010)

When asked if the principal could influence student success, one staff member felt building a relationship with students was the one key way the principal could influence student success. This teacher stated:

> I think the principal can do that by empowering teachers and believing that they are good, and that they are there to teach and let them do it. Let them be good with the students. And I think the students see that. And just seeing the students in the hall and saying "Hi, how are you doing? How has your day been?" That is another direct influence. McDonald did that a lot. (personal communication, March 2, 2010)

The work environment influenced student outcomes when there was a great amount of positive communication within that environment, driven by the principal in the school. Mansfield Middle School was also very concerned about the communication skills of the leader and felt that open, honest communication was a must to ensure student success. At Mansfield Middle School, the teachers understood the value of good communication. According to the teachers there, it was important that everyone was headed in the same direction. According to one teacher, "The principal sets the tone. If we are all on the same page, if we are all heading toward the same targets, then I feel like we have higher results" (personal communication, March 2, 2010).

Mansfield Middle School Summary

By all measures of student success available, Mansfield Middle School was successful. There were standard variations in proficiency scores across the grade levels in reading and math as was evidenced in the data tables. However, the school was an increasing success under the leadership of Mr. McDonald. The computer skills competency test scores in 8th grade increased during his tenure. The school met at least expected growth every year under his leadership and made high growth in 2007-2008. By the end of Mr. McDonald's tenure, the school met more AYP targets than had been met previously and closed to within two targets of making AYP. Attendance was better when he left than it was when he arrived. Also, the discipline has remained low and the incidents of crime or violence fell to almost zero this past year. When taking into account the 22.19% increase in the TWCS at Mansfield Middle School, it was clear that Mr.

McDonald's leadership had a positive effect on teacher satisfaction and student success indicators.

Eastwood High School Profile

Eastwood High School is a small 9-12 school located in southwestern Monroe County, North Carolina. It is a part of the larger Eastwood City Schools system. Eastwood High School and Eastwood Middle School are located at the same site in the city of Eastwood, but maintained distinctly different schools. The Eastwood City Schools system consists of three schools of which one was elementary, one was middle, and one was high (School System website masked, 2010).

At the time of this study, the school had a total of 379 children in grades 9-12. The average class size was around 18 students per class and was very comparable to state averages. The school had fewer books per student than the district average and was better than the district in number of students per computer. Most classes (97%) were taught by fully-licensed teachers, and 100% of classes were taught by teachers who had met the federal designation of 'highly qualified'. Eastwood High School had a low teacher turnover rate and was above the state average for teachers with 10+ years of experience (NC School Report Card, 2009).

Mr. Matt Boyd was the principal at Eastwood High School when the data were collected and was the principal there during the primary dates of this study. He had served as an assistant principal at the school prior to taking a principalship in another county. He returned as principal at Eastwood High in July 2007. He was not aware of any particular issues with the TWCS upon taking the position. He had realized that no matter

what happened he had some big shoes to fill at the school, primarily those of the principal

who had trained him a few years prior. As noted by Mr. Boyd when asked about the

leadership history of the school:

> We had been pretty fortunate. The principal prior to me getting here came from
>
> the eastern part of the state and had been here three years. Prior to that there was a
>
> gentleman who was here for four years before that. And he was somebody who
>
> was highly revered and highly respected and someone who really taught me a lot.
>
> (M. Bryd, personal communication, March 1, 2010)

Eastwood High School Quantitative Profile

The student success indicators are presented below for Eastwood High School.

The data are presented in tables so that a clear synthesis of their meaning can be

explored. The data in the tables are from the North Carolina Schools report cards (NC

School Report Card, 2009).

Table 16
Eastwood High School English EOC Scores

English I	
2005-06	90.8%
2006-07	87.0%
2007-08	82.1%
2008-09	78.7%

In Table 16, the proficiency scores for English I are shown. As was seen in the data, there was a slight decrease in this tested area over the four years of the study.

Table 17
Eastwood High School Math EOC Scores

	Algebra I	Algebra II	Geometry
2005-06	93.3%	95.0%	72.9%
2006-07	76.0%	64.0%	77.0%
2007-08	74.3%	69.2%	85.1%
2008-09	80.8%	82.4%	72.8%

In Table 17, the proficiency scores for the various math tests are shown. In algebra I, there was a decrease from the high in 2005-2006. But, in the latest year that data were available, 2008-2009, there was a noticeable increase in performance over what was seen in 2007-2008, which was Mr. Boyd's first year.

Algebra II showed much the same trend. There was an initial decrease in 2006-2007. Since that time, there have been two consecutive years of growth, which placed this subject back over 82% in the most recent year available in 2008-2009.

Geometry showed a three year increase up to a high of 85.1% in 2007-2008. There was a slight decline in this area in 2008-2009, where the scores are seen to fall to the current 72.8%. The scores were consistent with the scores witnessed in the 2005-2006 school year.

Table 18

Eastwood High School Science EOC Scores

	Biology	Chemistry	Physical Science	Physics
2005-06	75.9%	91.2%	79.6%	88.9%
2006-07	85.0%	N/A	N/A	N/A
2007-08	79.1%	63.6%	46.2%	N/A
2008-09	81.9%	68.5%	50.0%	92.9%

In Table 18, the proficiency data for the science courses are presented. In Biology, there was improvement from 2005-2006 to 2006-2007. That was followed by a slight decline in 2007-2008. In 2008-2009, the scores recovered to finish at 81.9%, which marked an overall improvement from 2005 to 2009.

In chemistry, there was a decline in 2007-2008. This decline followed 2006-2007 when the scores were not counted as part of the ABCs, which is indicated by 'N/A' in the table. In 2008-2009, there was an increase in the scores.

Physical science was much like chemistry. There was a fall in 2007-2008. That decline was immediately followed by an increase in proficiency the following year.

Physics saw a two-year gap in which the scores did not count toward the ABC model. Comparatively, the 2008-2009 proficiency scores illustrated an improvement over the one year that there was to compare, in 2005-2006.

Table 19

Eastwood High School Social Studies EOC Scores

	Civics & Economics	US History
2005-06	74.1%	74.0%
2006-07	81.0%	68.0%
2007-08	72.8%	77.9%
2008-09	72.9%	75.6%

In Table 19, the proficiency scores for social studies courses are presented. In civics and economics, there was a high of 81.0% in 2006-2007. There has been a slight decrease from that high. But the overall scores in this area have been very consistent from year-to-year.

US history has also shown consistent performance over the four years of the study. There was a slight decrease in 2006-2007. That decrease was followed the next year with a corresponding increase. Overall, the 2008-2009 scores were higher that what was seen in 2005-2006.

Table 20

Eastwood High School SAT Performance

	SAT
2005-06	1020
2006-07	1062
2007-08	1046
2008-09	1073

In Table 20, the SAT scores for Eastwood High School are presented. The SAT score was a very important measure for the high school level because it was a measure of college readiness among the students. As is witnessed here, Eastwood High School has seen an increase in the SAT from 2005 to 2009. There was a slight drop in 2007-2008, but the overall improvement in this measure is noted.

Table 21
Eastwood High School ABC Designation

ABC Designation	
2005-06	No Recognition
2006-07	School of Progress - Expected Growth
2007-08	No Recognition
2008-09	School of Progress - Expected Growth

In Table 21, the North Carolina ABC accountability model designations are given. Eastwood High School had grown from no recognition to becoming a school of progress and they have met expected growth in two of the last three years. Mr. Boyd's first year was 2007-2008. It was important to note from 2007-2008 to 2008-2009 that six of the 10 tested subjects increased under Mr. Boyd's leadership. Another course, physics, did not count in his first year, but increased noticeably in his second. The score was much better than the comparative in 2005-2006. It was improvements like this that led to the ABC designation increase in 2008-2009.

Table 22

Eastwood High School AYP Results

	AYP
2005-06	9 of 9
2006-07	9 of 9
2007-08	9 of 9
2008-09	9 of 9

In Table 22, the ABC targets for Eastwood High School as outlined by the No Child Left Behind legislation are illustrated. As can be seen, Eastwood High School had met all nine of nine AYP targets for every year of this study. That was important in showing the tradition of excellence that was spoken about so often at the school by the faculty and staff. As one focus interview participant stated:

> The likelihood of success at Eastwood High School is much higher than it is in other schools in my opinion. I've taught at five different high schools. Traditionally, this school has been very successful. I think a lot of teachers hang their hat on student success as a measure of their own identity. I was a part of so-and-so who went on to Yale or Harvard or who owns this business. (personal communication, March 2010)

Table 23

Eastwood High School Attendance

	Attendance
2006-07	95.95%
2007-08	96.39%
2008-09	96.83%

In Table 23, the attendance data for Eastwood High School are presented. There has been a steady increase in attendance during the tenure of Mr. Boyd. This information may be indicative of higher levels of satisfaction with the school in general or the principal. Either way, more students were in attendance to receive instruction in recent times than there were three years ago.

Table 24

Eastwood High School Crime and Violence

Year	Acts of Crime or Violence	Short Term Suspensions	Long Term Suspensions
2005-06	4	0	0
2006-07	4	10	0
2007-08	3	8	0
2008-09	7	10	0

In Table 24, the discipline data for the school are presented. The acts of crime or violence have been stable. There was an increase in the last year. However, despite this

fact, it was still low for a high school, a place where such criminal acts typically happen. There were also a low number of short-term suspensions for the school and no long-term suspensions noted over the four years of the study.

Eastwood High School Qualitative Profile

Research Question 1

Is there a relationship between school culture (with the important component of teacher satisfaction) and positive student outcomes?

School culture influenced student performance when there was a vision/mission based on high expectations. Eastwood High School valued high expectations much like the other case schools. At this school, the high expectations came from not only the principal and the teachers, but from the parents as well. The school had a tradition of strong community support. According to principal Matt Boyd:

> We are unbelievably fortunate with the community in that our community is very
>
> involved. Probably more than any school around, parents are willing to or want to
>
> keep up with their kids. They want to keep up with student performance. People
>
> in this community have high academic expectations. And anybody around will tell
>
> you that that makes their job a lot easier. We're also fortunate in that we're the
>
> one high school in the system and we're small enough that the parents aren't
>
> spread too thin. They recognize you when they are at the game or at the choral
>
> concert and they always take the time to speak. They really just like that genuine

feeling, that people genuinely care about their kids. (M. Boyd, personal

communication, March 1, 2010)

As far as his personal feelings about high expectations, Mr. Boyd noted:

If you come in and people know that you have high expectations. I think students

will know it, I think they can tell it by your behavior or by your demeanor in the

building. Now I'm one of those old school thinkers that believes people will meet

your expectations. If you have high expectations they'll meet them and if you

don't they won't. (M. Boyd, personal communication, March 1, 2010)

When asked to explain her feelings about Mr. Boyd's expectations for the staff

and students, one teacher noted, "Yes, he has very high expectations. He puts a lot of that

pressure on himself too. He is very dedicated to this school and these kids" (personal

communication, March 2, 2010).

