

CHARACTERISTICS THAT MAKE PRINCIPALS EFFECTIVE LEADERS.

A STUDY OF TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP.

By

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The members of the Committee appointed to examine the dissertation of DEBRA ANN MANDERS find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted.

Chair

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Abstract

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This paper outlines the research problem, reviews literature, describes research methods and presents findings addressing the research topic “Characteristics that make principals effective leaders. A study of teacher perceptions of principal leadership.” This study, building on Blase and Blase’s (1999a, 1999b, 2002, 2003a, 2003b) research, used a hand-written and web based open-ended questionnaire inviting teachers to reflect on leadership characteristics they deemed important to their school’s success and their own success as an educator. Results suggested that teacher language mirrored the literature about principal effectiveness, although teachers tended to emphasize support, communication, visibility, feedback, personal qualities, leadership traits and building school relationships rather than student outcomes and how principals contributed to them.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents Joe and Bonnie Manders who encouraged me to work hard, have faith and to believe in myself. To my incredible husband Brent Atthill who continually supports my dreams. To my dear friend Jen Freedy who unconditionally shared the ups and downs of this journey with me. To my faithful “assistant” Carling who never left my side.

With love and thanksgiving to you all.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“For centuries people have assumed that leadership is critical to the success of any institution or endeavor” (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005, p. 4). This is true for schools, even though leadership is neither easily defined nor static. As teachers we have been exposed to various leadership styles the longer we remain in the profession. In my teaching career I have witnessed the gamut of leadership styles. One of my first principals appeared to demonstrate vision but lacked the skills for implementation. Another lacked the ability to form a collaborative work environment, while the third exemplified a collegial model of leadership along with guiding the staff on a path of change. As Fullan (1993) asserts, the secret of growth and development is learning how to contend with the forces of change – turning positive forces to our advantage, while blunting negative ones. This led me to wonder what characteristics make principals effective leaders in the eyes of teachers. Arguably, teacher perceptions are not necessarily the only way to assess principal effectiveness; however, this study is an attempt to answer this question based on teacher perceptions of effective leadership. Blase and Blase (1999a, 1999b, 2002, 2003a, 2003b) addressed this issue in a number of publications during the 1990s and 2000s and I built on their work in the context of the new millennium where high stakes testing and steadily increasing student diversity create sustained challenges for all teachers.

The educational environment is not stagnant. It is ever changing, growing, and evolving. Administrators have to be effective and efficient managers who will promote

positive changes in education through motivational leadership. “Leaders for the 21st century must view leadership through the lens of its effect on actions of staff members that subsequently affect student achievement” (Dyer & Carothers, 2000, p. 16). This can be an overwhelming task at times. Teachers crave strong, supportive leaders who will not only provide necessary school management but professional guidance too. Positive energy and motivation offer teachers and students a productive educational environment.

There is a fine line at times between what is management and what is leadership. The ability to manage and be an effective leader is reflected in personality traits and the ability to cope with the demands and expectations of change. Therefore, “a leader’s personal values affect his or her perception of situations and problems” (Daft, 2002, p. 128). In this time of educational reform and national mandates along with a major focus on No Child Left Behind, a successful administrator is able to manage the everyday functioning of a school while supporting the necessary changes throughout the school environment. Teachers want principals to weed through the waves of political paperwork and narrow down what is expected of them in the classroom. Therefore, effective leadership is based on a commitment to support teachers with knowledge, information and resources in order to meet the needs of students. “Support entails listening, problem solving, reflecting, clarifying, and helping people develop workable solutions” (Robbins & Alvy, 2003, p. 49). Thus, principals willingly listen to and acknowledge teacher needs while multitasking at a whole new level to benefit all stakeholders.

Teachers are successful when they have the necessary skills and knowledge to guide them forward. Principals provide teachers these opportunities through role modeling and establishing a collaborative work environment based on mutual trust,

respect, dignity and commitment. Should there be stumbling blocks, the teachers will have the strategies and skills needed to guide both themselves and students past any hurdles. “The reward of a trusting environment is immeasurable, yet the price of a lack of trust is dear” (Blase & Blase, 2001, p.23). Therefore, this partnership of principal – teacher is vital for the success of all students in a school setting.

Professional development is important to teachers. It provides them with the support, knowledge and materials to connect with their students. Effective leaders role model a desire to grow as an educator and listen to the needs of the teachers. “By recognizing the importance of professional learning to produce better outcomes for students, these leaders drive resources to support focused professional development” (Copland & Knapp, 2006, p.41). This opportunity to grow together in the field of education builds a bond of trust and confidence among staff and the principal. Principals also lead by example in sharing expectations and clearly defining goals with teachers. Sergiovanni (2001) states, “If you wish them to behave in a given way, make the desired behavior clear to them and make it worth their while to engage in it” (p.14). Effective principals provide this clarity through honesty, professionalism, determination and excellence. Principals embrace each teacher’s uniqueness in professional needs and teaching styles and remain focused on the shared commitment to improving the lives of all students in the school.

Education requires the collaboration of many stakeholders: students, teachers, parents and the community. Stakeholders collectively have a vested interest in the students of today for they will be society’s future caregivers. Administrators continually work with stakeholders in a collaborative manner to strengthen the school community

and to ensure a safe and secure learning environment. This requires the principal to be patient and be the motivator for change among staff and the community. Buy in from stakeholders is important to have a smooth transition through change. A leader inspires people both in words and in actions. A productive leader guides people to put words into action. “Discerning principals are conscious of subtle reactions to their actions that negatively affect school climate” (Dyer & Carothers, 2000, p. 18). Therefore, effective leaders are motivated by a desire to maintain a relationship of honesty and integrity with the stakeholders and a willingness to see a task completed.

The visibility of principals in the classroom is important to teachers. This provides an avenue for principals to acknowledge, validate and celebrate the hard work done by teachers and student achievement. In turn principals observe different styles and types of teaching within the classroom setting. There are numerous ways to approach curriculum and lessons and an effective principal will readily see the diversity and creativity that teachers bring to their classrooms. This presence keeps administrators grounded to the necessities of teachers and provides a constant reminder why administrative duties such as paperwork and non-critical meetings ought to be set aside in order to focus on the bigger picture – teachers, students and learning. As well, “spending time in corridors, classrooms, stairwells, and throughout the building gives the principal a chance to spread good news and caring words to the staff, students, community members, and parents” (Robbins & Alvy, 2003, p. 14).

Educational leaders take on many responsibilities, tasks and challenges that reflect an ability to organize, prioritize and lead. “Leadership is essentially dynamic and heavily dependent on an ability to intuitively respond to those indicators of appropriate

behaviors discerned from clues found in the environment” (Dyer & Carothers, 2000, p. 42). Based on these successful traits principals develop effective school programs, facilitate, foster and nurture interactions with parents, work with communities, promote and support change in a school and develop strong relationships with teachers and students.

Principals continue to develop the art of listening, effective communication and sound decision making and shared leadership to better serve teacher needs. “The intuitive leader understands that success in reading environmental cues is often determined by the ability to hear not only the words but the intent that is being communicated” (Dyer & Carothers, 2000, p. 28). Teachers want to know that their voices are being heard and that their opinions, suggestions and ideas matter. Open lines of communication between teachers and principals help build a collegial workplace where teachers feel valued and appreciated for offering input. Decision-making does not have to be one-sided. Teachers are empowered when given the opportunity to be part of a decision or to have their ideas taken into consideration. “A democratic leader delegates authority to others, encourages participation, relies on subordinates’ knowledge for completion of tasks, and depends on subordinate respect for influence” (Daft, 2002, p. 50). It becomes a win/win scenario when decisions are made with feedback from teachers to principals.

Much is expected from a school principal. According to Bess and Goldman (2001) new pressures have altered the environment for K-12 schools as they enter an era of restructuring. “Consequently, there are important implications for transformation in the leadership role of...school principals” (Bess & Goldman, 2001, p. 423). Therefore, it

appears imperative that as one embarks on a career in school administration, a clear focus is on making a positive impact on students and staff in the school environment, an impact that begins with a firm understanding of what defines effective leadership. Teachers' perspectives are helpful in developing that understanding.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teachers can intuitively describe an effective principal based on past and current experiences. This does not mean that teacher perceptions are the benchmarks for assessing effective leadership. However, teacher perceptions can offer some insight into the characteristics teachers want in an effective leader. Smith and Andrews (1989) noted, “leadership is often defined as a blend of several tasks, such as supervision of classroom instruction, staff development, and curriculum development” (as cited in Blase & Blase, 1999a, p. 350). Teachers identify traits of effective leadership that will further enhance their profession, the learning experience for students and the over all culture of the school community. Unfortunately, teacher perceptions of effective leadership are rarely shared with principals. This lack of feedback does not provide quality opportunities for principals to support teachers.

Both teachers and principals have their own perceptions of ideal leadership; however, their concepts of effective leadership do not necessarily lineup. As Dyer (2001) explains:

Educational leaders, like leaders in most organizations, get less and less realistic feedback as they move up in the hierarchy. Because of the limited opportunities for feedback, they tend to build on or enjoy perceived successes of the past. As a result, leaders may not recognize a need to change their behavior. (p. 36)

Teachers provide the ideal opportunity to give principals current feedback on their leadership and to provide realistic examples to support their claims. However, teachers are not afforded the time to communicate this information with a principal.

The literature substantiates that teachers thrive in an environment where effective principals acknowledge their profession with support, feedback and proactive leadership. Unfortunately, this message is still not being clearly understood or acted upon by principals. Teachers want a principal who will appreciate and value their feedback for the greater good of the school community. As well, teachers want a principal with a combination of various leadership characteristics to support their profession. The literature review identifies characteristics of effective leaders. These characteristics include change agent, supporting teacher growth, being a collegial leader and acting as a staff empowerment agent. However, even with all the professional literature outlining effective leadership there is room still for principals to grow and develop as effective leaders.

What characteristics make principals effective leaders? “Given the perceived importance of leadership, it is no wonder that an effective principal is thought to be a necessary precondition for an effective school” (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005, p. 5). Thus, there is a consensus that it involves both management and leadership with emphasis on leadership. “Good management controls complexity; effective leadership produces useful change” (Kotter, 1990, p. 103). It often appears that there is a belief that leadership and management are synonymous with one another. However, Kotter clearly explains how leadership and management are two distinctive and complimentary systems of actions. According to Leithwood and Duke (1999) the distinction between leadership and management usually entails allocating management and responsibilities for policy implementation, maintaining organizational stability and ensuring that organizational tasks are done correctly. Management operates on intuition, hunches and judgment based

on prior experience and knowledge (Bolman & Deal, 1997). “Leadership in contrast is assigned the challenges of policy making, organizational change and making sure the right things get done” (Leithwood & Duke, 1999, p. 53). Systems will have clearly identified and supported leaders throughout, while management of these continues as part of this system. Therefore, an effective leader will hold awareness of this distinction as she develops a harmonious balance among employees, and synthesizes the team to ensure a collaborative model on the part of all. Because this paper is focusing specifically on the merits of effective leadership, it is these skills that will be discussed.

How a Good Principal Will Guide Through Change and Support Growth

The effective principal focuses not only on the status quo, but learns to welcome, embrace, and facilitate change. Bess and Goldman (2001) describe the challenges K-12 education faces. Among them are the pressures to educate non-English speaking children, manage ethnic diversity, consider special needs in the regular classroom, and integrate educational and social services. “Participating in this kind of learning builds a sense of empowerment and possibility in a world that is not always welcoming to young people from all walks of life” (Copland & Knapp, 2006, p. 18). Statewide testing, school by school reporting, and efforts to assess teacher performance are also the realities of change. Considering and welcoming such changes are important and necessary to help students be included, have their unique needs addressed, and eventually be competitive in the work world, giving them the skills and confidence they need to be productive members of society. Therefore, Fullan and Miles (1992) remind us that, “change is a journey of learning and risk taking” (as cited in Blase & Blase, 1999, p. 371).

Teachers do not read the leadership literature, even that tailored to practitioners, and most are not versed in the literature on school improvement and school reform. Many welcome the new paradigms and the new demands of school reform. “The primary work of educational leadership is to guide improvements in learning” (Copland & Knapp, 2006, p. 3). However, not all teachers are “ready to learn,” and willing and able to provide effective instruction and respond to the challenges of a changing and often frustrating environment. Teachers want to stay in their classrooms, teach within their four walls and be left alone. Teachers will participate in committee work but not always willingly. “Clearly, isolation and lack of professional growth provide the breeding ground for cynicism and contempt for change” (Copland & Knapp, 2006, p. 55). Change is necessary for growth and development in a school; however, specific changes cannot always be readily identified or preplanned. “Without learning new ways – changing attitudes, values and behaviors – people cannot make the adaptive leap necessary to thrive in the new environment” (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002, p. 13). Many teachers are ready for change, others believe they now do what is best for students and still others are content to “just get by”. Ultimately an effective leader does have the capabilities of supporting a change initiative with an energetic and optimistic attitude (Kelehear, 2003).

Leadership is not a popularity contest and it requires principals to make effective decisions based on the needs of the students, faculty and community. Stakeholders may not readily receive decisions; however, the principal will have a vision set and a path in place as a guiding force to support necessary changes. “Change is often difficult for people because they must shift attitudes and beliefs to accommodate a new technique, program, or set of facts” (Goldberg, 2001, p. 3). Because change can be perceived as

frightening and unsettling, a leader who sees beyond this proves most effective while acknowledging that change is never easy (Fullan, 1993). “Leadership . . . involves the concerted modification by the leader of the goals, motivation, behavior, and/or competencies of other members of the organization in facilitating the group achievement of preferred goals” (Bess and Goldman, 2001, p. 424). It is important for principals to be confident in their decision- making capabilities and realize that some situations warrant a change in plan or direction to better accommodate the needs of students and staff. “The school leader demonstrates the role of Change Agent when he says to the faculty, “Perhaps we are becoming too comfortable with ourselves. What could we be doing that we are not?” (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005, p. 45).

As a change agent school leaders create a climate of objectivity, trust and confidence. “Creating a culture of trust is a prerequisite to implementing change” (Robbins & Alvy, 2003, p. 73). To create this atmosphere the principal is perceived by teachers as someone who is not trying to force or manipulate a change but rather facilitate it. “They are able to deal with both the logical planning aspect of change and the psychological aspect, that is, the ability to handle the people problems associated with change” (Snowden & Gorton, 2002, p. 136). Lindelow, Coursen, Mazarella, Heynderickz and Smith (1989) noted that unfortunately there are principals who build reputations based on their frequency of adopting new innovations but fail to provide resources and support for the staff. This lack of administrative support distances teachers from embracing any change. Therefore, effective principals are able to establish a climate of change for teachers through their day-to-day actions of exhibiting enthusiasm, open-mindedness, and seeking out and accepting criticism for their suggestions and ideas.

Teachers feel safe during a change in their environment when a leader clearly and succinctly explains the need for change, how it will be implemented and the resources available to help teachers adapt to this change. “They have the ability to establish, visualize and clearly communicate goals – goals that are ambitious and specifically tied into student improvement” (Mazzarella & Grundy, 1989, p. 9). An effective leader possesses the necessary skills and knowledge to assist teachers throughout the change process. Throughout any change it is critical for teachers to be able to voice their concerns about changes and an effective leader will encourage and welcome teachers to do so. “Change efforts that do not involve teachers and change that threaten to lessen their control over teaching, learning, and other aspects of schooling can have serious consequences for school effectiveness” (Sergiovanni, 2009, p. 354). Thus, a principal “listens carefully when concerns or objections surface and takes action to try to ameliorate those concerns and objections” (Snowden & Gorton, 2002, p. 141). Effective principals are perceptive to teacher needs during times of change and provide them an environment of respect, safety and confidence.

An effective principal is sensitive to the students, families and staff when implementing changes. Clear communication, expectations, and support need to be offered in order for ‘buy-in’ to happen. Having a clear agenda that the staff can envision and stand behind enhances the school environment by embracing the school’s mission and providing meaningful help to the students. Miles and Ekholm (1991) stress to “keep the clear, shared vision, ‘or driving dream’ in sight, this will support change efforts, help to articulate values, and supply direction for your developmental work” (as cited in Blase

& Blase, 2001, p. 85). It is imperative that the principal guide the stakeholders through a change process so the transition appears seamless.

