

A STUDY OF TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF EFFECTIVE
PRINCIPAL BEHAVIORS

A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE
TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF TEACHER EDUCATION
COLLEGE OF PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

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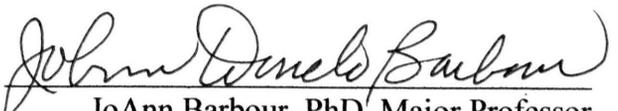
MAY 2011

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY
DENTON, TEXAS

April 5, 2011

To the Dean of the Graduate School:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Crissy Strickland Casey entitled "A Study of Teacher Perceptions of Effective Principal Behaviors." I have examined this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts with a major in Administration.


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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project has truly been a labor of love. While I thoroughly enjoyed the experience, I had to make some sacrifices along the way. My husband graciously and willingly stepped in and cared for our family and household when I needed to work. Thank you, Patrick, for being a “single dad” on weeknights and weekends when work required me to be away from our family. You are my best friend, and I could not have completed this without your encouragement and understanding. Also to my children, Faith and Parker, who are only six-years-old at the time of this publication. I hope that the sacrifices I have endured for this project show you that anything worth having takes commitment and passion. My desire for you is that you embrace the limitless possibilities of education and become life-long learners.

Thank you to my research advisor, Dr. Barbour, for providing wisdom and guidance throughout this project. I have been stretched beyond what I imagined possible, and together I believe we created a truly great piece of work! Thank you to Dr. Mutchler and Dr. Pemberton for their participation in this project. I thank you for your guidance and feedback in this endeavor.

Lastly, I dedicate this paper to the memory of my father, Robert Strickland, who passed away during this project. He knew that education opened doors and provided a way to a better life. He always wanted more for his children than what he had for himself, and I know that he would be very proud of this accomplishment.

ABSTRACT

CRISSY STRICKLAND CASEY

A STUDY OF TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF EFFECTIVE PRINCIPAL BEHAVIORS

MAY 2011

Because of the interdependence of principals and teachers, how teachers perceive a principal's leadership abilities is valuable and worthy of investigation. Thus, the purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of teachers' perceptions of effective principal leadership. Using a mixed-methods design, this researcher conducted an online survey where participants were asked to rank seven leader behaviors in order from most to least important. Next, participants in a focus group discussed the results of the online survey. Results showed that teachers perceive principals to be most effective who foster a culture of teamwork, foster a community of trust and respect, develop a vision and direction for the school, and honor commitments and promises. Other principal behaviors such as recognizing and rewarding teacher success, being knowledgeable in the field and providing training for faculty, and challenging the status quo were perceived by teachers to be less important for principal effectiveness.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Sergiovanni (1984) maintains that “to say excellent schools have high morale or have students who achieve high test scores or are schools that send more students to college misses the point” (p. 4). “Excellence,” he holds, “is all of these and more” (p. 4). Excellence begins with leadership, and excellent schools result from the combined efforts of the teaching faculty, support staff, and building and district-level administrators; additionally, appropriate relationships must exist among these groups of professionals. Of central importance to classroom teachers is their relationship with the building principal. With the principal as the leader of the school, his/her leadership is essential to the success or failure of this relationship.

Overview of Related Literature

Many scholars have researched and written about the traits and behaviors of effective leaders and the impact of leadership on the follower. To better understand the leader-follower relationship, it is necessary to evaluate the literature of both leader behaviors and follower perceptions.

Leader Behaviors

Bennis (2009) reports that “in a nation, in a world as complex and fluid as ours, we cannot function without leaders” (p. 4), and he lists three basic reasons why leaders are important: (1) leaders are responsible for the effectiveness of an organization;

(2) leaders are anchors and guides who inspire trust and restore hope; and (3) leaders provide integrity in a world rocked with corporate greed and scandal. In an attempt to develop future leaders, many have written about leadership, and they have identified behaviors of effective leaders. These behaviors include articulating a vision (Bennis, 2009; De Pree, 1992; Dess & Picken, 2000; Kotter, 1998; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Quigley, 1994), challenging the process and being a risk-taker (Bennis, 2009; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Zaleznik, 1998), as well as fostering collaboration and empowering others (Bennis, 2009; Kotter, 1998; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Tschannen-Moran, 2001).

In 2007, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) adopted six standards for effective school leaders known as the Educational Leadership Policy Standards: ISLLC 2008. These standards adopted by the NPBEA (2007) detail the behaviors of educational leaders as they relate to the schools and communities they lead. These leadership behaviors include detailed explanations of how an educational leader is to operate regarding vision, school culture, management, collaboration, and integrity. Blase (1987) lists nine task-related factors that contribute to the effective leadership of a principal—accessibility, consistency, knowledge/expertise, clear and reasonable expectations, decisiveness, goals/direction, follow-through, ability to manage time, and problem-solving orientation—and five consideration-related factors—support in confrontations/conflict, participation/consultation, fairness/equitability, recognition (praise/reward), and willingness to delegate authority. Blase (1987) found that “each

effective principal described [in his study] tended to exhibit all fourteen task and consideration factors” in varying degrees (p. 594).

Effective leadership is essential to effectively run organizations; however, the needs of followers must be considered when determining the effectiveness of a leader. In an educational setting, understanding how teachers perceive effective leadership is important in evaluating a principal’s effectiveness.

Perceptions of Leaders

Teachers’ perceptions of principal leadership can have a positive or negative effect on a variety of school-related variables: teacher job satisfaction, school culture, teacher retention, and instructional practice. In a study of 1,225 teachers, Richardson and Lane (1996) found that teachers believe a principal should possess certain traits and behaviors: honesty, competence, forward-focus, inspiration, and caring. Garner (2005) found that teachers also value integrity in their leaders. Research conducted by Blase (1987) coincides with the above findings. He discovered that teachers perceive a principal’s leadership competencies such as working with other people to be more essential to effective school leadership than his/her administrative competencies of budgeting or scheduling. For example, Blase (1987) found that personal qualities such as honesty, compassion and respect for others and competencies such as listening skills, problem-solving skills, and knowledge of curriculum were perceived by teachers as essential to effective school leadership.

Statement of the Problem

While scholars have attempted to explain which traits and behaviors make a good leader (Bennis, 2009; Kotter, 1998; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Zaleznik, 1998), in studying leadership it is essential to consider the needs of the follower as well. Do leaders know what their followers need or do leaders simply assume that they know what their followers need? According to De Pree (1992), leaders need the ability “to look through the lens of a follower” (p. 7). However, most leadership theories focus on the leader’s role and what the leader should do for his/her followers paying little attention to what the followers need the leader to do. Essential to all leaders is the need to understand what their followers perceive to be effective leadership. With this need in mind, this study examines teachers’ perceptions of effective leader behaviors.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study was to discover perceived effective behaviors needed by building principals from the viewpoint of teachers. To gain an understanding of teachers’ perceptions of effective principal leadership, the following research questions guided this study:

1. Within the scholarship of leader behaviors, what are the behaviors and characteristics of effective principals and leaders?
2. Which leader behaviors do teachers perceive to be the most important for a principal to be effective?

3. Do teachers vary in their perceptions of effective leader behaviors based on variables such as age, gender, years of teaching experience, subject taught, or grade level assignment?

Rationale

Because teachers interact daily with principals, they have perceptions of what makes a successful building principal, and these views and opinions are valid and worthy of consideration. By conducting this research, teachers have the opportunity to express what they believe effective leadership to be and hopefully help other future and current administrators improve their role as building leader.

Methodology

For this study, I used a mixed methods approach consisting of an online survey and focus group. Participants were preK-12 grade teachers in a small, suburban school district in North Texas.

Online Survey Instrument

The first research question that guided my study asks what are the behaviors and characteristics of effective principals and leaders within the scholarship of leader behaviors? A synthesis of this literature led to the development of the survey instrument which consists of two parts: an online survey via SurveyMonkey™ and a face-to-face focus group. First, I developed a list of effective leader behaviors which was the basis of the first part of the quantitative survey instrument. A content analysis of key pieces of the literature revealed the repetition of seven leader behaviors. When behaviors were

found in two or more authors' works, those behaviors were included on the list of top leader behaviors. The seven behaviors are vision, integrity, teamwork, recognition, knowledge and instruction, challenging the status quo, and trust. Next, I created statements for each selected leader behavior that defines each behavior.

- An effective leader has a long-range perspective and develops a vision and direction for the school (Vision).
- An effective leader honors his/her commitments and promises (Integrity).
- An effective leader works in partnership with teachers to meet the goals of the school and fosters a culture of teamwork (Teamwork).
- An effective leader recognizes teachers' contributions to the school and rewards their success (Recognition).
- An effective leader is knowledgeable about his/her field and provides training and instruction for his/her faculty (Knowledge and Instruction).
- An effective leader challenges the status quo and is willing to experiment and take risks (Challenging the Status Quo).
- An effective leader fosters a community of trust and respect for colleagues (Trust).

Because this study seeks to understand which behaviors are most important to teachers, I asked the participants to place the seven leader behavior statements on a continuum from most important to least important. Additionally, I asked participants to provide important

demographic information: age, gender, years of teaching experience, the subject/courses they are currently teaching, and the grade level which they are currently teaching.

Focus Group

The second component of the study consisted of qualitative data collected via focus group. Participants were selected from the preK-12 teacher pool in the district. I sent an e-mail to 227 preK-12 grade teachers in the district requesting their participation in the focus group. They were given a date and time deadline; eight teachers volunteered to participate.

Data Analysis

For the survey portion of the study, I analyzed all seven leader behaviors looking for a natural break in the percentage scores, giving most importance to the top leader behaviors selected by the participants. The survey data collected were analyzed using simple statistical charts from SurveyMonkey™. The data collected show the percentage of teachers who chose each leader behavior and the rating score of each leader behavior. Additionally, crosstab analyses show how leader behaviors ranked based on the demographic data of the participants. After a cursory analysis of the data, I conducted a focus group. The goal with this phase of the research was for the focus group participants to review the results of the online study and analyze why teacher participants in the survey chose certain leader behaviors as their most important.