School culture influenced student performance when it was sincerely learning-

focused. "Learning-focused" took on many meanings in terms of schools. All schools

should be learning-focused. At Eastwood High School, the learning focus was seen

through the extra work that the administration did to help all kids succeed. As noted by

one teacher:

There is a focus on the kids. If they need something to graduate, the

administration is going to try to find a way to make it happen. We are always

 trying to accommodate the kids and help them get what they need. (personal

communication, March 4, 2010)

School culture influenced student performance when it valued parental involvement. Eastwood High School valued parental involvement in the school as a strong component of a positive school culture that influenced student success. When asked about the positive nature of the school culture, the dialogue quickly turned to parental and community support. According to principal Matt Boyd:

Very positive. Very upbeat with high standards, high expectations. Again, I go back to the tradition of the school. For years it has been one of the top academic schools in the area. We are also very fortunate in that we've had a lot of athletic success and that carries over to strong community support. Without sounding like a cliché, so many schools will talk to you about having a family atmosphere and we have it. But, the way I describe Eastwood to people who know nothing about it is that you are getting a private school education in a public school atmosphere or public school setting. It's just a unique place, a very special place. (M. Boyd, personal communication, March 1, 2010)

When asked about the chance of student success at the school, one teacher quickly pointed out that community support as she stated, "Yes, overall they can be successful and the community is very supportive" (personal communication, March 4, 2010). The overall feeling of having a good school atmosphere that was supportive of student learning was a common theme at Eastwood. One last teacher added:

It's a smaller class size. I've had larger classes in other schools I've been in. We have more parental support here as well. I've had more parental contacts here than in my previous schools, too. We have less major problems, fights and such, here.

 We're just very small. Everybody gets along. It's a small community. (personal

communication, March 4, 2010)

Research Question 2

Is there a relationship between principal behaviors and teacher satisfaction as a

component of teacher working conditions and school culture?

The principal influenced satisfaction when he/she valued staff, with a particular

emphasis on staff planning and time. This particular theme was very broad in nature. The

concept of value was expressed in many different ways. Eastwood High School had a

value for staff and time according to faculty members. The high school was an especially

busy place when the final bell rang. That required special considerations for staff and

their time. According to principal Matt Boyd:

> We try to always remember that every decision we make, everything that we do is
>
> in the best interest of kids. When you have good teachers, they need their time
>
> protected as much as possible and they need to have a planning period. So, we
>
> used simple things, it's nothing brand new. We tried to use memos instead of
>
> meetings. If there's some information that needs to be handed out and it can be
>
> done with a memo, we do that rather than have a meeting. We also know that our
>
> teachers have a lot of after-school responsibilities, places they have to be, places
>
> that they're contracted to be whether that's coaching or tutoring. So we give the
>
> opportunity for make-up faculty meetings. We have an afternoon faculty meeting
>
> and if someone has somewhere that they need to be we allow them to make that

up the following morning. Just basically meet them when they are here, that is our philosophy. We still hold them to the standards. But, if we can accomplish just as much from 7:15 to 8:00am as we can from 3:15 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., we certainly try to do that. We really try to value their time, we try to protect their time and protect a lot of their classroom time. (M. Boyd, personal communication, March 1, 2010)

According to the faculty at the school, there was a concerted effort to value and protect the time of staff. This fact was evidenced by the administration's willingness to send information electronically rather than having a meeting. As noted by one teacher, "He did a good job of giving us information electronically instead of forcing us all to come together and sit and listen to a presentation" (personal communication, March 4, 2010). Added a second staff member:

> The meetings are better. I think he is very mindful of our time. I think he tries real hard to stick to the agenda. And we have memo meetings now. That's an improvement over having to sit in a meeting. (personal communication, March 4, 2010)

The satisfaction created by the principal's valuing of staff and their time was very important. At Eastwood High School it was summed up best by the following statement from a teacher:

> I think Mr. Boyd is very concise as far as time in concerned. He understands that time is valuable. He sticks to the agenda in meetings pretty religiously. So, he is conscious of our time. He treats us as professionals. He does a good job of protecting our planning time. He's always been good about that. If something

comes up, he watches out for us. I coach, so I need my time protected. He watches

out for me. I'm just used as an emergency to cover and stuff like that. (personal

communication, March 4, 2010)

The principal influenced satisfaction when he/she genuinely listened to and

communicated with his/her staff. Closely aligned with the sense of value, teachers felt it

was important that the principal listened to them. At Eastwood High School, the principal

exemplified this theme as he listened to staff. In his opinion:

We just try to do the basics as far as allowing our SIT team to certainly have some

say-so and give their feedback. I'm not crazy enough to think I have all of the

answers so we are certainly willing to listen to our teachers and listen to any good

ideas that they may have. And we listen to students also. I think sometimes that

students come up with good answers. I think it's important to always listen to

them as well. (M. Boyd, personal communication, March 4, 2010)

The teachers at Eastwood High School all felt that Mr. Boyd listened to them and valued

their opinion. When asked what leadership trait was most valued, one teacher stated,

"Well, if I had to say, it would be because our opinions are valued. I particularly see that

on the SIT team" (personal communication, March 4, 2010). Another teacher concurred

as he stated, "I really think our opinions are valued. I think he listens when we talk to

him. He always offers a supportive ear for us, in my opinion" (personal communication,

March 4, 2010). And one final teacher summed when she noted:

I feel like he always comes to us and asks us our opinions on his decisions. Like

the senior project. He came and asked all of the English teachers what they

thought. The same can be said for the SIT team as well. He asks their opinion as

well. I feel comfortable coming to him with things I need and problems I'm

having. They try to hear everything and find the best solution. It may not be what

we want but they listen and explain why they do what they do. (personal

communication, March 4, 2010)

The principal influenced satisfaction when he/she empowered the staff to

accomplish work for themselves, which helped the teachers build a sense of efficacy.

Having the principal trust the teacher to make decisions for their own students was a clear

desire shared by the teachers. The principal at Eastwood High School felt empowerment

was one of the keys to success. He tried to empower staff members at all levels, both

individually and through the School Improvement Team. According to Mr. Boyd:

Surrounding yourself with good people and just letting them lead, when the

opportunity comes up, but also when everyone is working well together. We have

a very effective SIT team. We have what I consider to be effective department

chairs and we're very fortunate in that we're small enough, and I know you hear

this everywhere, but teachers just look out for each other. We have people looking

out for each other and helping each other anyway that they can. We've got some

clerical leaders, or administrative staff leaders. Our lead custodian is the most

teacher-oriented person I've ever met. She's one of those people who is a leader

in your school and you hear that all the time from people about their custodians

being leaders but this one sure is. (M. Boyd, personal communication, March 1,

2010)

The teachers at Eastwood High School all pointed to the School Improvement Team as the primary method of empowerment. They felt Mr. Boyd used it effectively to guide all decisions which included budget allocations. As noted by one teacher, "I think as far as resources, there have been good decisions made on how to spend the money. The SIT gives money to each department. I think we spend all that we're given, and we do a good job of stretching it so that everyone benefits" (personal communication, March 4, 2010). Another added:

> There was a lot of input from the School Improvement Team on resources allocation, you know when we did the budget. He provided departmental budgets, which was important. And it was all departments, not just one department and not another. I think that was big. (personal communication, March 4, 2010)

> Overall, the method of empowerment at Eastwood High School had worked effectively for the staff. As one teacher explained it, "I think the SIT works well to resolve issues. I choose to be on SIT. I want to be a part of those discussions. I think it works well. I think we try to do what is best for the school" (personal communication, March 4, 2010)

The principal influenced satisfaction when he/she was visible in the school. It was important for the principal to be available and to be seen in the school during the school day. At Eastwood High School, the theme of visibility was an important consideration for the principal. It was a level of support for the teachers and something that was easy to do on the part of the administrative team. According to Mr. Boyd:

> I think two things have the biggest influence. One is being positive and the other

is being around, being visible. I think it is important for administration to be in the

building as much as possible. I think it is important for teachers to know if they

need you, that no matter what time of night or day, that you are going to be there

if there is any way possible. So we try to stick to that old philosophy that

administrators are the first people in the building and one of the last to leave. I

think that brings comfort for teachers because they know they are going to have

support and they know that they are not there by themselves. (M. Boyd, personal

communication, March 1, 2010)

Mr. Boyd also posted a detailed schedule of where he would be. The teachers felt

this step was very positive as part of being visible in the school. They appreciated his

hard work in this area. According to one teacher:

He showed teachers he was willing to be here. His visibility was a big

improvement. Teachers can count on if they need to see Mr. Boyd in a day, they

will be able to see him. If they don't see him, they know where he's at. He keeps

a calendar and if he's going to be out of the building, it's reflected. And it's

accurate. His information on his location is accurate. (personal communication,

March 4, 2010)

The appreciation for the posted schedule continued as a teacher stated, "He sticks

to his schedule for the week. He posts it. We know when he is going to be out of the

building" (personal communication, March 4, 2010).

The teachers gravitated toward visibility when asked about Mr. Boyd's leadership

style. As noted by one teacher, "He does a good job. He has a lot of charisma. I think he

is visible in the school which is important. He's always helpful if you need him"
(personal communication, March 4, 2010).

The principal influenced satisfaction when he/she valued staff development and
encouraged it through job-embedded means, like the Professional Learning Community
(PLC). The teachers at Eastwood High School enjoyed the professional development they
received at the school level. According to one teacher, "The teachers at school were
offering professional development. It was group professional development, for
everybody. I think that is better than coming from the outsiders" (personal
communication, March 4, 2010). The teachers also acknowledged that principal Matt
Boyd sent them to outside professional development if necessary, despite budget
concerns and dwindling money for staff development. As noted by one teacher, "He was
more willing to sign off and spend the money to send us to the state conference. He was
willing to send us. He didn't limit the resources" (personal communication, March 4,
2010).

Eastwood High School also utilized the PLC as a mean of work accomplishment
and for the professional development that was provided. It was a positive thing according
to the teachers, even though they heard other things from some people. One teacher
stated, "We do those PLC meetings. They haven't been bad. I've heard some friends in
other districts talk about what a nightmare they've been for them. I don't think it's been
that bad here" (personal communication, March 4, 2010).

Research Question 3

Is there a relationship between specific principal behaviors that influence the work environment and improve student success factors?

The work environment influenced student outcomes when there was a high level of teacher satisfaction, driven by the principal in the school. All teachers were constant on one theme— that happy teachers made a difference in student success. The teachers at Eastwood High School were enthusiastic about the effects of teacher satisfaction on learning. According to one teacher:

> Yes, I think if I'm in a good place, I create a better class. I think you have to have a strong environment for learning and we have that here. I definitely think enjoying going to work is better than resenting going to work. It shows in the classroom. The kids can sense that. I rarely miss work here because I enjoy it. I think it is huge. (personal communication, March 4, 2010)

That idea of the effects of absenteeism alluded to in the statement above was further described by another staff member:

> If I feel better, the kids have to feel better. I think that if the staff morale is up, the absentees will be better. That goes for students and staff. It has to affect student success. I think if you feel good, you will definitely work harder. I think you can either be beat down or built up. I think you do better when they build you up. (personal communication, March 4, 2010)

One teacher summed it up simply by saying, "If Mama ain't happy, ain't nobody happy" (personal communication, March 4, 2010).

The work environment influenced student outcomes when there were clearly established relationships, driven by the principal in the school. The teachers felt there needed to be a positive relationship developed with the principal and the principal needed a positive relationship with the students. The teachers at Eastwood High School felt the greatest strength of their principal was in his ability to develop positive relationships with the students. When asked if the principal can influence student success, one teacher replied:

> Yes, it trickles down from the top. There are some things they do indirectly, but this principal does it directly. He makes the students a priority. That's one of the good things about being in a small school. He knows them all. He has a great relationship with faculty and students. That helps a lot. (personal communication, March 4, 2010)

The staff felt Mr. Boyd knew what was happening in the lives of the students and that influenced them positively. As stated by one teacher:

> I think he makes them feel comfortable when he comes in the classroom. I think he is visible at all of the athletics and stuff. He supports the programs that we have going on. The kids see him at that stuff and they appreciate it. He knows their backgrounds and their parents. It is amazing the stuff he knows. More than we do. (personal communication, March 4, 2010)

It was his knowledge of the student's lives that helped build such a positive relationship between the principal and student. According to all the teachers at Eastwood

High School who participated in interviews, Mr. Boyd built that relationship with every

child in the school. His efforts were clearly seen by all. As noted by one teacher:

> I know Mr. Boyd tries to make this place positive as you've heard us say here
>
> several times. He wrote me a hand-written congratulation card one time. I know
>
> he does that for the kids, too. We had a student win a state wrestling title this
>
> weekend and he made such a fuss over that kid out in the hall. I mean, that
>
> kid was beaming. (personal communication, March 4, 2010)

The work environment influenced student outcomes when there was a great

amount of positive communication within that environment, driven by the principal in the

school. The school was also very concerned about the communication skills of the leader

and felt that open, honest communication was a must to ensure student success.