The ISSLC (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium) Standards, recently revised and re-issued by the Council of Chief State School Officers (2008), attempts to link the school leadership research tradition to policy. Their list of standards (reproduced in Appendix B) synthesizes a set of ideas about what is most important for school leaders and for what they should be held accountable. The standards say what is to be done, but leaves open how this is to be accomplished. “Leadership is ultimately all about learning and teaching and the ways these functions affect each learner, each teacher, and each education system (Copland & Knapp, 2006, p. 1). There is wide agreement that the task of school leaders is daunting, but the report represents a broad consensus on values, and has become embedded in school leadership training and in the mindsets of new administrators and most veterans as well. However, there is a caveat. The ISLLC Standards, and indeed the bulk of the research on school change and school reform, inevitably orient towards the effective harnessing of teacher energy and motivation (Hallinger & Heck, 1999; Ogawa, 2005).

An effective principal is only as good as the people she works with in the school setting. The ISLLC Standards identify the professional standards for principals based on student learning. In order to have successful student learning, schools will have productive principals and teachers on staff. Principals can influence the character and capacities of a staff by “recruiting teachers whose values are consistent with the culture that leaders seek to develop” (Copland & Knapp, 2006, p. 49). A unified culture between the principal and teachers will transcend into the classroom and revolve around student

learning. “Leaders are able to establish and sustain a stronger focus on learning when they share a set of fundamental values and norms about learning with other educators” (Copland & Knapp, 2006, p. 31). These values and norms must be identified into teacher needs for the classroom in order for productive student learning to occur. An effective leader will perceive the needs of staff members by being present in the classroom, listening to teachers and students and making observations throughout the school setting (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005). “Few practical ideas are more obvious or more critical than the need to get perspective in the midst of action” (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002, p. 51). Therefore, as principals address the ISLLC Standards in their own professional growth changes will occur within the school setting to better the environment for teachers and student learning.

Fullan (1993) suggests the change process is non-linear and cannot be preplanned. Change in an organization does not always come to a principal in a logical, sequential order with a beginning, middle, and end. As well, there might not be a readily available result for a specific change. Fullan notes that by the time a preplanned initiative has started the circumstances for that change no longer need to be considered. Change is the evaluation of ideas and is in constant flux. Change is in constant motion and needs to be a moving target and adjustable to any given situation. “The issues have to be internalized, owned, and ultimately resolved by the relevant parties to achieve enduring progress” (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002, p. 127). A strong school principal is able to respond and see this process as a challenge rather than a disturbance or an annoyance and is able to work with the staff to embrace change within the school setting. “Thus, leadership

requires disturbing people – but at a rate they can absorb” (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002, p. 20).

When teachers come to school to teach they want to be independent and be able to “do their own thing” within their classroom setting. This can pose some serious challenges for principals considering not all teachers are ready with ample curriculum and instructional knowledge, classroom management abilities and people skills to address the everyday demands of this profession. Unfortunately not all teacher programs prepare teachers for the reality of the classroom and it is the principal who guides these teachers (new and veteran teachers) through change to promote a healthier work environment for the school community.

In the *Handbook for Instructional Leadership* written by Blase and Blase (2003) they note that the most successful principals act as instructional leaders who promote teacher development to enhance student learning. A principal’s number one priority is the welfare of the students. The principal must know what is going on in the classrooms, what is being taught and how it is being taught along with academic outcomes. Therefore, the principal role models the importance of being an instructional leader to the staff and supporting instructional change throughout the classrooms. By reading research, going to presentations, sharing information and listening to staff concerns about instructional issues the principal is holding herself accountable for the success of every student. The principal is demonstrating credibility by taking ownership and responsibility for instructional leadership and not putting the entire burden onto the teachers. The principal is providing a partnership with the teachers to embrace instructional change and to take risks together along with celebrating the successes.

Building teacher trust through continual communication is another avenue to help principals when addressing and promoting change. Communication needs to start long before a change occurs. It is important for effective leaders to “protect and encourage the voices of participants who offer differing points of view” (Lashway, 2001, p.8). Effective principals build and develop relationships with the staff, provide open and honest communication and develop a partnership for a successful school. As well, Deal and Peterson (1999) noted as effective leaders deal directly and openly with difficult challenges within a school setting they must be cognizant of the messages they are sending out to their staff and students. Results from the data collected from the Blase and Blase (2001) study indicated that, “principals enhanced trust in teachers by working to create school climates free of intimidation, fear, coercion, and criticism” (p. 33). By having open lines of communication trust will develop and teachers will not be caught off guard when change needs to be implemented. A strong principal will have walked the teachers through the change process providing constant dialogue without some teachers even realizing a change had occurred.

Blase and Blase (2003a) stress the importance of a principal encouraging staff members to continue their self -improvement efforts. Words of encouragement and support go a long way with a staff and help build a solid team environment. “Specifically, principals encouraged teachers to experiment with new teaching techniques, new materials, new curricula, and new programs to improve student learning” (Blase & Blase, 2001, p. 91). In showing interest in personal self-improvements a principal develops a bond with the staff while demonstrating a caring and nurturing environment when changes need to happen within a school setting. A staff will feel cared

for and not fear the worst when changes occur or if a change should fail. They will know they are in a safe environment with strong leadership support.

Motivation is a major element in effective leadership. Motivation, especially during times of change or chaos is important for staff morale. A principal leads by example and takes on tasks with the staff. A principal can lead by “doing”. Words of encouragement and support or even lending an ear to listen can demonstrate necessary support when changes are happening. Giving teachers constructive feedback show them that the principal is paying attention to their good deeds and is willing to help them find solutions in times of difficulty. A few kind words can go a long way for a teacher!

In discussing motivation in the book *Fish!* Lundin, Paul and Christensen (2000) note that a motivated staff is a staff willing to follow their leader through “thick and thin” and see the organization through good times and bad times. A principal motivates staff through “play, make their day, be there and choose your attitude”. It is important for the principal to lead by example and give the staff time to “play”. At staff meetings give teachers time to throw around a toy ball and share something funny that happened to them in the past week. Lighten the mood and let the staff see another side of their colleagues. It is easy to “make someone’s day” just with a small act of kindness or a kind word. It brings out community spirit. To “be there” means to focus on the person and know they have your undivided attention. It is common courtesy and respectful. “Choose your attitude” is important especially when dealing with changes. You can begrudge the change and lead a miserable existence or take it on with open arms. These four focal points are great staff morale builders to support staff development and build

team spirit. A happy work environment will provide an effective principal with a supportive staff willing to take on various tasks that might revolve around change.

According to Blase and Blase (2003a) it is important for principals to support and encourage teachers' professional development. Strong resourceful principals will find the money to provide professional development for teachers. Professional development is a bonding time for teachers and can be a necessary tool for some teachers to gain ideas and support for their teaching. "Even when the principals took the initiative in defining topics for staff development, their decisions were generally congruent with teachers' needs, values, and goals" (Blase & Blase, 2001, p. 81). By providing further education and supporting continual learning, teachers can feel empowered when changes come along such as instructional or curricular changes. Professional development sets teachers up for success and helps guide them through times of change and unrest.

Charles Schwahn and William Spady (1998) address strategies for dealing with change within an organization. Schwahn and Spady stress the importance of recruiting strong leaders and the need to evaluate educational leaders. Evaluations are crucial because an ineffective leader can bring down a school. Such ineffective "principals appear to be preoccupied with power over others in an absolute sense; they are extremely coercive, directive, rigid, and closed-minded" (Blase & Blase, 2003a, p. 27). Changes will never occur or will happen haphazardly with an ineffective leader. Staff morale will be in jeopardy along with a disgruntled school population. "In general, mistreated teachers experience strong feelings of powerlessness, among others, in an atmosphere of coercion and domination by their principals" (Blase & Blase, 2003a, p. 30). It is necessary to analyze leadership performance and plan for future professional growth.

Principals benefit from the opportunity to participate in professional development to gain greater knowledge and be given tools to address various issues within the work environment. When principals are empowered with ideas and support teachers have much to gain. As well, principals require resources to guide them through changes that in turn can be used to support the school environment. If a principal is set up for success and has strong leadership skills then guiding staff members through change will not be a difficult task.

Lessons for principals are generic. It is not just educational advice needed for effective school leadership but good counsel found in the corporate world of business leaders. Skills and lessons are transferable between business leaders and the realm of principal leadership. The findings in current educational literature are consistent with popular literature addressed to a business audience. For example *Eat That Frog, Who Moved My Cheese, and The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* outline areas of concentration deemed worthy of effective leadership in both the business world and educational world.

When addressing change a principal needs to present ideas or concepts in small chunks in order to not overwhelm staff members. It is easy to procrastinate and get side tracked when facing changes. Brian Tracy (2001) offers simple ideas to get started with any project. He suggested starting with the largest most unpleasant job first and tackling it until it is completed. An effective principal will let staff members determine what aspect of a project they would like to tackle first. This would give them ownership and accountability to the changes being made. As stated by Blase and Blase (2001), “granting professional autonomy and supporting teacher innovation are decidedly

beneficial to teachers” (p. 92). Once completed a sense of accomplishment and pride would be felt among staff members.

At times change can be so overwhelming that some people need to “see the handwriting on the wall” as stated by Spencer Johnson (1998). Johnson takes the reader through a maze with two mice characters and two human-like characters. The cheese is a metaphor for what a person already has e.g. a good job, money etc. The maze is where you look for what you want e.g. at school. People will face changes in their lives whether they are received willingly or unwillingly. The characters in the book face changes with varying degrees of success due to how they perceive changes in their own life. The successful changes are “written on the maze wall” to be shared and celebrated for those willing to try. It is important to reflect on how staff members react to change and help them see “the writing on the wall”. Some people may require a lot of handholding and encouragement while others may readily embrace and support change.

Teachers resist change due to fear and uncertainty. They may feel their shortcomings or personal inadequacies might be unearthed. A strong principal will help teachers address their fears and provide them opportunities to work on their weaknesses. Stephen Covey (1990) guides people through personal change that could be hindering individuals who are nervous about change in the work place. The book focuses on how people perceive and act on productivity, time management, positive thinking and acting with initiative rather than reacting. Perhaps change will not be so burdensome once these focal points are addressed by an effective principal and change can be seen in a different light.

According to Goldberg (2001) a bedrock belief is the drive that inspires leaders to do their work. This supports the principal to create a network of people to accomplish a project or agenda, allowing the principal time to monitor progression and to ensure that the job is completed successfully at each stage. As a part of this, an effective principal deals with important and urgent situations such as a student crisis, parent issues and deadline-driven projects. However, the important, non-urgent elements, such as relationship building, planning and even recreation, are necessary and consistent areas of focus. In doing so, the effective leader will adopt charismatic approaches to leadership. Leithwood (1992) states, “these principals become first among equals in a community of leaders” (as cited in Blase & Blase, 2001, p. 37).

As the principal communicates vision, direction and expectations with her staff, her commitment becomes nurtured by these characteristics. Through this the effective principal; therefore, motivates staff, as constant feedback and praise cement a mutual element of respect and commitment to a vision. “Leadership is not only leader agency manifested as behavior but also leader recognition of desired outcomes and the facilitation of individuals and groups in the achievement of those outcomes” (Bess & Goldman, 2001, p. 424). Along with this, it is arguable that such a common vision will lead to a collegial working environment among staff, students and parents. Thus, “leaders know the ends toward which they are striving. They pursue goals with clarity and tenacity, and are accountable for their accomplishments” (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 7).

Another aspect of effective leadership is the importance of the principal embracing the talents of the staff. The effective principal provides support to the staff,

facilitating growth and professional development. “Words such as ‘trust’, ‘respect’, and ‘confidence’ were used to describe principals who not only permitted but encouraged and even expected teachers to make decisions and implement actions related to instructional and, to a lesser degree, non-instructional areas of work” (Blase & Blase, 2001, p. 32). Therefore, the principal assists staff members in discovering new opportunities, while helping them see their value in the school setting.

An effective leader provides staff the opportunity to experiment with various methods of teaching, and to adapt the curriculum and instruction to fulfill their own specific needs and unique style of both themselves and their students (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005). This in turn, demonstrates to the teachers the leader’s trust in their abilities to assess classroom needs while honoring their professionalism. Additionally, such talents of the staff are then constantly visible to the entire school community, allowing staff members to grow in their own leadership skills and develop a greater sense of confidence and ownership in their school environment. Moreover, to support the ongoing development of this, emotional intelligence is absolutely crucial for complex environments. As Fullan (1999) asserts, “people adapt more successfully to their environments, given their purposes and values, by facing painful circumstances and developing new attitudes and behaviors” (p. 24). Therefore, an effective principal celebrates teachers when they face their fears, not ridiculing or berating them.

A principal provides time for the staff to reflect on their own strengths and areas for growth and development. As a part of this, the effective principal offers a plan to help staff members combat their personal and professional challenges so such can be acknowledged and resolved, and for effective growth and change to occur (Marzano,

Waters & McNulty, 2005). These fears could be the key to the lock that is holding back the faculty's true greatness and gift to the students and school population.

According to Covey (1990) among effective leaders, lists and quick-fix ideas are discarded, and the leader must first enact self-change through important and necessary self-provoking analysis. This is important because as Bess and Goldman (2001) contend, charismatic leaders "loan" teachers the leader's ego, helping the later to actualize themselves and take uncharacteristic risks. Moreover, as Heck and Hallinger (1999) assert, a principal's means of examining her personal values with respect to decision making, a record of personal growth, and how the principal draws upon her own values can be influential on school commitment. Given this, the leader, herself, must first be actualized through self-provoking analysis. "Leadership is unpredictable and the only training possible is to train people in what gifts they have for particular settings" (Goldberg, 2001, p. 6).

If an effective principal is to support staff members in their own growth, then there must be an understanding of classroom situations and the richness of learning, the acknowledgement of continual changes in the family structure, an appreciation of student diversity, and an awareness of all the other problems and unforeseen events that happen in a school setting on a daily basis. Each school requires their own unique set of leadership requirements in order to be successful. An effective principal must demonstrate perseverance, integrity, and rigor and be able to acknowledge one's own strengths and weaknesses. Thus, it is arguable that this ability to self-assess will strengthen staff and administration bonds as well as provide mutual respect and trust for a cohesive school environment. An effective principal takes risks, by working through

personal and professional fears and concerns, thereby focusing on what is important and worthwhile.

A Good Principal As Collegial Leader and Staff Empowerment Agent

It is imperative for an effective principal and, subsequently, an effective staff to share knowledge with one another to support a common moral purpose of educating students for a successful future. Learning is not exclusively for students. As Blase and Blase (2001) assert, “principals encourage teachers to tap their considerable professional expertise and routinely share their knowledge with one another” (p. 79). Therefore, an effective leader facilitates a collegial environment for the staff to focus on the mission and vision of a goal and guide them to the reality that capacity building is what counts. With simply a ‘top-down’ approach, the principal becomes unable to see beyond a linear vision. Thus, as Bess and Goldman (2001) state:

The effective leader will be expected to react to individual problems from all directions, many of which create legitimate exceptions to policy and established practice, and stretch their ability to respond to the personal needs of staff and students...Leadership requires an understanding of both their staff and the situations they collectively face. (p. 430)

However, as Deal and Peterson (1999) note it is the visionary leader who can identify the hopes and dreams of the school and refine and refocus the vision and mission. For a school leader “to arrive at a shared vision, they listen closely for the cherished dreams that staff and community hold” (Deal & Peterson, 1999, p.89). An effective leader will listen intently to the staff and community’s values, sentiments and expectations for the future and weave them into the school vision. In return this collective vision for the

school can motivate students, staff, and community. This collegial environment with an adoption that this is important to all stakeholders will support the effective principal in maintaining such a comprehensive mindset.

An effective principal will benefit not only from a collegial working environment but also shared leadership roles within the school environment (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005). It is important for principals to acknowledge the need to distribute leadership roles among staff members. “Effective principals are aware of the need to establish alliances to get things done” (Mazzarella & Grundy, 1989, p. 23). As well, they realize that collaborative decision-making increases the coordination of tasks and duties and increases the quality of communication (Lindelow & Bentley, 1989). Principals are more effective leaders when they share the responsibilities of curriculum, instruction and assessment since these core areas require expansive amounts of time, research and energy (Elmore, 2000). Keedy and Achilles (1997) state that teachers are making more curriculum and instructional decisions for their classrooms and taking responsibility for these changes. Teachers “most favored some sort of shared decision-making, either through majority rule or a system of ‘consultation’ in which the principal makes the decision with a lot of input from teachers” (Lindelow, Coursen, Mazzarella, Heynderickz & Smith, 19889, p. 159). Therefore, “as teachers provide more instructional leadership, new collaborative norms redefine teacher-principal relationships” (Keedy & Achilles, 1997, p. 104).