The data collected from both phases of the research study address the second and third research questions: (a) which leader behaviors do teachers perceive to be the most

important for a principal to be effective; and (b) do teachers vary in their perceptions of effective leader behaviors based on variables such as age, gender, years of teaching experience, subject taught, or grade level assignment? My intent with this research was to assist school principals and administrators to understand the needs of their teaching staff. Additionally, the results from this study could be used for training and professional development of new principals.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

From the dynasties of ancient rulers to the leadership of modern-day presidents, scholars have been fascinated by how individuals lead and their ability to organize and motivate a group of people. In recent decades, the research on leadership has exploded with a variety of opinions and theories claiming rights to what makes an effective leader. While current and future leaders need direction on how to be an effective leader, they also must consider the needs of the follower, thus making the understanding of the leader-follower relationship crucial to the overall success of the leader. Within the walls of a school, it is the principal-teacher relationship that warrants understanding and analysis.

The first research question of this study is: Within the scholarship of leader behaviors, what are the behaviors and characteristics of effective principals and leaders? In the following section, I will review the literature to answer this question and will address followers' perception of leaders within the leader-follower relationship.

Leader Behaviors

Within the study of leadership, common traits and behaviors of effective leaders emerge across the literature. The seven leader traits discussed in this section and developed through a content analysis are not independent from each other; rather they overlap and mingle with one another to create a picture of a truly exceptional leader.

Vision

To begin, one leadership trait found across the literature is vision. Greenleaf (2002) maintains that “a mark of leaders, an attribute that puts them in a position to show the way for others, is that they are better than most at pointing the direction” (p. 29). He believes that a leader always has a goal or “the overarching purpose, the big dream, the visionary concept” (p. 29). This goal is presently out-of-reach and is something “to strive for, to move toward to become,” (p. 29) and it “excites the imagination and challenges people to work for something they do not yet know how to do, something they can be proud of as they move toward it” (p. 29). Kotter (1998) differentiates between planning and setting a direction: “Planning is a management process, deductive in nature and designed to produce orderly results, not change” (p. 42). Setting a direction, he argues, “does not produce plans; it creates vision and strategies” (p. 42). Quigley (1994) also maintains that a leader’s vision “offers a road map to the future and suggests guidelines to those in a given enterprise—how people are to act and interact to attain what they regard as desirable” (p. 37). Quigley also states that a leader’s vision is his/her source of power: “The leader who offers a clear vision that is both coherent and credible, and who lives by a set of values that inspire imitation, has a fundamental source of power” (p. 39). Additionally, that vision becomes the source of the organization’s energy, “both the energy that empowers others and the energy that results in superior performance” (p. 40).

Kouzes and Posner (2007), too, have listed vision as one of their Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership. They state that leaders are dreamers, idealists, and possibility

thinkers. The challenge for the leader, however, is turning the possibility thinking into an inspiring vision that is shared among followers. De Pree (1992) also believes in the importance of a leader sharing his vision with those he leads. He ponders, “How often do you suppose that magnificent visions are rendered ineffectual by the failure of the leader to communicate that vision to the people able to realize it?” Dess and Picken (2000) explain the importance of communicating a vision to others. They state that vision must be communicated in a way that “motivates and inspires a broadly shared sense of organizational direction and purpose” (p. 19). The benefits to the organization include “enhanced employee communication, participation, and commitment” (p. 19).

Vision, however, can blind leaders. Fullan (1992) maintains that a principal “who is committed to a particular innovation or philosophy ... may pursue it in such narrow and self-defeating ways that key teachers will resist the idea” (p. 19). Fullan also is wary of “the high-powered, charismatic principal who ‘radically transforms the school’ in four or five years” (p. 19). He refers to this strategy as “fragile” and “short-lived.” Fullan contends that the problems with both of these situations—over-attachment to one idea or over-reliance on a charismatic leader—is that they limit choices and consideration of alternatives, and they suppress the voices of teachers. Principals especially, Fullan argues, must ask themselves a crucial question: Whose vision is it? While Fullan believes that a principal’s vision is valuable, he maintains that “rather than impose their individual visions, principals would do well to develop collaborative work cultures” (p. 19) and make “vision-building a collective exercise” (p. 20).

Challenging the Status Quo

Leaders with vision are more likely to challenge the status quo. Both Bennis (2009) and Zaleznik (1998) compare managers and leaders to highlight the difference between the two styles of leadership. Both authors believe that managers accept things the way they are but the leader challenges. Zaleznik maintains that where managers work to “limit choices, leaders develop fresh approaches to long-standing problems” (p. 69-70). He also believes that because leaders work from high-risk positions, they are often “temperamentally disposed to seek out risk and danger” (p. 70). Kouzes and Posner (2007) agree that “leaders ... are fundamentally restless. They don’t like the status quo. They want to make something happen. They want to change the business-as-usual environment” (p. 168). Why do leaders like to challenge the status quo? Because “nothing new and nothing great is achieved by doing things the way [they’ve] always [been] done” (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 191).

Bennis (2009) claims that, to their detriment, most organizations and educational institutions practice “maintenance learning... [which]... seeks to preserve the status quo and make good soldiers of us all” (p. 72). He defines maintenance learning as a “static body of knowledge” which requires us to adjust to the way things are. The opposite of this is innovative learning: “a dialogue that begins with curiosity and is fueled by knowledge. It is inclusive, unlimited, and unending, knowing and dynamic. It allows us to change the way things are” (p. 73). Dess and Picken (2000) maintain that organizations that have made successful transformations share common threads of

behavior. They create a sense of urgency for change, encourage their employees to question the status quo and stimulate creative thinking, encourage experimentation and risk taking, and involve everyone to maximize the number of innovative ideas available for consideration. The necessity of these changes exists because the rapidly changing world requires organizations to become “more flexible, more responsive, and more willing to change and adapt” (p. 31) to compete in an increasingly interconnected global economy.

School principals also are expected to challenge the status quo and take risks. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) refer to this type of individual as a Change Agent. They describe a Change Agent as a leader who is willing to “temporarily upset a school’s equilibrium” (p. 44). Leaders who are change agents are “willing to lead change initiatives with uncertain outcomes” and are “systematically considering new and better ways of doing things” (p. 45). Kirby, Paradise, and King (1992) found that extraordinary educational leaders were considered to be challengers of the status quo who also challenged their followers. One participant in their study described an exceptional leader with whom he had previously worked as someone who appreciated that things could be done differently and encouraged his followers to take risks and explore other alternatives. In the study, seven of the nine leaders identified by participants as exceptional leaders were described as “challenging followers to grow and achieve” (p. 307). By challenging followers, the leaders themselves were considered to be risk-takers.

Integrity

Integrity, according to Morrison (2001), “forms the bedrock of character and is essential in sustainable ... leadership” (p. 65). Kouzes and Posner (2007) concur and believe leaders must set the example for their followers. They must walk the talk and do what they say they will do. Bennis (2009) refers to this behavior as congruity. He states that “in true leaders, there is no gap between the theories they espouse and the life they practice” (p. 152). Leaders who have integrity are credible. According to Bennis (2009), they “honor their commitments and promises;” “they stay the course;” they “walk their talk;” and “they are ready to support their co-workers in the moments that matter” (p. 152). Additionally, both Kotter (1998) and Kouzes and Posner believe in the power of credibility to get people to believe the message. The Kouzes-Posner First Law of Leadership is “If you don’t believe in the messenger, you won’t believe the message” (p. 38). Kotter states that “messages are not necessarily accepted just because they are understood” (p. 46). It is the leader’s “reputation for integrity and trustworthiness” that contributes to his/her credibility (Kotter, 1998, p. 46).

A leader’s credibility, however, becomes questionable when followers believe their leader lacks integrity and is without a solid sense of ethics (Bennis, 2009). De Pree (1992) maintains that “followers must be wholeheartedly convinced of their leaders’ integrity” (p. 10). He believes that leaders must speak to followers: “We must let them know where and how we stand on the important issues. We constantly make decisions and evaluate results in light of what we believe” (p. 36). Beliefs and values, De Pree

suggests, are the “footings on which we build answers to the questions ‘Who matters?’ and ‘What matters?’” (p. 36).

Advocating integrity within the organization is not enough, though. Morrison (2001) maintains that “integrity is demonstrated at two levels: interactions that are external to the company and interactions that are internal to it” (p. 67). Although his discussion focuses on global leadership, Morrison’s message applies to all leaders. For instance, a principal’s interactions outside the walls of the school building with parents and the community can profoundly affect the image and integrity of the school itself. Morrison maintains that “external missteps can undermine relationships” and “tarnish the [organization’s] reputation for years to come” (p. 72). In summary, effective leadership lies within the leader’s personal commitment to integrity, and Morrison maintains that “leaders are most effective when they consistently maintain the highest ethical standards for themselves and their organization” (p. 76).

Trust and Teamwork

At the heart of teamwork and cooperation is trust. Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999) define trust as “an individual’s or group’s willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open” (p. 189). Additionally, Kouzes and Posner (2007) found that when they interviewed leaders for their personal best stories, “people spoke passionately about teamwork and cooperation as the interpersonal route to success” (p. 223). “Without trust,” they argue, “you cannot lead” (p. 224), and in order to sustain a collaborative environment, a leader must “create a climate of trust” (p. 242). Bennis (2009) believes in

“getting people on your side” (p. 152) to affect change, and he states that “trust is the underlying issue in not only getting people on your side, but having them stay there” (p. 152). Similarly, according to Kouzes and Posner (2007), “Without that sense of ‘we’re all in this together’ it’s virtually impossible to keep effective teamwork going” (p. 243).

Whether a business executive, building principal, or basketball coach, all of these titles carry with them great leadership responsibilities; thus, the duties and results expected of these leaders are similar regardless of their title. Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (1999) found that teachers are more likely to trust each other, their parents, and their students when they trust their principal. Likewise, the greater the degree of perceived trust in the school, “the stronger the belief in teachers’ [abilities] to organize and execute courses of action that lead to success” and “the less degree of conflict” (p. 204). Tschannen-Moran (2001) also found a link between trust and teamwork. In her study, she found that “schools where there was a high level of trust could be predicted to be schools where there would be a high level of collaboration” (p. 327). Consequently, “when trust was absent, people were reluctant to work closely together, and collaboration was more difficult” (p. 327).