Communicating well was a necessity for the administrative staff at Eastwood High

School. When asked about the school's increased teacher satisfaction, Mr. Boyd was

quick to give that credit to his assistant principal, with whom he had to communicate

effectively on a daily basis. According to principal Matt Boyd:

> I don't think it was anything that I did. I think it was just, we are just so fortunate
>
> to have an assistant principal that nobody in the building can out-work. He and I
>
> just came together and basically made the decision that we wanted to be
>
> the best school possible. And we challenge each other to make sure we meet
>
> teachers' needs, which one gets to it before the other one. We just work really
>
> well together. We communicate well and we understand each other well. I just

think we are on the same page. (M. Boyd, personal communication, March 1,

2010)

According to the teachers at the school, being a good communicator was at the

core of Mr. Boyd's personality. According to one teacher:

As much as anything, I think it is his personality. He will joke around with you.

He's just a likeable person. But, he can do that kind of stuff and not offend you in

getting his point across. Everybody can't do that. For instance, he hates hat days.

But, he will do it to raise money for a charity or something. I just think he is

dedicated and people respect that. He gets a lot of respect from the faculty. We

really like him. (personal communication, March 4, 2010)

Another Eastwood High teacher summed up Mr. Boyd's positive communication

style in saying:

He always recognizes us when we do good things. That's great leadership,

making us feel good. He points out our weaknesses as well. He's very honest with

us. He tells us what we need to work on. He has tact. He is nice about it. He

understands that mistakes will be made. He helps us fix it. He is very

understanding. That makes me feel comfortable. I don't have to hide a mistake.

That's something to value in a leader. (personal communication, March 4, 2010)

Eastwood High School Summary

By all measures of student success available, Eastwood High School was

successful. There were standard variations in proficiency scores across the tested subject

areas which were to be expected. However the school was an increasing success under

the leadership of Mr. Boyd. The SAT scores for the school had seen an increase during his tenure. The school had been a school of progress and met expected growth in two of the last three years. Last year, the school increased in six of the 10 tested subjects. All AYP targets continued to be met year-after-year. There were minimal discipline issues at the school. When taking into account the 9% increase in the TWCS at Eastwood High School, Mr. Boyd's leadership had a positive effect on teacher satisfaction and student success indicators

Conclusion

Based upon the triangulation of the school profile data and the qualitative data supplied by school staff members, key themes were clearly visible as they related to the research questions of this study.

Pursuant to research question number 1, when the school culture was grounded with a clear vision/mission based on high expectations, it influenced student success. If there was a learning focus in the school that valued parental involvement, students achieved higher levels of success. The principal controlled these things in his/her building through specific behaviors.

Pursuant to research question number 2, when a principal valued staff and the staff's time, and listened to them, he/she influenced the satisfaction of the teachers. When the principal empowered them to do the job of teaching, was visible in the school and valued professional development, the principal influenced satisfaction. The principal controlled these things in his/her building through specific behaviors.

Pursuant to research question number 3, when the work environment was grounded in teacher satisfaction, student success increased. When the work environment was permeated by positive relationships, student success increased. When the work environment valued positive communication and interactions, student success increased. The principal controlled these things in his/her building through specific behaviors.

CHAPTER 5

Analysis, Conclusions, and Recommendations for Further Study

Introduction

The problem this study addressed was the possible relationship between specific

actions of the principal on working conditions, satisfaction, and student success. See

Figure 1:

Figure 1

   *PPA = Positive Principal Actions
   PWE = Positive Work Environment
   ITS = Increased Teacher Satisfaction
   ISS = Increased Student Success

In addition, the following research questions were explored:

    1. Is there a relationship between school culture (with the important component

of teacher satisfaction) and positive student outcomes?

2. Is there a relationship between principal behaviors and teacher satisfaction as a component of teacher working conditions and school culture?

3. Is there a relationship between specific principal behaviors that influence the work environment and improve student success factors?

There were three schools selected to participate in the study, primarily on the strength of their performance on the 2008 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey. The three principals of the schools in 2008 were interviewed in individual interview sessions. The certified staffs at each school were invited to participate in focus group interviews. The data for the study were collected in February and March 2010.

Analysis

The following analysis was rendered in alignment to the research questions.

Is there a relationship between school culture (with the important component of teacher satisfaction) and positive student outcomes? Based upon the gathered data, it was clear that interview participants believed a positive school culture had a positive influence on student outcomes. There was little variance in this belief among any of the principals or teachers who participated in the interviews. Moreover, these verbal perceptions tended to be supported by the quantitative data collected for each school. In each case, the school's performance data reflected the work of the principal and teachers that had created a school culture designed to produce a positive work environment.

One major characteristic that evolved from the data was that the school had a vision and/or mission that supported high expectations. It was the belief of staff that this strong devotion to high expectations came from the principal. From there it radiated to

the teaching staff and it ultimately radiated to the children. According to those interviewed, the school could not be successful if there was no discussion or talk of high expectations.

This belief in high expectations was also supported by the literature. Numerous studies were available that highlighted the need for the principal to clearly communicate a belief in high expectations for students (Jerald, 2006; Eilers & Camacho, 2007; Wilson, 2007). This behavior of the principal was validated in both the qualitative data and the literature.

There was also much discussion that this value for high expectations must be centered around success for all students. It was acknowledged that some students excelled regardless of the principal or the teacher. But most teachers felt that students needed to be motivated to excel. For that reason, teachers used the term high expectations for all in many instances during the interviews.

Many teachers also used the term vision and mission to describe what they do in the school. It was if they felt that the vision and mission of the school must be lived to be achieved. It was clear from observing these teachers during the interviews that they truly believed in what they did and that they wanted to help all children achieve.

The school having a clearly articulated vision and mission was also supported by the literature. According to a number of studies, the principal had to involve staff in meeting a shared vision and mission for student success to improve (Jerald, 2006; Wilson, 2007; Habegger, 2008). This behavior of the principal was validated in both the qualitative data and the literature.

Another characteristic that came to the top from the data was that the school must be learning-focused. This term may have been a cliché in recent years, but it did have merit. The teachers discussed how the school culture and the principal were learning-focused in a variety of ways.

One way in which the principal was learning-focused was that he/she worked in whatever way necessary to get teachers the supplies they needed. There were some examples of teachers who stated they did not have enough supplies. However, the vast majority stated they received what they needed to teach the classes. Most stated a sincere appreciation to the principal who had often gone above and beyond to make sure the teacher had the supplies needed. Several mentioned increased technology at the school as well.

Another way in which the school could be considered learning-focused would be the overall attitude of the administration toward individual student success. Several teachers made statements that administration would do whatever it took to make sure learning was happening in the building. Several noted specific examples of administration going the extra mile to help all kids be successful. It was a source of pride for the teachers as they discussed it.

A final characteristic that came from the data was that parental involvement was a key to success. This parental involvement happened in many ways. One way that was commonly discussed was the importance of athletics. While this study focused on student success, it did not take into account success in sports. But, it was clear in the interviews that athletic success had a tendency to bring parental support.

It was important to the teachers to get the parents in the building at whatever cost. Several specific, pertinent examples were given. Parents' nights and various curriculum nights were the prevailing method. While teachers did admit that these functions had varying degrees of success as time went on, it was still important to try and get as many parents into the building as possible.

Community support was mentioned numerous times during the interviews. Any time community support was mentioned it was coded to parental involvement because parents were the community. While some schools had what they perceived as a tradition that brought high levels of parental involvement, it was clear that all of the schools wanted a similar tradition to be developed. According to the teachers, the principals at the schools increased parental involvement in the school and that helped them do a better job with the students.

The characteristic of being learning-focused was not specifically covered in the literature reviewed. Parental and community involvement were also not explored in depth in the literature. Because these characteristics were so broad in nature, covering time, planning, technology, and multiple other factors within the school, parental and community involvement could not be explored independently in detail and to do so would not have served the purpose of answering the specific research questions addressed in this study. These concepts did emerge as salient factors in the qualitative data however.

Is there a relationship between principal behaviors and teacher satisfaction as a component of teacher working conditions and school culture? Based upon the gathered data, it became clear that all interview participants believed principal behaviors

influenced teacher satisfaction and shaped school culture in a positive way or negative way. There was little variance in this belief among any of the principals or teachers who participated in the interviews.

A primary behavior that influenced satisfaction that emerged from the data was that the principal valued staff. A big component of this value was time. Whether instructional time was valued by making sure it was not interrupted or planning time was valued by making sure it was not usurped, time was a critical issue for teachers. There were 21 separate references to this subcategory in the research notes, which illustrated its importance to the teachers.

The teachers felt the principals at the case schools valued staff by not making them sit in useless meetings. According to the teachers, the principals were very flexible as they were allowed to make up missed meetings and were downright against meetings unless absolutely necessary. This behavior and characteristic was appreciated by numerous teachers based on the number of times it appeared in the dialogue.

Another way in which the principal showed value was by being available. Many teachers noted there was an open door policy and that the principal was serious about it. It was not simple lip service to having such a policy. Numerous teachers mentioned they had gone to the office on numerous occasions and had never been turned away. The staff felt appreciated by the principal's willingness to be there for them.

The concept of the staff feeling valued as a component of teacher satisfaction was evident in the literature. There were a number of studies that discussed the fact that when a staff feels valued, they may perform at higher levels and student success can be positively impacted (Peterson & Kelley, 2001; Alvy & Robbins, 2005; Yeatts, 2005;

Catano, 2006). This behavior of the principal was validated in both the qualitative data and the literature.

A second behavior that influenced satisfaction that emerged from the data was the principal listened to staff. This behavior was viewed as the most important component of the communication process. While the principal's communication was a salient component later in the study, here it related just to the ability to genuinely listen to the needs of the staff. The teachers enjoyed having an ear to listen to them at times. It was considered an important support mechanism for the leader to be available to them and to give them this modicum amount of time.

Aligned to the listening was the fact that the principal valued the opinion of the teacher. It was easy for the leader to make decisions and dictate those decisions to the staff. In the cases at these schools, the principals behaved just the opposite. In fact, many teachers felt the principals not only valued the opinion of the teacher, but they actively sought it out. The teachers appreciated it when the principal listened to them, heard them, and utilized the teacher's suggestions in the decision-making process of the school.

The teachers valued giving input into decisions. Many could recount very specific instances that the principal asked them about various school projects and what they felt needed to be done. The teachers appreciated this candid need of the principal to garner staff input and they felt the principal did what was right for the entire school.

The premise that the principal valued staff opinions was also available in the literature. Several studies mentioned the fact that staffs were more satisfied when the principal took steps to listen to staff and to let them provide input in the decision-making process (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 1996; Henderson, 2000; Jorissen, 2002; Tooms, 2003;

Leithwood & McAdie, 2007). This behavior of the principal was validated in both the qualitative data and the literature.

