

A STUDY OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF LEADERSHIP
BEHAVIORS AND THE MORALE OF ELEMENTARY
TEACHERS IN A SELECTED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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By

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

A STUDY OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS AND THE
MORALE OF ELEMENTARY TEACHERS IN A SELECTED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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ABSTRACT

The evolution of student accountability has led some researchers to suggest the increase of teacher attrition is tied to the increase of accountability. Although some may suggest the teacher attrition rate is tied to accountability, this study explored the relationship of elementary teacher morale and the leadership of elementary principals and how that leadership may play a role in teacher morale and a possible factor in the teacher attrition. While many quantitative studies have been conducted on teacher morale and principal behaviors, this study analyzed principal behaviors through the lens of transformational leadership, gathering data in a qualitative method through individual teacher and administrator interviews. The findings, implications and recommendations of this study are a result of the data that were gathered through individual interviews. There were four common positive themes which principals and teachers believed impacted teacher morale in a positive manner including teacher support, teacher feedback, shared leadership and creating a family culture. There were five common themes principals and teachers believed to have a negative impact on teacher morale including negativity, lack of support, change or new initiatives, valuing teachers and common core curriculum. Additional emergent themes were also identified and discussed in the conclusions of this study. The findings are intended to change the leadership approach of principals in order to increase teacher morale and student achievement and decrease teacher attrition.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION OF STUDY

American leaders have sought ways to improve public schools since their beginning. Our current implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which requires all students to reach proficient levels by the year 2014, can be linked to President Reagan's initiative, *A Nation at Risk*, beginning in 1983 (Rowland, 2008). *A Nation at Risk* brought to light our country's status in comparison to other nations throughout the world. As the rankings of our nation's schools were publicized, making our shortcomings public, schools became scrutinized and increasingly more under the microscope for continuous academic improvement (Rowland).

Since Reagan's initiative, teachers and administrators have become the target for student achievement and continuous annual growth. Government officials continue to debate how schools and school personnel should be held accountable for student achievement (Rowland, 2008). Randolph (2007) emphasized Governor Barnes' focus in Georgia whereby members of Congress at the time were looking even further into the principal's roles as they ask the very difficult question of "How can we make the school environment a place where teachers and students can perform and achieve at their best?" (Randolph, p. 14). The environment about which Congress speaks is commonly referred to as the school culture or the climate. Tableman (2004) suggested the environment is a factor that affects the behavior of teachers and students, and Gruenert (2008) suggested the school environment, whether good or bad, is a direct result of the principal.

Education and educational theory are evolving and constantly being challenged; new curriculum, new strategies, and new methods to reach students are always on the

forefront of educational discussions. Millions of dollars are spent yearly at the local, state and federal levels in an attempt to find new curricular or instructional methods and techniques to increase learning. One of the most fundamental concepts to improve a school is to improve teacher motivation, which can be largely effected by feelings about the school or the environment provided at the school (Evans, 1997; Hunter-Boykin & Evans, 1995). These feelings of motivation can also be described as morale. Morale can greatly effect the motivation and achievement of students (Randolph, 2007; Rowland, 2008).

Tableman (2004) described the need to improve school environment as she emphasized how the school climate and culture are key to improving behavior and academics in our schools. One could reasonably presume school leaders influence the basic achievement skills of students through leadership behaviors and/or actions; these school leaders have a marked effect on many of the people around them (Leithwood, Begley, & Cousins, 1992). Research to define the qualities of an effective school has shown effective schools have strong principals (McEwan, 2003). Leithwood et al. asserted that principals directly influence a teacher's job satisfaction, otherwise known as morale.

As the pendulum sways toward increased levels of administrator and teacher accountability, teachers experience greater pressures, demands, and stress (Lumsden, 1998). The pressures and demands on school personnel can be very burdensome and can cause teachers to have a lower morale level or even to exit the profession (Hardy, 1999; Tye & O'Brien, 2002). Houston (2010) echoed this, explaining that due to the accountability demands placed on teachers, we have seen increasingly more [teachers] leave the profession. Hardy (1999) found nearly 7% of teachers are leaving the

profession on a yearly basis. A study conducted by Ingersoll in 2002 found nearly one in three teachers will leave the field of education within the first five years. Marshak and Klotz (2002) found that in roughly a five year period “2.2 million of 3.1 million teachers will leave the profession” (p. 42). In a recent study by Forbes.com on the unhappiest jobs, Smith (2012) found the job of teacher ranked third in America; the jobs of security officer and nurse ranked first and second unhappiest respectively.

While there are many possible reasons for low teacher morale, some teachers reported they are not treated as professionals, they feel underappreciated, or are simply overworked (Hollinger, 2010). Willis and Varner (2010) explained the “research on teacher morale and its effect on student achievement has been positively correlated” (para. 2). The opposite also holds true. When teachers show negative feelings towards their school or position, they may have negative influence on their students and the school (Miller, 1981).

Many researchers believe the actions of principals have some influence on teacher morale (Hunter-Boykin & Evans, 1995; Lester, 1990; Rhodes, Nevill, & Allan, 2004; Rowland, 2008). Teachers who report higher levels of morale expressed feeling supported as teachers, appreciated, and as though they were allowed to teach (Rowland, 2008). Principals must understand they have an influence on the morale of the teachers, and they must strive to increase teacher morale if they are going to decrease teacher attrition and increase student achievement.

The researcher attempts to examine how a leader’s behavior effects the school culture and climate that influences teacher morale. Additionally, this researcher intends to add clarity to teacher morale by identifying leadership behaviors of elementary principals that elementary teachers believe may be affecting the culture and influencing

morale whether in a positive or negative manner. It is believed there are specific leadership behaviors that change the climate and culture of a school which teachers will attribute to the increase or decrease of teacher morale.

Theoretical Lens and Transformational Leadership

Researchers tend to agree that leaders are individuals who guide their subordinates using a vision or mission to lead towards a common goal (Bolman & Deal, 2009; Bush, 2009; Leithwood, 2005). Many researchers also explored the idea of leadership occurring through teams or individuals, therefore having a form of shared leadership (Bush, 2009; Yukl; 2002). As efforts increase nationwide to improve student achievement, this idea of sharing leadership has become more of a reality in our schools. Thus, the intention of this researcher is to more fully understand the role of transformational leadership of elementary principals and its effect on school climate and the influence transformational leadership may have on teacher morale. Therefore, a broad overview of leadership theory is briefly discussed and then quickly focused onto transformational leadership.

Bush (2009) suggested that transformational leadership tends to focus on the “process by which leaders seek to influence school outcomes rather than focusing on the nature or direction of the outcome” (p. 77). Transformational leadership also tends to involve all stakeholders in a collective union towards a common goal. It is thus emphasized that many transformational leaders use charismatic traits to organize committees and individual support (Bush). While some researchers question the ethics of this leadership style, others have found that it provides a “normative approach to school leadership” (Bush, 2009, p. 77).

Homrig (2001) explained that the “transformational leader strives to achieve a true consensus, aligning individual and organizational interests” (para. 22). Straker (2010) explained transformational leaders never hide behind their staff members and will stand up and be accountable. Straker continued, explaining transformational leaders show through their example of attitude and their actions of how the staff should behave.

Straker (2010) explained that transformational leaders sustain motivation of their followers by the use of ceremonies, rituals and other cultural symbolism. Straker believed this type of leader sees the big picture. Yukl (2006) discussed many traits of transformational leadership, including “acting confident and optimistic, expressing confidence in followers, using dramatic, symbolic actions to emphasize key values, and leading by example,” (p. 274). All of these traits, when used appropriately, help to make change much more likely to occur, while maintaining a positive culture.