Collaboration and teamwork are of great significance in team sports. In a study of trust in leadership and team performance, Dirks (2000) studied the performance of thirty NCAA men’s basketball teams and the trust they had for their coach. His study compared not only teamwork but more importantly team performance and effectiveness. Dirks found that the two teams who reported the highest levels of trust in their coach

early in the season both excelled on the court. One team was ranked number one in the latter part of the season before being upset in the NCAA tournament, and the other team played in the championship game for the national title. In contrast, Dirks states, “the team with the lowest level of trust in its coach won approximately 10% of its conference games, and the coach was fired at the end of the season” (p. 1008-1009). According to one coach interviewed by Dirks, “trust ‘allows players to be willing to accept their role, so that they can do what it takes to win’ and to ‘be willing to do things that we ask of them that are unpleasant or hard but are necessary to win’” (p. 1009). Likewise, a player interviewed by Dirks commented that “‘once we developed trust in Coach _____, the progress we made increased tremendously because we were no longer asking questions or were apprehensive. Instead, we were buying in and believing that if we worked our hardest, we were going to get there’” (p. 1009). Thus, as Dirks’ study suggests, trust is “an expectation or belief that the team can rely on the leader's actions or words and that the leader has good intentions toward the team” whether on the court, in a school, or around a conference table.

Recognition

Both Kotter (1998) and Kouzes and Posner (2007) address the need for leaders to motivate those they lead. According to Kouzes and Posner, “Leaders get the best from others not by building fires under people but by building the fire within them” (p. 293). In the same way, Kotter believes that “good leaders recognize and reward success” (p. 48) which provides a sense of accomplishment and belonging. “When all this is done,”

says Kotter, “the work itself becomes intrinsically motivating” (p. 48). Recognition and rewards, however, are not about “fun and games” or “pretentious ceremonies” (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 22); instead, Kouzes and Posner (2007) believe that people need encouragement. They need “emotional fuel to replenish their spirits” and “the will to continue and the courage to do something they have never done before” (p. 281). The way that leaders accomplish this, they argue, is by recognizing individual achievements. Kouzes and Posner take recognition one step further and encourage leaders to make it personal. They believe that “a one-size-fits-all approach to recognition feels disingenuous, forced, and thoughtless” (p. 292).

Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) define recognition as contingent rewards and affirmation. Contingent rewards, they maintain, “refers to the extent to which the school leader recognizes and rewards individual accomplishments” (p. 45). In recognizing and rewarding individuals, principals should use hard work and results as the basis for the recognition and use performance versus seniority as a primary criterion. Marzano and colleagues (2005) describe affirmation as the school leader “recognizing and celebrating the legitimate successes of individuals within the school and the school as a whole” (p. 101). The principal’s acknowledgment provides evidence to teachers that “their efforts are producing tangible results” (p. 101). Blase and Blase (2000) found that “praise significantly affected teacher motivation, self-esteem, and efficacy” (p. 134). Principals who provide positive recognition to teachers on their classroom instruction fostered risk taking, innovation, and creativity. According to one teacher interviewed in

the study, ““My principal’s praise gets me searching for new and innovative things on my own”” (p. 134).

Knowledge and Instruction

Lastly, Kotter (1998) believes that good leaders provide coaching and feedback to help their followers grow professionally. Leaders create a climate for learning and are active learners (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Bennis (2009) sees leaders as learners who use experience as a part of their learning. The learning is “active and imaginative rather than passive and habitual” (p. 71).

In education, the concept of the principal as the instructional leader, one who provides knowledge and instruction to his/her teaching staff, abounds in the literature. Glickman (1991) believes that the most successful school leaders are not those who are “all knowing, all wise, and transcendent in vision” (p. 7), but they are leaders who mobilize the expertise and talent of the teachers. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) discuss knowledge and instruction in terms of increasing student achievement and affecting change. They maintain that whether a principal is implementing a small change or large change, he/she “must establish a monitoring system that allows her to identify effective versus ineffective practices in curriculum, instruction, and assessment and evaluate the impact on student achievement. To do so, the principal must have and seek out knowledge of best practices in curriculum, instruction, and assessment” (p. 72).

Blase and Blase (2000) found that effective instructional leadership consists of two themes: talking with teachers to promote reflection and promoting professional

growth. Their research found that “effective principals valued dialog that encouraged teachers to critically reflect on their learning and professional practice” (p. 133).

Effective principals provide feedback which increases teacher reflection, innovation, instructional variety, risk taking, teacher motivation, and self-esteem. According to one teacher interviewed for the study,

As I collaborate with [my principal], I learn more about my teaching. I look forward to her next visit as a chance to grow. The confidence I have described shows in my teaching. As I gain positive feedback, I continue using what works in the classroom. And because I do not fear negative evaluation, I am willing to take risks (p. 134).

Blase and Blase (2000) also found that effective principals promote teachers’ professional growth by providing staff development opportunities. One participant in the study appreciated the “voice and choice” (p. 135) that the principal provided staff members for their professional growth. Effective principals also encourage collaboration among educators, coaching relationships, and action research. In summary, Blase and Blase's research found that effective principals do not force their teachers to teach in limited ways and do not criticize their teachers. Their findings suggest that to be effective, instructional leaders “should avoid restrictive and intimidating approaches to teachers, as well as approaches that provoke little more than ‘dog and pony shows’ based on a narrow definition of teaching; administrative control must give way to the promotion of collegiality among educators” (p. 137).

The Leader-Follower Relationship

Leadership theory has evolved significantly over the last century. With Great Man theories to trait theories and then behavior theories, early leadership discussions had everything to say about the leader but very little to say about those he leads.

Contemporary leadership scholars, however, have much to say about followers. From transactional to transformational leadership, situational leadership and distributed leadership, modern-day theories not only consider the leader but the followers as well.

Kellerman (2007) criticizes the leadership industry, however, for not devoting enough discussion to the importance of good followership. She writes, “Good leadership is the stuff of countless courses, workshops, books, and articles. Good followership, by contrast, is the stuff of nearly nothing” (p. 84). Kellerman believes that “the relationship between superiors and their subordinates is not one-sided” (p. 91). While followers may lack authority in comparison to their superiors, “followers do not lack power and influence” (p. 91). She concludes with a decree for academics and practitioners to “adopt a more expansive view of leadership—one that sees leaders and followers as inseparable, indivisible, and impossible to conceive the one without the other” (p. 91).

Bennis (2010) admits that “until recently, followers have been largely neglected in the study of leadership” (p. 3), and he categorizes great followership as an art. Bennis (2010) reminds us that we spend much of our lives as followers which makes it important for leadership discussions to consider the effect followers can have in an organizational setting: “No matter who is memorialized as founder, no enterprise is built without the

collective effort of a group of able, energetic, unsung followers” (p. 3). Likewise, Burns (1978) believes that leadership is inseparable from the needs and goals of the followers and says that the “genius of leadership lies in the manner in which leaders see and act on their own and their followers’ values and motives” (p. 19). Spillane’s (2005) distributed leadership theory places emphasis on leadership practice which results from the interactions between leaders and followers rather than as a function of the leader’s actions. Hollander and Offermann (1990) concur and maintain that “the traditional view of the follower role as mainly passive is misconstrued” (p. 179). They believe that “effective leadership depends on reciprocity and the potential for two-way influence and power sharing” (p. 180). Finally, De Pree (1992) devotes an entire chapter in his book, *Leadership Jazz*, to followership because he believes that “one obvious requirement for doing good work as a leader is to learn the perspective of followers” (p. 198). He suggests that leaders can learn much by walking in the shoes of their followers. Most importantly, leaders can learn the “startling differences between the perceptions of leaders and the everyday realities of followers” (p. 201).

Perceptions of Leaders

In considering the needs of the followers, Kouzes and Posner (2007) conducted research covering a twenty year time period with over 75,000 participants asking them to select the seven qualities they most look for and admire in a leader. When they administered their “Characteristics of Admired Leaders” questionnaire in 1987, 1995, 2002, and 2007, respondents consistently selected the same four characteristics: honest,

forward-looking, inspiring, and competent. Kouzes and Posner maintain that when leaders are performing at their peak, they are “doing more than just getting results. They’re also responding to the expectations of their constituents” (p. 31).

Because the leaders of schools are principals and their followers are the teachers, it is necessary to consider how teachers perceive their principals. In a study using Kouzes and Posner’s “Characteristics of Admired Leaders” questionnaire, Richardson and Lane (1996) surveyed 1,225 teachers. The participants in Richardson and Lane’s study also selected honest, forward-looking, inspiring, and competent as the most important leader behaviors. According to Richardson and Lane, this finding provides a striking implication for principals: “The better a principal understands teachers’ expectations, the more likely a principal can fulfill the expectations of the role” (p. 291). Kelley, Thornton, and Daugherty (2005) found that principals’ perceptions of their leadership styles are not consistent with the perceptions of their teachers. Kelley and colleagues (2005) believe the old adage of ‘perception becomes reality’ needs to be considered because a teacher’s perception of principal effectiveness is reality.

Based on a series of in-depth interviews with high school teachers over a period of two and a half years, Blase (1987) was able to categorize effective leader behaviors into two categories: task-related factors and consideration-related factors. The nine task-related factors the teachers reported in effective principals were accessibility, consistency, knowledge/expertise, clear and reasonable expectations, decisiveness, goals/direction, follow-through, ability to manage time, and problem solving.

Additionally, Blase highlighted five consideration-related factors: support in confrontations/conflict, participation/consultation, fairness/equitability, recognition, and willingness to delegate authority.

In Blase's (1987) study, teachers reported a decrease in tension, frustration, and uncertainty when principals exhibited traits such as consistency, clear expectations, decisiveness, goals and direction, follow-through, time management, problem solving, fairness, and recognition. In addition, teachers felt an increase in self-esteem when principals exhibited the five consideration-related factors: support in confrontation, participation, fairness, recognition, and delegation. Teachers also felt an increase in professionalism and professional growth when principals exhibited these same behaviors. Blase reported that teachers "indicated that encouragement by principals to attend workshops and conferences and to take university course work facilitated professional growth" (p. 603). Likewise, principals with a participatory perspective were linked to teachers' sense of professionalism. As one teacher said, 'I'm recognized for my professional knowledge' (p. 604). The five consideration-related factors also increased the teachers' cognitive, emotional, and physical energy commitment to the school, decreased ambiguity and unpredictability, and increased satisfaction, confidence, and pride. Overall, Blase found that effective principals can dramatically affect the culture of the school and relationship with teachers, and according to the study, effective principals "tended to exhibit all of the task and consideration factors" (p. 594).