Another specific behavior that influenced satisfaction was the fact that the principals empowered staff to do the work of the school. The principals admitted that the job of running a school is daunting and there was no need for the principals to do all of the work. Therefore, it was acknowledged that it just made sense that staff be empowered to do the work.

The primary empowerment tool used by these principals was the School Improvement Team (SIT). Many of the school decisions were driven by the work of this team. Curriculum decisions were driven by the teachers on this team. Budget decisions were driven by the members of this team. It was important that principals realized the power of managing the school through the SIT, if for nothing more than to make the difficult job of being principal just a bit easier.

The principals tried to encourage leadership among the staff and empowered them to do different roles. The principals tried to encourage leadership and empowerment in those staff members who could handle it and do something with it to benefit other staff members. All of the principals discussed how they encouraged teacher leaders to pick up the mantle and how these teachers had helped move the school forward. At least in the case of these three, the concept of empowerment was important to meeting the goals of the school.

The concept of empowerment, allowing staff to make decisions that impacted their work, was a powerful theme in the literature. There have been many studies in this area over the last several years. The principal should work to empower staff to

accomplish the goals of the school in an effort to help teachers build their own sense of self-efficacy (Baughman, 1996; Wu & Short, 1996; Perie, et al., 1997; Davis & Wilson, 2000; Connolly & Myers, 2003). This behavior of the principal was validated in both the qualitative data and the literature.

Another behavior that influenced satisfaction that emerged from the data was the concept of visibility. Based upon the statements of many teachers, having the principal in the building and available to them was very important. Thus, for a school leader to make the necessary changes needed to influence the school, visibility was a key.

An integral part of the feeling of visibility was that it placed a value on being at the school. Since the principal wanted to be at the school, it was natural that the teachers wanted to be at the school. The teachers felt the principals were dedicated to the school based upon the fact that they wanted to be there so much. If the principal is so dedicated to the mission of the school, should the teacher not be equally as dedicated? That analogy was a common theme in this subcategory.

It was also important for the teachers that the principal have a presence in the classroom. In fact, teachers were dependent upon the principal interacting with the students. This interaction was manifested with praise for the students when necessary and also when bad behavior was corrected as necessary. Either way, teachers were adamant when the principal was heard coming down the hall, in some cases whistling, as being a positive thing in accomplishing the vision of the school.

The visibility of the principal as it relates to a positive effect on school climate and morale was available in the literature. There were a couple of studies that mentioned the visibility of the principal as a factor in school success (Ma & McMillan, 1996; Alvy

& Robbins, 2005; Catano, 2006). This behavior of the principal was validated in both the qualitative data and the literature.

A final behavior that influenced satisfaction that was evident in the data was the principal valued staff development and the work of the school's Professional Learning Communities (PLC). A key ingredient in the success of the professional development program was that the principal promoted it and allowed staff to go to workshops when the opportunity arose. While there was a specific focus on providing professional development as economically as possible at the school, the teachers all stated the principal had allowed them to go to offsite staff development even during tight budget times. While some staff did state there was not enough professional development, the majority appreciated the fact that the principal focused on letting them get what they could.

The major emergent theme as it related to staff development was the concept of the PLC. The PLC was at varying stages of deployment in the three schools, but it was clear that it was an important component of the school's culture of learning. It was clear that the use of the PLCs was positive in these schools. In fact, the teachers had heard that other schools districts used the PLCs in a way that was not positive. However, rumor and innuendo had not influenced the teachers' enthusiasm for PLC service and work.

Individual professional development was also viewed as a means to train the staff on the latest concepts. There was much discussion that when teachers went to one staff development or another, they would return and share it with the staff. This fact also increased the feeling of empowerment of the teachers and it promoted teacher leadership

among the staff. All three principals merged the needs of the staff in regard to professional development with empowerment and helped the teachers build a sense of efficacy in that they could control student success outcomes.

The principal's use of the PLC was emerging in the literature at the onset of this dissertation. There were a number of studies available on how the principal could use the PLC to improve the school and streamline teacher staff development processes in relation to the school's culture (Eilers &Camacho, 2007; Johnson & Donaldson, 2007; Wheatley & Frieze, 2007; Habegger, 2008; Weast, 2008). This behavior of the principal was validated in both the qualitative data and the literature.

Is there a relationship between specific principal behaviors that influenced the work environment and improved student success factors? Based upon the gathered data, it became clear that all interview participants believed the work environment positively or negatively influenced student success outcomes. There was little variance in this belief among any of the principals or teachers who participated in the interviews. In the three cases presented in this study, the prevailing belief was that the work environment had positively influenced student learning in the case schools. This influence was further manifested in the student success factors articulated earlier.

The first work environment factor that influenced student success that emerged from the data was teacher satisfaction. All teachers who were interviewed felt that if they were satisfied with the job, then students would be influenced positively in the classroom. Many of the teachers described this sensation as a radiating or cascading force. It

appeared through the dialogue of teachers that the force was almost so irresistible that it could not be stopped once it had started.

An important component of satisfaction was that it led to a sense of enthusiasm on the part of the teacher that would be felt in the classroom. This enthusiasm would be so meticulous that it would be evident down to the individual lesson plan level. The planning component of teaching would be better just because the teacher was satisfied with the job. It was clear through the statements of teachers that they had much more job security when they were satisfied, even more so than when the principal was satisfied with them as teachers.

It was also noted with satisfaction that, not only would performance be enhanced, but teacher attendance would also be increased. It was clear in the data that teachers who did not feel good about the place they work had little incentive to actually be there. While no one actually admitted that they were out more when they were unhappy, it was certainly alluded to in the dialogue of several teachers.

The concept that a satisfied teacher will impact student success is readily available in the literature. Several models of school culture were available that suggested that teacher satisfaction was a necessity in improving schools and student outcomes ((Alvy & Robbins, 2005; Jerald, 2006; Eilers & Camacho, 2007; Johnson & Donaldson, 2007; Wilson, 2007; Habegger, 2008). The fact that satisfied teachers have a positive impact on students was validated in the qualitative data and in the literature.

A second work environment factor that influenced student success that emerged was the concept of relationships. It was important that the principal maintained a positive relationship with staff, students, and the greater community at large. Most teachers felt

this was one of the most important things a principal could do. This factor was often cited

with high expectations as a primary behavior to get the school moving in a positive

direction.

In the cases of the three schools in the study, it was clear that the principals did a

good job of maintaining a positive relationship with the staff. It was also clear that the

community and parents were involved in the relational nature of the school. Maintaining

a relationship was seen as a necessary component of making the school operate

successfully.

It was also clear that the principals built positive relationships with students.

Whether that meant singing to them at a Saturday night dance, or being taped to the wall

with duct tape when they met a particular school goal, the principals were always

interested in building a sense of pride and depositing the notion that the principal cared in

the mind of the children. Several staff members could cite specific instances that the

principal recognized a child or gave them a personal hand-written note of

congratulations. In the eyes of those staff members, there was no greater thing the

principal could have done to build a bridge of trust and friendship with that student.

A final work environment factor that influenced student success that emerged was

the principal's ability to effectively communicate in the work environment. Being honest

with staff was considered a highly desirable trait from the principal. The teachers felt

comfortable discussing issues with the principals because they felt that they would not be

lambasted over mistakes that were made. The teachers felt that the principals could be

trusted to deal with them fairly and that the communication would be open, honest, and

lead to improvement.

Also important was opening up multiple channels of communication, both within the school and beyond. It was important to find ways to contact parents and keep them involved in the educational process. Whether it was newsletters or some other means, teachers felt the principal should keep open lines of communication with the home.

Teachers also wanted multiple channels of contact at the school. With these principals, it was evident that they took this desire to heart. They provided communication via emails, memos, whiteboards, and whatever other means necessary. They provided detailed schedules of where they would be, which increased teacher satisfaction. The one thing they did not do was increase meeting time to communicate with staff members. This fact was also appreciated by the vast majority of teachers who participated in the interviews.

Having an open and honest communication system that served as a basis for building relationships was evident in the literature. There were a number of studies that outlined the power of communication and building positive relationships as a necessary component in improving schools (Alvy & Robbins, 2005; Waters & Kingston, 2005; Johnson & Donaldson, 2007). The fact that building relationships and open communication can influence student outcomes was validated in the qualitative data and in the literature.

Limitations of this Study

The limitations of this study included the following:

1. Measures of student achievement used in this study are determined by the federal and state government and are not under my control.

2. The TWCS was administered every two years, and the administration of the survey was outside of my control.

3. Respondents who agreed to participate in the study were outside of my control.

4. External conditions and circumstances that could influence student success such as socioeconomic factors, ethnicity, family support, and teacher competence are outside of my control and were not included in the study.

Conclusions Addressing the Knowledge Gap

Based upon the qualitative data that were analyzed, the school culture influenced student success outcomes positively. The school culture did this when the principal set a vision of high expectations for all students, the school culture was learning-focused, and the school valued parental involvement. The principal, as the leader of the school, had ultimate influence over these cultural variables.

It is also noted that the principal influenced teacher satisfaction positively with his/her specific behaviors. The principals did this when they valued staff and the staff's time and listened to staff and valued the staff's opinion. The principal also did this when he/she empowered staff, was visible in the school, and valued staff development and school-level PLCs.

The work environment also influenced student success outcomes positively when the principal valued teacher satisfaction, built relationships with staff, students, and the community, and the principal communicated effectively in the educational environment with students and staff.

Based upon an analysis of the case school student success data and the case school TWCS data, the principal influenced student performance through specific behaviors. Those specific behaviors have been listed here as thematic subcategories in the qualitative data and have been analyzed in detail. It was concluded that the principals in these case schools performed these behaviors and it was positively reflected in the increased student success indicators in the individual schools as outlined in Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

Implications

There are several implications that emerge from this study. The first implication is for school leaders. Schools must be learning-focused and have a vision and mission based on high expectations for all. The principal ultimately sets these expectations. In looking at the case study schools, the principal and staffs agreed that setting high expectations was a key to garnering student success. That fact was pervasive in the interviews. Therefore, for a school to improve student achievement, principals must clearly communicate and act in accordance with a vision of high expectations for all students and staff. Decisions should be made based upon what is best for the student, which may sometimes conflict with the staff's wants and desires. At that point, the relationship built between the principal and teachers should mitigate any harm to the school climate when the relationship is a strong one based upon high expectations.

A second implication that emerges from the study is for teachers. The principals in the case study schools empowered teachers to make decisions. With such empowerment comes great responsibility. When making decisions, teachers must realize

that the principal is bound by what is best and right for children. This realization can sometimes conflict with what teachers want and desire. In the case study schools, everyone had an attitude of whatever it takes to be successful will be done. That is an attitude that must dominate in the school building, but may not in some schools. To achieve meaningful school improvement, teachers must be empowered to make decisions that are in the best interest of students and respect the principal when he/she makes such decisions in accordance with the school's vision and mission. In light of this knowledge, it is incumbent upon principals to train teachers in what empowerment is and how to use it to have a positive effect on student success.

Another implication is for principal training programs. It is important that principals understand school culture and how it ultimately impacts student achievement. Future principals need to understand the decision making process and that decisions must be shared with teachers and other staff members in doing what is best for students. They need to understand that creating positive working conditions is a time consuming task, but the rewards in student achievement are worth the work. Therefore, principal training programs should focus attention to the school's culture, and train principals that they must understand how their behaviors affect school culture. Principals must be trained to embed a belief in high expectations for all students that permeates throughout the school building.

A fourth implication revolves around the importance of communication within the school building. The principals in the case study schools were visible and openly communicated with staff and students. This fact was appreciated by interview participants. Without open communication within the school building the school culture

will suffer, based upon the responses in the interviews. Therefore, principals should spend much time developing positive relationships with both students and staff and making a commitment to transparent and honest communication within the school building.