Statement of the Problem

For many years the U.S. has continued to develop standards which federally funded schools must meet (NCLB, 2001). The development of these standards has caused the roles of principals and teachers to change and evolve throughout the history of public education. With the implementation of NCLB in 2001 the government at both state and federal levels has increased the expectations of student achievement levels and has changed the roles of teachers and administrators. Hardy (1999), Marshak and Klotz (2002), and Smith (2012) have found teachers are leaving the classrooms at an alarming rate.

Lumsden (1998), Houston (2010) and others attributed stress and pressures that have been placed on teachers as one of the main reasons for teacher attrition. In her research, Lumsden found “40% of survey respondents would not again select teaching as

a profession and 57% are definitely planning to leave, if something better comes along” (para. 2). While the change of roles for teachers and increasing student performance expectations has caused a great deal of stress on educators, these alone do not explain the number of teachers who continue to leave the profession.

If we, as the general public and as educators, continue to believe state and federal restrictions and expectations are solely to blame for the teacher exodus to other professions then we will never be able to look more closely at the situation we have at the individual building level. While many studies have been conducted to determine what factors affect teacher morale and teacher attrition, we still know very little about underlying causes of teachers leaving the profession. While some quantitative studies (Bhella, 1982; Cook, 1979; Evans & Johnson, 1990; Hackman & Johnson, 2000) on teacher morale exist, very few qualitative studies (Hipp, 1997; Whitaker, 1997) have focused specifically on elementary teacher morale, and fewer have focused on the perceptions of elementary teachers concerning principal leadership behaviors that affect culture and how they may relate to teacher morale.

Purpose of the Study

The intent of this qualitative multi-site case study is to explore how elementary principal behaviors influence teacher morale in the Pleasant School District. For this research, teacher morale will be determined through in-depth individual interviews with teachers and principals. Using the transformational leadership lens, the focus is based on gathering more understanding of which principal behaviors effect school culture and climate and therefore influence teacher morale.

The rationale for qualitative data collection is to obtain personal experiences and rich data concerning teacher morale (Mertens, 2005). Although historically similar

research has been accomplished using a quantitative approach, the findings from quantitative research studies do not provide the depth necessary for leaders to make changes in practice and behavior. America's schools are faced with an increasing teacher attrition rate that is costing the nation over \$7 billion a year. Teacher attrition is a drain on resources, it decreases teaching quality, and diminishes ability to close the student achievement gap (Carroll, 2007). Previous quantitative research has brought to light the benefits of transformational leadership for increasing teacher morale, but leaves out other important pieces of rich data that might also be beneficial for teachers and administrators in order to change practice.

Research Questions

This research will use the following central question to guide the study:

1. How do elementary principal leadership behaviors influence the morale of elementary school teachers?

The following sub questions will be used to help add focus to the research:

1. What principal behaviors do teachers attribute to increasing teacher morale?
2. What principal behaviors do teachers attribute to decreasing teacher morale?

The following sub questions will be directed toward elementary principals to help add understanding to current practice and teacher morale.

1. What principal behaviors do principals attribute to increasing teacher morale?
2. What principal behaviors do principals attribute to decreasing teacher morale?

Limitations, Delimitations, Assumptions, and Design Controls

Limitations

Elements which may hinder the research process of this study included subjective personal opinions of individuals interviewed, region specificity, and the researcher's

relationship with the participants.

The first limitation to be considered is the subjective personal opinions of the individuals interviewed. Specifically, the elementary teachers interviewed were a narrow group of individuals in the Pleasant School District who likely value their building leader. It is necessary to point out that due to the small sample studied for this research through the qualitative approach, results should not be considered generalizable beyond the sample which was studied.

The second limitation is the geographic specificity of the research. This research focuses specifically on elementary teachers in the Pleasant School District, and thus the findings are not only limited to this specific school district, but also to those elementary teachers and administrators who were interviewed. While the findings may bring to light certain elementary principal behaviors that effect culture and influence teacher morale for other districts, and other researchers may find similarities in their own studies, it is important to remember the findings are limited to this area, at this specific point in time.

Third, interviewees may be hesitant to share with a district administrator how they feel about leadership characteristics of other district administrators. However, the Pleasant School District is a large district with over 21,000 students in 26 buildings and the researcher does not supervise the research participants.

Delimitations

Factors effecting this study which the researcher has some control over include the sample size, the data-collecting instruments, and the geographic region where data were acquired.

1. The sample size was focused on three elementary buildings and their principals who were purposefully selected to study leaders who have been in their schools for more

- than five years. Eight to ten participants for individual interviews per building were randomly selected from these pre-selected elementary buildings.
2. The data-collection instruments were developed by the researcher and consisted of open ended in-depth interview protocols. The interview guides were similar in terms of the questions asked in order to provide consistency from each set of data collected.
 3. While a similar study could have been conducted in nearly any region or location worldwide, this geographic region was selected mainly due to accessibility and due, in part, to the lack of research on morale in this area.

Assumptions

It is necessary to identify multiple assumptions believed to have no effect on the outcome of this study. First, it is assumed the elementary teachers in Pleasant School District will have the necessary personal experiences with their principals to provide enough data to clarify what may contribute to their morale. Second, it is assumed teachers, administrators and other participants will be honest in their responses and experiences throughout the study. Third, it is assumed the demographics of study participants such as gender, race, age, etc. will not significantly impact their perceptions.

Definition of Key Terms

To provide consistency throughout this study, a list of terms has been provided to ensure an accurate understanding of reoccurring terms and themes.

A Nation at Risk. The 1983 report “A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform” was conducted during President Ronald Reagan’s term as President of the United States. This report claimed American schools were failing and since being published efforts have been in place for school reformation. It is now referred to as a Nation at Risk.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). AYP is a measurement defined by the No Child Left Behind Act which determines how public schools and districts are progressing academically from one year to the next (NCLB, 2001).

Grade Level Teacher. For this study, grade level teacher refers to teachers who are in a grade level mainstream classroom, specifically K-5.

Instructional Coach. The role of instructional coach is filled by an experienced teacher who spends time individually with grade level teachers to enhance instruction and teaching methods. Generally this faculty member does not have her own classroom, so as to provide increased support to grade level teachers as needed. This role may also be called Literacy Coach or Instructional Facilitator.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Congress passed NCLB into law in 2001. It was designed for states to set high academic standards with measurable goals. This act requires states to develop assessments in certain basic skills administered in specific grade levels if the state expects to receive federal funds (NCLB, 2001).

School Climate. Norton (1984) explained climate as the “collective personality of a school or enterprise, the atmosphere as characterized by the social and professional interactions of the individuals in the school” (p. 43).

School Culture. The culture of a school is “defined by its traditions, celebrations, tone, values, ideals, expectations, sense of community and usual ways of doing things” (Ravitch, 2007, p. 66).

Special Education Teacher. Special Education teachers focus specifically on students with special needs including those who are intellectually, physically, or behaviorally disabled.

Specials Teacher. This term refers to teachers of Physical Education, Art, Music, Computers, and Library in the elementary setting.

Teacher Morale. For this study, teacher morale will be defined as job satisfaction.

Significance of the Research

This researcher sought to understand teacher perceptions of elementary principal leadership behaviors that may have an influence on elementary teacher morale. It is necessary for elementary school leaders, specifically principals, to develop a deeper understanding of how leadership behaviors motivate teachers in order to have students achieve at high levels. While there have been several studies on leadership and its relationship to teacher morale, this study is significant to the field of education since it will add to what we currently know specifically about elementary principal leadership behaviors and its relationship to elementary teacher morale.