Research conducted by Andrews and Crowther (2002) determined that a “parallel leadership is a process whereby teacher leaders and their principals engage in collective action to build capacity” (p. 155). This relationship of shared leadership results in mutual

respect, shared purpose and the ability for individual expression within the classroom. “Support might be strengthened by human resource approaches like participation and self-managing teams or through symbolic approaches linking the innovation to values and symbols teachers cherish” (Bolman & Deal, 1997, p. 271). Teachers crave for individuality in the classroom in order to address student needs. Lourdes Zaragoza Mitchel (2000) observed that teachers who were given standardized lessons without the ability to be creative within the lesson or given decision-making capabilities remained in the “proverbial box”. Thus, “parallel leadership enables teacher leaders and principals to engage in mutualistic working relationships while asserting their individual values, thereby enriching the school’s philosophical purpose and pedagogical practices” (Andrews & Crowther, 2002, p. 156). Mitchel (2000) discovered by focusing on the mission of the school, teachers were provided the opportunity to participate in shared decision- making, build collegial relationships and support the cultural needs of the school. In turn the principal was able to concentrate on school wide issues such as building trust, instructional leadership, student empowerment, and parent involvement. This form of leadership flourishes and is embraced when all members of a school community are valued, appreciated and share a collective responsibility to the students to further develop teaching and learning.

Blase and Blase (1999a) conducted a study where their data determined positive results for principals as instructional leaders. The results concluded that “principals valued dialogue that, above all, encouraged teachers to become aware of and critically reflect on their learning and professional practice” (Blase & Blase, 1999a, p. 359). The dialogue included the principal making instructional suggestions to the teacher in a

proactive manner. These conversations were rewarding and empowering for the teacher and provided a safe avenue for the teacher to further reflect on personal instructional behaviors.

Another focal point in the Blase and Blase (1999a) study was the principal providing teachers constructive feedback after classroom visits and observations. Feedback was solely focused on classroom behavior with detail and specific examples and was presented in a caring, supportive, nonjudgmental way. Praise was provided and problem-solving techniques were shared based on trust and respect (Blase & Blase, 1999a, p. 361). “Teachers . . . reported that feedback had positive effects on motivation, self-esteem, efficacy, and sense of security” (Blase & Blase, 1999a, p. 361). As a result, teachers were able to plan and prepare better lessons and focus on greater innovation and creativity within the classroom setting. Teachers feel valued when a principal acknowledges their hard work and takes time to discuss observations and student learning opportunities in the classroom. “Good leaders take time to observe teaching and other forms of learner support and to interact with teachers and other professionals about their practice” (Copland & Knapp, 2006, p. 33).

In Blase and Blase’s (1999a) study, principals who used modeling, implemented an inquiry (questioning) approach and provided praise allowed teachers to continue to grow professionally. Teachers were able to further reflect on their professional strengths and areas for growth, determine effective teaching strategies in the classroom, become risk takers and develop innovation/creativity in their lessons. These additional forms of communication had a positive impact on teachers and their professional behavior.

“The Developmental Taxonomy of Empowering Principal Behavior” was a framework developed by Reitzug (1994) as a guide for identifying empowering behaviors. Reitzug (1994) identified three empowering behaviors: support, facilitation, and possibility. The first behavior, support, was defined as the manner in which the principal creates a supportive environment for critique (Reitzug, 1994). In providing support the principal is allowing teachers greater control and autonomy of their teaching, encouraging all voices to be heard and embracing risk taking and professional collaboration.

Facilitative behavior is exemplified when the principal role models shared problem solving strategies, “asks questions about the modus operandi, and calls attention to policies or practices that may advantage or disadvantage certain groups” (Keyes, Hanley-Maxwell & Capper, 1999, p. 206). Reitzug (1994) determined that by stimulating critique a more responsive pedagogy would develop. Therefore, “exercising leadership necessarily involves interventions” (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002, p. 134). Thus, an effective principal’s response or reaction to a teacher’s complaint or criticism defines his or her level of commitment to a given situation.

Possibility is the third aspect of Reitzug’s framework. This is defined as “the manner in which the principal makes it possible to give voice by actualizing the products of critique” (Reitzug, 1994, p. 291). Teachers are often expected to adapt new teaching strategies in the classroom without any training or support. This domain determined the need for the principal’s proactive behavior and commitment to time, money and staff development. “Every action has an immediate effect but sends a message as well”

(Heifetz & Linsky, 2002, p. 137). Therefore, an effective principal will realize that actions communicate and speak volumes to a staff.

Leithwood (1994) introduced the transformational model of leadership in education based on the Four I's identified in a study conducted by Bass and Avolio. Bass and Avolio (1994) note that individual consideration requires the principal to focus on the specific needs of each staff member. However, an effective leader will identify individuals who appear to be left out and offer them personal attention as a means of professional support. Using intellectual stimulation principals guide staff members by assisting them in new ways of thinking about old problems, issues or situations (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Bass and Avolio (1994) explain that inspirational motivation requires effective principals to clearly map out and communicate their expectation of high standards for both teachers and students. It is important for principals to be visible, supportive and knowledgeable as a means of support to the teachers and student body. Finally, idealized influence is the opportunity for effective leaders to be exceptional role model for their teachers. Effective principals exhibit expected behaviors, demonstrate upstanding character and model professional successes (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Therefore, in implementing Leithwood's transformational leadership model principals will have the skills necessary to assist them in meeting the educational needs of teachers while addressing the challenges facing administrators today.

In order for principals to respond to the needs and demands of teachers an effective leader welcomes feedback. "Administrators seldom have the opportunity to gain insight and perspective on their actions or responses" (Dyer, 2001, p.35). The 360-Degree Feedback model provides leaders feedback from multiple sources allowing for

professional reflection and assessment of strengths and weaknesses. Teacher perceptions alone are not necessarily the only way to assess principal effectiveness; therefore, feedback sources include teachers, parents and community members. Principals compare their own views with those of the stakeholders. “The fundamental premise is that data gathered from multiple perspectives are more comprehensive and objective than data gathered from one source” (Dyer, 2001, p.35).

These feedback instruments come in the form of surveys or questionnaires with sections for open-ended responses. The focal points are on different kinds of competencies such as interpersonal skills, leadership, decision making, delegating, technical management skills, communication and time management. This type of feedback is powerful because it gives principals opportunities to receive useful information about their behaviors and leadership style. The information then allows principals to either strengthen or diminish behaviors based on the data findings. Therefore, 360 Degree Feedback “does provide educational leaders with data to help them see, perceive, reflect, articulate, and analyze their own behavior on the basis of data from a full circle of constituents, including possibly their toughest critic-themselves” (Dyer, 2001, p.38). This form of feedback ultimately gives not only teachers but also all stakeholders a voice to share with principals their perceptions of effective leadership.

In an article written by Harchar and Hyle (1996), the authors examined teachers’ perceptions of administrators. One finding stated that teachers were more concerned about their working relationship with the administrator, as well as, their involvement in the classroom (Harchar & Hyle, 1996). This face-to-face contact in the classroom between the teacher and the administrator may be a key factor to a teacher’s successful

performance in the classroom. “Effective principals are in teachers’ classrooms every day, and it is difficult to draw the line between observations that have an evaluative intent and those that are part of the professional support system” (Fink & Resnick, 2001, p. 606). Teachers embrace the opportunities to have principals in the classroom to share in the success of their students and to be a part of the classroom experience.

The working relationship between an administrator and teacher is a critical element for educational success. Teachers want principals to be aware of situations both personally and professionally. “Along with an awareness of specifics of the professional lives of faculty and staff in a building, the principal should be aware of their personal lives, appropriately commenting on and reacting to critical events” (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005, p. 103). By nurturing these professional relationships teachers gain the confidence to take risks and try new teaching strategies and methods without fear of being reprimanded. Teachers value principal involvement in the classroom and the capability to freely ask questions. As well, teachers appreciate principals stepping in and controlling negative teachers in order to maintain a collegial working environment. These elements establish a vision, develop trust, foster collaboration and demand respect for all stake holders in the school community (Harchar & Hyle, 1996).

“Inquiry seeks to learn what others think, know, want, or feel” (Bolman & Deal, 1997, p. 148). Communication is an imperative link between the principal and teacher relationship. “A principal may need to check out the employees’ perceptions of the communication climate within the school and to determine staff perceptions of the communication relationship between the principal and staff” (Snowden & Gorton, 2002, p. 47). Traditionally communication would flow from administrator to subordinate;

however, the tides have turned and teachers are clearly stating that communication needs to be a two way street (Mazzarella & Grundy, 1989). “Although administrators often proclaim an open-door policy, these administrators should realize that the door may not be perceived by everyone as truly open, especially not by people with disturbing or disagreeable messages” (Snowden & Gorton, 2002, p. 47). Regardless of the message, giving teachers the opportunity to communicate with their principals affirms that their issues will be taken seriously. Out of common courtesy and professionalism principals afford teachers the time and patience to share their thoughts, ideas and suggestions as valued staff members.

Thomas Sergiovanni (2009) studied data from the 2003 *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: An Examination of School Leadership* where he identified what teachers’ opinions were on the most important tasks of a principal. Teachers perceived “that making the school safe and encouraging teachers and students to do their best were the most important parts of a principal’s job” (Sergiovanni, 2008, p.51). Teachers ranked next in importance that an effective leader needed to help teachers do their jobs well, be the leader in the school and to help students get the good education that they deserve. The data also supported the fact that teachers felt it was important for principals to have a relationship with the community and let people know about the school. Having the teachers and students be proud of their school and making sure teachers are doing a good job were ranked as important aspects of a principal’s job too. Discipline was another aspect brought to light in the data. Teachers believed principals needed to make sure students behaved themselves in school and stopped kids from bullying and teasing each other (Sergiovanni, 2009). Finally, knowing all of the students and making sure students

got along with each other were ranked as the last two items of importance for a principal's job.

The literature on educational leadership, more specifically teachers' perceptions of principal leadership, rarely incorporate personal thoughts or opinions expressed by teachers. Teacher voices tend to be stifled on this topic. However, an exception is the work of Joe and Jo Blase (1999a, 1999b, 2002, 2003a, 2003b) who have surveyed hundreds of teachers in a series of studies assessing how teachers see their principals. Their findings highlight the emphasis teachers put on clear, personal, respectful communication and on providing consistent and ongoing opportunities for professional and staff development. Unfortunately, what teachers want and what they get is different. Blase and Blase (2002) collected enough data that they were able to publish a book-length volume on "bad" principals. Their work illustrates; however, the general point that teachers can provide useful insights on what good (and not so good) principals actually do. As such, Blase and Blase's (1999a, 1999b, 2002, 2003a, 2003b) studies examined principals' actions (and lack of action) that influence classroom teaching from the teacher's perspective. This research builds on the foundation provided by the Blases.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The research questions, data collection and analysis used were based on research conducted by Blase and Blase (1999a, 2001). Their studies were consistent with the symbolic interactionist theory where information is gathered through the use of unsolicited personal documents such as diaries and letters or solicited personal documents such as open-ended questionnaires and unstructured interviews (Blase & Blase, 1999a). “Symbolic interactionism, in contrast to some qualitative research orientations, stresses individual perceptions and interpretation” (Blase & Blase, 2001, p. 165). In Blase and Blase (1999a), Allport (1942) noted that, “an open-ended questionnaire is a useful personal document for qualitative research that focuses on the subjective perceptions of people” (p.355). This report used an open-ended questionnaire and investigated the broad topic: Characteristics that make principals effective leaders. A study of teacher perceptions of principal leadership.

There are advantages and disadvantages to using open-ended questionnaires as a tool to study teacher perceptions of principals. These differences are examined and thought through in order to write a valid open-ended questionnaire and to determine if a questionnaire is the best tool to use when studying teacher perceptions of principal leadership. It is important that enough data be gathered and analyzed from open-ended questionnaires for teacher perceptions to be a viable topic for consideration.

Babbie (2005) noted four areas of concern when conducting research. The first is Inaccurate Observations. The researcher does not pay attention and needs to be

deliberate. It is important for the researcher to have well chosen and well written questions to keep the subject engaged and to help prompt the researcher to dig deeper should more information be required. The open-ended questionnaire used for this report resulted in lengthy answers with responses overlapping the boundaries of specific questions. Teachers provided ample amounts of information for analysis through their anecdotal responses.

Overgeneralization is another area of concern discussed by Babbie. In overgeneralization the researcher does not measure a large enough portion of the group. It is important that the researcher make sure the sample group is large enough for valid results. When discussing a sample group using questionnaires it is apparent that time is a factor both in executing the research and analyzing the data. A researcher wants a large enough sample group to make the research valid; however, not so large that the research will never get done. Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss and Corbin (1990) noted that “open-ended protocols that sample people across many situations increase the probability of gathering a broad range of relevant data about the phenomenon under investigation and of producing empirical and conceptual generalizations (as cited in Blase & Blase, 1999a, p. 356). Therefore, the number of open-ended questionnaires used for this report was 137 and information was gathered from different locations (British Columbia and Washington State). The sample proved to be large enough for the questionnaire to be valid and to garner productive responses.

Selective observation is the third area of concern discussed by Babbie. In selective observation the researcher searches out patterns already believed to be true and ignores other patterns. However, “consistent with symbolic interaction theory, no

concepts from the literature were employed a priori to direct data collection” (Blase & Blase, 1999a, p. 356). Data was gathered and all findings and information was shared with my academic advisor. This held me accountable for examining all patterns. A researcher needs a sounding board to share questionnaire responses and to ensure all avenues are being explored during the analysis phase. Teacher perceptions are large in scope and unexpected patterns of concepts need to be realized.

Illogical Reasoning is the fourth area discussed by Babbie. Illogical reasoning realizes there may be an exception to the rule. However, the exception does not necessarily prove the conclusion to be false. In using open-ended questionnaires the researcher needs to be open and prepared for unexpected results especially with human subjects. Should some answers deviate from the norm this could open a whole new area of research and should not be seen as invalid research or an assumption for a false conclusion. This report unearthed some unexpected findings in teacher responses that provided an avenue for further research in the area of principal leadership.

When examining the advantages and disadvantages of using an open-ended questionnaire to study teacher perceptions of effective principal leadership the researcher maps out a plan of action to determine the pros and cons to the research. The first order of business is to establish the goal of the project – what is to be learned. The topic was narrowed down so the questionnaire remained focused on receiving responses to “Characteristics that make principals effective leaders. A study of teacher perceptions of principal leadership”. Constructing too many areas of focus cause confusion and issues when analyzing the responses. As well, it was essential that teachers were clear on the questionnaire topic and no ambiguities were read throughout the questionnaire.

A large enough sample size is important to the validity of the report. In utilizing open-ended questionnaires to examine teacher perceptions guidelines and parameters are determined for the sample. For example: Will the sample be for teachers who have a minimum of three years or five years of teaching experience? This report was based on a three- year minimum teaching parameter. Another focal point was the number of teachers needed to make the report valid and where information was gathered. One hundred and forty five questionnaires were collected from teachers in Vancouver, British Columbia and Vancouver, Washington.

Questionnaires can be a challenge in gleaning statistical data because of the variety of responses given especially when the questions are open-ended. It was important to start organizing and analyzing data both quantitatively and qualitatively as questionnaires were completed. Analyzing data in small chunks kept this task manageable while identifying both common and uncommon descriptive categories, themes and concepts. For this report the unit for coding was concepts rather than specific questions. The data brought forth common concepts seen throughout the questions.

A challenge facing this report was finding teachers who were willing to share their experiences, especially the negative experiences, and feel that their job was not in jeopardy. Anonymity and confidentiality are issues of concern for subjects when conducting data collection via questionnaires. The nature of this questionnaire made it very unlikely for a breach of confidentiality. The subjects and questionnaires were anonymous and data resided on home computers and were password protected. In the unlikely event of a breach of confidentiality a formal letter of apology would be mailed to the subject. This helped alleviate any concerns of potential backlash from the results.

Writing the questions was time consuming and a huge challenge. Proper wording and clarity was critical to elicit valuable information from the teachers. Questions can be misinterpreted; therefore, this questionnaire utilized open-ended questions for the teachers to elaborate on and not just give one- word responses. This format provided deeper richer responses from the teachers with elements of feelings and emotions intertwined in their words.

There are many advantages to using questionnaires to study teacher perceptions. Teacher perceptions offer a wide spectrum of possibilities and in order to fully understand them an open-ended questionnaire was determined to be the best method of data collection for this report. Seven open-ended questions were constructed to capture the essence of teacher perceptions of effective leadership.