Summary

Research scholars have identified traits and behaviors of effective leaders; however, little attention has been given to the needs of followers in the leader-follower relationship. In a school building, the principal is the leader of the teaching faculty and support staff. Although some research exists on the principal-teacher relationship and what teachers need from their building principals, I believe that more research is necessary. The next chapter explains the methodology for my research study that further explores teachers' perceptions of effective principals.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Although contemporary leadership discussions have made an effort to understand the role of the follower in leadership theory, more research must be conducted to study the needs of followers especially as it relates to the principal-teacher relationship. The purpose of this study was to discover perceived effective behaviors needed by building principals from the viewpoint of teachers. To gain an understanding of teachers' perceptions of effective principal leadership, the following research questions guided this study:

1. Within the scholarship of leader behaviors, what are the behaviors and characteristics of effective principals and leaders?
2. Which leader behaviors do teachers perceive to be the most important for a principal to be effective?
3. Do teachers vary in their perceptions of effective leader behaviors based on variables such as age, gender, years of teaching experience, subject taught, or grade level assignment?

Design

To answer the second and third questions in this study, I used a mixed methods approach containing both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. The quantitative phase consisted of an online survey, and the qualitative phase consisted of a

focus group. Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) believe that the mixed methods design has become increasingly popular primarily because combining quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis provides a better understanding of the research problem than by using either approach alone. However, Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009) find that a “major problem with the current state of affairs regarding mixed methods designs is that there are a plethora of designs in existence” (p. 266). To help a researcher deal with this problem, Teddlie and Tashakkori (2006) support the creation of typologies for mixed methods studies because “typologies help researchers decide how to proceed when designing their [mixed methods] studies” (p. 12). Additionally, typologies provide researchers with a variety of designs and paths to help accomplish the goals of their study (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006).

To alleviate problems with existing typologies, Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009) have created an integrated, three-dimensional typology of mixed methods designs that includes consideration of three dimensions—level of mixing (partial or fully mixed), time orientation (concurrent or sequential), and emphasis of approaches (equal or dominant)—thus yielding eight types of mixed methods designs. Based on these three dimensions, this study is a fully mixed sequential dominant status design. First of all, the level of mixing for this study is fully mixed because the data collected in the quantitative phase was used to plan the qualitative phase as compared to a partially mixed design where the quantitative and qualitative portions of the study are not mixed until both types have been collected and analyzed. Second, the time orientation of this study is sequential because.

the quantitative phase occurred before the qualitative phase. Finally, the emphasis of the approaches is dominant because the quantitative data collected was the primary method of data collection whereas the qualitative data was used to support data collected during the quantitative phase.

Participants

The school district cited in this study was selected because the researcher is currently employed by the district. The district has one 9-12 grade high school, one 7-8 grade middle school, one 5-6 grade middle school, and three preK-4 grade elementary schools. There are approximately 4,300 students in the district and approximately 512 district employees, 281 of which are classroom teachers.

Because this study concerns the relationship between a leader and his/her followers, I thought that the participants in the study should have similar interactions with the leader to maintain consistency in the results; therefore, only classroom teachers were selected for the study because the ways in which teachers interact with the principal are different from the interactions between a principal and the secretary, librarian, or other non-faculty position. Therefore, participants for both phases of data collection were selected based on their teaching status within the district. Teachers of general education (preK-4th grade), English/language arts, reading, math, social studies/history, science, physical education/athletics, special education, and electives (foreign languages, fine arts, career and technical education, and so on) were eligible for the study. However, staff

members such as librarians, instructional technology specialists, counselors, secretaries, receptionists, nurses, registrars, and aide positions were not eligible for the study.

Based on school staffing rosters obtained through the district administrative offices, I identified 281 potential participants based on the criteria outlined above. Four teachers were not included in the study, however, because current e-mail addresses were not accessible via the district staff e-mail address book. The total number of possible participants for this study was 277. Additionally, all 277 teachers were eligible to participate in the online survey and focus group. One hundred teachers participated in the study; therefore, the survey return rate was 36%.

For participation selection of the focus group, I followed the suggestion of Stewart and Shamdasani (1990) who believe that focus groups with “fewer than 6 participants makes for a rather dull discussion, and more than 12 participants are difficult for the moderator to manage” (p. 57). I decided, therefore, to have nine participants: three from elementary schools, three from middle schools, and three from the high school. My original design was to select the focus group participants in a two-step process by obtaining an unlimited number of volunteer participants from the sample population then randomly selecting nine participants from the list of volunteers. However, only eight teachers volunteered for the focus group, so I accepted all volunteers and did not need to randomly draw names. In the end, only seven teachers participated in the focus group because one teacher was unable to attend at the last minute.

Instruments

As discussed above, I utilized a mixed methods approach with both a quantitative phase and a qualitative phase. Therefore, this study includes two instruments: an online survey and a focus group. The first instrument discussed in this section is the online survey which makes up the quantitative phase of the study. The second instrument discussed is the focus group which makes up the qualitative phase of the study.

Online Survey

According to Shannon and Bradshaw (2002), electronic surveys are gaining widespread use primarily because of their low cost and quick response rate. Additionally, web-based surveys offer a flexible design and can provide a “dynamic survey process” (Umbach, 2004, p. 25). I chose to conduct this survey online via the online survey tool of SurveyMonkey™ because of its user-friendly design process offered as well as the easy distribution that online survey tools provide. Additionally, SurveyMonkey™ analyzes data in easy-to-read, downloadable charts and graphs and allows the researcher to cross-tabulate data.

The survey instrument for this study consisted of two parts: a list of seven behavior statements to rank in order of most important to least important and a participant demographics portion (see Appendix A). Part one of the online survey addresses the second research question: Which leader behaviors do teachers perceive to be the most important for a principal to be effective? To create the list of effective principal behaviors, I reviewed the literature of four well-known leadership scholars (Bennis, 2009; Kotter,

1998; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Zaleznik, 1998). Then, I identified similar leadership traits and behaviors. My main criteria for selecting each behavior was that the behavior must be found in at least two of the authors' works from the four noted above. The seven leader behaviors I selected were vision, integrity, teamwork, recognition, knowledge and instruction, challenges the status quo, and trust. Next, I created a list of seven statements of effective leader behaviors. Because this study is about the leader of a school, the word leader was changed to principal. The list given to participants in part one of the online survey follows.

- An effective principal has a long-range perspective and develops a vision and direction for the school (Vision).
- An effective principal honors his/her commitments and promises (Integrity).
- An effective principal works in partnership with teachers to meet the goals of the school and fosters a culture of teamwork (Teamwork).
- An effective principal recognizes teachers' contributions to the school and rewards their success (Recognition).
- An effective principal is knowledgeable about his/her field and provides training and instruction for his/her faculty (Knowledge and Instruction).
- An effective principal challenges the status quo and is willing to experiment and take risks (Challenging the Status Quo).
- An effective principal fosters a community of trust and respect for colleagues (Trust).

Because this study seeks to understand which behaviors are most important to teachers, participants were asked to place the seven leader behaviors on a continuum from most important to least important.

Part two of the online survey addresses the third research question: Do teachers vary in their perceptions of effective leader behaviors based on variables such as age, gender, years of teaching experience, subject taught, or grade level assignment?

Participants were asked to provide important demographic information: age, gender, years of teaching experience, the subject/courses they are currently teaching, and the grade level which they are currently teaching. Data from this portion of the survey instrument allowed me to analyze and compare the teachers' perceptions of effective leader behaviors based on specific demographics.

Focus Group

The second phase of the study consisted of a qualitative data collection via focus group. The purpose of conducting a focus group is to listen and gather opinions about an issue, product, or service (Krueger & Casey, 2009); additionally, when used in a mixed methods study, focus groups can be a powerful tool in interpreting previously obtained data and developing recommendations for later action or study (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Therefore, the goal of the focus group in this study was for the participants to review and discuss the results of the online survey. I developed general questions based on the online survey instrument and created a focus group protocol (see Appendix B). Because the focus group is a social experience with the goal of promoting "self-disclosure among

participants” (Krueger & Casey, 2009, p. 4), the questions and format were intentionally informal and conversational in tone, and at times I deviated from the protocol to provide participants an opportunity to elaborate on their responses.

Procedures

First, I gained approval for this research study from the Institutional Review Board at Texas Woman’s University (see Appendix C). Additionally, I gained approval from the superintendent of a small, suburban independent school district in North Texas to conduct the research for this study (see Appendix D). I selected participants for the study from the teacher population of this school district. Only classroom teachers were selected for the study. Approximately one week before the survey was to be distributed, I sent an introductory e-mail explaining the upcoming survey. One week later I sent an e-mail to all preK-12 grade teachers with a link to the online survey. In the online survey via SurveyMonkey™, participants were asked to rank seven leader behaviors in order from the most important to the least important behaviors of an effective principal. They also were asked demographic information including age, gender, years of teaching experience, current subject assignment, and current grade level assignment. Two days later I sent a reminder e-mail of the day and time the survey would be ending as well as the link to the survey. Finally, on the morning of the day the survey would be ending, I sent one last reminder asking teachers for their participation in the survey.

The day after the survey ended I sent an e-mail to all teachers requesting their participation in a face-to-face focus group to be held the following week. My original

intent was to have nine participants: three from the elementary school level, three from the middle school level, and three from the high school level. I planned to select the focus group participants in a two-step process by obtaining an unlimited number of volunteer participants then randomly selecting nine participants from the list of volunteers. However, only eight teachers volunteered but seven attended the focus group because one teacher was unable to attend at the last minute. Focus group participants were required to sign a consent form prior to the start of the session (see Appendix E). The focus group session was held at the district's administration building after school hours, and the session was audio recorded. I acted as interviewer and moderator for the focus group.

Data Analysis

The data collected from both phases of the research study answer the second and third research questions: (a) which leader behaviors do teachers perceive to be the most important for a principal to be effective; and (b) do teachers vary in their perceptions of effective leader behaviors based on variables such as age, gender, years of teaching experience, subject taught, or grade level assignment? For the survey portion of the study, I analyzed all seven leader behaviors looking for a natural break in the percentage scores and focusing mainly on the top leader behaviors selected by the participants. The survey data collected was analyzed using simple statistical charts from SurveyMonkey™. The data indicate the percentage of teachers who chose each leader behavior and the rating score of each leader behavior. Additionally, crosstab analyses show how the leader

behaviors ranked based on the demographic data of the participants. Upon a brief review of the online survey data, I conducted a focus group with the purpose of having the participants review the results of the online study and analyze why teacher participants in the survey chose certain leader behaviors as their most important and least important.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The findings discussed in this chapter seek to explain what teachers perceive to be effective principal behaviors. I sent an online survey to 277 preK-12th grade teachers in a small, suburban North Texas school district. One hundred teachers participated in the survey, giving the study a participation rate of 36%. Additionally, seven teachers participated in a face-to-face focus group.