Through the research of elementary teachers in the Pleasant School District the researcher intended to gain a better understanding of behaviors of elementary leaders which are necessary to increase morale of teachers that can, in turn, have an impact on student achievement. While no personally identifiable data will be reported, the findings from this study will be shared with the administrative team at the district's central office and eventually explored with elementary leaders. The findings may lead to improvements to the practices of the elementary administrators. Ultimately, this study is aimed at administrators to encourage reflection on personal practices and behaviors that affect the climate and culture in order to increase teacher morale and improve student achievement.

Summary

This chapter began with a brief history of education and the high level of accountability facing the nation's schools. Accountability was explained as the roles of the teachers and administrators were introduced, including the duty principals have in creating a positive environment. Transformational leadership was then introduced and connected to climate and culture of the school. Several pieces of literature were introduced to illustrate how the principal is responsible for environmental change in the building through culture, climate and leadership practices.

The problem of practice was then presented, highlighting the relationship of principals and teachers. Rationale for the qualitative approach was presented. Also introduced were data concerning the high turnover rate with teachers and the need to increase morale to improve student achievement. Information was provided explaining how the data will be collected in the Pleasant School District. The significance of the study was explained, emphasizing how results of the study may shape the practice of elementary administrators in the Pleasant School District.

Chapter Two will include a review of related literature on culture, climate and the transformational leadership theory. Chapter Three will include the research design and methodology for this study. Chapter Four will provide an overview of the data collected, and Chapter Five will include the discussion of the findings and suggestions for future studies.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Throughout the history of public education government leaders have sought ways to improve the way children are educated in schools. Prior to President Ronald Reagan's term in office, it was believed schools were reaching high standards of academic achievement (National Commission of Excellence in Education, 1983). With the report known as *A Nation at Risk*, we learned the public school system was not living up to standards. Since then the government has worked to hold schools accountable for student achievement (Rowland, 2008). With the beginning of *No Child Left Behind* initiated during George W. Bush's term in office, the standards for student achievement have become increasingly more difficult for students and schools to meet. Although an increase in teacher and student accountability cannot solely be blamed for low teacher morale, an increased number of teachers have chosen to leave the profession (Houston, 2010; Lumsden, 1998; Protheroe, 2006; Straker, 2010).

The role of the principal as it may relate to school climate, culture and teacher morale is explored in this chapter. Additionally, the school climate, leadership theories, leadership qualities, leadership of principal, the public school principal, and the changing roles of the principal are examined. Finally, teacher morale and student achievement are explored, and with the principal's behavior and teacher morale are analyzed.

Throughout this chapter a roadmap for the research design of this study is provided, highlighting landmark and current leadership literature emphasized in Bolman and Deal (2009), Bush (2009), Collins (2001), Lumsden (1998), Shafritz, Ott and Jang (2005), Sterrett (2011), Tableman (2004), and Yukl (2006). Other current literature is

analyzed in this chapter to further explain the need for increased morale and the role principals may play in creating an environment conducive to increasing teacher morale, improving turnover rates, and ultimately increasing student achievement.

School Climate and Culture

Tableman (2004) emphasized the principal's role in establishing the school environment by explaining, "the principal plays a primary role, providing leadership, articulating goals and behavioral expectations of teachers, and supporting staff in developing an effective school" (p. 6). When researched separately, climate and culture allow for one to delve deeper into individual branches of what makes up the overall environment of an organization.

Tableman (2004) explained climate as the way an organization feels. Gruenert (2008) explained that a person can quickly assess the climate of a building by merely entering the school. Research would suggest climate is determined by leaders of an organization who set the mood or attitude for the staff by their daily actions and words (Gruenert, 2008; Rowland, 2008; Tableman, 2004). Deal and Kennedy (1983) defined the climate as the personality or atmosphere that is made up by all participants. They continued by explaining climate as the relationship staff members and administrators have developed. Tableman (2004) strengthened this argument, explaining how one person can be responsible for changing the climate of a school. Stronge, Richard, and Catano (2008) expressed concern with the idea of climate because the climate affects the effectiveness of teachers, and if the teachers' effectiveness is in question, then we must consider the quality of their teaching.

This research would thus indicate the climate of a school or an organization could change from day to day based on the leader's attitude or demeanor. Urban (2004)

explained that everything we hear and see around us is what defines the culture and climate of an organization. Norton (1984) explained climate as a collection of personalities at a school or organization, and the atmosphere as it is defined by the professional interactions of personnel at said establishment. Given these definitions, it is safe to assume climate can change based on the mood of staff, students, or administrators. A school's climate is not a set feature, but can and will change based on the events that are transpiring or the attitudes from those in the building.

While school climate may change from day to day based on daily attitudes, culture is deeply imbedded and is typically based on shared experiences (Bolman & Deal, 2009; Tableman, 2004). Shafritz, Ott and Jang (2009) defined culture as shared beliefs or experiences that a group has learned to solve problems and adapt together. They continued explaining that these experiences and shared beliefs are then taught to new members of the personnel to help guide them to the correct way of thinking and feeling in their dealings with new challenges and problems. Bush (2009) explained how culture has continued to become increasingly more important in the educational setting.

Tableman (2004) proposed that culture is a collection of ideas and beliefs that seem to be shared by staff. Tableman continued explaining that these shared ideas generally stem from shared experiences through accomplishing difficult tasks together. Deal and Peterson (1999) claimed the culture of an organization tends to be one of the determining factors in performance. Deal and Peterson explained how a positive school culture impacts school effectiveness and productivity, improves collaboration and collegiality which enhances problem-solving and communication, aids successful change and improvement, in addition to building commitment, motivation, and focus on importance.

Schein (2005) added another layer to the definition of culture explaining that not only is it based on shared past experiences, but it is the total accumulated learning of the group. Schein explained that it would include the group's way of thinking and feeling towards complex issues. The total sum of this learning will play a role in determining whether or not the group is successful or unsuccessful. Schein further suggested culture is "the result of a complex group learning process and that leadership and culture are conceptually intertwined" (p. 361). Barth (2002) summarized this idea explaining how culture is generally the most difficult piece of a school for a principal to change. An assistant superintendent explained her experience in changing the culture of a school to the time it takes to turn around an ocean cruise liner. She said, "It sometimes takes a cruise liner up to 40 miles to turn around, and we also need to expect school culture to take time to change (K. Morledge, personal communication, 2011).

Smith and Piele (2006) explained culture as a pattern that is determined on history and is shown by symbols and rituals. Ravitch (2007) provided additional clarity to what the school culture consists of explaining that it will sometimes include traditions, celebrations, values, expectations, and the usual way of doing things. Essentially, school culture is the way members of the system act in response to input such as change, ideas, and events (Rowland, 2008).

Deal and Peterson (1999) further identified the elements of a positive school culture as vision, values, missions, purposes, and norms centered on success. McEwan (1998) explained how principals who promote positive cultures attend to the history, heroes, rituals, ceremonies, and stories which reinforce the positive parts of the culture. Smith and Piele (2006) reported how positive school cultures are evidenced by tangible artifacts, values, beliefs, and underlying assumptions. Given these definitions, it is safe to

say the culture of a school is developed over a period of time, with a specific group of people. Urban (2004) echoed this idea saying that the things we hear and see all around us every day tells the story of our culture. Bolman and Deal (2008) explained how culture is built over time and serves as an anchor for the organization or school.

Leadership Theories

While there are many definitions and theories on leadership, this study focuses specifically on theories presented by Bolman and Deal (2008), Bush (2009), and Cherry (2012) as they relate to the public school administrator, specifically the elementary school principal.