The questionnaire for this report was modeled from a study conducted by Blase and Blase (1999a) using similar methods with surveys and questionnaires. One study conducted by Blase and Blase (1999a) focused their research on five open-ended questions to elicit detailed responses related to specific characteristics of an instructional supervisor. These questions ranged from having subjects describe positive leadership characteristics that influenced classroom teaching, effects of these characteristics on subject thoughts and behaviors, goals connected to the characteristic, the effect of the characteristic on job performance, and personal feelings about the instructional supervisor's characteristic. Blase and Blase's (1999a) research collected data from 809 teachers who participated in their study. The results of this study determined that "the theme of talking with teachers to promote reflection included principal strategies of making suggestions, giving feedback, modeling, using inquiry and soliciting advice and

opinions from teachers, and giving praise” (Blase and Blase, 1999a, p. 367). Providing professional growth for teachers was another positive leadership quality identified in this study.

In their subsequent book *Empowering Teachers, What Successful Principals Do* Blase and Blase (2001) presented data by using an open-ended questionnaire. Data was gathered from 285 teachers. From this qualitative study the broad question examined by Blase and Blase (2001) was, “how do teachers perceive the characteristics of school principals that influence their sense of empowerment?” (p. 18). The results of this research indicated that empowering strategies used by principals were shared governance, collaboration, reflective problem-solving, building trust, support, encouragement, autonomy, permitting risk taking in a safe environment, and rewards. Thus, “empowerment may occur at a level at which teachers are granted professional respect” (Blase & Blase, 2001, p. 163).

Instructors from Washington State University and the University of Oregon invited students to complete online questionnaires or hand written questionnaires. Participation was completely voluntary. Teachers were able to self administer the online questionnaire or complete the hand written questionnaire in class and return it to the instructor. I do not know how many teachers received an invitation to participate because I was not present in any of the classes. It is my belief that between 175 – 200 teachers had the opportunity to respond to the questionnaire. Ultimately 145 teachers from Washington State and British Columbia completed the questionnaire consisting of seven open-ended questions and a demographic section (reproduced in Appendix A).

The Washington State teachers included 77 teachers enrolled in a university based professional certification program required for license renewal with 15 being veteran teachers who had student teachers in their classrooms. These teachers were from districts of varying size, and took courses at Washington State University, Vancouver, Washington. The professional certification teachers generally had between 3 and 12 years experience while most of the supervising teachers had more than ten years experience. The 60 British Columbia teachers were enrolled in an educational leadership masters degree program delivered in suburban Vancouver, British Columbia by the faculty of the University of Oregon. All of the Canadian teachers had at least five years experience, and about a third of them had administrative aspirations. Eight surveys were unusable because the teacher either did not meet the minimum 3 year teaching requirement or the “Information About You” section was left blank and I was unable to determine years of teaching experience. Therefore, this research utilized 137 surveys (N=137).

All the teachers had three or more years teaching experience with an average number of 10 years. The sample was more tilted towards elementary teachers: 40% taught in elementary schools, 7% in K-7 or K-8 schools, 26% in middle schools or junior highs, 26% were secondary teachers and 1% was left unanswered. Fifty-three teachers (39%) reported that their current principal was the “best” they had worked for, 74 (54%) said that their “best” had been a previous principal, 1 (1%) stated that it was equal between current and previous principals, 3 (3%) state none, 1 (1%) wrote unsure, 1 (1%) identified the vice principal as the best and 1 (1%) wrote “yes” as a response. (The survey failed to ask how many principals teachers had worked for in total.)

Based on Blase and Blase's adaptation of the ISUPICT questionnaire used in their 1999a study, seven open-ended questions were carefully constructed in consultation with an academic advisor for this report. "The Inventory of Strategies Used by Principals to Influence Classroom Teaching (ISUPICT), an open-ended questionnaire, was designed to elicit free expression of personal meanings on the study topic" (Blase & Blase, 1999a, p. 356). For this report, teachers were asked to answer seven open-ended questions and encouraged to include as much detail as possible in order to clearly state their responses. These open-ended responses provided the opportunity for teachers' voices to come out and clearly articulate their perceptions of effective principals. Teachers were reassured that all information shared would remain confidential.

The teachers reflected and responded to, "Think about the best principal you have worked for. Is it your current principal or a previous principal? This question determined whether teachers were recalling past information or current information. If a teacher was reflecting on a past principal it was hoped that the information shared was precise and accurate.

Teachers provided detailed responses to, " Why do you think this is/was the best principal you ever worked for?" The responses to this question provided specific examples to illustrate how teachers felt principals interacted with them in the classroom and in the school setting. Teachers interjected feelings and emotion into their responses.

"Give me a detailed example to demonstrate how this principal helped you to improve your classroom teaching? Did this help occur on a regular basis or once/twice?" This question determined if the teacher was able to identify a perceived positive experience where the principal was able to help improve teacher instruction without

feeling defensive. Teachers responded to this question using characteristics of effective leadership to describe their personal situations.

“What did this principal do to make the school better?” Teachers used this opportunity to describe specific characteristics to illustrate their principal’s contributions to the school, its culture and community.

Teachers responded to the statement, “Briefly, tell us about the demographics of the school the principal led.” The responses determined any extra stresses placed on the principal above and beyond the daily responsibilities of an administrator. These details had the potential to impact a teacher’s opinion of a principal. There were eight “demographics” categories for this question – ELL/EBD, Low-Middle Income, Medium-Upper Medium Income, High Income/Well Off, Culturally Diverse, Free and Reduced Lunch, Mostly Caucasian (over 50%) and Large School of more than 800 Students.

The demographics section was modeled from the 2003 MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: An Examination of School Leadership and the 1999a Blase and Blase study on Principal’s Instructional Leadership and Teacher Development: Teachers’ Perspectives. The MetLife survey focused on 1017 teachers who were currently teaching at least part-time in a public school in grades K through 12. Data was collected to determine the age and gender of the teachers. Teachers shared information about their schools such as race/ethnicity and size of place. Blase and Blase’s (1999a) study used a sample of 809 teachers. The demographics shared were sex, marital status, degrees earned, school location, age level taught. Blase and Blase (1999a) also gathered specific data to identify the gender of principals being described and the mean number of years spent with the current principal at the time of their study.

Teachers were asked to answer, “As a teacher, what do you think are the qualities that make a good principal?” This question elicited personal perceptions and information to determine what characteristics the teacher used to identify an administrator as an effective principal.

The final question on the questionnaire asked, “In general, what do you feel principals can do to make their school more effective?” This information from the teacher identified professional needs from a teacher’s perspective.

The final section of the questionnaire “Information About You” was examined using quantitative analyzes. This data was entered on a spreadsheet and percentages were given for each of the six sections – Gender, Where you work, What you do now, Are you currently in an Administrative training program, Number of years as an educator and Current assignment.

The original intention was to use a web-based questionnaire. I discovered that the pressure of work and family responsibilities seemed to discourage full participation. In total there were 33 web-based responses to the questionnaire. However, students in post-service professional programs were more than willing to complete paper versions of the questionnaire, and most provided one or two thoughtful paragraphs in response to each of the seven main questions. Therefore the sample consisted of 137 teachers. I learned, not surprisingly, that comments overlapped the boundaries of the specific questions I asked, and required a more refined and labor-intensive coding process.

As I received batches of questionnaires I read over the responses to familiarize myself with them and to start mentally thinking about a coding strategy. Once I received all the questionnaires I read them over several more times to immerse myself in the

responses. I highlighted repeated words and phrases and entered them on a spreadsheet. After examining the spreadsheet of data I determined concepts would be the best approach for coding the data. Concepts from the spreadsheet were analyzed and coded under one of five categories: Supportive/Listener/Communicator, Personal Qualities, Leadership, Feedback/Visibility and Culture/Community. “When designing and applying your coding categories, you have to keep your mind engaged; avoid turning coding into an automated task” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 240). Responses were read over numerous times to ensure consistency and accuracy in coding. Trends in responses to questions were evident and coded responses overlapped between the questions. “Sometimes a single sentence or paragraph might be coded into several categories” (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 239). Common concepts across the questions were identified as effective leadership characteristics for the results section.

It proved difficult to count coded responses precisely, so I resorted to such general estimates as “about three-quarters”, “most” or “a few” rather than trying to report percentages. Some respondents gave multiple answers to questions, so reported numbers summed to more than 100%; “about three-quarters” refers to three-quarters of responses, not three-quarters of respondents. The analyses of the research focused on concepts rather than specific questions. I incorporated quotations as well as summaries of what teachers wrote, attempting to use their words to illustrate the data, highlight common feelings, and provide some quotes that surprised me and brought out issues I had not previously considered. The reader should keep in mind that questionnaires were completed by hand, sometimes hurriedly, so the text had misspellings, abbreviations, and some handwriting required guesswork. That being said, at times I made guesses and had to

“clarify” the writing. I am confident that I captured the teachers’ intentions in my presentation of the data.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS: WHAT TEACHERS WANT FROM THEIR PRINCIPAL

Questionnaire responses were orthogonal to the research on effective principals, neither fully supporting it nor refuting it. That literature—generated by administrators and by educational leadership faculty—anticipated key issues, but not their significance to teachers, either in how frequently they were mentioned or in the apparent intensity of teacher views. Although possibly the findings may be a consequence of the specifics of my instrument, teachers look at the world of administration from a different perspective than those who most often write about principals as effective leaders.

The results from the questionnaire section “Information About You” reflect a quantitative analysis of data. The data is presented in the table below.

Table 4.1

Teacher Responses For Each Section of “Information About You”

Gender	Where do you work?	What you do now?	Currently in an Administrative Program.	Current Assignment
Female 93	British Columbia 60	Teacher 121	Yes 33	Elementary 55
Male 43	Oregon 13	Assistant Principal 7	No 103	Intermediate 35
No response 1	Washington 64	Principal 1	No response 1	K-7,K-8 School 10
		Other 8		Secondary 35
				No response 1

Note. N=137

Based on teacher responses identifying effective leadership, there was no distinguishing differences within or across categories of teachers: gender, state/province,

teacher position, teacher experience or school level. Teachers frequently responded that an effective principal was supportive, visible, knowledgeable, listened, trustworthy, respectful, forward thinking, organized, open to change and had leadership qualities. The following response illustrated these specific leadership qualities, “organized, fair, caring, strong leadership with students, staff & parents, clear vision, be seen by your students, listen to your staff needs, do not micromanage your staff, support them.” Another supporting example stated that an effective leader, “led with a free hand, advocate[d] for the style of teaching she fervently believed in. Provided deep, clear professional development [and] inservice for inquiry based learning and curriculum integration. Kind, calm, always led with her heart.” These quotes, and others as well, suggest that teachers, regardless of gender, location or teaching position and experience, want the same characteristics in an effective leader.

Surprisingly, teachers in an administrative program did not discuss assessment strategies in their responses as an important quality in an effective leader. However, their responses included, “promote & improve quality of education” and to demonstrate “instructional leadership.” As well, future administrators did not focus any comments on No Child Left Behind or the Washington State WASL testing. Current administrators are constantly aware of the instructional impact of No Child Left Behind and the WASL. However, even teachers in administrative programs identified effective leadership characteristics through the eyes of a teacher rather than that of an administrator.

Teachers used their own words to describe the demographic characteristics of their schools. Teachers used more than one category to describe their schools. In describing their schools, fifteen teachers stated that over 50% of their students received

free and reduced lunch. Table 4.2 outlines these descriptions and the number of responses for each category. The intention of this question was to determine if teachers noted any demographic issues while describing principal effectiveness or perceptions of effective leaders. However, the school demographics section of the questionnaire did not report any significant information relating to hardships experienced by a principal or their perceived effectiveness as a leader based on the school population except for one teacher who noted that a good principal will “shield [teachers] from the crush of expectation[s] from demographics.”

Table 4.2

Teacher Descriptions of School Demographics

ELL/EBD	Low-Middle Income	Medium-Upper Medium Income	High Income	Culturally Diverse	Free and Reduced Lunch	Mostly Caucasian (Over 50% of the school)	Large School With More Than 800 Students
16	42	35	30	46	20	36	16

Note. Teachers used more than one description to describe their schools.

The responses to the seven open-ended questions were analyzed using a qualitative approach. In reviewing the anecdotal responses to the questionnaire the unit for coding were concepts rather than specific questions. Concepts overlapped between the boundaries of questions; therefore, the results are reflected by number of teacher responses, not number of people. Five categories of characteristics emerged as concepts were identified and organized from teacher responses to determine effective leadership. These five categories were: Supportive/Listener/Communicator, Personal Qualities,

Leadership, Visibility/Feedback and Culture/Community. The category “Supportive, Listens, Communicates” received the most responses from teachers. The results are shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

Effective Leadership Categories Identified By Teacher Responses

Supportive, Listener, Communicator	Personal Qualities	Leadership	Feedback and Visibility	Culture and Community
285	172	156	141	115

Note. Numbers reflect teacher responses, not number of people.

Teachers shared their perceptions, ideals and examples of effective leadership using descriptive words and phrases. Each category is examined and supported by using quotes from teacher responses. There were many similarities between teacher responses.

“Supportive, Listener and Communicator”

Overall, there were 285 responses stating that an effective leader is supportive, a listener and a communicator. The results of this category are divided into three sections for easier reviewing.

Supportive

Support is an all-encompassing word with various meanings attached it. “Support entails listening, problem solving, reflecting, clarifying, and helping people develop workable solutions” (Robbins & Alvy, 2003, p. 49). Over one third of the teachers reported that “support” was a key element when describing an effective principal. It was clear from the context used that support was seen in various dimensions such as the principal would “back up the teachers”, as a source of “help” for teacher efforts and through listening and effective communication.

“One important task of the school principal is to protect teachers from undue distractions” (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005, p. 48). For example, teachers felt supported when principals “backed teachers”, “didn’t take defiance/disrespect from students”, “follow[ed] thru on discipline” and “supported staff on disciplinary issues.” Teachers saw discipline as an ineffective use of their time and welcomed principal intervention. Teachers and students alike do not appreciate interruptions in the middle of a lesson. It is disrespectful to the learning process. Therefore, it is important for principals to protect instructional time from interruptions and distractions by taking on the role of disciplinarian. In turn this support provides the teacher with minimal lost teaching time. Teachers are then able to remain focused on student learning and curricular instruction.

“An education leader promotes the success of every student by ensuring management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment” (ISLLC Standard Three). An effective principal’s main goal is the success of all students. When there is a discipline issue in the classroom efficient and effective learning has stopped. It is critical for an effective principal to provide necessary support to the teacher and remaining students by quickly and fairly addressing the concern. Teachers want minimal distractions to invade their teaching time. Therefore, having the support of the principal to handle discipline issues validates the importance of teacher instructional time.

Support also included providing “help” both on a personal and professional level. The following comments illustrate these levels of helpful support, “[she] cared about me as a person not just a teacher” and “gets everything done and still makes sure teachers

feel cared about and supported.” To further illustrate personal and professional help teachers simply stated that principals “encouraged me.” These comments stress that teachers want to be valued as human beings and not seen as instructional machines with a never-ending supply of energy. An effective principal is able to take a teacher’s perspective and gain insight into their daily struggles. Teaching is an isolating profession and teachers want to be acknowledged for their hard work and efforts. As well, another noteworthy dimension of support may “mean spending time with people when tragedy or medical emergencies occur” (Robbins & Alvy, 2003, p.49). Teachers are human beings and at times personal issues can cloud their professional lives. Effective principals provide the necessary support teachers need to help them through personal challenges.

Support was also identified in the form of developing and nurturing professional relationships. Teachers thrive in a collegial environment where friendliness, mutual trust and respect are present between themselves and principals. The following comment illustrated this professional relationship, “the principal was very friendly but not bossy – always approachable and found ways to support teacher goals.” Another example of nurturing support was, “I believe a principal needs to inspire his/her staff to be great. This requires high expectations as well as a supportive, encouraging attitude.” Further examples of relationship building between the teacher and principal are illustrated in the following comments, “he took the time to build a personal relationship with me” and “very personal touch, got to know you well.” A final example illustrated a relationship built on mutual respect and trust. The principal “env[e]loped trust within me and instilled confidence within my teaching practices.” These comments suggest that teachers want interactions with their principals to be personable, proactive and positive. Teachers feel

not only supported but also “seen” when a principal acknowledges them on both a professional and personal level.