A final implication involves the use of the Professional Learning Community (PLC). At the onset of this study, the PLC was beginning to appear in the national literature as a viable means of staff development and school improvement. By the time the qualitative data was gathered, all three of the case study schools were involved to some degree with implementing PLCs. The PLC had gone from a primarily theoretical approach to being implemented in all of the schools in this study, making it an important emergent factor from the study that had grown beyond what was witnessed in the literature. It is crucial for superintendents in local educational agencies to utilize the PLC as a means of professional development for principals and teachers and as a driver of school improvement. To achieve success for students, there must be a framework to get from the current level of performance to the desired level of performance. It is my belief from the data gathered in this study that the PLC is that framework. While principal training programs can provide the theoretical knowledge needed to improve school culture and student achievement, the PLC is the best practice tool to train both principals and teachers in what makes effective schools and how to implement learning-focused strategies that ultimately lead to success for all students.

Recommendations for Further Study

There are many possible recommendations for further study that emerged from the current study. A longitudinal study of Eastwood High School would be of interest to the educational community, to study the school in five to 10 years to see if the influence on student success factors of the current principal, Matt Boyd, is still in place then. Also, it would be appealing to see if the same specific behaviors of the principal continue to have the same positive effects on staff members into the future. Such a study may be difficult because there is no guarantee the current principal will still be in place in five to 10 years. The next administration of the TWCS is happening now, so that data would begin to be generated in May 2010.

A study of the principals in their new schools could serve the educational community. Kathy Mack moved from Cooper Elementary to Fontana Middle School in July 2009. David McDonald moved from Mansfield Middle School to Mansfield High School in July 2009 as well. It would be of interest to see if the results presented here can be replicated in another school. As the principals both noted, they are trying to replicate the good things they did at their previous schools.

A further study might be to observe the new principals at Cooper Elementary and Mansfield Middle. It was established that the behaviors of the departed principals had a positive influence on student leaning. It would be interesting to repeat this study after the 2010 or 2012 rendition of the TWCS to see if the momentum that was gained in 2008 could be maintained by the new principals.

Another study might be the influence of central office leadership and decisions on the school culture. The only mention of the central office in this study was from the

principals who mentioned the support they got and from the teachers who mention how the central office was involved in any negative that had happened in the school over the years reviewed from 2006 to 2009. It may help the educational community to see where this perception comes from and if it can be explained or mitigated.

It would also be interesting to see this study performed in larger, urban districts. The largest of the school systems involved in the study was the Jamestown School System. It can be considered urban. The other two systems, Eastwood City, and Smythe County would be considered rural. It would be of interest to see the study conducted in a larger system such as Wake or Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Unfortunately, these schools did not meet the TWCS requirements for inclusion in the study at this time.

A last study recommendation would be to focus on the opposite of this study. Instead of focusing on specific behaviors a principal should do, it may help educational leaders to identify what specific behaviors a principal should avoid. Such a study would be easy in that I would only need to focus on schools that had a significant decrease in the TWCS. Such a study would be difficult in that it would present a school and a principal in a very negative light. It may be difficult to find participants for such a study.

Conclusion

This study was anchored in the framework of the relationship between school culture, teacher satisfaction, and student success. As outlined in figure 1 (p.3), it was proposed that positive principal actions would create a positive work environment and that teachers would be more job satisfied. In turn, student success would increase. As student success increased, teachers would be more satisfied, which would create a more

positive climate. Such a cyclical relationship has validated the principal in performing actions that influenced the school's culture in a positive way. Through the triangulation of the quantitative data, the qualitative data from the case schools, and the national literature, the idea behind this three-legged stool was validated through the specific actions of the principal. It is imperative that this knowledge be shared with aspiring principals in principal preparation programs. Principals will be evaluated on it and schools will ultimately be more successful when leaders have focused their attention on those actions that mattered most to teachers.

References

Alvy, H. & Robbins, P. (2005). Growing into leadership [Electronic version].

Educational Leadership 62 (8).

Amsterdam, C., Johnson, R., Monrad, D., & Tonnsen, S. (2003). A collaborative

approach to the development of a principal evaluation system: a case study.

Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education, 17(3), 221-242.

Balzer, W., Kihm, J., Smith, P., Irwin, J., Bachiochi, P., Robie, C., et. al. (1997). *Users'*

manual for the Job Descriptive Index and the Jobs in General scales. Bowling

Green, Oh: Bowling Green State University.

Bass, B. (1985). *Leadership and performance beyond expectations.* New York: The Free

Press.

Bassey, M. (1999). *Case study research in educational settings*. Philadelphia: Open

University Press.

Baughman, K. (1996). Increasing teacher job satisfaction: A study of the changing role of

the secondary principal. *American Secondary Education, 24(3)*, 19-22.

Bossert, S., Dwyer, D., Rowan, R., & Lee, G. (1982). The instructional management role

of the principal. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *18(3)*, 34-64.

Bryk, A. & Schneider, B. (2002). *Trust in schools: A core resource for improvement*.

New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Burke, D. (1996). Multi-year teacher/student relationships are a long-overdue arrangement [Electronic version]. *Phi Delta Kappan, 77(1).*

Catano, N. & Stronge, J. (2006). What are principals expected to do: Congruence between principal evaluation and performance standards. *NASSP Bulletin 90(1),* 221-237.

Cheng, Y. (1996). Relation between teachers' professionalism and job attitudes, educational outcomes, and organizational factors. *The Journal of Educational Research, 89(1)*, 163-171.

Connolly, K. & Myers, J. (2003). Wellness and mattering: The role of holistic factors in job satisfaction. *Journal of Employment Counseling, 40(4)*, 152-160.

Connolly, R. (2000). Why do good teachers leave the profession: What can be done to retain them? [Electronic version]. *Momentum, 31(3).*

Creemers, B. & Reetzig, G. (1996). School level conditions affecting the effectiveness of instruction. *School Effectiveness and School improvement, 7(3),* 197-228.

Danielson, C. (2006). The many faces of leadership [Electronic version]. *Educational Leadership, 65(1).*

Davis, J. & Wilson, S. (2000). Principals' efforts to empower teachers: effects on teacher motivation and job satisfaction and stress [Electronic version]. *The Clearing House, 73(6).*

Davis, S. & Hensley, P, (1999). The politics of principal evaluation. *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education, 73(4)*, 383-403.

DeMarrais, K. & Lapan, S., eds. (2004). *Foundations for research: Methods of inquiry in education and the social sciences*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Eilers, A. & Camacho, A. (2007). School culture change in the making: Leadership

　　factors that matter. *Urban Education, 42(1)*, 616-637.

Eisner, E. (2006). The satisfactions of teaching. *Educational Leadership, 63(6)*, 44-46.

Elmore, R. (2000). Building a new structure for school leadership. *American Educator,*

　　Winter, 1999-2000, 6-44.

Fritzberg, J. (2004). No Child Left Behind: Assessing President Bush's assessment law.

　　Educational Foundation, Summer-Fall, 2004, 7-24.

Gall, J., Gall, M. & Borg, W. (2005). *Appling educational research: A practical guide*.

　　Boston: Pearson.

Glasman, N. & Heck, R. (2003). Principal evaluation in the United States. In T.

　　Kellaghan, D., L Stufflebeam, & L Wingate (eds), *International Handbook of*

　　Educational Evaluation: Vol.9, Part Two.

Glesne, C. (2006). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. Boston: Pearson.

Gronn, P. (1996). From transactions to transformations: a new world order in the study of

　　leadership. *Educational Management and Administration, 24(1),* 7-30.

Gruenart, S. (2008). School culture, school climate: They are not the same thing.

　　Principal, March/April, 2008, 56-59.

Habegger, S. (2008). The principal's role in successful schools: Creating a positive

　　school cuture. *Principal*, September/October, 2008, 42-46.

Hallinger, P. & Heck, R. (1996). Reassessing the principal's role in school

　　effectiveness: A review of empirical research, 1980-1995. *Educational*

　　Administration Quarterly, 32, 5-44.

Hallinger, P. & Heck, R. (1998). Exploring the principal's contribution to school

    effectiveness: 1980-1995. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 9*, 157-

    191.

Hargreaves, D. & Hopkins, D. (1991). *The empowered school.* London: Cassell

    Publishing

Harris, J., Moritzen, S., Robitschek, Imhoff, A., &Lynch, J. (2001). The comparative

    contributions of congruence and social support in career outcomes. *The Career*

    Development Quarterly, 49(4), 314-323.

Hart, A. (1995). Reconceiving school leadership: emergent views. *The Elementary*

    School Journal, 96(1), 9-28.

Henderson, S. (2000). Follow your bliss: A process for career happiness. *Journal of*

    Counseling and Development, 78(3), 305-315.

Hertting, M. (2008). Are we supporting new principals? *American School Board Journal*,

    June 2008, 36-37.

Hipp, K. & Bredeson, P. (1995). Exploring connections between teacher efficacy and

    principals' leadership behaviors. *Journal of School Leadership, 5(2),* 136-150.

Howard, B. & Gould, K. (2000). Strategic planning for employee happiness: A business

    goal for human service organizations. *American Journal on Mental Retardation,*

    105(5) 377-386.

Jerald, C. (2006). School culture: The hidden curriculum. Report from The Center for

    Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, 12/2006, retrieved from

    Education Research Complete on 9/29/08.

Johnson, S. & Donaldson, M. (2007). Overcoming the obstacles to leadership [Electronic version]. *Educational Leadership, 65(1)*.

Jorissen, K. (2002). 10 things a principal can do to retain teachers. *Principal Leadership, 3(1)*, 48-54.

Katzenmeyer, M., and Moller, G. (1996). *Awakening the sleeping giant: Leadership development for teachers*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Kruger, M., Witziers, B., & Sleegers, P. (2007). The influence of school leadership on School level factors: Validation of a causal model. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 18(1)*, 1-20.

Laabs, J. (2001). Today's Lutheran educator. *Lutheran Education, 136(4)*, 296-297.

Lambert, L. (2003). *Leadership capacity for lasting school improvement.* Alexandria, Va: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Latham, A. (1998). Teacher satisfaction. *Educational Leadership, 55(2)*, 82-83.

Leithwood, K., Jantzi, D., & Steinbach, R. (1999). *Changing leadership for changing times*. London: Open University Press.

Leithwood, K. and McAdie, P. (2007). Teacher working conditions that matter. *Education Canada, 47(2)*, 42-45.

Ma, X. & MacMillan, R. (1999). Influence of work conditions on teachers' job satisfaction. *The Journal of Educational Research, 93(1)*, 39-47.

Marcus, F. (1991). Mattering: Its measurement and theoretical significance. Unpublished manuscript.

Marzano, R. (2003). *What works in schools: Translating research into action*. Alexandria, Va.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Marzano, R., Waters, T., & McNulty B. (2005). *School leadership that works.*

Alexandria, Va: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Mawhinney, T. (2005). Lord, what do I do now: Prepping new principals goes well

beyond a set of new keys and well wishes [Electronic version]. *School*

Administrator, 62(6).

Maxwell, J. (2005). *Qualitative research design, An interactive approach.* Thousand

Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

McRel, Mid-continent research for education and learning. (2008). *North Carolina*

School Executive: principal evaluation process. Located at:

http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/profdev/training/principal/required/rubricas

sessmentform.pdf

Morgan, M. & O'Leary, M. (2004). A study of factors associated with the job

satisfaction of beginning teachers. *The Irish Journal of Education, 35(1)*, 73-86.