Bush (2009) discussed multiple models of leadership including formal models, collegial models, political models, subjective models, ambiguity models, and cultural models. Yet at the center of said models, three core themes remained constant as the heart of leadership of an educational leader: the leader as an influencer, the leadership and values, and the leader and the vision. Bush developed these ideas throughout his research and illustrated time and again how these concepts underlie what we know as educational leadership. Bolman and Deal (2008) also introduced multiple styles of leadership, referred to as leadership frames in their research, including structural, human resources, political, and symbolic. As these styles of leadership are all different, Bolman and Deal emphasized the importance for leaders to learn how to harness the power that lies within each frame in order to lead effectively.

The first role Bush (2009) discussed is that of influencer. This idea leans towards the notion that one person, or perhaps a group of people, push their ideas or agenda onto the larger group with the intent of the larger group changing. Bolman and Deal (2008) also explored the structural and political frames as they explained how ideas are pushed

on subordinates. This point came out specifically as they discussed hierarchy and lines of authority which are necessary to follow if the leader is to lead appropriately.

Bush (2009) then explored the idea of leadership and values. Bush explained how the leader pushes her personal values or beliefs on those who are subject to her. Bush continued explaining how these moral views or values tend to serve as a compass for the leader, which often becomes the values of the organization. Bolman and Deal's (2008) focus on culture and symbolism align with Bush's thoughts on values. These researchers emphasized there are existing values in an organization, but the leader will always bring personal values and underlying beliefs with her that will affect the organization. Bolman and Deal emphasized the importance of traditions, organizational history and ceremonies which develop into sacred entities in large part because leaders allow it to happen.

Bush (2009) then developed the idea of the leadership and the need for a vision. Bush discussed not only the need for a vision but also for the ability to communicate the vision and goals to the staff members. Bush illustrated the need for a vision if a leader is to be successful, through several reported international studies. Bush then provided evidence explaining the dips in student achievement when there is a change in leadership. This research claims the leaders may be placing too much attention or importance on vision and not enough in other areas. Bolman and Deal (2008) also explored the need for leaders to have a vision in their leadership frameworks. Vision was a reoccurring theme for them as they often explored companies whose leaders were unsuccessful, as they had no end goal in sight. These leaders were continuously compared to successful leaders whose vision was communicated to their organization.

Cherry (2012) highlighted eight theories of leadership as they relate to an educational leader, including great man, trait, contingency, situational, behavioral,

participative, management, and relationship. The term "Great Man" was used because, at the time, leaders were thought of primarily as male. In the great man theory it is assumed the ability to be a great leader is part of a person's very nature – "great leaders are born, not made" (Cherry, 2012, para. 2). The great man theory depicts great leaders as courageous, mythic and destined to rise as a great leader when needed.

Trait theory often identifies particular personality or behavioral traits that are common among leaders. Trait theory assumes that people hold certain qualities and traits which make them better suited to leadership (Cherry, 2012).

Contingency theory explores how there is not one single leadership style that can or should be used in every situation (Cherry, 2012; Straker, 2010). The focus for this theory is on specific variables related to the environment that might determine which specific leadership style is best suited for the situation. The leader's success relies on certain variables, including leadership style, the followers, and details of the given situation (Cherry, 2012). Bolman and Deal (2008) tend to agree with the idea of being well rounded in several leadership frames to be able to handle any situation that may arise.

Situational theory is much like contingency theory in that it is adaptable to what the leader is experiencing with the current set of situations. Leaders must choose the best course of action based upon current events. Situational theory suggests different styles of leadership may be more appropriate for certain types of decision-making (Cherry, 2012).

Behavioral theories of leadership are essentially the opposite of the great man theory in that they are based upon the belief that great leaders are made, not born. According to this theory, people can learn to become leaders through teaching and

observation. This leadership theory focuses on the actions of leaders, not on mental qualities or internal states (Cherry, 2012).

In participative theories the leader has the right to allow the input of others. Participative leadership theory introduces the idea of including and welcoming the ideas and input of others who are not the leader. Leaders using this theory encourage participation and contributions from group members and ensure group members feel more committed to the decision-making process (Cherry, 2012).

Bolman and Deal (2008), Bush (2009), and Cherry (2012) suggest management theories or transactional theories tend to focus more on the role of organization and group performance. These theories base leadership on a system of supervision and seeing to personnel needs based on rewarding or punishing staff. This can be seen in the public school setting as teachers being rewarded by being placed at a desired grade level or punished by being placed in a less desirable classroom, based on a teacher's behavior or ability.

Cherry (2012) also discussed relationship theory, also known as transformational leadership. This theory focuses on the connections and relationships formed between leaders and followers. Leaders using a transformational approach strive to motivate and inspire people by helping group members see the importance of their overarching goals. These are the leaders who are mostly focused on the group performance, while still working to ensure each staff member is working to reach her potential. Cherry explained that most leaders with this leadership style have high ethical and moral standards.

The theories espoused by Bolman and Deal (2008), Bush (2009) and Cherry (2012) converge on a leadership style which seems to be conducive to an elementary principal, that of transformational leadership. Cherry (2012) explained “transformational

leaders are generally energetic, enthusiastic and passionate. Not only are these leaders concerned and involved in the process, they are also focused on helping every member of the group succeed as well” (para. 2). Straker (2010) explained how a transformational leader should act by explaining how the leader must make continued efforts to motivate and inspire his followers, constantly observing, listening, consoling and motivating. Straker (2010) emphasized many of the components of the symbolic/cultural organizational frame introduced by Bolman and Deal (2008), explaining a transformational leader attempts to sustain motivation by using ceremonies, rituals and other cultural symbolism.

Yukl (2006) discussed many items of transformational leadership which can be connected to the symbolic/cultural organizational frame as well. Yukl explained that a transformational leader appears to be confident and genuinely optimistic. These leaders tend to express confidence in staff and know how to emphasize necessary values. Yukl continued explaining that transformational leaders always lead by example. When these items are used appropriately, change is much more likely to occur while maintaining a positive culture. Homrig (2001) also expressed the values of transformational leaders, explaining how they attempt to achieve a consensus of the staff as they try to guide others’ personal interests to align with the interests of the company, school, or organization. Straker (2010) explained transformational leaders never hide behind their staff members and will stand up and be accountable. Straker continued by explaining transformational leaders show through their example of attitude and actions how the staff should behave.

Homrig (2001) also explained the need for high morale and ethical standards of a transformational leader. Homrig explained that a major role of transformational leaders is

to be the example of what is right and good. Homrighaus continued explaining that they need to help lift others to live up to their potential while also encouraging staff to look beyond their own self-interests and focus on what is best for the organization. Burns (1978) explained that transformational leaders are not only good examples, but they work with others to push them to the next level of morality. Transformational leadership involves transforming the attitudes, motivations, and behaviors of leaders and followers (Jackson & Parry, 2008; McDowelle, 2009). Transforming leadership is an ethical, moral enterprise, through which the integrity of the organization would be maintained and enhanced (Parry, 2002). Bass (1985) explained transformational leadership as a process by which followers trust, admire, and respect their leader, and as a result are motivated to do more than they were expected to do. Some key elements of transformational leadership may include: (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration. These correlates are cited by current leadership theorists and researchers as foundational components of transformational leadership (Kim, 2006; Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Northouse, 2007)

Leadership Qualities

Although leadership qualities may be defined as good or bad by some researchers, it is important to remain unbiased as definitions for “good” and “bad” are subjective, based on an individual’s experience. Researchers (Covey, 1989; Dweck, 2006; Hebert, 2006; Hollinger, 2010) have sought to help answer the questions as to what qualities are typically associated with a good leader and what qualities are associated with a poor leader.