Utilizing a mixed methods research design, I employed an online survey and focus group for data collection. The survey consisted of two parts. First, participants were asked to rank seven effective principal behaviors in order from most important to least important, and then participants were asked to answer demographic questions about their age, gender, years of teaching experience, subject currently teaching, and grade level currently teaching. The focus group was conducted in the second phase of the research study. The findings in this chapter are taken only from the survey phase of the study; however, focus group data are analyzed and used for discussion in chapter five.

The data analyzed in this chapter address the second and third research questions of the study: (a) which leader behaviors do teachers perceive to be the most important for a principal to be effective; and (b) do teachers vary in their perceptions of effective leader behaviors based on variables such as age, gender, years of teaching experience, subject taught, or grade level assignment?

Demographic Data

This study consisted of two parts of data collection: an online survey and a face-to-face focus group. This section details the demographic data for both parts of the survey.

Online Survey

Participants were asked to provide demographic data concerning their age, gender, years of teaching experience, and subject and grade level they are currently teaching.

Table 1
Age of Survey Participants

Age	Response Percent	Response Count
20-29	23.0%	23
30-39	26.0%	26
40-49	39.0%	39
50+	12.0%	12
Total		100

As noted in Table 1, the largest group of participants contains teachers who are ages 40-49, with 39% percent of the participants falling in this age range. Teachers who are 30-39 years of age make up 26% of the participant pool, and 20-29 year olds comprise 23% of the population; thus, teachers who are between 20-39 years of age make

up almost half of the survey participants. The last 12% of the participants are age 50 and older.

Table 2
Gender of Survey Participants

Gender	Response Percent	Response Count
Male	21.0%	21
Female	79.0%	79
Total		100

Table 2 shows the percentage of participants who responded to the online survey. More females participated in the survey at 79%, compared to only 21% male participation. This percentage closely reflects district percentages which include 80% female teachers and 20% male teachers.

Table 3
Years of Teaching Experience of Survey Participants

Years	Response Percent	Response Count
1-5	28.3%	28
6-10	31.3%	31
11-15	15.2%	15
16+	25.3%	25
Total		99

Table 3 shows the participants' years of teaching experience with 6-10 years being the highest percentage group of participants at 31.3%. However, the second largest group of participants at 28.3% has only 1-5 years of teaching experience. Thus, almost 60% of the participants have between one to ten years of teaching experience. Teachers with 11-15 years of experience make up 15.2% of the participant pool, while 25.3% of the participants have over 16 years of teaching experience.

Table 4
Subjects Currently Being Taught by Survey Participants

Subject	Response Percent	Response Count
General Education	24.0%	24
English/Language Arts/Reading	12.0%	12
Social Studies/History	8.0%	8
Math	17.0%	17
Science	12.0%	12
Fine Arts (choir, band)	9.0%	9
P.E./Athletics/Dance/Drill Team/ Cheerleading	7.0%	7
Career Technical Education	3.0%	3
Special Education	9.0%	9
Other	11.0%	11

Note. Participants were allowed to choose more than one subject.

Table 4 shows the subject areas currently being taught by the survey participants. The participants teach a variety of subjects; however, the largest group of participants in the survey are general education teachers with 24% participating. These teachers are primarily preK-4th grade who teach all core subjects: reading, math, social studies, and

science. Other groups that provided a significant contribution to the study are Math at 17%, English/Language Arts/Reading at 12%, and Science at 12% of the participant pool. Overall, 73% of the participants teach the core subjects of English/Language Arts, Math, Science, and Social Studies.

Table 5
Grade Level Currently Being Taught by Survey Participants

Grade Level	Response Percent	Response Count
Preschool/Elementary (preK-5 th)	45.0%	45
Middle (6 th -8 th)	34.0%	34
High (9 th -12 th)	24.0%	24

Note: Participants were allowed to choose more than one grade level.

As noted in Table 5, the survey contains responses from teachers who teach a variety of grade levels. Forty-five percent of the participants teach preK-5th grade. The other two grade levels of middle school and high school are represented well in the participant pool with 34% and 24% of the teachers being from these two grade levels respectively.

Focus Group

For phase two of the data collection, I conducted a face-to-face focus group with seven volunteer participants who had been a part of the larger group of survey participants. The focus group participants exhibit a wide variety of ages, teaching experience, and teaching subjects and grade levels; however, all participants in the focus group were females.

Table 6
Age of Focus Group Participants

Age	Response Percent	Response Count
20-29	28.6%	2
30-39	28.6%	2
40-49	28.6%	2
50+	14.2%	1
Total		7

Table 7
Years of Teaching Experience of Focus Group Participants

Years	Response Percent	Response Count
1-5	42.9%	3
6-10	28.6%	2
11-15	14.2%	1
16+	14.2%	1
Total		7

As noted in Table 6, participants' ages represent a variety of age groups: two are 20-29 years of age, two are 30-39 years of age, two are 40-49 years of age, and one participant is 50 years of age or older. Similarly, participants represent a variety of years of teaching experience, as shown in Table 7. Similar to the demographic data from the survey, over 60% of the focus group participants have between one and ten years of

teaching experience. Three of the participants have 1-5 years of teaching experience, two participants have 6-10 years of experience, and the other two participants have 11-15 years and 16+ years respectively.

Table 8
Subjects Currently Being Taught by Focus Group Participants

Subject	Response Percent	Response Count
General Education	28.6%	2
English/Language Arts/Reading	28.6%	2
Social Studies/History	28.6%	2
Math	0.0%	0
Science	0.0%	0
Fine Arts (choir, band)	0.0%	0
P.E./Athletics/Dance/Drill Team/ Cheerleading	0.0%	0
Career Technical Education	0.0%	0
Special Education	0.0%	0
Other	14.2%	1 ^a
Total		7

^a The participant teaches psychology and Spanish

As noted in Table 8, participants teach a variety of subjects: Social Studies, English/language arts, Psychology, Spanish, and general education. One participant teaches both Spanish and Psychology. Similar to the demographic data from the survey, 85% of the focus group participants teach core subjects such as English/Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, and Science.

Table 9
Grade Level Currently Being Taught by Focus Group Participants

Grade Level	Response Percent	Response Count
Preschool/Elementary (preK-5 th)	57.1%	4
Middle (6 th -8 th)	28.6%	2
High (9 th -12 th)	14.2%	1
Total		7

The focus group contains members from all grade levels, as demonstrated in Table 9. Four of the participants are elementary teachers, two are middle school teachers, and one is a high school teacher.

Principal Behavior Data

As discussed in chapter three, to create the list of leader behaviors for the survey, I examined the works of well-known leadership researchers and writers (Bennis, 2009; Kotter, 1998; Kouzes and Posner, 2007; Zaleznik, 1998) and highlighted seven key leadership behaviors: vision, integrity, teamwork, recognition, knowledge and instruction, challenging the status quo, and trust. Next, I created statements for each leader behavior to be used in the survey. The statements are affirmative sentences of what an effective leader does and are based on a synthesis of the leader behaviors discussed in the literature review. To make for an easier discussion, I have reduced the statements to one or two-word behaviors coinciding with the leader behaviors discussed

in the literature review. The words in parentheses below represent those leader behaviors.

- An effective principal has a long-range perspective and develops a vision and direction for the school (Vision).
- An effective principal honors his/her commitments and promises (Integrity).
- An effective principal works in partnership with teachers to meet the goals of the school and fosters a culture of teamwork (Teamwork).
- An effective principal recognizes teachers' contributions to the school and rewards their success (Recognition).
- An effective principal is knowledgeable about his/her field and provides training and instruction for his/her faculty (Knowledge and Instruction).
- An effective principal challenges the status quo and is willing to experiment and take risks (Challenging the Status Quo).
- An effective principal fosters a community of trust and respect for colleagues (Trust).

Participants were asked to rank each behavior on a scale from most important with a score of 1 to least important with a score of 7. Each ranked behavior was given a rating average to determine how high that behavior ranked among participants. The lower the rating average, the higher ranked the behavior is among participants. Table 10 contains a complete summary of these findings.

Table 10
Ranking of Teacher Perceptions of Effective Principal Behaviors Based on Survey

Principal Behavior	Overall Rank	Rating Average
Teamwork	1	2.40
Trust	2	2.54
Vision	3	3.72
Integrity	4	3.80
Recognition	5	4.55
Knowledge and Instruction	6	5.08
Challenging Status Quo	7	5.75

As noted in Table 10, the principal behavior with the lowest rating average and therefore perceived as the most important is teamwork (2.40). The other behaviors in order from most important to least important with their rating averages are trust (2.54), vision (3.72), integrity (3.80), recognition (4.55), knowledge and instruction (5.08), and challenging the status quo (5.75).

Additionally, results showed that 35% and 35.1% of the participants selected trust and teamwork respectively as the two most important effective principal behaviors. Eighty percent of the participants ranked teamwork in their top three most important principal behaviors, and 75% of participants ranked trust in their top three. No participants selected challenging the status quo as the most important behavior, and only 1.1% and 2.1% of the participants chose recognition and knowledge and instruction respectively as the most important behaviors. The behavior of challenging the status quo was chosen by 39.6% of the participants as the least important principal behavior.

Likewise, knowledge and instruction was chosen as the least important behavior by 28.1% of the participants. (Appendix F contains a complete list of the principal behaviors and the ranking each received by participants.)

Comparative Data

The third research question seeks to understand if teachers vary in their perceptions of effective leader behaviors based on demographic variables. This study compares the ranking of the principal behaviors with demographic variables of age, gender, years of teaching experience, subject taught, or grade level assignment.

Table 11
Rank of Principal Behaviors and Age of Survey Participants

Principal Behavior	Age			
	20-29	30-39	40-49	50+
Vision	4.64	3.25	3.65	3.17
Integrity	3.71	3.25	4.19	3.83
Teamwork	2.32	2.75	2.36	2.00
Recognition	4.41	4.91	4.46	4.42
Knowledge & Instruction	4.73	5.19	5.33	6.50
Challenging the Status Quo	5.57	5.80	5.38	6.50
Trust	2.57	2.50	2.31	3.33

Note. Data indicate the rating average for each leader behavior; boldface indicates top ranking for this age group.