Mok, Y. (2002). Teacher growth: The formation and pursuit of personal values.

Interchange, 33(2), 115-138.

Morice, L. & Murray, J. (2003). Compensation and teacher retention: A success story.

Educational Leadership, 60(8), 40-43.

Mortimore, P. (1993). School effectiveness and the management of effective learning and

teaching. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 4(4),* 290-310.

Murnane, R. (2007). Improving the education of children living in poverty. *The Future of*

Children, 17(1), 161-182.

Murphy, J. & Pimental, S. (1996). Grading principals: Administrator evaluations come

of age [Electronic version]. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *78(1).*

Myers, J., Sweeney, T., & Witmer, J. (2000). The wheel of wellness counseling for

wellness: A holistic model for treatment planning. *Journal of Counseling &*

Development, 78, 251-266.

NC Report Cards (2009). Located at: http://www.ncreportcards.org

Nichols, S. & Berliner D. (2008). Testing the joy out of learning [Electronic version].

Educational Leadership 65(6).

No Child Left Behind Act, 2001.

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, (2008). Located at:

http://www.dpi.state.nc.us

Ogawa, R. & Hart, A. (1985). The effects of principals on the instructional performance

of schools. *Journal of Educational Administration, 23(1),* 59-72.

Ogawa, R. & Bossert, S. (1995). Leadership as an organizational quality. *Educational*

Administration Quarterly, 31(2), 224-243.

Perie, M., Baker, P., & Whitener, S. (1997). *Job satisfaction among America's*

teachers: Effects of workplace conditions, background, characteristics, and

teacher compensation. National Center for Education Statistics, Statistical

Analysis Report, (NCES No. 97-XXX).

Peterson, K. & Kelley, C. (2001). Transforming school leadership [Electronic version].

Leadership, 30(3).

Pounder, D., Ogawa, R., & Adams, E. (1995). Leadership as an organization-wide phenomena: Its influence on school performance. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 31(4)*, 564-588.

Ramirez, E. (2007). Room to improve [Electronic version]. *U.S. News & World Report, 143(17).*

Scheerens, J. (1997). Conceptual models and theory-embedded principles on effective schooling. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 8(3),* 269-310.

School System websites (masked), 2010.

Sunderman, G., Orfield, G. & Kim, J. (2006). The principals denied by NCLB are central to visionary school reform [Electronic version]. *Education Digest, 72(2).*

Thomas, D., Holdaway, E., & Ward, K., (2000). Policies and practices involved in the evaluation of school principals [Electronic version]. *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education, 3(14)*, 215-240.

Tooms, A. (2003). The rookie's playbook: Insights and dirt for new principals [Electronic version]. *Phi Delta Kappan 84 (7).*

Townsend, T. (1994). Goals for effective schools: the view from the field. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 5(2),* 127-148.

Van Houtte, M. (2006). Tracking and teacher satisfaction: Role of study culture and trust. *The Journal of Educational Research, 99(4)*, 247-254.

Walberg, H. (1984). Improving the productivity of America's schools. *Educational Leadership, 41(8),* 19-27.

Waters, T. & Kingston, S. (2005). The standards we need. *Leadership 62(16)*, 14-39.

Weast, J. (2008). Creating shared leadership that works [Electronic version]. *School Administrator, 65(7)*.

Wheatley, M. & Frieze, D. (2007). How large-scale change really happens [Electronic version]. *School Administrator, 64(4)*.

Wilson, L. (2007). Great American schools: The power of culture and passion. *Educational Horizons*, Fall 2007, 35-44.

Woods, A. & Weasmer, J. (2004). Maintaining job satisfaction: Engaging professionals as active participants. *Clearing House, 77(3)*, 118-121.

Wu, V. & Short, P. (1996). The relationship of empowerment to teacher job commitment and job satisfaction. *Journal of Instructional Psychology 23(9)*, 85-89.

Yeatts, M. (2005). Before turning over the keys to the new principal [Electronic version]. *School Administrator, 62(6)*.

Yin, R. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Yuki, G. (1994). *Leadership in Organizations.* New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Appendix A

Sample Recruitment Letter to Superintendent

January 8, 2010

Dr. _____, Superintendent
_____ Schools

Dear Dr. _____,

       I am interested in conducting a valuable research project that will help principals build a success-based culture in schools. One component of a successful school is to have a culture that values success for all children. It is my belief that principals, through specific behaviors in positively interacting with staff, are another vital component in building such a culture that values success. By utilizing the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (TWCS), principals who are making a positive influence in teacher satisfaction can be identified. I believe a connection exists between positive working conditions in schools and student success. A study of such schools will help provide educational practitioners a roadmap to success that other schools may model. Based upon a review of recent results from the TWCS I believe that _____ School has much to offer to such a study.

       I would like to conduct a case study of _____ School in an effort to explain the dramatic increase in the school's overall TWCS composite score from 2006 to 2008. In 2006, the school's composite score, the average of the score in all five domains of the survey was 3.54. In 2008 the composite rose to 3.89, a 9% change which is a very significant increase. It is my understanding that a new principal, Mr. _____, was hired between the two survey administrations. It is my belief that new leadership had an effect on these scores so it is natural to ask why. I feel the answer to that question is one that all educational leaders will want to hear.

       I am a doctoral student and this research project and the corresponding story it tells is my dissertation. I will be under the supervision of Dr. Ken Jenkins who is a seasoned and respected educational researcher. With your permission, I plan to interview the principal and review aggregate data for the school such as test scores, grade distributions, attendance, and discipline. Since I plan to review aggregate data, it will not be identifiable to me or any other outside source. I also plan to hold focus group interviews with certified staff members who would like to participate in the study.

       I assure you that this proposed case study will follow all exemplary standards of case study research and all ethical standards will be utilized and upheld. No students will be interviewed in the study. No individual staff member will be identified in the study unless permission to do so is given. I will ask your permission to use the name of the school in the final draft of my report. I will provide to you and Mr. _____ a final draft of the case for your review and approval before including it in my final report.

With your permission to proceed, I would like to arrange the logistics of my visits with Mr. _____. I would propose to have all of my data collected by February 28, 2010 and final drafts of the case study prepared and approved by April 30, 2010. Please let me know by letter or email (rdellis@iss.k12.nc.us) if I have your permission to conduct the case. I appreciate your time in considering this request. I look forward to the possibility of telling _____ School's story.

Sincerely,

Dale Ellis
ASU Doctoral Student

Appendix B

Sample Recruitment Letter to Principal

January 8, 2010

Mr. _____, Principal
_____ School

Dear Mr. _____,

I am interested in conducting a valuable research project that will help principals build a success-based culture in schools. One component of a successful school is to have a culture that values success for all children. It is my belief that principals, through specific behaviors in positively interacting with staff, are another vital component in building such a culture that values success. By utilizing the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (TWCS), principals who are making a positive influence in teacher satisfaction can be identified. I believe a connection exists between positive working conditions in schools and student success. A study of such schools will help provide educational practitioners a roadmap to success that other schools may model. Based upon a review of recent results from the TWCS I believe that _____ School has much to offer to such a study.

I would like to conduct a case study of _____ School in an effort to explain the dramatic increase in the school's overall TWCS composite score from 2006 to 2008. In 2006, the school's composite score, the average of the score in all five domains of the survey was 3.54. In 2008 the composite rose to 3.89, a 9% change which is a very significant increase. It is my understanding that you were hired between the two survey administrations. It is my belief that new leadership had an effect on these scores so it is natural to ask why. I feel the answer to that question is one that all educational leaders will want to hear.

I am a doctoral student and this research project and the corresponding story it tells is my dissertation. I will be under the supervision of Dr. Ken Jenkins who is a seasoned and respected educational researcher. With your permission, I would like to interview you and review aggregate data for the school such as test scores, grade distributions, attendance, and discipline. Since I plan to review aggregate data, it will not be identifiable to me or any other outside source. I would also like to hold focus group interviews with certified staff members who would like to participate in the study.

I assure you that this proposed case study will follow all exemplary standards of case study research and all ethical standards will be utilized and upheld. No students will be interviewed in the study. No individual staff member will be identified in the study unless permission to do so is given. I will ask your permission to use the name of the school in the final draft of my report. I will provide to you and your Superintendent, Dr. _____, a final draft of the case for your review and approval before including it in my final report.

If you agree, I would like to contact you soon to arrange the logistics of my visits to _____ School. I would propose to have all of my data collected by February 28, 2010 and final drafts of the case study prepared and approved by April 30, 2010. Please let me know by letter or email (rdellis@iss.k12.nc.us) if I have your permission to conduct the case at your school. I appreciate your time in considering this request. I look forward to the possibility of telling _____ School's story.

Sincerely,

Dale Ellis
ASU Doctoral Student

Appendix C

Sample Flier Delivered at School Faculty Meeting

YOUR INPUT IS NEEDED!

What makes a school successful?
How can school leaders be more effective?

I plan to answer these two questions and more in a research study and I need
your help!

MARK THE DATE!

What: Focus Group Interviews
When: January 20, 2010 (planning and after school)
Where: _____ School Media Center
Who: All Certified staff
Why: To help school leaders lead effectively in the 21st century

Note: Of the three schools invited to participate in this important study, the
school with the highest percentage of staff participation will receive $500 for
school supplies or to be spent as otherwise deemed appropriate by the
School Improvement Team!

Appendix D

Sample Principal Interview Transcript

Interview with Kathy Mack – Former Principal at Cooper Elementary School (Smythe County, NC) - 2/15/2010

This is Dale Ellis. I am here with Kathy Mack. Kathy was the principal at Cooper Elementary School in Smythe County at a time they witnessed a significant increase in their Teacher Working Conditions Survey from 2006 to 2008. I'm here to ask Kathy what went right so that I can capture that for the future.

1. Kathy, when did you come to the school?

I came to the school in July 2005, that's when I started.

2. What did you know about Cooper Elementary School?

Well, I had been working in Smythe County for I guess about 3 or 4 years prior to that. So, I was working at East End Elementary School so I had some background knowledge of Cooper with Smythe County being a small system, uh, you know we talked about it in meetings and stuff as principals, we talked. So, I knew John Doe (name changed by researcher) was the principal, so I knew him and we had talked about the school. I knew he was retiring and uh, so I had talked to him, you know, about the good things about Cooper School. I didn't know a lot about it, but you know I was familiar with the staff and what he thought about them.

3. Were there any staff dynamics or anything that you came to know about or that
   you did know about? The TWCS scores were pretty high to begin with.

Uh huh. Um, Not really. There were a couple of situations that he shared with me of
some staff members that needed direction maybe, I guess you could say. And so we set
priorities to try and help those particular teachers. I made sure I was visible in those
classrooms. Some were just not at the level they, uh, in some cases they needed to be.
Some of them did not return after my first year there and that was needed. (Interviewer) –
This is just for me for context. Ok – Good.

4. Leadership history, you had mentioned being at East End?

Yes, this was my first principalship. Now, when I was at Cooper, um I mean East End, I
was the assistant principal there and it just so happened after my first year the principal
that I was working under was out for most of the next school year so the Superintendent
at the time made me the acting principal of the school, so, um I did have some principal
experience prior to going to Cooper but it was in an interim.

5. You were at Cooper from July 2005 until when?

I started here, now let me get this right, so I was here this past November. I've been the
principal here all year since we were established as a school for the whole year. So April

of '09 was when I left Cooper School and that's when Ms. Jenkins came to the school. So, there for about a couple of months, I guess I was the principal at Cooper and the principal at Fontana Middle. We were trying to get everything going. It was close to a year I guess that they named us as the principals at the Middle School, so it was something everyone was aware of.