In speaking about great leaders, Dweck (2006) claimed they “were self-effacing people who constantly asked questions and had the ability to confront the most brutal

answers—that is, to look failures in the face, even their own, while maintaining faith that they would succeed in the end” (p. 110). Hebert (2006) referenced the importance for a good leader to be autonomous and lean on his own experiences. Collins (2001) examined why some companies stayed stagnate at “good” and never achieved greatness. He found much of the companies’ success revolves around the leadership. Collins explored the idea of a leader’s arrogance as a potential reason for companies never reaching greatness. Collins explained that you know mediocrity is in a company’s future when the followers of said company are more worried about the boss than they are about the objective at hand. In quoting Jack Welch, former CEO of GE, Dweck (2006) pointed out the need for leaders to be open minded as he said, “True self-confidence is the courage to be open—to welcome change and new ideas regardless of their source. Real self-confidence is not reflected in a title, an expensive suit, a fancy car, or a series of acquisitions. It is reflected in your mindset; your readiness to grow” (p. 127).

In comparing leaders to teachers, Dweck (2006) explained a good teacher is one who continues to learn along with the students. Dweck explained that a good teacher lets her students know up front that they do not know everything and they are still learners. Collins (2001) explored the need for leaders to be open minded as he explored the attitude of some great teachers. Collins explained that some of “the best students are those who never quite believe they are professors” (p. 16). A good building leader must shed the know-it-all attitude and develop the behavior of an open mind and a willingness to learn something new every day.

Giving specific attributes to a positive leader, Dweck (2006) explained that a leader will be much more productive if he serves as a mentor to those with whom he works as opposed to ruling over personnel. Hollinger (2010) supported this idea,

explaining how effective and supportive leaders contribute significantly to high morale, while weak leaders and low morale go hand in hand. Covey (1989) explained several habits which highly effective people have in common, including being proactive, beginning with the end in mind, prioritizing, win-win attitude, seeking to understand then to be understood, synergizing, and persevering. McEwan (2003) also discussed several traits of highly effective principals including the need to be a communicator, educator, envisioner, facilitator, change master, culture builder, activator, producer, and character builder. Brown (2012) discussed five traits of effective school leaders and included the need to shape a vision, create a climate, cultivate leadership, improve instruction, and manage people.

While one could assume a poor leader would have behaviors which contradict those of a good leader, researchers point out some specific behaviors poor leaders have in common. In qualifying specific attributes of poor leaders, Dweck (2006) explained poor leaders do not necessarily set out to do harm, they just choose to do the things that will make them look good as opposed to doing what will best meet the goals of the company or school. Hornstein (1997) discussed the idea of poor leaders attempting to enhance their own feelings of power, competence, and value at the expense of the subordinate. One crucial component of a leader is the ability to give feedback. Too often constructive criticism is filled with judgment. Dweck (2006) explained this idea of feedback saying, “Constructive [criticism] means to help fix something, build a better product, or do a better job” (p. 182). Covey (1989) discussed the idea of servant leadership in terms of a positive trait; therefore, a poor leader would be self-serving. The common theme for a poor leader would be the idea of people who seek to fulfill their own needs and to forego

to needs of others for their own interests and glory. Thus, a poor leader is therefore blind to the needs of others and the organization.

Leadership of the Principal

While exploring attributes of a leader it is important to note that leadership quality is subjective; therefore, a one-size-fits-all approach simply does not work in most leadership situations. Duke (2010) explained that all schools work in a different way because they all face different problems. Duke continued explaining that it is because of these differences leaders must learn to differentiate and change their style of leadership. Sterrett (2011) supported this saying, “A leader may need to vary his or her approach to recognize and capitalize on the diverse strengths of the organization while also working to optimize consistency and coherence” (p. 53).

Acheson and Gall (1992) explained how a school leader also has several different personalities in the building that must be accounted for and these personalities can range from one extreme to another, and fall anywhere in between. Sterrett (2011) explained how successful principals lead with a differentiated approach specific to their schools’ needs. What great principals all have in common is a desire to maintain the vision and mission and consistently lead people. Principals play a large role in the ongoing growth of teachers by constantly being in the classroom, listening and questioning, and being extremely involved in the process. Ryan (2012) discussed what successful principals look like, explaining how successful principals spend time with students and teachers, and find a way to make themselves available to stakeholders.

Chenoweth (2010) explained how the educators of today need to treat everyone respectfully with high expectations and a high level of compassion. Chenoweth discussed how principals need to be the example of the right way to treat others. Conolly (2007)

also supported the idea of principals needing to model behavior, but said principals are, unfortunately, not a good example of balance and self control. Conolly expressed that often times school administrators resemble the flight pattern of a butterfly as they flitter about from one thing to the next, appearing to have no real path or goal. In their study of 34 principals Chenoweth and Theokas (2012) found several similar characteristics in successful principals, including helping teachers improve individually; working with groups of teachers to find trends per grade level; identifying school wide needs and planning professional development accordingly; building class schedules to maximize instructional time and common plan times; developing school wide routines, procedures, and discipline, ensuring all are responsible; and finally, providing teachers the opportunity for self-reflection.

The Public School Principal

The idea of a school principal began in the mid-nineteenth century (Rousmaniere, 2007). With the formation of grade schools in urban areas, the idea of a head teacher emerged in several school districts to help lead the other teachers in the school. As Rousmaniere pointed out, the head teacher or principal teacher was the authority in the school. It was up to this individual to organize curriculum, be the disciplinarian, and oversee operations. The development of the principal's position in America continued through the end of the nineteenth century. It was at that time most urban school leaders had developed into what we now know as the principal, although it may have looked somewhat different from school to school (Rousmaniere, 2007). Rousmaniere explained in some systems the principal was primarily a teacher with minor managerial duties and in other districts the principal acted more as a clerk with record keeping duties.

Throughout the twentieth century, the principal continued to emerge from teacher to administrator, with professional requirements and licensing becoming required for the position of principal (Rowland, 2008). For much of the twentieth century, the role of the principal was that of manager, where the principal was expected to uphold district mandates, manage personnel, manage the budget, and handle the operational issues of the building (Usdan, McCloud, & Podmostko, 2000). As American education moved into a new era of accountability in the latter part of the century, this role necessitated the inclusion of leadership. Cawelti (1984) explained that it is uncommon to find a successful school where there is an unsuccessful leader. From the inception of the role of principal in its early stages to what we now know it, the duties of the principal have continued to change and evolve according to the needs and demands of the time and the location into its current state. Hebert (2006) explained the current roles of the principal saying,

The principalship is about simultaneous demands. For the most part no individual task or duty is beyond my abilities. It's that constant yanking, however, from screen to screen; large to small; intimate to generic; crisis to detail; educational philosophy to mechanical systems of the building; 5 year old to 45 year old; classroom at the north end of the building to the farthest edge of the playground; coping with a parent's heated verbal assault to beaming with pride at a first-graders' first writing draft – it's that everything at the same time syndrome that wears me down and erodes my energy. (p. 16)

Throughout the evolution of education, the roles of the principal have thus changed from those of disciplinarian and head teacher, to being accountable for academic performance as instructional leader. The pendulum of academic accountability has also continued to sway more towards the responsibility of the administrators and has thus forced teachers

to improve their teaching methods. Lumsden (1998) suggested the accountability that has been forced on teachers has caused teachers to experience greater pressures and demands to ensure student success. Ryan (2012) summarized the duties of a public principal saying principals can no longer go into their office and close the door. These leaders must be visible to the public and the students and set the expectations for their school.