In a cross-tab analysis of age and principal behaviors, Table 11 indicates that age groups 20-29, 30-39, and 40-49 ranked either teamwork or trust as their first and second most important principal behaviors which are consistent with the results listed in Table 10.

It should be noted, however, that teachers age 50+ ranked teamwork and vision, respectively, as their number one and number two most important behaviors. Additionally, teachers ages 20-29 selected recognition as their fourth most important behavior. All other age groups listed vision above recognition.

Table 12
Rank of Principal Behaviors and Gender of Survey Participants

Principal Behavior	Gender	
	Male	Female
Vision	3.75	3.71
Integrity	3.80	3.80
Teamwork	2.37	2.41
Recognition	3.68	4.77
Knowledge & Instruction	5.38	5.00
Challenging the Status Quo	5.70	5.76
Trust	3.05	2.41

Note. Data indicate the rating average for each leader behavior; boldface indicates top ranking for each gender.

Survey demographic data based on gender were similar to the comparable data for age groups. However, as noted in Table 12, although male teachers selected teamwork and trust, respectively, as their most important effective principal behaviors, recognition ranked as the third most important behavior. Trust and teamwork tied as most important for the female teachers with vision ranking as third for this group.

Table 13

Rank of Principal Behaviors and Years of Teaching Experience of Survey Participants

Principal Behavior	Years of Teaching Experience			
	1-5	6-10	11-15	16+
Vision	4.19	3.48	3.50	3.71
Integrity	3.59	3.96	3.36	4.08
Teamwork	2.33	2.14	2.36	2.83
Recognition	4.56	4.45	5.07	4.35
Knowledge & Instruction	4.96	5.19	5.71	4.63
Challenging the Status Quo	6.04	5.70	5.36	5.72
Trust	2.39	2.61	2.53	2.60

Note. Data indicate the rating average for each leader behavior; boldface indicates top ranking for this group.

Table 13 shows that in a cross-tab analysis of teaching experience and principal behaviors, teachers in all levels of teaching experience ranked either teamwork or trust as the most important principal behavior with vision and integrity ranking as third or fourth.

Table 14

Rank of Principal Behaviors and Current Teaching Subject of Survey Participants: Core Subjects

Principal Behavior	Subject Currently Teaching				
	General Education	English/ Lang. Arts Reading	Social Studies/ History	Math	Science
Vision	3.87	3.55	3.63	4.47	4.08
Integrity	3.74	5.00	3.38	3.75	4.00
Teamwork	2.17	2.55	2.13	2.31	2.25
Recognition	4.48	4.73	4.50	4.35	3.83
Knowledge & Instruction	5.61	4.67	5.75	4.75	5.25
Challenging the Status Quo	5.57	5.00	6.63	5.88	5.75
Trust	2.29	2.00	2.00	2.65	2.83

Note. Data indicate the rating average for each leader behavior; boldface indicates top ranking for this group.

Table 15

Rank of Principal Behaviors and Current Teaching Subject of Survey Participants: Electives, Special Education, and Other

Principal Behavior	Subject Currently Teaching				
	Fine Arts ^a	P.E. ^b	CTE ^c	Special Education	Other
Vision	3.13	4.50	3.33	3.78	2.70
Integrity	3.25	4.00	3.33	4.00	3.60
Teamwork	3.88	2.00	1.67	2.56	2.60
Recognition	5.39	3.83	5.33	4.22	4.90
Knowledge & Instruction	4.25	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.20
Challenging the Status Quo	5.13	5.83	6.00	5.67	5.60
Trust	3.33	2.14	3.33	2.78	3.18

Note. Data indicate the rating average for each leader behavior; boldface indicates top ranking for this group.

^a Includes choir and band, drama

^b Includes athletics, dance, drill team, cheerleading

^c Career Technical Education

Tables 14 and 15 compare participants' current teaching subject with their ranking of the principal behaviors. Data show that most subject groups collectively chose either teamwork or trust as their most important principal behavior with vision and integrity ranking either third or fourth. However, as noted in Table 15, fine arts teachers

selected vision as the most important effective principal behavior with integrity and trust ranking as second and third respectively. Teamwork, which is usually ranked as first or second for most demographic groups, was ranked fourth by fine arts teachers. Table 15 also highlights another difference found in the results. Physical education teachers, which include athletics, dance, drill team, and cheerleading, ranked teamwork and trust as first and second respectively but ranked recognition as the third most important principal behavior.

Table 16
Rank of Principal Behaviors and Current Teaching Grade Level of Survey Participants

Principal Behavior	Current Grade Level		
	Elementary (preK-5)	Middle (6-8)	High (9-12)
Vision	4.05	3.25	3.50
Integrity	3.83	3.97	3.67
Teamwork	2.21	2.65	2.58
Recognition	4.45	4.44	4.78
Knowledge & Instruction	4.88	5.22	5.21
Challenging the Status Quo	5.60	5.91	5.71
Trust	2.71	2.35	2.71

Note. Data indicate the rating average for each leader behavior; boldface indicates top ranking for this group.

In Table 16, the last to be noted, principal behaviors were compared to the grade level that the participants are currently teaching and were divided into three categories: elementary (preK-5th grade), middle (6th-8th grade), and high (9th-12th grade). Results from this comparison showed similar results found in other cross-tab analyses with each

group selecting either teamwork or trust as the first and second most important principal behavior with vision and integrity ranking third or fourth.

Summary of Findings

In conclusion, survey participants ranked the seven effective leader behaviors from the most important to the least important in the following order: (a) teamwork, (b) trust, (c) vision, (d) integrity, (e) recognition, (f) knowledge and instruction, and (g) challenging the status quo. In cross-tab analyses of the demographic data and the principal behaviors, most variable groups ranked teamwork and trust as the top two principal behaviors with vision and integrity as either third or fourth.

There are exceptions, however. Male teachers and physical education teachers ranked recognition as the third most important behavior. Another difference was found with teachers who are 50+ who ranked teamwork and vision as their first and second most important principal behaviors. Also, teachers ages 20-29 ranked recognition as fourth above vision. Lastly, fine arts teachers were the only group who ranked vision as the most important principal behavior. Data from the focus group will be incorporated into the next chapter with the discussion of the findings.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to seek to understand teacher perceptions of effective principal behaviors. Using a mixed methods approach, I collected quantitative data via an online survey. I also collected qualitative data through a face-to-face focus group. The online survey results received from 100 teachers show that the most important principal behaviors, in rank order, are teamwork, trust, vision, integrity, recognition, knowledge and instruction, and challenging the status quo. In this chapter, I discuss the findings from the survey, and I enhance the discussion with qualitative data collected from the focus group.¹

Overview

Building principals have a great responsibility to their students, faculty, and community. There is no doubt that the principal's leadership can dramatically affect the success of a school. According to the focus group participants, a principal's leadership "denotes the climate of the entire building" (T4) and "sets the bar for the attitude in the building" (T2). Additionally, the principal is the "face of the school to the parents and the community" (T1). The following sections contain the statements and beliefs from the

¹ For purposes of citing and referencing participants in the discussion, I coded the seven teachers as T1 through T7.

focus group as they interpreted and discussed the results of the online survey. Each behavior is discussed in order of its ranking on the survey.

Teamwork and Trust

Participants in the survey understand teamwork to mean that a principal works in partnership with teachers to meet the goals of the school and foster a culture of teamwork. This behavior of teamwork received a rating average of 2.40 among survey participants which made it the highest ranked behavior. (See Tables 10-16 and Appendix F for a complete summary of the results for this behavior.) Focus group participants spoke highly for the need of a principal to promote teamwork in his/her building. Teamwork promotes togetherness and collaboration among the principal and faculty. Two focus group participants cited the importance of teamwork as necessary for making decisions so that the principal is not a “lone wolf principal doing anything [he/she] wants” (T1). Teamwork also allows the principal to know the perspective of his/her teachers. According to one participant, “When you feel like your principal is on your side and they’re going to back you up, whether it’s to administrators above them or to parents or to other grade levels, you’re going to just innately work harder and put in more time [and] more effort to do a better job...” (T5).

Several focus group participants linked the top-rated behavior of teamwork to the survey’s second highest ranked behavior, trust. Participants in the study understand trust to mean that a principal fosters a community of trust and respect for colleagues. See Tables 10-16 and Appendix F for a complete summary of the results for this behavior.

One focus group participant believed that the attitude in the building can be so much better or so much worse “depending on the trust and respect and the atmosphere that the principal creates” (T7). Additionally, the teamwork and trust created by the principal can affect a teacher’s desire to work at a school: “It affects my ability to be the best teacher I can be for the students. So as much as you love teaching, when you don’t feel like you’re a part of a community then you don’t want to be there” (T7). Another focus group participant had similar feelings: “If I know that [the principal] is going to back me no matter what, then I’m going to do absolutely everything I can. I’ll raise the bar for [him/her]” (T2). Likewise, according to another focus group participant, what drives a school to be great is a school with a “teamwork mentality” and a principal who “fosters a culture of teamwork and community and the trust and respect for colleagues” (T6).

Conversely, principals who do not build relationships of trust or a climate of teamwork may foster environments detrimental to the teachers and students. One focus group participant likened a poor school climate to a “cancer” that grows and eventually has “emotional, physical, and mental effects upon [teachers]” (T3). Focus group participants cited the need for principals to create a culture of teamwork so that the teachers feel supported in situations involving parents (T3; T5; T6). A principal who cares more about what the community thinks than addressing what the teachers need breeds an uncooperative and unsupportive working environment for the faculty (T2; T3; T4; T6).

Vision

Survey participants ranked vision as the third most important behavior of an effective principal, receiving a rating average of 3.72. For purposes of this study, a principal with vision is defined as having a long-range perspective and developing a direction for the school. Cross-tab analyses of the principal behaviors and disciplines that the participants teach show that fine arts teachers ranked vision as their most important principal behavior. Additionally, teachers age 50-years-old and over ranked vision as their second most important principal behavior behind teamwork. (See Tables 10-16 and Appendix F for a complete summary of the results for this behavior.)