Encouragement was another form of support noted by teachers. For example, “she would encourage with a gentle hand. I was too shy to make an announcement in front of school at an assembly. She made public speaking my goal and encouraged me by telling me she believed in me, she believed I could do it. I gave it a try because she didn’t forget to keep encouraging.” This comment illustrates that teachers, especially new teachers require encouragement, praise and support as they make their way through the first few years in the teaching profession. Effective leaders use compassion, dignity and grace when supporting teachers who have perceived challenges. Principals are the cheerleaders for teachers as they conquer obstacles within the teaching profession. Therefore, an effective principal’s sensitivity helps teachers feel empowered and promotes a desire to help teachers succeed (Blase & Blase, 2001).

Teachers want to be valued in their profession. Effective principals provide the necessary means to allow teachers to flourish in their classrooms. For example, “they can try to support the staff to do the best job they possibly can and find creative ways to do so.” The following comment, “someone who lets the teachers know they are fantastic, qualified educators” illustrates the importance of teachers wanting to hear that they are valued. Teachers also wanted principals to be “committed to the staff and students” and to “check(ed) if I needed anything or if anyone in the dept. could help me.” Teachers also wanted principals to value their profession by “looking for innovative methods of delivering the curriculum while supporting ways that are ‘tried and true’.” This last comment supports the fact that teachers do not have an infinite amount of time during the

day to conduct research or read literature on top of their daily responsibilities. Principals support teachers by sharing educational research, best practices, and article reviews to further enhance their teaching capabilities. Effective principals also encourage teachers to be risk takers and to try new and innovative teaching methods regardless of the outcome. As well, principals provide monetary support to address the professional needs of teachers thereby valuing teachers with a sense of pride and self-worth.

Teachers felt supported when principals were aware of negative issues and dealt with them effectively. For example, “this man was not a push-over-he was able to make hard calls and stand up to ‘sabateurs [saboteurs] and negative energy in order to have the most effective school possible.” Teachers also appreciated principals who were cognitively aware of the school environment and “kept tabs on things-offered real time assistance” in order to alleviate negativity. Another comment further illustrates this point, “he mediated departmental issues so less energy was spent on inter-personal issues and so [energy] could be put into teaching.” Teachers want to go to work and do their jobs. They do not want to spend the time or energy in dealing with negative people or issues. Effective leaders alleviate teachers from that responsibility and deal with negativity immediately before it permeates into the classroom.

Support was given to teachers through professional development opportunities. Many teachers stated that effective leaders provided them with professional development days or workshops. For example, effective leaders “supported pro-d days and workshops”, “professional development choices” and “would always find a way to support me to grow in any area I wanted to learn more about.” The world of education is constantly changing through initiatives, best practices and research and teachers do not

want to be left behind. ISLLC Standard Two states, “An educational leader promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.” In acting on this standard, teachers want to be part of this change and effective principals provide teachers these opportunities.

Listener

Teachers used the terms “good listener” and “accessible” when describing effective principals. This suggests that teachers want a principal to whom they can comfortably go to with their professional (and perhaps non-professional) concerns. Just over one third of the responses identified listening as a quality of an effective principal. Teachers want a principal who is a good listener, non-judgmental and shows a genuine concern for the person. The following comment illustrated this point, “listened to staff feedback/concerns with interest and desire to help.” Teachers also appreciated constructive input when the principal “would take the time to listen to my concerns or ideas, and then offer his own ideas.” Teachers want a principal who is accessible and willing to lend a supportive ear. For example, “he was approachable and a good listener” and “supportive, articulate, [a] good listener.” Teachers spend numerous hours a day in school and want a support network in the work environment. Many times this support network extends beyond teacher colleagues to the principal. Principals have busy agendas but an effective principal provides teachers the time to share with them what is on their minds. As is human nature, many times a person just needs to be “heard” in order to feel validated.

Communicator

Communication was a companion theme to listening and evident in about one third of the responses. Although listening came up in the responses, clarity was a more dominant concern. Teachers wanted to know what was going to happen and what would be expected. The following gives some heft to what teachers mean when they say “good communicator.” She is an “excellent communicator, [meetings with] agendas that we stick to, know her schedule--where she is always. She is open/transparent in decision-making. Clear when a decision is the staffs’ to make, the principals to make, or if she is looking for teacher perspective in her decisions.” This suggests that teachers—some teachers at least—like order and predictability in their work lives. Teachers appreciate principals who are organized and clearly communicate their expectations.

Communication was also seen as dialogue (talking and listening) between principal and teacher. The following comment illustrates this rapport, “took the time to talk to you and hear your concerns.” Another example stated an effective principal as, “communicator, encouraging, supportive and not condescending.” Teachers want an engaged and present principal. For example, “you could also tell that when you were speaking he was actually listening” along with “communication skills, both as a speaker and more importantly as a listener.” One final response from a teacher succinctly commented, “listen, allow, invite.” These comments suggest that teachers want to have their voices heard and that an effective principal is engaged in active listening with a shared interest in the conversation. Effective principals invite teachers to share both positive and negative dialogue with them. By opening the lines of communication teachers establish a trusting rapport with principals. Therefore, it is important for

principals to “use active listening so people sense that you are really listening and that you do care” (Robbins & Alvy, 2003, p. 48).

Collaborative efforts on school issues and decision-making provide an avenue for teacher voices to be heard and to allow for open communication. “Leaders are able to establish and sustain a stronger focus on learning when they share a set of fundamental values and norms about learning with other educators” (Copland & Knapp, 2006, p. 31). The following comments illustrate effective leadership through open communication between principals and staff members, “collaborate with the staff, ask what the staff needs are and insure that all voices are being heard” and “engaged in very stimulating, functional, relevant conversations, spearheaded and then facilitated learning teams, initiatives around relevant topics/idea.” These comments suggest that through open and honest communication teachers are given the professional support they need along with acknowledging their ideas and opinions.

During difficult situations it is important for principals to have open lines of communication with all staff members. For example, “he happened to be a slightly unwilling leader who stepped up when no one else would into a bad situation. He consulted with all levels of staff, not just teachers.” Teachers also want principals who are, “open to hearing others’ ideas and sometimes accepting, implementing them even if they go against his own vision.” These comments indicate that teachers appreciate the opportunities to communicate their ideas and suggestions with their principal. Teachers want positive communication in the form of support and encouragement to further enhance their profession. For example, the principal “encouraged staff to do what they can to implement new ideas in [the] classroom and give them as much support as he

could.” As well, teachers appreciated productive communication when the principal “took input then made a well thought out decision-thus didn’t have to change her mind or reverse decisions as they wer[e]n’t made on the spur of a moment.” By communicating and valuing teacher input through collaborative effects “intuitive leaders are able to balance continuity and improvement” (Dyer & Carothers, 2000, p. 21). The next section outlines personal qualities teachers attribute to effective leadership.

“Personal Qualities”

Personal qualities encompassed words or phrases used to identify general characteristics of effective principals. Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005) examined 69 studies for specific behaviors related to principal leadership. They identified 21 categories of behaviors that they referred to as “responsibilities”. “These 21 responsibilities are not new findings within the literature on leadership, though others may have given them different names” (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005, p. 41). Paralleling the results of the above study, 172 teacher responses for this report readily identified personal qualities as a characteristic of effective principals. The responses outlined ten specific qualities. They were: strength, productive use of time, knowledgeable, teacher advocate, respectful, student focused, humanness, fairness, caring, and follow through.

Strength

Teachers mentioned strength as a recognizable quality of effective leadership. Assertiveness equated to strength in the eyes of teachers. For example, “assertiveness (won’t let certain group or groups run the building w/[ith] decisions that are ‘union related’ versus – what’s best for the students” and “she is not afraid of parents &

confronting their issues.” These comments suggest that teachers want a principal who is willing to deal with staff and parents who are negatively impacting the school environment. Teachers want a principal with a backbone. For example, a principal “draws the line when necessary, not wishy-washy.” Teachers do not want to be bullied by parents or fellow colleagues. At times parents can be demanding and unrealistic. Parents are not always willing to listen to the truth about their child. This can be emotionally draining and frustrating for teachers. As well, teachers do not want to be bullied by staff members or community members with personal agendas. To the extreme bullying can instill fear in teachers with detrimental effects to their health. “Fear, because of its unavoidable links to the body, has particularly injurious effects on our thinking; it subtly invades and pervades our mental work and profoundly degrades human perception, cognition, and action” (Blase & Blase, 2003, p. 115). The workplace must be a safe and accepting environment for all teachers regardless of their beliefs or values. Effective principals know when to step in and handle a situation for the great good of the school and the teachers.

Productive Use of Time

Teachers appreciated principals being respectful of their time and ensuring time spent in meetings was useful and productive. For example, the principal “used staff meeting time to address school improvement issues-NOT review weekly schedule etc.-stuff we could read in an email.” Teachers also felt time was well spent when principals “create[d] department meetings weekly among teachers so we could share ideas and solutions to current problems that we were facing” and to “foster grade level collaboration (not chit chat) on academic approaches [and] behavior.” These comments

suggest that teachers are frustrated when staff meetings or team meetings are not focused with a specific agenda. People are then off topic with a sense of nothing being accomplished. Time is valuable to a teacher and spending it in unproductive meetings proves to be a disservice to the profession. With the modern conveniences of email many daily messages can be sent to staff members via the computer. Teachers feel very devalued sitting in meetings that are not focused on student learning and student success. “Competent and confident leaders are generally sensitive to situations in which failure to act would be synonymous with the abdication of responsibility” (Dyer & Carothers, 2000, p. 17). Principals are responsible for chairing productive meetings while keeping teachers engaged on relevant topics and on task. By respecting teacher time an effective principal focuses meetings on student driven agendas and not the frivolous mundane weekly updates.

Knowledgeable

Teachers want to be assured that their principal is knowledgeable and familiar with the latest educational research, methodologies and data. Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005) noted that Fullan (2001) “attests to the importance of this responsibility by explaining that a principal’s knowledge of effective practices in curriculum, instruction, and assessment is necessary to provide guidance for teachers on the day-to-day tasks of teaching and learning” (p.54). For example teachers want a principal who is “knowledgeable of education, teaching & special populations.” Another comment illustrates the importance of principals who “reviewed scores, looked for trends & patterns” and are “comfortable looking at data.” Teachers also wanted a principal who “understood state requirements and trends in education.” These comments indicate that

effective principals “must take care to understand current issues and their constraints, and not to discount any potential challenges to established strategies for success”

(Sergiovanni, 2001, p. 131). Teachers are overwhelmed with classroom responsibilities and the importance of being well read on the latest innovations in education. Effective principals provide teachers with an overview of critical research information and explain how this impacts the students or their teaching. As well, with standardized tests teachers are competent in administering the tests but not necessarily in deciphering the results. Principals support teachers by analyzing test scores and presenting them in simple, clear, concise terms. Teachers are then able to adjust their lessons or curriculum accordingly.

Teacher Advocate

Effective principals are advocates for their teachers. For example, “be a teacher advocate” and “we all knew he was our advocate” suggests that teachers want to have a sense of security from their principal. As well, teachers appreciated a principal “rooting for the teachers and advocating for us & not bowing always to every parents whim.” Teachers stressed the importance of open support in front of parents. For example, “he supported teachers in front of parents.” Unfortunately, parents can railroad teachers when they choose to discuss a student issue with the principal first without consulting the teacher. Effective principals defend teachers in difficult situations with parents by respecting and upholding their professional opinions even if it goes against the grain of what parents want to hear. In return a bond of trust is established between the principal and teacher. “Trust builds when the staff knows what to expect-what can be predicted-in the principal’s actions” (Robbins & Alvy, 2003, p. 48). Ultimately, teachers feel secure knowing principals have their backs during tenuous situations with parents.

Respect

Another noted personal quality in an effective principal was respect. The following comments illustrate teachers' perceptions of respect, "respectful of all diverse populations (including ethnic minorities, gay & lesbian, low SES)", "he showed the utmost respect to all staff and students" and "respect and care for teachers." These comments indicate that teachers want a principal to be respectful of all stakeholders and to provide a safe and caring learning environment for all. Robbins and Alvy (2003) noted effective leaders "respect, nurture, and celebrate diversity of ideas and people" (p. 49). This respect in diversity brings forth richness in a school's culture and environment. This element of respect also supports ISLLC Standard Five, "An education leader promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner." As well, teachers want a principal to acknowledge and respect their professional performance. "Words such as 'trust', 'respect', and 'confidence' were used to describe principals who not only *permitted* but *encouraged* and even *expected* teachers to make decisions and implement actions related to instructional and, to a lesser degree, noninstructional areas of work" (Blase and Blase, 2001, p. 32).

Student Focused

Effective principals are student focused by being visible and a champion of student success. For example, "loves kids", "really involved with kids and teachers, not always in his office" and "high student interest" illustrates the importance of principals connecting with students away from the office. Teachers identify principals who are student focused by their actions. For example, "he increased the number of students who successfully graduated w/[ith] scholarships through our ministry" (Referring to the

Ministry of Education in British Columbia). Teachers want a principal who is personally visible and involved with the students to further enhance their educational experience. The following comments, “is involved w/[ith] the student body” and is “approachable and interested in members of both staff and students outside of work and school” suggest that a principal’s role goes beyond the walls of the office and extent into the community.

Effective principals make learning central to their own work. “Leaders find ways to focus on both learning in general and on particular aspects of student learning (e.g. how well certain kinds of students are learning and what is being learned in particular subjects or grade levels)” (Copland & Knapp, 2006, p. 32). Teachers feel they are in a partnership with principals when together they are driven toward student success. This partnership provides a mutual sharing of instructional and curricular information geared towards high achievement for students. Thus, effective principals hold themselves accountable to remain student focused and explore all avenues for student success.

Humanness

Teachers want to see the human side of a principal. They want a leader who can have fun and see the lighter sides of things. The following comments illustrate these qualities, “good sense of humor”, “assemblies were fun because he was fun”, “smiles a lot” and “fun (when appropriate!).” These comments suggest that teachers want to work in an environment that is professional yet enjoyable through laughter and a play. As well, Robbins and Alvy (2003) state an effective leader will:

Take time to look at people; smile, respond, and laugh. Taking time to interact sincerely, with a smile or meaningful hello, shows others that you care.

Moreover, the nonverbal gestures that you make, and respond to, really count.

Your ability to “read” nonverbals can make the difference in communicating effectively with a staff member. The message may not always be obvious, but it is still there to be received. (p. 48)

Teaching can be very lonely, isolating and intense. There are few opportunities throughout the school day for teachers to interact with one another. Therefore, effective principals provide opportunities for teachers to decompress, enjoy humorous moments and have fun within the work environment.

Fairness

Fairness was another personal quality teachers sought in a principal. Teachers wanted to be treated equally and fairly among each other. For example, “treats everyone the same”, “fair”, and “unbiased towards all staff” suggest that showing favoritism is damaging to a staff. “Favoritism among staff members can negatively affect the culture of a school and result in “cliques, “in groups,” and “out groups”; increased distrust; and decreased communication among teachers” (Blase and Blase, 2003, p. 42). An effective principal celebrates the uniqueness and diversity of staff members while remaining steadfast with fair, just and equal treatment for all teachers.

Caring

Teachers stated that an effective principal was caring of staff and students. For example, “as mentioned earlier, she did not put up with defiant behavior, yet she was also extremely caring [,] she was very tough being a principal in south side Chicago” and “he invested time, energy, and love” illustrates a nurturing caring quality in an effective principal. Another comment further supports a principal’s caring attitude, “[he] find[s] ways to make teachers feel comfortable.” As well, an effective principal articulates care

with choice of words, physical actions, facial expressions and tone of voice (Dyer & Carothers, 2000). Teachers appreciate seeing the sensitive side of a principal. “Most people are readily able to determine if genuine caring is being expressed, even when there may be an attempt to feign concern” (Dyer & Carothers, 2000, p. 36). Teachers want to know that they matter and that they have a principal who cares about them.

Follow Through

Teachers want a principal who consistently follows through on promises and is true to their word. For example, “he was very hard working and did what he said he would”, “followed through on everything” and “he was welcoming and when you gave him something to follow up on, he would.” These comments indicate that prompt follow through on requests allow teachers to be efficient and effective in their profession. This also establishes a relationship of trust between teacher and principal. As well, follow through “helps create credibility and provides the staff with a sense of security about what can be expected of the principal” (Robbins & Alvy, 2003, p.48). Therefore, effective principals validate teachers’ questions and requests with quick and accurate responses as a form of leadership support. The next section further explores the characteristic of leadership and how it impacts teachers’ perceptions of effective principals.

“Leadership”

The 156 responses from the questionnaire supported two areas central to the school leadership literature: “leadership” generally and the focus on students and student learning. “Leadership is closely associated with the ability to visualize, articulate, and create structures for supporting a vision for teaching and learning” (Dyer & Carothers,

2000, p. 42). Leadership encompasses vision, risk-taking, shared leadership, empowering teachers, providing professional growth for teachers, acting as a change agent and focusing on student learning. What is interesting, of course, is that none of the quotes included a single factor, hinting that, in teachers' eyes, leadership qualities and performance will often—maybe always—be complex and integrated.