Roles of the Principal

Hebert (2006) explained the entirety of the principal's roles as they might be summed up in two categories, building manager and instructional leader. Hebert continued to explain the importance of these two roles of the principal, explaining that each is necessary for a successful principal, and although they appear to be two separate roles, they each play an important part in leading a school. Hebert continued by defining the manager role as fast-paced and solving problems in an efficient manner. Hebert (2006) explained the important role of manager as necessary but requiring attention to detail. Managerial tasks may include several issues such as handling personnel, student transportation, providing a safe work place, overseeing building maintenance, following school policies, securing substitute teachers, ordering necessary materials, overseeing school budgets, among many other items. Hebert (2006) suggested the principal's role as manager would therefore include any event or procedure which would allow for teachers and staff to have the physical ability to carry out the duties outlined in their job description.

The role of instructional leader requires more thought and forward thinking on a much bigger scale. Hebert (2006) also explored the role of instructional leader. Hebert explained the instructional leader as the part of the job that requires creativity and a foundational knowledge of education. Hebert discussed how this part of the job required

true leadership. The role of instructional leader might include leading staff meetings, instructing teachers on new methods or techniques, leading staff discussions, facilitating collaborative meetings, providing insight on how to use technology in the classroom, using data to change instruction, or many other roles. Hebert explained the principal's role of instructional leader would thus include any teaching or instruction to faculty or staff on how to modify or differentiate delivery, methods, or techniques teachers use.

While Hebert (2006) suggested only two main roles of the principal, Usdan, McCloud, and Podmostko (2000) explained the following items as necessities for fulfilling the role of principal: knowledge of academic content and pedagogy, working with teachers to strengthen skills, collecting and analyzing data, rallying stakeholders to increase student performance, and possessing the leadership skills to fulfill the role. Usdan et al. (2000) explained the role of principal suggesting how principals must act as the instructional leader in their building. In reference to transforming schools, Houston (2010) supported this stance by suggesting school leaders have the largest impact on student achievement.

Rowland (2008) suggested the principal's roles have constantly evolved since the position was created and will continue to change with the years to come. Sterrett (2012) suggested, "As principals, our roles are numerous; at any given time, we may wear the hats of manager, event organizer, counselor, spokesperson, and analyst, among others" (p. 22). Today the principal's roles in a given school can vary from managing facilities and personnel, to leading curriculum for staff, to leading motivational meetings for faculty (Mednick, 2003). Rowland suggested that the role of the principal as instructional leader continues to evolve and there is now more importance placed on this role than on any other. Rowland continued suggesting that these roles are constantly shifting and often

change from day to day, from one building to the next, and even more so from one district to another.

Principal as Climate/Culture Leader

When discussing school environment, several items are to be taken into consideration when specifically exploring school culture. In education there are rules, procedures, schedules, calendars, expectations, dress codes, evaluations, promotions, contracts, personnel, grades, tests, recognitions, certificates, diplomas, graduations, ceremonies; the list that makes up the culture of a school is endless. In order for these pieces of our educational culture to have purpose and meaning, there must be a leader who gives them the appropriate level of importance, defines them, and breathes life into them so they have merit (Boykin & Noguera, 2011).

Hollinger (2010) explained the effect that low morale has on a school as it brings out cynicism and decreases the collaboration of staff and students. Hollinger explained that school leaders have a difficult job and they must continue to work with staff in order to improve teacher morale. School principals are the symbolic leaders of the school culture and have eight major roles according to Barth (2001). The roles of the cultural leader include “historian, anthropological sleuth, visionary, symbol, potter, poet, actor, and healer” (Barth, 2002, p. 6). Essentially, school principals must lead the school to a positive outlook and attitude through constantly personalizing and communicating the positive aspects of the school.

Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005) explained how principals also influence school culture by bringing staff together and building teams, and helping staff to have a shared purpose and vision. According to Smith and Piele (2006), school leaders have a large impact on culture through their vision and can create a significant influence on a

teacher's motivation for change. Principals are a primary change agent of the school culture. Smith and Piele (2006) explained that a principal must communicate with everyone who is inside and outside of the building if he wants to make significant changes to the culture.

To transform school culture, Smith and Piele (2006) discussed how principals must use the following transformation principles: "facilitating a shared vision, using narratives or storytelling, organizing the school day, setting a consistent example, selecting compatible staff, and recognizing staff members" (p. 172). Leithwood and Riehl (2003) found principals further set the example through effective modeling, which is a form of both verbal and non-verbal communication. Through the correct use of communication, leaders can boost teacher motivation for change and improve the belief in the mission and vision of the school (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). One cannot reject the idea that the principal, through her effective communication and interpersonal skills, can provide positive change on schools through the shaping of the culture.

Principals are an important leader in their school, and the need for positive change is impacted through the principals' influence on the school culture. Kowalski, Petersen, and Fusarelli (2007) emphasized this concept when they found that principals who are inefficient communicators are at a disadvantage in regards to leading and facilitating school change. Urban (2004) also emphasized the need for effective communication skills, explaining how a leader's words can tear a person down or they can build a person up depending on the delivery. McEwan (2003) explained that effective principals build culture and they communicate their vision based on their character and accountability. It is commonly asserted that today's principals directly influence teachers' job satisfaction, and research conducted to define the qualities of an effective school has shown how

effective schools have strong principals (Leithwood, Begley & Cousins, 2001). Bush (2009) explained how school leaders have a primary role in changing the culture in their building. In a petition to current administrators, Farber (2003) explained that with some planning administrators can improve the climate and morale of their building if they communicate more effectively.

Leithwood, Begley and Cousins (2001) explained that leaders have a large effect on many of the people around them. As leaders of their schools, principals have a responsibility to build and sustain culture. The principal's behaviors serve as a model to the staff of the rituals and traditions she wants in the school (Bush, 2009; Hebert, 2006; Schein, 2005). Bush (2009) furthered this idea by discussing how leaders are in part responsible for maintaining culture, and this role is often considered an important part of being a good leader. It is crucial for leaders to understand the role culture plays if they are going to be successful leaders (Bush, 2009; Schein, 2005).

Tableman (2004) also emphasized the principal's role in establishing the school environment, explaining how the principal plays a central part in the leadership, expressing the goals and vision, setting expectations, and helping the staff become a great school. Teachers and students should feel the school climate is conducive to professional growth and student learning, which is made possible in large part by the school principal (Sterrett, 2011; Whitaker, 2009).

Kafka (2009) explained that there is an increasing amount of research that shows the relationship between leaders and the students' level of success. By increasing teacher and student morale, an environment that is more conducive to learning is created. "In our quest to maximize learning, we must never forget a key building block is fostering a climate which allows us to teach—and reach—our students" (Sterrett, 2011, p. 66).

Whitaker (2009) explained there are two important parts to an effective school, a positive learning environment and a principal who works to create and sustain that environment.

In a study performed by McREL in 2001 of 739 high performing and 738 low-performing schools researchers found it was necessary for schools to change their culture if they wanted to change from low-performing to high performing. Researchers found culture was not only necessary to change on behalf of the students in terms of learning environment, it was also necessary for the staff and other stakeholders who served in the building.

Teacher Morale

In her research, Lumsden (1998) indicated “40% of survey respondents would not again select teaching as a profession and 57% are definitely planning to leave, if something better comes along” (para. 2). The pressures and demands on school personnel can be very burdensome and can cause teachers to have a lower morale level or even to exit the profession (Hardy, 1999; Tye & O’Brien, 2002). Lumsden (1998) echoed this idea as she explained the additional requirements which have recently been placed on teachers have negatively affected morale.