Focus group participants talked about vision in terms of instruction of students. One participant contrasted the difference between working with a principal who makes short-term decisions “based on the next few months” as compared to a principal who develops a long-range perspective and has a vision of where kids are going to be two and three years from now (T1). Another focus group participant stated that “if the principal is only concerned with that year and how they look that year, then they don’t have long-term vision or goal for those children, and that will affect the teachers and the goals they set for themselves and their classrooms” (T3). Principals who have a clear goal for the future allow teachers to know what they are working towards and make them feel successful. On the other hand, focus group participants linked a lack of vision to disorganization of the whole school. Without direction, vision, or commitment, faculty

do not know what the goals are for themselves, for the students, or for the entire school community (T7). This lack of vision may breed confusion and frustration.

Integrity

The fourth ranked behavior of integrity received a rating average of 3.80 from survey participants. Participants in the study understand integrity to mean that a principal honors his/her commitments or promises. (See Tables 10-16 and Appendix F for a complete summary of the results for this behavior.) Focus group participants believed that this behavior was ranked fourth possibly due to its dependence on the first three behaviors of teamwork, trust, and vision. As one participant said, “You’re not going to trust someone who’s constantly breaking [his/her] word or promises something and doesn’t follow through. If there is truly that sense of trust and community those binds and promises are going to be kept” (T6). Another participant believes that a principal’s commitments will affect teacher behavior: “I’ve worked for [principals] who’ve said ‘This is what we’re going to do. This is what we’re going to achieve, and I promise that I’ll be with you every step of the way,’ and it made a difference in how I responded to them” (T1). This participant also noted that principals must have values and put “skin in the game” (T1) when it comes to being accountable to the staff.

Recognition

The behavior of recognition ranked fifth in the online survey, receiving a rating average of 4.55 on the online survey. Recognition in this study is defined as a principal who recognizes teachers’ contributions to the school and rewards their success. In a

cross-tab analysis of the survey data, however, recognition was ranked as third for male teachers and physical education teachers. Also, teachers ages 20-29 ranked recognition as fourth above vision, but all other age groups ranked recognition as fifth behind vision. (Tables 10-16 and Appendix F contain a complete summary of the results for this behavior.) Focus group participants had little to say about recognition, although some were surprised that it was not ranked higher by survey participants. As one participant noted, teachers need recognition: “We need that pat on the back that says good job. I know that definitely makes me work a little harder and want to go that one extra step when I know someone appreciates [what I do]” (T6). Participants felt that recognition, like the behavior of integrity, ranked where it did on the survey perhaps because a principal would have to exhibit the other top behaviors first, and that “if you have a principal that truly fosters that relationship they’re going to incorporate recognition of the teachers” (T3). Additionally, one participant remarked that the behaviors are hard to pick because they are all important: “I don’t think a principal would be effective and a school would run the way it should if one of these pieces were missing” (T6). Several participants agreed that when a principal creates a community of teamwork and fosters trust and respect among his/her staff then the other behaviors will “fall into place” (T3; T4; T6).

Knowledge and Instruction

The sixth ranked behavior according to the online survey is knowledge and instruction which earned a rating average of 5.08. Participants in this study understand

knowledge and instruction to mean that a principal is knowledgeable about his/her field and provides training and instruction for his/her faculty. (See Tables 10-16 and Appendix F for a complete summary of the results for this behavior.) Participants in the focus group discussed this behavior in terms of providing training and instruction to staff via professional development. One participant stated that it is important for the principal “to facilitate opportunity for further training and instruction” (T5). The participant believes that a principal should not teach a teacher how to teach but should provide teachers with opportunities for training and professional development instruction. Another participant said that she prefers training when it is about something that she’s read and is interested in learning more (T6). Other participants suggested that providing choices of professional development allows teachers to determine what training is best for them so that they can easily implement what they’ve learned into the classroom (T2; T3). One participant linked knowledge and instruction to trust. She believes that a principal who trusts his/her staff will trust them to find opportunities for professional growth: “When [the principal] supports me in my desire to learn, that’s where I feel the support” (T7).

Challenging the Status Quo

The last ranked behavior was challenging the status quo which received a rating average of 5.75. Challenging the status quo is defined in this study as a principal who is willing to experiment and take risks. (Tables 10-16 and Appendix F contain a complete summary of the results for this behavior.) Similar to the last several ranked behaviors,

focus group participants had little to say about a principal who challenges the status quo. Once again, participants seemed to believe that this behavior ranked last on the survey because if the other behaviors are in place “your principal is going to support you when you want to go outside the box” (T6). One participant said, “I want to work for a principal that says, ‘What else can we do?’ ‘How can we do it?’ ‘What is best for the kids?’” (T5). Overall, it appeared from the discussion that, even though teachers want a principal who is willing to support them and let them experiment and take risks, teachers in the focus group agreed with the survey results that this behavior is not as important as the ones that are ranked at the top of the survey.

Summary

In the first part of the study, survey participants were asked to rank seven effective leader behaviors. Participants chose the following principal behaviors in order from most important to least important: (a) teamwork, (b) trust, (c) vision, (d) integrity, (e) recognition, (f) knowledge and instruction, and (g) challenging the status quo. In the second phase of the study, members of a focus group were asked to analyze the results of the online survey. In general, focus group members agreed with the ranking of principal behaviors from the online survey. They seemed to believe that teamwork and trust were indisputably the two most important behaviors for an effective principal, with vision and integrity falling into place as third and fourth possibly due to their close connection to the first two behaviors. Overall, the focus group members seemed to feel that the last three behaviors, while important for an effective principal, are not as important as the first four.

The last three behaviors, they seemed to believe, will fall into place if a principal promotes teamwork, trusts his/her staff, has vision for the school, and models integrity.

CHAPTER VI

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study provides a preliminary look at the behaviors teachers believe make a good principal, and it highlights the importance placed on principals understanding the needs of their faculty. Findings from this study suggest that teachers want a principal who works in partnership with the staff and one who fosters a culture of teamwork. Additionally, teachers want a principal who trusts and respects his/her staff. As evident from the focus group, participants seem to believe that principals who exhibit these behaviors have teachers who put forth more effort for their principal and who feel that they are a part of a community. This study also suggests two other effective principal behaviors that are important to teachers: vision and integrity. The other behaviors of recognition, knowledge and instruction, and challenging the status quo are important, but according to focus group participants, it appears that these behaviors will fall in place if the more important behaviors of teamwork and trust are evident in a principal.

Based on findings from this study, I would suggest that school leaders and administrative preparation programs teach current and future principals the importance of the leader-follower relationship, or more specifically the principal-teacher relationship. Additionally, principals need to understand the importance of teamwork and trust and be provided training on how to build and sustain teams in an educational setting and build trust among faculty. Additionally, school leaders and administrative preparation

programs must teach the overall qualities of good leadership. The principal behaviors examined in this study reflect the existing research on leadership (Bennis, 2009; Blase, 1987; Burns, 1978; De Pree, 1992; Kotter, 1998; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Zaleznik, 1998), and findings from this study suggest that principals who exhibit these behaviors are considered to be effective by their teaching staff.

There were limitations to this study; I will briefly discuss those below and add recommendations for further study. First, this study only included teachers from one district. I suggest replicating this study but with an increased sample size including teachers from other districts. An increased sample size will include a greater variety of demographic data available for further analysis. Second, the district represented in this study is a small, suburban district. For a future study, I suggest surveying teachers in districts of varying sizes and locations. Larger districts and those in urban or rural areas have diverse and unique needs that differ from the needs of the district reported in this study which might yield different results. Third, in this study, I only utilized one focus group due to time constraints. I suggest conducting more than one focus group to gain a greater variety of feedback and interpretation of the data.

Finally, I suggest further research on how demographics affect a teacher's ranking of the principal behaviors. Findings from this study seem to suggest that gender, teaching subject, and age affect a teacher's belief in what makes a principal effective. Male teachers and physical education teachers both ranked recognition as their third most important principal behavior. Do these findings suggest that male teachers need more

recognition than female teachers or that physical education teachers need more recognition than teachers in other disciplines? Also, fine arts teachers were the only group who ranked vision as the most important behavior. Perhaps a focus group containing fine arts teachers could explore the reasoning further. Additionally, teachers who are 50 years of age or older ranked teamwork first and vision second. What do these findings suggest about the importance of a principal's vision from the perspective of teachers over 50 years of age? Further research of these demographic variables is necessary to address these questions. Additionally, because I did not include ethnicity as a demographic variable in this study, I suggest the inclusion of ethnicity in a future study. I also suggest conducting the same study with an attempt to include more teachers of varying ethnicities. The variety of ethnic groups represented among teachers in the district in this study is very limited. A district with a more diverse teaching population might yield different results.

In conclusion, further research of the suggested demographic groups would be valuable for principals and administrators because understanding how all teachers perceive effective leadership helps a principal become a great leader. This study has suggested that teachers need and desire effective leadership from their principals. Leadership is not a one-man show; it is an interconnected relationship between the leader and the followers. To illustrate this, De Pree (1992) compares leadership to a jazz band: Jazz-band leaders must choose the music, find the right musicians, and perform—in public. But the effect of the performance depends on so many things—the

environment, the volunteers playing in the band, the need for everybody to perform as individuals and as a group, the absolute dependence of the leader on the members of the band, the need of the leader for the followers to play well (p. 8-9).

As De Pree eloquently states, leaders must lead people, and the interdependence of the leader and follower cannot be ignored. Unless a principal understands what teachers perceive as effective leadership, he will never fully realize the mutual dependence of the principal-teacher relationship.

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APPENDIX A

Online Survey Instrument

Teacher Perceptions of Effective Leader Behaviors

1. Survey Introduction

Dear teachers,

I am conducting research in _____ ISD this semester for the completion of my master's degree. The study is titled "Excellence in Leadership: A Study of Teacher Perceptions of Effective Principal Behaviors."

The next page will take you to an anonymous survey using Survey Monkey. The purpose of the survey is to collect data on teachers' perceptions of effective leader behaviors. I would appreciate your participation; however, your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. The survey should take about 10-15 minutes. The survey will end on [insert date] at [insert time]. In order to preserve the instructional day, I ask that you complete this survey outside of your employee contract hours.

Directions are listed at the top of the next page. If you have any questions, my contact information is listed below. Additionally, if you have other questions or concerns, my university research advisor and her contact information are listed below.

The return of your completed questionnaire constitutes your informed consent to act as a participant in this research. There is potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all e-mail, downloading, and internet transactions.

Thank you for your participation. Please click "next" at the bottom of the page.