6. Did any teachers have an issue with losing their principal, with knowing so long in advance?

Well, there had been a lot of rumor that I would be going, uh simply because I have a middle school background. I was a middle school teacher. And everyone knew that. That was not a secret. A lot of people saw it as a promotion. I didn't really see it as a promotion, it was more of a natural step.   A lot of people saw it as one and thought that she will definitely want to do that. So, I don't think it came as a real shock to anybody. It was difficult on me, more difficult that I thought to try and do 2 things. Uh, they were, our system, the Superintendent and Maintenance Director were very gracious in letting Mr. Swaim who's at Starmount and I be involved in the process, you know, from hiring staff, to picking our carpet color, to picking out furniture and picking out paint. We were involved in all that, those decisions from the start. It was all a little more difficult that what I had originally expected and the staff at Cooper understood but it did take some of my time away from Cooper. I know there were some who did not want me to go, but they were happy for me, that I was able to get this good opportunity.

7. Do you recall when you went to Cooper, was there a specific charge from the

   Superintendent to do this or do this?

Well, I don't want to bash the prior principal, but there wasn't a lot of organization nor a

lot of leadership prior to that. One thing that I got a lot when I got there was that the old

principal said handle it yourself, don't bring me any bad news type of thing. So, I think

that in some cases the staff felt they were fending for themselves I guess. So, Dr. Daye

and I sat down to talk about Cooper School, that was one of the things I think she wanted.

And the staff wanted somebody who was present. I think they didn't feel like they had

someone who was there. He was retiring. I mean, he was a very nice guy, very

personable, but not there.

8. At any time, were you aware of the Teacher Working Conditions scores. From

   2006, was it a focus area for you in 2008?

Uh, we looked at the scores, um, you know with being hired in '05 and then '06, you

know, I guess it was done in the 05-06 school year. It would have been done in March of

'06 and I started in July of '05. It's really hard for me to recall back because I don't

remember Dr. Daye being a stickler about the Teacher Working Conditions Survey. You

know, you've got to get it up. You've got to do this or you've got to do that. I don't recall

her taking that approach with it. Now I do remember her bringing me, uh, a copy of all of

the scores in a red notebook. You know, I remember us setting there and talking about it

and I remember looking and comparing the scores and trying to figure out why was this

low or why was this high. But, she wasn't dead set that we needed to address the scores. And also, with being a first year principal, that could explain why some things weren't as high as they could have been. I remember talking about the survey in some of my principal classes and researching it. So, I knew about the importance of the survey.

9. In looking at the specifics in 2006 72% of the staff took the survey. That increased in 2008. Do you know why?

Well I guess at the time the girl that got the codes and things that they had to give out to the staff helped because I told her to make sure she got them out to people and we discussed it at staff meetings. You know, I would make sure that I reminded them to do it. I also reminded them that the computer lab was available if they needed to go and do it then they could go and do it then. I tried to remind them whenever I could. I think the main thing was the communication. I don't recall specifics. I'm actually surprised because I thought it would have been higher than that. But there's always some that you don't know why there on your list anyway. Some of the itinerants may only be in your school for a day.

10. The first domain that increased was time. What were some strategies you used, or what happened from 2006-2008?

On this one, there were some deliberate things that I did. When I was there in '05, coming in in July of '05, I did not do a whole lot with the schedule. Can't recall exactly

what I did that first summer. But, being a first year principal and the schedule had already really been established from the year before so I was like ok we're really going to leave it. I noticed during that first year that these teachers did not have a whole lot of planning. They didn't have individual or common planning. I have a colleague of mine who is a principal also in this system. We worked on scheduling together. We had a lot of the same issues. We both had itinerant folks. We were able to put together a good schedule. But, we were able to do that. We worked together and we basically had the same schedule, our schools were about the same size. So that second year we were able to do that and I think that they appreciated the planning time. I tried to insure we had more literacy blocks of time. That still wasn't really where I wanted it to be. I think it's gotten better. I think Ms. Jenkins has really done a great job with that at Cooper. Last year we also brought in a scheduling guy from JMU. We brought him in and he really helped. One thing they did not have was common planning. That was one thing they did not have when I first got there. I shared itinerants with another school and that made scheduling difficult. Then next year I worked with her and we were able to get the same folks, those same itinerant folks and we actually ran a six-day schedule. I tried to make sure that they always had their planning, that they didn't lose time. We worked with our teachers to make sure the kids didn't miss out on Art and other classes. You know they would see the kids on Mondays, you know a lot of times holidays hit on Mondays or you're out for snow they miss time. We fixed the rotation where that did not happen. They got to see the kids for an equal amount of time. That was a lot of work to create that.

11. Facilities and resources was another area of increase. Was there anything specific that you can recall that you did in this area?

If the teachers felt that they needed something, I would do whatever I could to get that something for them. I worked with the School Improvement Team and told them that we got to create a budget that we would look at what our needs were. The budget was only used to feel needs. We were going to use what money we have for teachers. I'm not really sure they had done that before. I had them tell us what was needed. The budget had purpose. We were actually able to fulfill what they wanted and actually spend less than what we would have spent if we not asked what they needed. You know, the art teacher always had whatever the art teacher needed. They asked for it and I pretty much did what I could do to get it. They didn't ask for anything that was really out of the way. We were able to get SMART boards for them, we started doing that. I worked with the PTO to start that process and now every classroom has one. We tried to bring in more technology. They will tell you this. The school did not replace computers and that sort of thing. That is one difference from when I started. You know prior to that, you know with Title I, you can target that kind of stuff. There is more money there so I think we were able to get some things we needed, especially in the technology field. There really wasn't a technology plan but we addressed that to make sure teachers had what they needed to teach the kids.

12. In empowerment, there was a slight decrease, but there was a statewide decrease due to the questions being changed. What changes do you recall you made to address empowerment?

I tried to focus on, on trying to send them to conferences that they could go to and come back and lead a staff development. I had key staff members that I believed, still do believe that were tremendous leaders on that staff and could motivate other staff members. I tried to put them in empowering roles. I had a Kindergarten teacher and a 4th grade teacher that were great leaders. I encouraged them. That 4th grade teacher is now my AP here. I tried to encourage leadership. I know one of my teachers was selected to go to one initiative, I think it was called Power of K, she was one of 50 out of the whole state to be a part of this. Especially in the K-2 area, we tried to do some things that were different and she organized and was able to lead the staff meeting and so I tried to make that a leadership thing. But you have to be careful to so that the staff would not see them as being the pets, which that is very hard to do. I tried to encourage them. I tired to send my teachers to Teacher Academy, that kind of thing. We started PLC's. That did not start out the way it really needed to start out. What we ended up doing was I had a group that I took to Teacher Academy. We applied and I had a group that I took every year. My last year, well right before my last year, they wanted to go and learn about Professional Learning Communities, that group went and my assistant principal actually went with them. And we had that group trained in it. Then the system began to really study PLC's and I took a group of teachers with me to that. What we were learning in our system was different than what the Teacher Academy PLC group learned. That was really not good.

We had 2 different was of doing it. So, I think for Ms. Jenkins that was a hurdle she had to overcome and she has been working on it for a couple years now. I think we are finally getting there as a district.

13. The leadership score you received on the survey is about as high as you're ever going to see. Do you recall anything in particular that you did to help here?

Well I have always believed it is important to be out and be visible in the school. One, I want to be where things are happening. If you have a bunch of kids in the cafeteria I should be down there where they are because where things are happening. And so, I tried to be there when something happened. I was also the type that I never asked a teacher to do something that I wasn't willing to do. Now to me it's important that teachers see me picking up that piece of paper in the hallway or the cafeteria. That's the stuff that people do. We had a procedure for everything. We had duty free lunch for our teachers and in order to do that we had to use teacher assistants in the cafeteria to monitor. For the first couple of weeks I was one of those folks in there helping and trying to make sure it was going well. We're not just going to let them all just get up and go, we're going to do this systematically table by table and we're going to do this right. So, I think that they saw that as wow, she's willing to get in here with us, we can't believe you're in the cafeteria. You know if there's paper on the floor in the cafeteria you know I'm going to pick it up and I'm going to take care of it. I mean I even got a couple parents who would comment, I can't believe you're in the cafeteria as well. I mean, that's just what you do. I mean I'm not going to ask someone to do something for me when I can do it. I always had an open

door policy. You know, it really didn't matter if I was busy, if that teacher had a planning period at that time I was available to them. They also knew that I didn't hammer them over little things. You know I know you have families and that was ok. If you had an issue or a conflict with school we would find a way to work it out. They knew this about me, just to not try and take advantage of it. I think I could reign in on things like that when I had to but also give some leeway. For instance, if you have a doctor's appointment in the afternoon, I'm not going to make you take a half a day for that. We'll work, we'll work through it. So, there were some instances like that helped. I really don't think the staff had felt that level of support before. Also, if there was an issue with the parent I would ask them to talk to the teacher and then to me. If it was an issue that could not be resolved, then call me and I'll get involved. If the teacher was wrong I would let them know, not in front of the parent, but you know, work with them. I don't remember sitting back and thinking I'm going to do this and this will happen. I just did what I felt was the right thing to do. You know, trying to think of some academic things we did, we started curriculum nights and that worked well. It was popular with the parents. We tried to feed everyone and that was appreciated. I thought that was a positive thing for the community.

14. The last domain was Professional Development. Can you remember anything specifically you did to try and improve professional development for the staff?

One thing that I tried to stick to was if you went to a conference when you came back you needed to come back and share with everyone else. Of course, that didn't always work

the way I wanted it to. But, that's something I should have stuck to a little bit more, but we did give them the opportunity to go. We also provided professional development at the school with those staff members that were leaders that we talked about earlier. We tried to send people to the elementary school conference, the middle school conference, the math conference, you know those big conferences, really try to get those covered. I also required them to be up on current practices. I tried to keep them up on new and fresh ideas. At least I tried to. We also did summer book studies to keep them engaged and learning. We had staff development on year long book studies. I told them it was important to stay current, just like their doctor. I used that example. They want their doctor to stay current. That is why I am giving you these articles from ASCD. We shared a lot of things and I tried to keep that going so they could get what they needed from professional development.

15. Do you feel that the things that you did influenced the TWCS?

Yes, when you show it to me like this and I actually sit back and I think about it I would say yes. I didn't really think that much about it at the time. But, would I have done anything different, probably not. What I'm saying is is that I did those things because that is what I believed was in the best interest of my school, the teacher, the kids and learning in general. And, I'm glad to see that this was the outcome. I don't really like to say oh yeah I did a great job, I mean I'm not one of those types of people to do that, but when you show it to me this way it does make me feel good about what we did. I believe like you do that teachers respond better when they feel support. I would say that the teachers

at Cooper would say that I cared about kids and the teachers and that I wanted to see

students learn. They would say that I cared for them not only as a teacher, but as a

person. I know I feel more empowered when I have the central office folks on my side

and the Superintendent believes in me and understands that I have other things beyond

the operation of the school.

16. Do you feel the students at Cooper were successful or had a chance at success?

Yes, but I don't think it would ever be where I wanted it to be. I saw growth at all levels.

But Cooper has always struggled I guess you could say. You would be focusing on one

grade and slack off in 2nd and 3rd. We would improve in one area and drop in another.

And that just about stayed the trend while I was there. I tried to make some changes

personnel wise that would help in the grade levels. But, I think big improvements are on

the way. I struggled with helping them in some areas, particularly in K-2. That goes back

to what we are currently doing in this system with this K-2 literacy initiative we have

now. I know when I was there we tried to meet after school and share strategies to help

the students learn. We tried to share what was working. The system is doing that now.