Vision

“Effective leaders walk with their heads held high in the clouds of vision, but their feet are firmly grounded in the realities of recognizing and orchestrating scenarios during which their vision can be actualized” (Dyer & Carothers, 2000, p. 20). Principals continually look for ways to shift or adjust learning conditions in support of student learning and student success. Teachers want a principal who can clearly see the big picture while staying focused and attentive to the vision. For example, “she had a clear vision of trying to improve academic standings”, as well as, a “vision of the world” illustrates principals seeing the big picture for the school. The following comments, “vision, developed sense of belonging for all stakeholders” and “shared his vision and incorporated others” indicates that teachers want to be part of the vision making process and to take ownership in the school’s direction. The following comment, “always looking forward – willing to set new paths, but logical ones” suggest that teachers want a principal who moves the vision forward to further enhance the needs of staff and students. These comments further support ISSLC Standard One, “An educational leader promotes the success of every student by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders.” Teachers want to see where they are going professionally with realistic

goals to support the vision. Teachers do not want hidden agendas or be led blindly towards an unknown vision. Effective leaders will clearly articulate the school vision, as well as, welcome input from teachers, as the vision is refined to accommodate learning for all students.

Risk Taking

Teachers want the opportunity to take risks and experiment with educational designs without the fear of reprimand for failed attempts. “The willingness of people who inhabit a school to take risks directly influences their capacity to learn” (Robbins & Alvy, 2003, p. 29). For example, “willing to try reasonable changes but recognizes that change is hard and some people need to make changes in small steps” suggest that teachers want to be risk takers; however, they need support, help and guidance from the principal to achieve this step. The following comments, “freedom to try new things and the money needed to do them” and “the fear of failure was not there. I was encouraged to try new things and if I failed, faine [fine]. Take what I learned from it, alter things and try again,” suggests that teachers want to expand their teaching repertoire and learn from their mistakes knowing they have the unconditional support from the principal. Effective principals will not only support teachers in these endeavors but role model risk taking and experimentation themselves. “Learning from one’s ‘mistakes’-risk taking-and exploring heretofore undiscovered dimensions of one’s competencies can contribute to an environment characterized by teaching and staff collaboration committed to continuous improvement” (Robbins & Alvy, 2003, p. 29).

Shared Leadership

An effective leader embraces shared leadership in the school setting. “Intuitive leaders recognize that their confidence in the capacity of others can be a constant source of leverage for actualizing their personal visions” (Dyer & Carothers, 2000, p. 21). Teachers felt valued when principals shared the role of leadership. The following comments, “formed an administrative team so that more people were involved in the running of the school” and “encourag[ed] and support[ed] others to take on leadership roles” indicates that teachers want to be seen as leaders beyond their classroom and to provide input in a leadership role. Teachers also want to share in the leadership role of curriculum and design. For example, principals “involve[d] teachers in the planning/organization/scope and sequence of different curricular areas.” Teachers want principals who are willing to acknowledge the leadership potential of teachers and to expand leadership roles among staff members. This is illustrated with the comment, “she worked closely with the informal leaders to create a more shared leadership approach.” An effective leader provides teachers the opportunities to grow as leaders whiling ensuring they have the necessary resources and knowledge base to be successful.

Empowering Teachers

Empowerment provides teachers the opportunity to be active members in all aspects of the school. Foster (1986) states:

Leadership is not manipulating a group in order to achieve a preset goal; rather it is empowering individuals in order to evaluate what goals are important and what conditions are helpful. The educative use of leadership results in the empowerment of followers. The leader here is truly concerned with the

development of followers, with the realization of followers' potential to become leaders themselves. (as cited in Blase & Blase, 2003, p. 4)

The following comments, “included all those who need to be included on decisions”, “involves staff in decision making” and “shared decision-making” indicates that teachers want to be part of the big picture and not be mandated to follow strict guidelines and orders established by the hierarchy. Teachers feel empowered and valued when they are asked for input and suggestions and to collaborate on decisions that will affect student learning and the school environment. This collaborative effort offers unconditional buy in and ownership for greater student achievement. Therefore, effective principals provide teachers the opportunities to be involved in developing school policies, input on all important decisions, and facilitating leadership teams for the decision-making process (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005).

Empowerment also reaffirmed teachers as professionals. For example, “respect[ed] teachers professionalism and judgment, and giving teacher autonomy within their classroom” and “he believed in what we were doing and in our professionalism and allowed us the autonomy to get on with our work” illustrates teachers wanting to work independently based on their professional competencies. Another example of empowerment suggests that principals “instill practices or guidelines that are concrete and those in which the staff would have some say in.” All the above comments indicate that teachers want to be respected as professionals while effective principals acknowledge teacher capabilities in making sound decisions based on classroom needs. Therefore, teachers feel empowered when “shared governance principals demonstrated great interest in promoting individual teacher decisional authority, or autonomy,

primarily in classroom instructional and student control matters” (Blase & Blase, 2001, p. 88).

Teachers also felt empowered through encouragement and support. For example, “she helped improve my teaching through her admiration for me. She held me in such high self[-]esteem, that I couldn’t help but do things excellent. I wanted to keep the image she had of me.” The following comments, “she empowered me to be my very best” and “the principal never made direct suggestions, only helped the teachers with their own thoughts” indicates that teachers want a principal to help them achieve excellence and to bring out their strengths. The following comment, “they are aware of their teachers’ strengths and weaknesses and try to improve areas of weakness” further suggests that teachers gain a sense of strength and confidence when they are empowered by effective leaders through guidance and assistance toward professional success.

Professional Growth

“One of the most frequently mentioned resources important to the effective functioning of a school is the professional development opportunities for teachers” (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005, p. 59). An effective principal welcomes the responsibility of providing teachers with the necessary materials and opportunities to meet their professional goals. For example, “she finds ways for us to attend professional devel[o]pment conferences and classes” and “very supportive of collaboration and providing training/support” suggests that teachers want to further enhance their knowledge of teaching through professional development opportunities. Another example, “very encouraging toward our professional development” illustrates that effective principals welcome opportunities to provide professional support to teachers. A

final comment, “he has helped to provide us with quality experiences for professional development. He allows us to have freedom to make choices,” suggests that teachers want to be able to choose their own professional development paths to further enhance their teaching capabilities in the classroom. Therefore, with the ever changing world of education and student needs effective principals ensure that their teachers have all the necessary materials, equipment and staff development opportunities to directly benefit their teaching (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005).

Teachers also achieved professional growth through the words and actions of principals. For example, “willing to discuss ways to improve my teaching,” suggest that teachers welcome constructive feedback from principals to further support their professional growth. Another example, “providing me with the classroom resources I need” and “she would always find a way to support me to grow in any area I wanted to learn more about” indicates that teachers appreciate principals finding the monetary resources for professional development. Teachers also found opportunities for professional growth when given the time to work with colleagues. This was illustrated in the comment, “provided time for teaming with other teachers on a regular basis.” Teachers also welcomed growth through leadership opportunities. For example, “my principal encouraged me constantly over the five years, but in the last two he challenged me to gain more training in reading and become an instructional leader at my school.” Teachers want to move forward in their profession. This happens when effective principals share thoughts, ideas, observations and resources with teachers as a means of supporting their professional growth.

Change Agent

Change can be concerning for teachers. Some teachers embrace change while others hide from it. Teachers enjoy routines and schedules that are predictable and known. Unfortunately, “there is a temptation for the pace of reform to move faster than schools and teachers are ready to internalize it” (Copland & Knapp, 2006, p. 95). For the sake of all teachers, effective principals introduce changes in small increments and at a slow and thoughtful pace. Principals take into account the past but are willing to make changes for the greater good of the school. For example, “she inspired others. She led the school. She was able to make snap decisions. Her 1st year at the school, she was careful to not make too many changes and sit back and watch how the school, the parents and the teachers worked.” This suggests that teachers want a principal to observe the school culture before making any changes. As well, teachers want changes in small increments that are easily digestible. However, not all teachers accept change and “an effective leader is willing to bolster a change initiative with his optimism and energy” (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005, p. 56). Therefore, effective leaders champion change initiatives according to teacher directives.

Focus on Student Learning

Student learning was mentioned both as a “what” and as a “how.” While most of the responses were not specific about an emphasis on student learning or “what’s best for kids,” this was a sub-text in several comments. Sergiovanni (1999) states, “The work of educational leadership is distinctly moral. It is different from leadership in other types of organizations because it is rooted in a set of common commitments to do right by children” (as cited in Copland and Knapp, 2006, p.16). The following comment, “care

for kids, respect and care for teachers, focuses on clear academic goals, focuses on teaching, non-punitive, shares authority, not authoritarian, good long term planner” illustrates that teachers want a principal who is focused on student learning and is respectful of instructional time. One teacher’s response noted that an effective principal is “all about student learning and standards based, [and has] very high expectations of staff and self.” Another example, “he never took staff frustrations personally. He acted on data & what is best for kids” suggests that teachers wants a principal who will make all decisions based on what is in the best interest of the students. “The effective leader establishes clear goals and keeps those goals in the forefront of the school’s attention” (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005, p.50). Therefore, by staying focused on student learning and centered on specific goals effective leaders will safeguard teachers from wasting time and energy on school improvements and initiatives that go nowhere. The next section discusses feedback and visibility and how this leadership characteristic supports the teaching profession.

“Feedback and Visibility”

One hundred and forty-one teacher responses clearly stated that feedback and visibility were important qualities of effective leadership. Principals support teachers through feedback beyond the regularly schedule evaluations. Teachers appreciate feedback after informal classroom visits and immediate feedback to specific questions or topics of interests. As well, teachers enjoy seeing principals outside of the office and walking through the school and classrooms.

Feedback

Responses indicated that teachers appreciated regular, informal feedback. As Dyer (2001) states, “Feedback is developmental, not evaluative” (p.36). Teachers valued informal feedback as a means of professional growth and development. Feedback allowed teachers to examine their teaching practices without fear of reprisal. For example, “he would come to the class once and a while just to visit with the students and ask me how everything was going with no strings attached.” The tone of the responses also strongly suggested that feedback went well beyond—in depth and frequency—the routine, mandated teacher evaluation cycle. A significant number referred to drop-in observations with feedback as a positive. For example, “[the principal is] always in the classroom, asking questions and giving feedback” and “informally swing[s] by to see classes once/twice a week. Nice to have him around in a lower stress setting” suggests that teachers welcome feedback in a casual atmosphere. The following comment, “checked in on occasion to see if I need[ed] assistance to enhance my teaching, gave positive and informative feedback on a regular basis” illustrates teachers appreciating principals in their classrooms while offering feedback based on the informal visits. Clearly the teachers conveyed a strong sense that they trusted their leaders, that they saw their principals operating on the basis of benevolence (Tshannen-Moran, 2004).

Many of the teachers mentioned the quality of feedback, not just its frequency and informality. Their comments indicated that the principal really did like to help them, and responded not just to what they saw as classroom visits, but were responsive to the questions and issues teachers had in their practice. Some of the examples were striking.

For example, “[observes on a] regular basis. Read student work I showed him. Helped me phrase things for tricky situations. Came to class and gave compliments and suggestions.” Teachers want principals who willingly spend quality time with both themselves and students in the classroom setting. The following comment, “asks very specific questions about my teaching rationale, student results and my own learning. If I don't have a good answer she compliments me on the courage to look at my teaching. I always leave her office feeling supported and encouraged,” suggests that teachers value principal feedback based on specific observations. This also lets the teacher know that the principal was actively engaged while in the classroom. Teachers appreciate feedback through dialogue and assistance. For example, “lots of positive feedback and observations. Asks questions. And things that aren't excellent - prompting thought. Offers one or two small suggestions for troubles I articulate” suggests that teachers value help from the principal when it is conveyed in a positive and trusting manner.

In *Trust Matters*, Tshannen-Moran (2004) includes “competence” as one of the five components of trust. The teachers cited above indicated that classroom visits and feedback made a difference in their teaching. As scholars we know that is probably true, but we also know that many principals, sometimes even ones who are otherwise effective, do not manage to spend as much time in their classrooms as they or teachers would like. As one respondent put it succinctly, teachers want “good feedback, honest, probing questions for reflection.” But they expect that principals will know what they are doing. One teacher described the principal as having “knowledge of curriculum, combined with his understanding of policy, data collection, various assessment tools, etc.” as the basis of her acceptance of principal suggestions. These quotes, and others as

well, suggest that principals can, and do, balance positive support with accurate, thoughtful, sometimes uncomfortable feedback on teacher performance.

Negative feedback can be devastating for teachers; however, an effective principal will have a support system set in place. This support system is built into the 360 Degree Feedback model because “a coaching or mentoring session accompanies feedback” (Dyer, 2001, p. 36). Teachers value constructive feedback; however, at times comments and suggestions can be overwhelming and time consuming. Effective leaders will mentor and support teachers as they implement changes or adjustments given during feedback sessions.

As much as teachers appreciate informal feedback principals are obligated to conduct yearly evaluations with more structured feedback. “Good leaders take time to observe teaching and other forms of learner support and to interact with teachers and other professionals about their practice” (Copland & Knapp, 2006, p. 33). For example, “the observation [was] very helpful in all areas” suggests that teachers value formal feedback when given in a constructive manner. Feedback from formal observations also helped teachers with their professional growth. For example, “he would do the standard eval[uation] but before he came in, we would meet to talk about specific areas of concern that I had so that he could give me honest feedback based on his observation. Because I was dealing w/[ith] what I perceived to be a weakness, he was kind & supportive while offering advice.” The following comment, “[my] supervisor encouraged me to take workshops to improve areas of growth. I normally receive this feedback in my annual evaluation” further supports the benefits of feedback in directing teachers towards

professional development. Even in formal settings teachers valued constructive feedback and support from their principals to further enhance student learning and success.

During formal or informal feedback praise and compliments give teachers a sense of accomplishment and a boost to their self-esteem. In the past the stereotypical principal would only tell teachers if something was wrong, otherwise, it was assumed all was well. Teachers want to be acknowledged and honored for their efforts. For example, “she would come in to visit the class and observe for a short time. She gives positive comments and appreciates my hard work” and “he had quick thoughtful responses to questions, responded to emails quickly & complimented you whenever he could” indicates that teachers wanted to be complimented and acknowledged for their efforts. The comment, “praise, positive feedback, appreciation for your contribution to staff and student body” illustrates that an effective principal takes every opportunity to provide positive feedback to teachers thereby validating their importance to the school and student body.

Visibility

Responses from teachers indicted that visibility was an important quality in an effective principal. “The proposed effect of Visibility is twofold: first, it communicates the message that the principal is interested and engaged in the daily operations of the school; second, it provides opportunities for the principal to interact with teachers and students regarding substantive issues” (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005, p. 61). Effective principals make frequent classroom visits a priority, have regular contact with students, and make themselves highly visible to all stakeholders.

Despite the image of “closed-door teachers,” respondents in this study wanted to see their principals in the classrooms, in the halls, out with the community. Principals are models as well as leaders, and that was an important part of how they symbolized school growth and improvement (Goldman, Dunlap, & Conley, 1993). One teacher described her principal as being “visible [in classrooms] at least once per week and understood needs, expected collaboration among grade and grade levels, expected parental involvement, expected [the School Improvement Plan].” Another talked about their principal being “always around and in constant communication, [offering] suggestions, validation, [and] open to discuss[ion] and wanting to know what is going on in my class.” These comments indicate that teachers want principals visible in the classroom and to be aware of all the activities within a school setting. Robbins and Alvy (2003) noted the importance of principal walkabouts, “before school, in the morning, in the afternoon, or after school, two or three weekly, 1-hour walkabouts into classrooms is wonderful way of demonstrating that the principal knows where the true center of the school is” (p.220). An effective principal is visible and present to the teachers; thereby, providing the opportunity for daily support, encouragement and feedback.

Effective principals made an impact on teachers with their energy and effort to be visible and present. For example, the principal “worked tirelessly on communication, visible, last place to find her was in her office” and “she is always in the classroom working with teachers asking q’s [questions] and giving feedback.” These comments suggest that teachers take notice when principals are present and offering assistance in the classroom. Another comment noted the principal “was very human not hiding in her office.” When principals are constantly visible in a positive, proactive manner teachers

view them as approachable. Effective principals lead by example and teachers take notice. Teachers appreciate the one-on-one face time with principals in the classroom. This gives principals the opportunity to acknowledge the greatness of both teachers and students.