Crissy S. Casey
CSCasey@
972-

University Contact:
Dr. JoAnn D. Barbour
Professor
Education Administration and Leadership

Teacher Perceptions of Effective Leader Behaviors

2. Effective Leader Behaviors

This survey gauges what teachers feel are the most important leadership behaviors of principals. There are seven leader behaviors listed below. Consider what makes a good principal and rank the 7 behaviors in order from most important (1) to least important (7). In other words, what are the most important leader behaviors of a principal in order for him/her to be an effective principal? Please note: this is NOT a survey about your current principal's job performance. Be sure to rank all seven behaviors. Do not give two behaviors the same ranking. You may make comments at the end as needed.

1. Rank the following seven behaviors from most important (1) to least important (7).

When you have finished with this section, please click NEXT at the bottom of the page.

	1st (Most Important)	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th (Least Important)
An effective leader has a long-range perspective and develops a vision and direction for the school.	<input type="radio"/>						
An effective leader honors his/her commitments and promises.	<input type="radio"/>						
An effective leader works in partnership with teachers to meet the goals of the school and fosters a culture of teamwork.	<input type="radio"/>						
An effective leader recognizes teachers' contributions to the school and rewards their success.	<input type="radio"/>						
An effective leader is knowledgeable about his/her field and provides training and instruction for his/her faculty.	<input type="radio"/>						
An effective leader challenges the status quo and is willing to experiment and take risks.	<input type="radio"/>						
An effective leader fosters a community of trust and respect for colleagues.	<input type="radio"/>						

Is there a behavior that you think is important for a principal that is not listed here? Please explain.

Teacher Perceptions of Effective Leader Behaviors

3. Demographic Information

This section of the survey asks about your demographic information.

1. Please select your age

- 20-29
 30-39
 40-49
 50+

2. Please select your gender

- Male
 Female

3. How many years of teaching experience do you have? (Include this year)

- 1-5 years
 6-10 years
 11-15 years
 16+ years

4. What subject are you currently teaching? (Choose all that apply.)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> English/language arts/reading | <input type="checkbox"/> P.E./athletics/dance/drill team/cheerleading |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social Studies/History | <input type="checkbox"/> CTE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Math | <input type="checkbox"/> Special education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Science | <input type="checkbox"/> General education (preK-4) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fine Arts (choir, band) | |

5. What grade level are you currently teaching? (Choose all that apply.)

- Preschool/Elementary (preK-5th grade)
 Middle (6th, 7th, 8th grade)
 High (9th, 10th, 11th, 12th grade)

Teacher Perceptions of Effective Leader Behaviors

4. Conclusion

Thank you for participating in this survey. If you would like to know the results of the study, please contact Crissy Casey at CSCasey@. and you will receive the results once they are collected.

APPENDIX B

Focus Group Protocol

Focus Group Protocol

“Welcome to the focus group for the study ‘Excellence in Educational Leadership: A Study of Teacher Perceptions of Effective Principal Behaviors.’ I appreciate you donating your time and insight to this study. The goal of this focus group is to gain an understanding of what teachers perceive to be effective principal behaviors. I will be asking you a series of questions. During the course of your answer, I ask that you please not reveal the names of specific people or principals. This study is about the overall effectiveness of principal leadership rather than the job performance of your current or former principal.

Before we get started, I would like to remind you of a few things. First, we will be taking a break at the halfway point; however, if you need a break, please feel free to take one as needed. Also, you may help yourself to food and drinks as needed throughout the course of the discussion. This discussion is privileged to those of us in this room, and I ask your assistance in keeping the members of the group as well as the discussion anonymous once we leave tonight. Lastly, at the end of the session tonight, you will receive a gift card as a thank you for participating in the focus group. Are there any questions?

Opening Question

“Tell the group how long you have been teaching and what level you teach (i.e. elementary, middle, high)”

Transition Question

“Is the leadership of the principal important to you as a teacher? If so, how?”

Key Questions

“Read over the list of the top leader behaviors from the online survey.”

- “Why do you think that these leader behaviors were ranked as the most important leader behaviors?”
- “Choose one of the top leader behaviors. Is this one of your top? If so, why is this leader behavior important to you as a teacher?”
- “Has the absence of this behavior in a principal affected you in some way? If so, how?”
- “Is there a leader behavior that is not important at all for a principal to be an effective leader?”

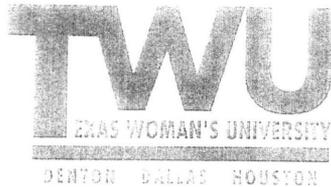
- “Are there any leader behaviors not on this list that you believe are mandatory for a principal to be effective?”

Concluding Questions

- “If you had a chance to give advice to a principal about his/her leadership, what advice would you give?”
- “Is there anything you want to add to the discussion that wasn’t addressed?”

APPENDIX C

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter



Institutional Review Board
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
P.O. Box 425619, Denton, TX 76204-5619
940-898-3378 Fax 940-898-3416
e-mail: IRB@twu.edu

October 8, 2010

Ms. Crissy Strickland Casey

Dear Ms. Casey:

Re: Excellence in Educational Leadership: A Study of Teacher Perceptions of Effective Principal Behaviors (Protocol #: 16268)

The above referenced study has been reviewed by the TWU Institutional Review Board (IRB) and appears to meet our requirements for the protection of individuals' rights.

If applicable, agency approval letters must be submitted to the IRB upon receipt PRIOR to any data collection at that agency. A copy of the approved consent form with the IRB approval stamp and a copy of the annual/final report are enclosed. Please use the consent form with the most recent approval date stamp when obtaining consent from your participants. The signed consent forms and final report must be filed with the Institutional Review Board at the completion of the study.

This approval is valid one year from October 8, 2010. Any modifications to this study must be submitted for review to the IRB using the Modification Request Form. Additionally, the IRB must be notified immediately of any unanticipated incidents. If you have any questions, please contact the TWU IRB.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kathy DeOrnellas, Chair
Institutional Review Board - Denton

enc.

cc. Dr. Jane Pemberton, Department of Teacher Education
Dr. JoAnn Barbour, Department of Teacher Education

APPENDIX D

District Approval Letter

Independent School District
P.O. Box 100 - 605 East Seventh St.

September 17, 2010

TWU Institutional Review Board
PO Box 425619
Denton, TX 76201

Dear TWU Institutional Review Board:

Independent School District has reviewed the proposal for Crissy Strickland Casey's research project titled, "Excellence in Educational Leadership: A Study of Teacher Perceptions of Effective Principal Behaviors." We are pleased to grant permission for Ms. Casey to conduct research for this project in _____ ISD and with _____ ISD teachers.

For any questions or additional information, you may reach me at

Sincerely,

Assistant Superintendent of
Curriculum and Instruction

DR/cb

APPENDIX E

Focus Group Consent Form

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title: Excellence in Educational Leadership: A Study of Teacher Perceptions of Effective Principal Behaviors

Principal Investigator	Crissy Casey	cscasey@	972-
Advisor	JoAnn Barbour, Ph.D.	jbarbour@	940-

Explanation and Purpose of the Research

You are being asked to participate in a research study for Crissy Casey's thesis at Texas Woman's University. The purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of teachers' perceptions of effective principal leader behaviors. You have been asked to participate in this study because you are a preK-12 grade teacher in _____ ISD and have expressed interest in participating.

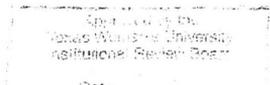
Description of Procedures

As a participant in this study you will be asked to spend about two hours of your time in a focus group session with the researcher and eight other participants. The researcher will ask you questions about your perceptions of effective principal leader behaviors. You will be assigned a number (i.e. T1, T2, etc.) that will be used during the focus group to identify you. The focus group session will be audio recorded and then written down so that the researcher can be accurate when studying what you have said.

Potential Risks

A possible risk in this study is loss of confidentiality. Confidentiality will be protected to the extent that is allowed by law. Additionally, there is a risk of loss of anonymity. The focus group session will be held at the administration building rather than a local campus to keep identification of you at a minimum. You will be assigned a number (i.e. T1, T2, etc.) during the session so that your real name is not used. To keep the group members and its discussion anonymous, the group members are asked not to share names of other group members or information discussed in the session with others not involved in the focus group. The session will be audio recorded and transcribed. You will be identified by your number during the recorded session and in the transcripts. The audio recording and written transcripts will be stored in the researcher's password protected home computer.

Initials _____
Page 1 of 2



The audio recording will be deleted and the transcripts shredded one year after the completion of the study. If the results of the study are published or presented for others, your name or any other identifying information will not be included. Other potential risks include fatigue and loss of time. During the session there will be at least one scheduled break; however, you may take breaks throughout the session as needed. Additionally, your participation in this study will cost you about 2 hours of your time.

The researcher will try to prevent any problem that could happen because of this research. You should let the researcher know at once if there is a problem and they will help you. However, TWU does not provide medical services or financial assistance for injuries that might happen because you are taking part in this research.

Participation and Benefits

Your involvement in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. Food and drinks will be provided during the session and free childcare if needed. Upon completion of the focus group session, participants will be given a gift card as a thank you for participating in the study. If you would like to know the results of the study, you may contact Crissy Casey at

Questions Regarding the Study

You will be given a copy of this signed and dated consent form to keep. If you have any questions about the research study, you should ask the researcher. Her e-mail and phone number are at the top of this form. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research or the way this study has been conducted, you may contact the Texas Woman's University Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 940-898-3378 or via e-mail at IRB@twu.edu.

Signature of Participant

Date

APPENDIX F

Rank and Percentage of Principal Behavior

RANK AND PERCENTAGE OF PRINCIPAL BEHAVIORS

Principal Behavior	Overall Rank	Rank						
		1 st (Most Important)	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	5 th	6 th	7 th (Least Important)
Teamwork	1	35.1%	27.7%	17.0%	7.4%	7.4%	5.3%	0.0%
Trust	2	35.0%	24.0%	16.0%	10.0%	9.0%	4.0%	2.0%
Vision	3	21.1%	10.5%	16.8%	11.6%	18.9%	9.5%	11.6%
Integrity	4	7.4%	11.7%	25.5%	25.5%	13.8%	10.6%	5.3%
Recognition	5	1.1%	12.8%	14.9%	17.0%	21.3%	21.3%	11.7%
Knowledge & Instruction	6	2.1%	10.4%	5.2%	17.7%	16.7%	19.8%	28.1%
Challenging the Status Quo	7	0.0%	4.2%	5.2%	10.4%	11.5%	29.2%	39.6%

Note. Boldface numbers indicate the highest percentage of participants who selected the behavior