Farber (2010) discussed several reasons why teachers leave the profession and explained, “One of five teachers will leave the profession in the first year, and this number grows to three in five during the first five years” (p. ix). In March of 2012 MetLife released the 28th annual survey of the American Teacher. This survey found “29% of teachers are likely to leave the profession in the next five years – up from 17% in 2009” (Heitin, 2012, para. 2). Achor (2011) found when people are happy they have more secure jobs, they are better at keeping jobs, they are more productive, more resilient, there is less burnout, and turnover is decreased.

While there are several factors to consider with regards to the decline in teacher morale, Sterrett (2011) suggested relationships are a major factor. Sterrett explored how the current issues we see in teacher attrition may be attributed to the lack of positive relationships in our schools, and the principal needs to understand that these relationships are necessary. Fullan (2001) also pointed out that a school will not go anywhere without relationships. Fullan further believed relationships are what make the difference with teachers. Sterrett (2011) explained how successful educational leaders find ways to get out of their offices and interact with those who are in their building and the community. Sterrett further discussed how it takes time to build relationships but it is one of the most important ways an administrator can spend her time.

Factors that Effect Teacher Morale

In an effort to determine what specific leadership traits and behaviors “ignite the passions of those around us” (Collins, 2001, p. 109) in terms of culture, climate and, more specifically, teacher morale, Hackman and Johnson (2000) found the following three traits as the most evident in effective leaders: interpersonal factors, cognitive factors, and administrative factors. Cook (1979) believed five major areas affect teacher morale, including administrative leadership, administrative concern, personal interaction, opportunity for input, and professional growth. In supporting Cook’s findings, Rowland (2008) was more specific when he pointed out decision-making, critical thinking, and creativity as having major roles in affecting teacher morale and the overall environment of schools. Lumsden (1998) also emphasized several ways administrators can influence teacher morale, including empowering teachers, guarding instructional time, supporting teachers with discipline matters, and ensuring teachers have the necessary materials to teach. Farber (2010) shared eight ideas as to why teachers leave the profession, including

standardized testing, working conditions in today's schools, increasing expectations, bureaucracy, respect and compensation, parents, administrators, and school boards.

Devi and Mani (2010) suggested several steps administrators can take to boost teacher morale, including opening the lines of communication, staying visible, developing a faculty reward system, thanking everyone, and consistency, all of which center on leaders creating a positive environment. Protheroe (2006) initially explained that a principal needed to increase pay and decrease class sizes in order for teacher morale to improve. Realizing those options are not luxuries at the principal's discretion, administrators need to focus on creating an environment where teachers feel productive, supported and appreciated. While not all researchers agree on what affects teacher morale, common themes can be seen, including the environment in which teachers work, expectations, and leadership. Through the research we find many factors also coincide with the transformational leadership theory, as transformational leadership relates to culture, environment and the modeling of the leader.

Student Achievement and Teacher Morale

Tableman (2004) explained a key to improving behavior and academics of students is to change the climate and culture, also known as the environment in the school. Stronge et al. (2008) explained how the principal is related to student achievement, since principals can change a teacher's attitude which will influence a student's opportunity to learn. Hallinger (1996) strengthened this argument by explaining how a principal creates a positive school climate, which then is a direct reflection on the teaching and learning occurring in the building.

Miller (1981) found teacher morale can have a positive effect on student learning. Through his research of more than 100 studies of different educational initiatives,

Hanushek (1998) found teacher quality is the most important factor in determining student achievement. Miller (1981) explained how increasing teacher morale focuses on making teaching more enjoyable for teachers while also making learning more enjoyable for students. By increasing teacher and student morale, an environment which is more conducive to learning is created. Willis and Varner (2010) explained there is now research that shows a positive correlation between student achievement and teacher morale. Urban (2004) believed there were things a leader must do to increase morale. Urban said, “Leaders must let employees know they are valued, recognize and praise them, and help them grow” (p. 157). This positive behavior should then be adopted by teachers and transferred to their students.

Reeves (2009) noted, “Of all the variables that influence student achievement, the two that have the most profound influence are teacher quality and leadership quality” (p.67). As the largest team in a school system, teachers hold power as a group and as individuals. This power can be used to greatly influence a school’s environment. Miller (1981) also found that teacher morale can have a positive effect on student learning. Public school administrators must be aware of factors and leadership behaviors that can affect teacher morale and how teacher morale may ultimately affect student achievement (Rowland, 2008).

To further validate Miller’s findings from 1981, Hollinger (2010) explained that low morale will decrease the engagement between teachers and students. Hollinger continued explaining that low morale also reduces productivity of staff and decreases the level of student achievement. Whitaker (2009) also explained that the opposite is true. Whitaker reported that in schools where the teachers were identified as having a high level of morale, students were also identified as having a high level of morale. Blase and

Blase (1994) explained how praise by the principal increases the efficiency of teachers, the teachers' self-esteem, and creates greater motivation within staff.

Principal's Effect on Morale

In discussing overall morale and motivation of employees and the leader's role in motivating others, Collins (2001) claimed "You can't manufacture passion or motivate people to feel passionate. You can only discover what ignites your passion and the passions of those around you" (p. 109), thus illustrating the need for strong relationships. Fullan (2001) also argued that leaders need to build relationships.

Andrew, Parks, and Nelson (1985) found relationship building to be important in a study performed to identify factors which determine morale. In schools with high morale levels, principals displayed the following traits or behaviors: outgoing, friendly, organized, enthusiastic, available, fair, and a good listener. In schools with poor morale the traits or behaviors were as follows: disciplinarian, inconsistent, unsupportive, formal, and impatient. The National Science Foundation (2012) found several administrative practices which maintain positive teacher morale, including having good morale yourself, good communicator, involving others in decision-making, knowing the values of your community, holding high expectations, giving credit where credit is due, and obtaining the best staff possible.

Bhella (1982) examined the idea for building relationships in a study correlating the Perdue Teacher Opinionnaire (Bentley & Rempel, 1980) and The Principal Leadership Style Questionnaire. The study found a significant relationship between teacher/principal rapport and the principal's concern with people and production. The results indicated a principal who shows a high level of concern for people and for the product has a better rapport as reported by the faculty.

Evans and Johnson (1990) surveyed middle and high school teachers and found conflicting results. They concluded from their research that principal leadership did affect the stress level of teachers, but the correlation between principal behaviors and teacher job satisfaction was not significant. Evans and Johnson believed principals do not have much of an impact on teacher job satisfaction. It is necessary to point out this study was specifically conducted on Physical Education teachers and should not be generalized for future studies.

Hunter-Boykin and Evans (1995) studied the relationship between high school principals' leadership and teacher morale. This study was quantitative in methodology and used the Perdue Teacher Opinionnaire (Bentley & Rempel, 1980) to collect data regarding the morale level of teachers. The instrument used to collect data for principal leadership was the Leadership Ability Evaluation. The results of the study indicate a low positive correlation between the principal's leadership style and teacher morale. On the other hand the results of a mixed method study by Mackenzie indicated 97% of the participants acknowledged leadership as a major stimulus for high teacher morale.

Hipp (1997) performed a qualitative study with several teachers, examining the relationship of leadership to teacher morale. The study consisted of interview questions designed to explore teacher morale and principal behaviors. The following principal behaviors were found to impact teacher morale: modeling behavior, inspiring group purpose, teacher recognition, providing support, managing student behavior, and developing a sense of community. Similar to other studies, these are attributes associated with building relationships and the transformational style of leadership. Whitaker (1997) conducted a study of more than 230 elementary schools. Whitaker found that schools with a positive climate had principals who took responsibility for the climate, were

visible, were knowledgeable of the staff beyond school, had regular communication with staff, conducted positive staff meetings, were knowledgeable of teacher strengths, role modeled, and ensured the school was well kept.