Teachers appreciate principals being visible and involved. Teachers want a principal who is an active participant in the classroom not just a visible presence from afar. The following comments, “be there, and be involved in the school, classrooms, etc.”, “very involved, knows teachers, in the classroom often” and “be involved, circulate the classrooms, be visible” suggests that being directly involved with student activities help principals see the strengths and immediate needs of teachers. Therefore, “these acts not only build relationships but also inform the principal about the pulse of the school” (Robbins & Alvy, 2003, p. 282).

Teachers enjoy seeing principals in their classrooms during school tours or with parents. For example, one principal was “coming for visits regularly with parents on coffee tours and essentially bragging about my classes’ accomplishments.” This visibility builds trust and confidence in teachers. “Dignifying people shows respect, which can foster trust, and trust is the most critical attribute in building a learning organization” (Robbins & Alvy, 2003, p. 48).

While teachers mostly wrote about principal contact with themselves, several saw visibility more broadly. They described their principals as visible to students as well. For example, “present for activities, rapport with students, understood what teachers do and challenges [we face]” suggest that teachers want principals to build a relationship with students in order to readily identify with student needs and the challenges teachers

face addressing those needs. The following comments, “he was highly visible & involved w/[ith] kids, parents & staff”, “he was in the halls, talking to the kids” and “connected with students and was always in halls between classes” further support the importance of principal interaction with students based on teacher perceptions. Robbins and Alvy (2003) noted that:

Students appreciate spending time with the principal, and this helps to spread the message that the principal is more than the office figure or school disciplinarian. Having students see you as a “real person” helps in the process of building relationships with all students. (p. 282)

Therefore, principal visibility and positive interactions provide students with a collegial school environment. The next section further expands on the climate and community of the school environment and its impact on teachers and students.

“Culture and Community”

In the questionnaire teachers mentioned (a) culture as a general issue rather than individual support or feedback, (b) relationships with the larger school community, (c) reinforcement of the school’s instructional mission, and (d) organizational issues and innovation. As in the previous sections, these somewhat arbitrary categories overlapped, and many of the teacher responses drew linkages between one or more of them. In total there were 115 responses identifying culture and community as a characteristic of effective leadership.

Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005) define a purposeful community as, “one with the collective efficacy and capability to develop and use assets to accomplish goals that matter to all community members through agreed-upon processes” (p.99). Marzano,

Waters and McNulty (2005) further discuss four concepts addressed in this definition. The first concept is collective efficacy where group members' have a shared belief that they can significantly enhance the effectiveness of an organization. The second concept is the development and use of tangible and intangible assets. Tangible assets include financial and physical resources where intangible assets are shared visions, beliefs, and ideas about the mission of the school. The third concept of a purposeful community is the accomplishment of goals that matter to all community members. Members make a conscious decision to be part of this community and hold strong to the existence of the community. Finally, the fourth concept is agreed-upon processes. "These are processes that enhance communication among community members, provide for efficient reconciliation of disagreements, and keep the members attuned to the current status of the community" (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005, p.100). Therefore, teachers want an effective principal who plays a critical role in establishing and upholding a community of stakeholders with a shared vision of student success while maintaining a culture conducive to student learning.

Responses from teachers indicated that school culture was a significant factor for school improvement. Teacher responses highlighted the importance of collective relationships and working together to support students. For example, the principal "created a culture where teachers are encouraged to discuss their craft and strive to continually improve what they do" suggest that teachers want to work together in a proactive environment while continuing to grow in their profession. The following comment, "created a caring community, used staff meeting time to address school improvement issues" illustrates that teachers appreciate and feel supported with a

collaborative team approach. Teachers want a school culture where they are given the opportunity to support one another in a caring professional manner while focusing on student learning and student needs.

It is also significant that the idea of school culture extended to students as well as to staff. This conforms to current thinking that takes a broad view of school climate and culture. Teachers want a principal who will build a school culture focused on positive relationships with staff and students. For example, when a principal “interacts with students” a sense of care, concern and belonging becomes part of the culture. Further examples, such as “positive, caring, good communicator” and “communicates the importance of positive teacher-student relationships on a consistent basis” illustrates the importance of a proactive principal to help support and development relationships in the school. Another comment, “[the principal] allowed the staff to form/create its own school culture. By doing that it trickled down to the students who also wanted to be a part of the cultural feel” indicate that a positive culture is created for the students when teachers are included in building the school’s vision. “Leaders build strong professional communities by nurturing work cultures that value and support their members’ learning” (Copland & Knapp, 2006, p.24). Teachers value an all-encompassing environment where principals, teachers, and students work together to promote a productive school culture for all.

Principals further enhanced the school culture for students with a clear vision and focusing on student learning and outcomes. For example, “focus was on the students but at the same time supported staff needs.” Another example, “she had a clear vision of trying to improve our academic standards. We were ranked near the bottom in the Fraser

Institute (Canadian School) and she led us to improve kids' exam results – it worked, so that area of the school did improve” suggests that teachers want a principal focused on student improvement thereby making learning a positive experience for students. Another comment, “he had a vision for the school which he coined, ‘Always take the high road’. The idea permeated into all aspects of the school culture” illustrates the importance of teachers wanting to work with principals to support the vision and further enhance the school culture. A school’s culture and vision will clearly support all learners. “We have a high ESL population and she has used an early literacy program with the primary teachers to have every child reading at their grade level.” Ultimately, teachers want a school culture that is outlined with a clear and structured path of expectations while providing support not only for themselves but for the students too.

Several teachers broaden their definition of how principals connected school culture and school improvement to how they nurtured relationships with parents and the community. For example responses from teachers described their principal as “present at events in classrooms, in hallways, listened to all parties” and “made it family friendly.” Other responses included, “always around, very visible, outside checking with parents” and “increased family involvement.” These comments suggest that teachers want a principal who is proactive with parents and willing to build relationships with these stakeholders. Teachers appreciate principals involving parents in school activities. For example, “parents involved, made it a very happy place to be, knew student names.” This collective involvement further develops a collegial environment for all. Teachers valued principals who “interacted well with the parents, worked well with the staff, had fun with the students (they all loved and enjoyed him).” In establishing these

relationships, “an education leader promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests, needs, and mobilizing community resources” (ISLLC Standard Four). In being able to broaden school support “it addresses the need to get the public to support schools and enables the school to maximize the use of existing and potential human and financial resources” (Robbins & Alvy, 2003, p. 236). Interestingly, teachers observed relationship building between principals and parents more as a bonding experience than an opportunity to garner financial support and resources for the school.

At the same time, a few teachers came back to the concept of principals as “tough” individuals, who improved the school culture by dealing with student discipline issues. For example, “didn’t take defiance/disrespect from students.” As well, teachers want a principal who will deal with difficult parents and not be swayed by parent pressure. For example, “she is not afraid of parents” and is “not influenced by parents to make decisions.” Teachers also want a principal to handle recalcitrant teachers. As one response clearly stated, “weakened the staff Mafia.” Interestingly, these concerns were minimal throughout the responses on the questionnaire.

For some teachers, the broad sense of interconnectedness extended to how the principal made the linkage between the community and the school’s mission and how his or her actions modeled the school’s mission or vision. Sergiovanni (2001) states that:

Symbols and culture become important concepts in bonding leadership as values are communicated and agreements are struck. People become believers in the school. They view themselves as members of a strong culture that provides them

with a sense of personal importance, significance, and work meaningfulness. (p. 9)

For example, one response described a principal who “lived/breathed the school's culture, involved families and the community in much of decision-making. It was ‘our’ school, not a job, not our kid's school.” The commitment to an almost spiritual sense of mission also came up in several responses on the questionnaire. For example, “led school in new direction to develop core values to teach from, encouraged staff to take on leadership roles” and “kept kids [at school] and improved their levels of achievement in all round manner at the front. His vision was clear.” A final comment, “What didn't he do! Made the students accountable to the school, their learning and their community” suggests that effective principals are selfless and totally committed to success. This interconnectedness lends itself to ISSLC Standard Six, “An education leader promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.” A total buy-in of all stakeholders to the school’s mission offers principals support when trouble shooting various administrative issues while staying focused on staff and student needs.

In general, there was little mention of actual programs that showed how principals made connections between school culture and community. The exception was one principal who “worked with community to create after school homework program at a local apartment complex.” and another principal who “brought in outside community members to build the school community. She focused on the needs of the students from homework clubs to intramurals and community after school walking programs for kids & parents.”

Teachers were also a bit more focused when writing about how their principal had made organizational changes and promoted innovations at the school. Their comments indicated that at least some teachers felt change was desirable, even necessary, and appreciated principals' efforts to initiate and sustain change. For example, "learn[ed] the history of the school from staff who had been there longer" and "didn't try to change everything." However, most of the changes were specific to professional development issues or the organization of teacher time rather than representing large-scale school restructuring. Nonetheless, teachers felt they were important. For example, the principal, "[held] department meetings weekly among teachers so we could share ideas/solutions to current problems" and "foster grade level collaboration on academic approaches, behavior." One response from a teacher mentioned that the principal "implements programs and ideas focused on student learning" while another response acknowledged a principal who "provide[d] time and ideas for creating a framework for writing instruction at each grade level."

Teachers shared examples of positive community spirit that further developed a collegial working relationship with all stakeholders. For example, "she put up signs around the school saying 'Welcome to our school' to make it a more openly welcoming building." Another response from a teacher stated, "I loved going to work everyday because the school climate was so positive and welcoming." A final example was "she started the tradition of going around to the houses in the perimeter of the school with a potted plant to say 'thank you' for keeping an eye on our school during breaks and letting our staff park in front of your house (we didn't have our own school parking lot)." An effective principal not only provides positive feedback and appreciation to students and

teachers but to various community members too. Therefore, building bridges between various stakeholders provides students with a proactive and positive culture for achieving success.

The social aspect of community building was evident in teacher responses. For example, “he got to know each of us personally. Social gatherings were as important as staff trainings. He hired great people that worked well together. He kept an element of fun in our work together.” Other examples included, “it was such an amazing culture, the staff gathers were regular and many of us vacationed together in the summer” and “social gatherings at Christmas & Spring Break. Christmas staff meeting was a mysterious bus tour. We were told to bring our coat to the staff meeting and be prepared for travel.” All these comments suggest that teachers see their profession beyond the four walls of the classroom and want to build personal relationships with colleagues. Sergiovanni, (2001) states that:

Connections are particularly important to building community. Community is something most of us want in order to experience the sense of meaning that we need in our lives. We cannot go it alone. We have to be connected somehow, somewhere. Being connected to others and being connected to institutions we value is a way to become connected to ourselves; to know that we belong; to know that we count for something; to know that we are valued.” (p. 63)

Teachers appreciated the opportunity to veer from the norm of professional meetings and discussions in order to get to know their colleagues on a more personal level. Teachers want to feel a connection with their colleagues beyond the typical salutations of “good morning” and “have a nice evening.” Effective principals provide teachers the time to

bond and build relationships among one another as a support system for their personal and professional needs.

Based on the findings in this report, teachers have high yet realistic expectations of an effective leader. Teachers identify effective leadership with a principal who is supportive, listens and communicates. As well, teachers want a principal who exhibits personal qualities and leadership skills. Effective principals also provide constructive feedback and are readily visible to all stakeholders. Finally, an effective leader builds a strong school culture with supporting relationships among the school community.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, INTERPRETATION, AND CONCLUSION

After having examined and coded concepts from teacher responses, five categories emerged from the data. These categories defined the characteristics of effective principals based on teacher perceptions from the questionnaire:

Supportive, listens and communicates

Personal qualities

Leadership

Feedback and visibility

Culture and community

Teacher responses from the questionnaire are incorporated in this section to further enhance and support the five characteristics of effective principals.

Teachers want a leader who encompasses all of these characteristics in order to make a school more effective for themselves, the students and the community. “Leadership practice, as a result, is always concerned both with what is effective and what is good; what works and what makes sense; doing things right and doing right things” (Sergiovanni, 2009, p.8). Teachers intuitively know what they want in an effective leader; however, it is rarely communicated to the principal. In supporting teachers, it is important for effective leaders to examine their strengths and weaknesses to see where there is room for personal growth and development. Teachers provide the perfect opportunity to give principals feedback on their leadership style; however, this is seldom the case. Teachers have their own perceptions of what constitutes an effective leader and it may well vary from that of a principal’s own ideal. The questionnaire

identified areas of effective leadership with teacher responses consistently supporting more than one characteristic. Teachers provided numerous examples of what they perceive is effective leadership; however, there still is room for improvement on the part of the principals.

Principals undoubtedly have busy schedules and at times take the attitude that if there is a problem the teacher will make it known. However, teachers want a supportive principal who has an open-door policy, offers active listening and provides “open and effective lines of communication with staff” (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005, p. 47). An effective principal is aware that “their view is likely to be different from yours, and if you don’t take their perspective as the starting point, you are liable to be dismissed as irrelevant, insensitive, or presumptuous” (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002, p. 63). As well, a teacher appreciates a principal who can trouble shoot many school related problems and provide them with unconditional reassurance and a sense of self-worth about their profession. As one teacher stated, “listening to every teacher’s input and giving them the opportunity to do so is key in creating a collaborative environment in which all teachers feel valued and appreciated.” It is critical that principals see the link between these qualities of effective leadership. Many principals will say they are good listeners and communicators; however, teacher perceptions state otherwise. “Many school leaders who achieved their success because of their decisiveness and public speaking ability may have a difficult time becoming good listeners and reflective thinkers” (Robbins & Alvy, 2003, p. 295). It is essential for principals to step away from their offices and truly engage themselves in deciphering the best ways to support their teachers. Teacher responses indicated that they want principals to “be involved, take off the suit and tie and

participate.” and “bottom line...keep focused on student achievement and how to best support all stakeholders with this regard.”

Teachers spend many hours a day at work and want this environment to be like a second home. For example, one teacher felt it was important “having parents, teachers and all other staff feel like one family.” Principals have the ability to set the tone of the school through their words and actions. “Leaders who value others, display empathy, and deal forthrightly with their colleagues help set a tone of mutual trust and respect in their institutions” (Copland & Knapp, 2006, p. 46). Teachers want a professional atmosphere yet know that there is a time and place for laughter and excitement and for the principal to “make it fun and positive for all - teachers, parents, students” suggesting that teachers want principals to balance out work time with fun time for all. Teachers expect honesty, integrity and respect from their principals, as well as, predictable behaviors with no hidden agendas. They also want a principal to “build trust and confidence among their staff. The only way we can grow as educators is to work together and share ideas, triumphs and failures. Unless a staff has trust with one another, then open and honest communication will not happen.” As well, “work on relationships within their staff. I believe if teachers are happy, then kids are happy. I want to see the principal motivate their teachers to want to do great things, like my great principal did. The principal needs to be a good listener, not just the talker.” Therefore, effective principals promote cohesion and a sense of well being among staff members (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005).

Leadership is a multi-faceted term that covers many roles of an effective principal. Teachers want a strong leader who can wear many hats yet be down to earth

and still remain a “teacher at heart.” As one teacher noted, “I respect the fact that she was a real person. She was right there doing the tough work, instead of simply delegating everything (something my current principal does a bit too much).” In order to achieve these lofty goals effective principals provide support and guidance through productive in-services and workshops or as one teacher stated, “provide meaningful pro-d.” However, one teacher felt that principals were not able to provide her professional assistance because of her position. “I haven’t really had a principal that helped me improve my classroom teaching. I am a special education teacher. I don’t think principals really know what to do to help me.” Blase and Blase (2001) noted that, “teachers usually take an active role in defining and implementing staff development” (p. 54). This inclusion of teacher input might alleviate teachers feeling unsupported, as did the special education teacher mentioned above.

Teachers want to move forward in their profession in order to support their students. An effective leader “show[s] care, consideration and interest in their employees” by not letting money be the reason to hold back the growth of a teacher who strives for excellence. Principals, “find resources and provide support”, “ask what the staff needs and ensure all voices are heard” and “talk[s] with teachers about what they need and [provide] follow-through.” Teachers want this professional support in order to be effective in the classroom and to further enhance their own professional goals. Therefore, an effective leader provides “teachers with materials and professional development necessary for the successful execution of their duties” (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005, p. 60).