But, we now have a Superintendent who doesn't look at the scores that much. Our other

Superintendent was very much by the data, the actual physical data.

17. How would you describe the culture at Cooper? Do you feel that the culture in the
school at the time valued student success?

Definitely. Students definitely could be successful there. I would describe the culture as

very student-centered. I feel that we made decisions based upon what was best for

students. I felt that the school had a very welcoming atmosphere, for students and staff.

We were beginning to become a school for staff learning as well. The staff began to

recognize that we were moving in the right direction I felt. We had started down the road

of doing whatever it takes to make students successful. And, while we were moving in

the right direction, there was some staff that didn't want to move. And it's hard to move

some of those people but we were definitely getting there that's for sure.

18. Can a positive work environment influence student outcomes?

Yes, I stressed to the staff a lot about positive relationships and tried to maintain a

positive relationship with them. At Cooper we were working with the rural poor. A lot of

these kids didn't have support at home. We tried to insure that support first. You can do

so much more when you have that positive relationship. I think relationship building

could also describe the school.

19. Do you feel that a principal or school leadership can influence student success?

Yes, definitely. I think as the principal of the school you set the expectations for the staff

and you set the expectations for the students. You have to make sure that everyone is

following through with those expectations. And if someone is not following through with

that then you take the proper steps to make sure it happens. We must set high

expectations for ourselves and set the bar high. Not often will people go higher than the

bar. They need to know where that bar is so they can meet the expectations. Really, that is the key to success, high expectations for all. People will go to the bar you set. You have to tell them what you expect. There must be clear high expectations not only for staff but for students. Being the instructional leader, it's my job to bring ideas and share with the teachers. It's my job to help students learn what they need to be successful.

20. Is there anything you can think to add that I did not ask?

No, I think you covered just about every angle.

Thank you so much or your time today.

Appendix E

Sample Focus Group Interview transcript

Mansfield Middle School – Focus Group 2 – (3 People) 3/2/2010

1. How would you describe the culture here from 2006 to 2008?

The very first administrator that I worked with was a woman and she had turned this school around. This school had bad test scores and the climate was not one that was conducive to learning. This woman worked hard to turn it around and make it a climate that was more welcoming, one where the students felt safe. There was chaos and she put structure in this school. She had high expectations for her teaching staff. It was very authoritative though. She had the final say and she wanted to make sure you knew that she was the boss. She had expectations and if those expectations weren't met, then you had to go. She ran off a lot of teachers. Of those that stayed, the staff kept getting better. There was a less turnover rate each year. It ran like a well oiled machine. But teachers were walking around on thin ice. They were afraid. She treated teachers like kids. Made it kind of tough to work here. That all changed when David McDonald came here. It was a complete 180. Very laid back. He had an open door policy. He allowed the teachers to teach, to choose and it wasn't like he was watching you all the time or critiquing you all the time. He gave the teachers freedoms that just weren't there before. Things just loosened up quite a bit and the kids sensed it too. I think it was a very positive thing.

It went from a concentration camp, I don't want to say to an amusement park, but it was much more laid back approach. We still have an infinite amount of structure. A lot

different from where I came from up north. The kids here need that kind of structure.

Some of the home lives here are not great. But McDonald, what he did, he kept a lot of

those bounds in place from the previous regime but gave the teachers more freedoms.

And because the teachers were given more freedom to do things, it made for a happier

work climate and it made it easier for those self-motivated teachers to go ahead and be

more engaging and do different things.

The climate was good. The administrator communicated what the expectations were and

the teachers practiced those expectations on a daily basis. That trickled down to the

students in the classroom.

2. Do you feel that kids were successful or had a chance for success?

Oh yes. He was very student-centered.

Yes, very student-centered.

He was all about taking them to the next level and getting them as far as we could. That's
why I was so excited about having him over at the high school.

3. So, the positive things trickled down to the students?

Absolutely, we were able to provide a more engaging classroom. I teach science and they

are moving around all the time. Before, that would have been considered chaos. But, with

Mr. McDonald, we could do that kind of stuff. There is a decent amount of noise, but it

was constructive noise. I could get away with that with McDonald and I could not with

the previous one. The freedoms that Mr. McDonald gave us let us teach the way we want, to teach to the students, not necessarily to some old school way of thinking.

To piggy-back off of that, I think when teachers are given the freedom to explore how they want to teach, rather than being told how to teach and what to teach, I think you build a certain sense of excitement. When a teacher has excitement, when you're in that classroom and you have excitement, the students can sense that. They can sense when you are happy, they can sense when you are sad. They can sense when you are uninterested in what you are teaching. They can sense when you are boiling over with excitement. They can pick up on that. So, when you're excited, that definitely permeates within the students.

4. There was a large increase in time. Is there anything you can recall about time that was improved?

We had fewer meetings. And when we did have meetings they seemed to be longer. But, teacher's time is really valuable, so when you don't have as many meetings, that helps. The turnover rate decreased so we were here longer, we knew each other so our collaborative time was better. So we did a lot of that. Having pointless meetings set up where administration watches over your shoulder was a thing of the past. We met on our own, we planned together, we were the ones that did it rather that it being dictated to us. We decided on things rather than having it all set for us. I think people were a lot happier because they felt like they were professionals.

I would agree with that. There were countless meetings and committees for everything before.

She put fear and consequences for everything.

You knew when the meetings were going to take place. You knew about how long you were going to be there. You knew they were going to last about an hour and a half on occasion. There was a schedule and there was hardly ever anything scheduled after school which was nice. We have long hours anyway.

We have lives after school and I think a good administrator recognizes that. Our jobs are important, these kids are important, the vision and mission of the school are important. We don't forget that, but we do know that having a family is priority one. I think Mr. McDonald recognized that and he had a family and was a family man. So, he allowed teachers a little more freedom and there was more gray area.

5. Facilities and resources was another increase. What can you recall happening there?

That would be the only black mark I would have given him really. We don't have very good science labs. But, that's not something I guess he really could control.

I see this increase and I think I understand why. I think it boils down to fear. If you are afraid of your boss, you're not going to voice that you don't have something that you need. I think the reason for the increase is that teachers felt like they could go, and they could approach this principal. It went up because staff was more comfortable with the new principal than they were before.

6. Empowerment went down state-wide but there was an increase here. Can you think of anything to explain that?

I think he gave teachers more liberties, he allowed them to explore options for themselves without having to actually instruct them every waking moment. I know he was the type of leader that delegated powers, especially to his administrative staff. And the reason why this isn't higher, I mean I know he had a vision for the school, all he had to do was keep the good stuff in line and add some things here and there.

7. Leadership went up. What happened here?

I liked the fact that he left me alone and that he recognized that I could teach and he let me do it.

He was not a micromanager. The previous principal was big time. And he was not. He gave us our leeway to get the job done.

I would agree with that too.

8. Professional development, anything you can think of there?

Once again, delegating, he delegated those responsibilities to his administrative team. And we just happened to have a really, really good assistant principal here. She is a principal at another school now. Just a stand up individual. Stand up leader. She was a curriculum person. She would show us things during our grade level meetings, show us teaching strategies and walk us through things. We would have someone come in and have a workshop every now and then too. They would try to find funds to send you. But, you had to seek it out yourself. Had it not been for the AP, it would have been non-existent if you didn't seek it out yourself. Not saying it was his fault and he didn't promote it. The funds just weren't there.

9. Can principals influence student success?

Absolutely. They set the climate for their building. If you set a climate that is friendly and safe, a climate that is conducive to learning in different styles and in different ways, it is going to help in student learning. Mr. McDonald gave those freedoms to his staff. He set the climate by laying back a little bit. He was hard on some teachers but they needed that. If he realized that you were doing what you needed to do, he was very laissez faire.

I think good leaders lead by example. If you expect success then you need to radiate that to your teaching staff. And once that's radiated to your teaching staff, you expect that radiates to the students. You expect that because they are in the trenches. If you do right by your staff and you check in on them and you do right by them and you treat them as professionals, then they are going to go into the classroom and you have empowered them and they are going to go in there and do their best for you. Once those expectations are in place, and they are clear and they are concise and they are conducive to learning, that's all going to go to the classroom. And you're going to keep your staff and they're going to get better every year. You are working together with them and the kids are going to benefit.

If you set your climate, and provide opportunities for teachers to be successful, to be a part of the community, there going to be less likely to leave.

   10. Do you feel having a positive work environment influences student success?

Oh definitely. If the teachers are happy then obviously they are, that emotion is going to flow over to the kids. If you've got an administrative team who is really on your side I think that positive atmosphere goes through everything.

When we had our grade level meetings last year, our meetings were really fun. I don't think that the other grade levels had as much foolishness going on as much as we did. But, as a group, we enjoyed being around each other. You know that has a big influence.

It just carries through to the student. Even if you're having a bad day and you can talk to the person next to you and vent a little, then it's gone. You can get back to it and move on. I think a positive attitude is big. Our problem is student attitudes, being sassy. If we can overcome that and keep the teachers with positive attitudes, we can do a lot. But, McDonald was good about working with you.

It didn't feel like you were constantly scrutinized. Everything you do, you have to watch your back kind of thing. I will say this, last year was one of the best years we had as far as scores.

11. Anything else that you can think to add?

Well, in comparison of the 2 years, I think our turnover rate declined from '06 to '08. So, our teachers that we had that were in place around here, the next group dropped off, and a new group came in here that next year and they stayed. So, the retention of teachers that we had was much higher. And it made a big difference because in our teams, well when a team works together for 2 or 3 years, you just really start to get, it's like being married. We could finish sentences and we knew what the others were thinking. I think that that was a big thing there.

He worked toward getting more technology in. I think that probably the biggest influence was the retention though too. You know they always say when the parents start seeing you with brothers and sisters and they see you over time, they know who you are.. In general, McDonald was much more respectful.

You know anyone has those times they push it too far as far as you're not doing your job or I need the test scores to be higher, but he was better. I think when he came in he also said I want to be a school of distinction in 3 years. And he stayed focused on that. The other principal had been there for multiple years and there hadn't been, as far as EOG scores, there hadn't been growth in over 3 years. So, we weren't getting where we need to be under his regiment. So we needed to make that happen.

When we got the freedom, things changed. I don't think we changed so much what we were doing as we felt better about what we were doing. We were being trusted to educate these children without someone hovering over us.

Thank you so much or you time today.

VITA

Richard Dale Ellis was born in Wilkes County, North Carolina, on May 25, 1974, to Margaret Ann Wingler Ellis and Noah Howard Ellis of Hays, North Carolina. He attended the Wilkes County Schools until his graduation from North Wilkes High School in 1992. He attended Emory & Henry College and Wilkes Community College before graduating with a B.S. in History and Secondary Education from Appalachian State University in 1997. He attended Gardner-Webb University and obtained an MBA with an emphasis in Human Resources Management in 2001.

Following the completion of his bachelor's degree, he was employed as a social studies teacher with Lee County Schools in Sanford, North Carolina and East Wilkes High School in Ronda, North Carolina. Following completion of his graduate degree he was employed by Iredell-Statesville Schools, first as a social studies teacher at North Iredell High School in Olin, North Carolina. He advanced through the organization serving first as Director of Human Resources for Classified Employees and Staff Development and the Director of Human Resources. He was promoted to Executive Director, Assistant Superintendent and Associate Superintendent for Human Resources with Iredell-Statesville Schools, a position that is currently held as of March 2010.

He has also served as an adjunct professor of business administration at Gardner-Webb University, the Art Institute Online, and David N. Myers University.

He currently resides in Statesville, North Carolina with his wife, Alisha and three children, Gabriel, Baylee, and Chloe.