Teachers want a principal who is not only an administrator but also a compassionate human being. Effective principals will see teachers not only as a “worker” but also as a “human being” with real feelings and emotions. Teachers stated that an effective leader “connect[s] with their staff on a personal level. Better understand[s] their teachers (values, morals, etc), take[s] a vested interest in their teachers.” This requires an effective principal to walk a fine line and remain professional while meeting the needs of teachers. “The exercise of leadership can give life meaning beyond the usual day-to-day stakes – approval of friends and peers, material gain, or the immediate gratification of success – because as practical art, leadership allows us to connect with others in a significant way” (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002, p. 209). Teachers want to be valued and respected where support, nurturing and guidance is readily provided and available. “Hence, successful leaders must be ultimately aware that they are humans interacting with other humans at a given time and place” (Mazzarella & Grundy, 1989, p. 9).

Teachers are observed and evaluated on a formal and informal basis. Teachers appreciate positive feedback with constructive and supportive areas for growth. However, one teacher stated for principals to “evaluate teachers realistically. Make sure that popularity of teachers is not confused with the talents/effectiveness of a teacher.” Feedback is essential for teacher growth and an effective principal is sincere, clear and articulate in this form of communication. Blase and Blase (1999a) found “that by visiting classrooms and giving postobservation feedback to teachers, effective instructional leaders ‘hold up a mirror,’ serve as ‘another set of eyes,’ and are ‘critical friends’ who engage in thoughtful discourse with the teacher about what was observed for instructional

improvement” (p. 360). Along with feedback teachers are delighted to see principals in the classroom because at times teachers feel very isolated in their classrooms. However, effective principals engage their teachers in meaningful dialogues along with keen observations to determine best practices for staff, students and the community.

Teachers want principals to “be more involved. Out between classes. Checking on how teachers are doing before and after school, between classes”, “be in the classrooms, not just 2 times a year for evaluations” and “get out of the office, show up to as many extra-curricular activities as possible, memorize as many names of students as possible, [and] don’t pay too much attention to the idiots on staff.” In so doing, teachers receive feedback and praise as validation to their profession.

Teachers perceive principals as approachable when they are visible in the classroom and throughout the school. Too often principals get bogged down with the mundane administrative jobs that tie them to their offices. Teachers want principals to “be involved in the classroom, be seen outside of [the] office” thereby building bridges and supporting collaboration among teachers, students and parents. As well, “teachers reported that principals who practiced effective instructional leadership worked to create cultures of collaboration, inquiry, lifelong learning, experimentation, and reflection” (Blase & Blase, 1999a, p. 366).

Teachers want principals to have a vision and common goal for the school. “Leadership is closely associated with the ability to visualize, articulate, and create structures for supporting a vision for teaching and learning” (Dyer & Carothers, 2000, p. 42). Teachers felt an effective leader will “have a vision and keep it simple”, as well as, “a principal should have a vision and be able to inspire people into action.” Another

teacher wanted a principal to “encourage staff to work together to create common goals. Sometimes force...this isn’t always pretty but at our school it was sometimes needed. She understood what she was there for and it wasn’t just to make friends with everyone. I can’t think of even one staff member thought that doesn’t respect her now though.”

Effective leadership is a passion, a dedication to hard work along with insurmountable patience and an unconditional desire to make a difference. Teachers want leaders open to changing their mode of operation for the greater good of all stakeholders and not get stuck in a rut of familiarity. An effective principal is “comfortable with making major changes in how things are done” (Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005, p. 49). Teachers felt principals “should follow current research in highly effective schools and seek to implement identified strategies. They work to help weak teachers improve instruction to students”, as well as, “become insatiable learners! Be willing to change to meet the needs of the school population and lead teachers to make this change more effective.” Effective principals go outside their comfort zones and explore the great unknowns to better meet the needs of those they have chosen to lead. It is important for principals to “listen to teachers, CUPE staff (Canadian Union of Public Employees), [and] students of today [because] times have changed, so needs and demands have too.” Thus, a principal “create[s] a culture where teachers are encouraged to discuss their craft and strive to continually improve what they do.” Therefore, those in the position to be a guiding force readjust their leadership styles to focus on the needs of teachers and to ultimately achieve the greatest impact as an effective leader. In achieving this level of leadership commitment effective principals can use the broad themes and

priorities outlined in the ISLLC Standards to stay in check and keep focused on their efforts to support every student, teacher and stakeholder.

The ISLLC Standards describe effective leadership that supports student learning, raise student achievement capabilities, and transform schools into quality learning environments. The Standards also include functions that describe actions effective leaders take to reach the necessary goals of student achievement. As well, the Standards help principals set priorities and guide their work for the greater good of the school and community. Ultimately, the ISLLC Standards reinforce that the primary responsibility of school leaders is to improve teaching and learning for all students.

The six Standards help educational leaders stay current and aware of the priorities, skills, and curricular needs of teachers. As well, the Standards focus on goal and vision setting which helps align the expectations of principals, teachers and students. Teacher perceptions of effective leadership are identified in this document and reinforce the ISLLC Standards as a foundation to support principals in their roles.

Standard One states that, “An education leader promotes the success of every student by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders.” Teachers want to be included in the development and implementation of the school vision and mission. They want their voices to be heard and to have shared input in the direction of the school. This form of collaboration brings the teachers together for unity, clarity and accountability. An effective leader supports teachers by putting together and organizing plans to achieve the goals of the school and to promote continual improvement, growth and development for the staff and students. Effective principals monitor and evaluate the

progression of the school vision and are willing to adjust and change the course of action for the greater good of the school. Teachers want a leader who will move a school forward in a proactive and positive manner.

Standard Two notes that, “An education leader promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.” Teachers want to work in an environment of trust. They want to feel secure, valued and appreciated. Effective principals will incorporate collaboration of teacher input on many levels especially when the input will have a direct impact on student learning in the classroom. In turn, this collaboration and focus on student learning demonstrates a respectfulness of teacher time and energy. Teachers feel recognized when sharing ideas, thoughts and concepts for curricular programs and instructional needs. Effective leaders are visible to the staff and students. This visibility creates a personalized and motivating environment for teachers and students. Teachers appreciate being empowered with leadership opportunities in the school. This provides another opportunity for teachers to have their voices heard and to be proactive members of the staff.

Standard Three states that, “An education leader promotes the success of every student by ensuring management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.” Teachers want an effective leader who will include them in the decision making process but will also know when a decision must be made by the principal alone. An effective leader will take on the responsibility to ensure the school is operating smoothly and that the teachers have the necessary resources to support student learning. In order to promote the success of every student a

principal will provide teachers time to focus on quality instruction with their colleagues to promote high level learning. Effective leaders will acknowledge and support leadership roles among staff members to further enhance student learning and development. Above all, teachers want to be reassured that they are working in a safe environment and that an effective principal has taken every precaution to ensure the safety and well being of the school community.

Standard Four notes that, “An education leader promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.” Teachers want a principal who is knowledgeable about the latest trends in education, can analyze data and stay current on the relevant educational research. Effective leaders will share this information with teachers while continuing to support their needs within the classroom. As well, effective leaders are visible to all stakeholders in the school and community. Principals are advocating for their teachers and students in a proactive manner among parents and community members. Teachers want principals to build bridges with the various stakeholders and to establish collegial working relationships among them.

Standard Five states that, “An education leader promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.” Teachers want a principal who is fair and just with everyone. An effective principal will not show favoritism among staff or students; thereby, valuing the uniqueness in all. As well, teachers want a principal who holds all staff members accountable for student success. Teachers appreciate a principal who is student focused and addresses student needs while providing them with the necessary support for high student achievement.

Finally, Standard Six notes that, “An education leader promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.” Teachers want a principal who is an advocate for all stakeholders. An effective leader will assess the needs of staff and students and deal with any political fallout to gain the resources needed to further support the success of student learning. As well, an effective leader is open to adapting leadership strategies in order to support staff and students with emerging trends in leadership.

The five characteristics of effective leadership identified in this report are recognized throughout the six ISLLC Standards. Teacher perceptions of effective leaders hold credence to each of the Standards. The ISLLC Standards help keep principals focused on student achievement and staff needs. As well, the ISSLC Standards establish performance expectations of effective leaders and can assist in the facilitation of curriculum development and personal accountability. Therefore, these policy standards can influence and drive training courses and principal programs, as well as, support literature and further research on effective leadership.

There are numerous books and guides available on effective leadership along with professional literature focusing on how to be an effective leader. “However, few published studies have directly examined teachers’ perspectives on principals’ everyday instructional leadership characteristics and the impact of those characteristics on teachers” (Blase & Blase, 1999a, p. 349). The literature focuses on effective leadership but teacher input into identifying these qualities is not readily evident. As stated in this report, teachers want their voices heard allowing them to share their perceptions of effective leadership in a safe and inviting environment. One practice that capitalizes on

the value of diverse perspectives is the 360-degree feedback model (Dyer, 2001). As Robbins and Alvy (2003) explain:

This process involves soliciting feedback from multiple and diverse sources so that the leaders can gather data about their performance from those who interact with the leader. Examples of data sources might include teachers, parents, students, classified staff, central office personnel, and community members. (p. 49)

It seems only logical that teachers would be suitable candidates to provide productive feedback on the effectiveness of a principal. Being able to openly and honestly receive constructive feedback will only garner mutual respect and collaboration among teachers and principals. As well, principals can continue to grow in their profession while gaining insight into the needs and wants of their school community.

Schools offer numerous educational leadership courses and “administrators’ learning includes acquiring knowledge, skills, and perspectives that inform their practice” (Copland & Knapp, 2006, p. 19). However, in Blase and Blase (1999a) “Glanz (1995) found that reports of research in the area of instructional leadership are noticeably lacking in administrator preparation textbooks, both in quantity and quality; in fact, he indicated that few of these textbooks address this area at all” (p. 354). By incorporating literature on teacher perceptions of effective leaders, principals gain a better understanding of their role and how to support the teachers. The topics discussed in courses and textbooks cover the basic scope of traditional leadership qualities; however, by examining teacher perceptions principals can gain greater depth and clarity of their responsibilities. Some courses provide principals the opportunities to reflect on their own leadership practices;

however, this view- point of effectiveness is limited. Teacher perceptions of principal strengths and weaknesses offer them professional insight. “Few practical ideas are more obvious or more critical than the need to get perspective in the midst of action” (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002, p.51). As principals or even future principals continue their professional studies keeping teacher perceptions in mind will help them develop a framework for effective leadership.

“Opportunities for continuous professional learning can take various forms” (Copland & Knapp, 2006, p. 19). In-services and workshops can utilize information gleaned from teacher perceptions as a focal point for administrative continuing education. Teachers are faced with many challenges today both in the classroom and with the diversity of the school population. Teacher perceptions offer principals a first hand account of issues and concerns that can be addressed to a larger audience during professional development opportunities for school leaders.

Teachers’ perspectives on effective principal leadership diverges from the school leadership-oriented focus that dominates most of the writing in books and articles on principals in academic and practitioner journals and in books directed towards administrative trainees and post-service principals. Teachers expect principals to provide support, both in helping individual teachers improve their instruction and in “backing” teachers when they have difficulties with children and parents. School culture and climate issues—increasingly part of the literature—are also important to teachers. But the teachers who responded to this questionnaire—almost all of them—reported that either their current principal, or a principal in the past, successfully met these challenges. As the

majority of teachers had an average of tens years teacher experience and probably no more than two or three principals, this is a meaningful finding.

Teachers expressed much less interest in what is normally considered the key issues of contemporary education: accountability, including high stakes testing, and large-scale school restructuring. Surprisingly, very few Washington State teachers mentioned No Child Left Behind or the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) as an area that affected their view of their principal. This surprised me, as an educator who worked in the state, as testing—actually complaints about testing--was a very common staple of teacher talk. Only a few teachers incorporated data or outcomes into their remarks (e.g. “reviewed scores, looked for trends and patterns”) and vigorously asserted that her principal “DOES NOT emphasize state test data over human beings.”

Even though about half the teachers whose responses I examined were in low SES schools or those with considerable racial/ethnic diversity, these issues did not emerge in what they wrote. The data do not allow for speculation whether this is because such issues are low priority for principals, for teachers completing the questionnaire, for the structure of the questionnaire itself, or some other reason.

The questionnaire indicated that teachers appreciate principals who change things (but maybe not too much), who support instruction personally, who are collaborative and share power, and who communicate effectively. More surprising, many of the teachers saw schools as larger than just the area contained by a chain link fence, and noted with appreciation where principals connected effectively with the community of children and parents outside the school.

Teacher perceptions offer principals the opportunity to be open and honest as they assess their own leadership qualities. An effective principal is willing to identify personal strengths and weaknesses. In listening, acknowledging and acting on teacher perceptions a principal is able to support, nurture, empower, and build team spirit for teachers as well as the entire school community. Ultimately:

There are groups or “constellations” of qualities that appear to correlate with leadership. Not all leaders have these traits, and not even all effective leaders have all of them. Many followers have many of them, and many more have a few of them. Yet people who have many of these characteristics do appear to have a better chance of being effective leaders than do those who have none.

(Mazzarella & Grundy, 1989, p. 11)

Limitations and Future Research

This report had its limitations. Data was not triangulated in this report. Triangulating data helps address environmental and motivational influences which affect the accuracy of results. Using three points of data that say the same thing about a principal can help gain a body of reliable evidence in determining effective leadership. Relatively small sample size is always problematic and makes it difficult to broadly generalize descriptions of principals extracted from the data.

Some specific features of the sample magnify potential bias. First, although these teachers and their principals work in challenging environments (many of them are in low SES, high minority, and/or high ELL buildings), their region is noted for successful public education and for the high quality of educational professionals by both American and Canadian standards. Hence, the engagement of teachers and the positive

characterization of principals may not be typical, although their comments may accurately represent principal behaviors in schools with good leadership and strong staff. Second, high school teachers are slightly underrepresented in the sample. Another limitation is that while the American teachers are not self-selected (updating credentials is mandatory in Washington State), the teachers from British Columbia were not required to get master's degrees and there is probably a selection bias. Finally, I would like to think university-based education makes a difference. Being in classes where training in curriculum/instruction/assessment and/or leadership issues are stressed could well affect the perceptions of participants and have some influence on responses, probably generating greater depth than I might otherwise see.

Since the data for this report did not incorporate multiple measures future research should consider triangulation of data. Data could be triangulated using questionnaires, surveys and interviews. This would provide greater validity to the results. Since high school teachers were under represented in this study, future research could compare teacher perceptions of effective leaders between high school and elementary school principals. A final research suggestion would be to compare teacher perceptions of effective leaders to principal perceptions of effective leaders. The results would determine if ideas of effective leadership are in alignment between the two groups.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire

How do teachers know if they have a good principal?

Thank you for completing this survey. The purpose of our research is to get a teacher's view of what makes a good principal. We hope that the results will help us learn more about how teachers see principals and give us information we can use to improve administrator training. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. The information you send on the hand-written survey is entirely anonymous. We will report our findings—in presentations, publications, and Debra's dissertation in a manner that makes it impossible to link people to what they have written. Your completion of the survey indicates that you have consented to participate in the research. If you have any questions about the research or about your rights as a participant in a research study, you can contact us or contact Washington State University's Institutional Review Board at WSU IRB, PO Box 643140, Pullman, WA, 99164-3140, (509) 335-1676, irb@wsu.edu.

Please respond to the following questions in a few sentences.

Questions

1. Think about the best principal you have worked for. Is it your current principal or a previous principal?
2. Why do you think this is/was the best principal you ever worked for?
3. Give me a detailed example to demonstrate how this principal helped you improve your classroom teaching. Did this help occur on a regular basis or once/twice?
4. What did this principal do to make the school better?
5. Briefly, tell us about the demographics of the school the principal led.
6. As a teacher, what do you think are the qualities that make a good principal?
7. In general, what do you feel principals can do to make their school more effective?

Information About You

Check the appropriate boxes and fill in the blanks:

1. Gender:

Male

Female

2. Where you work:

Washington
State

Oregon

British
Columbia

Other
Specify: _____

3. What you do now:

Teacher

Assistant
Principal

Principal

Other
Specify: _____

4. Are you currently in an Administrative training program?

Yes

No

5. Number of years as an educator

Years Teaching _____

Years in Administration _____

6. Current assignment:

Elementary
(K-5 or K-6)

Intermediate
(e.g. Middle
School or
Junior High)

K-7 or K-8
School

Secondary
School

Appendix B: ISLLC Standards

Standard 1: An education leader promotes the success of every student by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders.

Standard 2: An education leader promotes the success of every student by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

Standard 3: An education leader promotes the success of every student by ensuring management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

Standard 4: An education leader promotes the success of every student by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

Standard 5: An education leader promotes the success of every student by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

Standard 6: An education leader promotes the success of every student by understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

Source: National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2008).