In an effort to determine what specific leadership behaviors influence teacher morale, Hackman and Johnson (2000) found the following three traits as the most evident in effective leaders: interpersonal factors, cognitive factors, and administrative factors. Cook (1979) believed five major areas affect teacher morale, including administrative leadership, administrative concern, personal interaction, opportunity for input, and professional growth. Rowland (2008) was more specific when he pointed out decision-making, critical thinking, and creativity as having major roles in affecting teacher morale and the overall environment of schools. Lumsden (1998) also emphasized several ways administrators can influence teacher morale, including empowering teachers, guarding instructional time, supporting teachers with discipline matters, and ensuring teachers have the necessary materials to teach. Devi and Mani (2010) suggested several steps administrators can take to boost teacher morale, including opening the lines of communication, staying visible, developing a faculty reward system, thanking everyone, and consistency, all centering on leaders creating a positive environment.

Summary

Several constructs were explored in this chapter as they relate to the relationship between the morale of elementary teachers and the leadership behaviors of elementary school principals. First, school climate and culture were discussed, followed by several current leadership theories and qualities. These leadership characteristics were then compared to those traits viewed as necessary for elementary principals. The leadership of the principal was also introduced. A brief history of the public school principal was

explored, followed by a glimpse into the roles of the principal, both past and present. Principals and their role as the leader for building the climate and culture for the school were discussed. The literature then provided insights to teacher morale and factors which affect it. The affect teacher morale has on tenure and student achievement and how the elementary principal's behaviors may affect that morale were also presented.

Leadership theories were then explored, adding insight to a myriad of different styles or techniques towards leadership. Teacher morale was also examined as teacher roles were introduced and factors which contribute to morale were developed. As the chapter was brought to a close, additional research was provided to support the need to build relationships specifically through the transformational leadership style. A case was also made for the need to increase teacher morale specifically as it is directly correlated to student achievement levels.

Finally, literature was introduced which explored the effect a principal has on teacher morale. This review of the related literature included several quantitative studies, some of which show a link between the leadership of the principal and the morale of the teachers. There was also qualitative research included which gave additional insight as to the perceptions of teachers on the relationship between teacher morale and leadership behaviors. It is the purpose of this study to gain further understanding about the relationship of teacher morale and principal behaviors in the specific population studied.

Chapter Three will include detail about the research design and methodology for the current study. Findings from the research will be presented and analyzed in Chapter Four, and conclusions, findings and recommendations will be presented in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

It is commonly asserted that today's principals directly influence teachers' job satisfaction, and research conducted to define the qualities of an effective school has shown effective schools have strong principals (Leithwood, Begley & Cousins, 2001). Leithwood, Begley, and Cousins (2001) defined school climate as the effect leaders have on many of the people around them.

In the field of education, the roles for teachers and principals are constantly changing. The intent of this qualitative multi-site case study is to gain additional understanding of how elementary principal leadership behaviors affect the climate and culture to influence the morale of elementary school teachers.

Included in Chapter Three are the guiding research questions and explanation of the qualitative design for the study. The participants involved from Pleasant School District are introduced and defined, and data collection is also explained. Data instrumentation, data analysis, and the researcher's role are also identified and explored.

Research Questions

This qualitative multi-site case study was focused on how the behaviors of elementary school principals have influenced the morale of elementary teachers. Creswell (2009) recommended using one or two guiding questions along with additional sub-questions to allow for clarification of the study. This research will use the following central question to guide the study:

1. How do elementary principal leadership behaviors influence the morale of elementary school teachers?

The following sub questions will be used to help add focus to the research:

1. What principal behaviors do teachers attribute to increasing teacher morale?
2. What principal behaviors do teachers attribute to decreasing teacher morale?

The following sub questions will be directed toward elementary principals to help add understanding to current practice and teacher morale.

1. What principal behaviors do principals attribute to increasing teacher morale?
2. What principal behaviors do principals attribute to decreasing teacher morale?

Design of the Study

The design for this research was a qualitative multi-site case study situated in the transformational leadership lens (Mertens, 2005). This qualitative study involved an inquiry process to understand a social organizational problem based on building a complex, holistic picture formed from random and purposeful participant selection and conducted in a natural setting (Creswell, 2007).

Qualitative Research Approach

While researchers suggested “field notes, conversations, photographs, recordings, memos” (Mertens 2005, p.229) and several other naturalistic approaches to the world when using the qualitative method, this study included personal interviews with teachers and principals in the attempt to identify specific leadership behaviors which may affect teacher morale. This study explored specific experiences of elementary teachers in the Pleasant School District through qualitative data, collected during individual teacher and principal interviews, “designed to provide an in-depth description” (Mertens, 2005, p. 229), of teachers’ personal experiences with their principal that may have affected their morale.

Participants were asked open-ended questions (Creswell, 2009) reflecting on leadership behaviors of their principals. The rationale for qualitative data collection was to obtain personal experiences and rich data concerning teacher morale (Mertens, 2005). In qualitative research, the aim is to "engage in research which probes for deeper understanding rather than examining surface features" (Johnson, 1995, p. 4). Many quantitative studies have been completed on teacher morale and principal behaviors, but few qualitative studies have been conducted on leadership and morale. Although the quantitative data lends itself to further understanding as to what affects teacher morale, much is lost in the findings due to the nature of quantitative data. The purpose of this study was to add depth and richness to the myriad of quantitative data which can currently be found on teacher morale and the correlation to principal behaviors. This research was intended to give the quantitative data a voice, thus making it possible for principals to self-reflect and make changes to their practice.

Personal interviews. Mertens (2005) suggested several items in preparing for and conducting individual interviews including holding introductory meetings, making an interview schedule, making an interview guide, structuring questions so as to avoid yes-or-no responses, establishing rapport, focusing attention on what the person is saying, sequencing the questions from general to specific, putting the answers in perspective, and providing a variety of different kinds of questions during the interview. The interview was designed in such a way as to build rapport, avoid yes-or-no questions, and allow for the perspectives of the participant to be shared (Fink, 2009; Mertens, 2005).

Two types of interviews are used in evaluation research. The first type of interviews is structured interviews, in which a carefully worded questionnaire is

administered. The second is in-depth interviews, in which the interviewer does not follow a rigid form (National Science Foundation, 2012).

In structured interviews the emphasis is on obtaining answers to carefully phrased questions. Interviewers are trained to deviate only minimally from the questions. However, for in-depth interviews, the interviewers facilitate free and open responses to the questions (National Science Foundation, 2012). The in-depth interviews also attempted to note the participants' perceptions in their own words. This allowed the evaluator to present the meaningfulness of the experience from the respondent's perspective. The goal of in-depth interviews was to elicit rich, detailed material that could be used in analysis (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). Salkind (2003) explained how open ended interview questions allow for participants to share ideas the researcher may not have originally considered. Krueger and Casey (2009) suggested the interviews begin with easy questions, the questions be sequenced to allow for the conversation to flow, the questions gradually become more focused, and the questions use time effectively. The researcher abided to these recommendations allowing for the first questions to be easy and gradually moving on to questions that required more thought. Salkind explained how the individual interviews should "allow for a full exploration of the subject at hand...delving deeper into the subject's feelings" (p. 211). Lofland and Lofland (1995) continued by explaining the project evaluator prepares an interview guide which includes a list of questions or issues to be explored and probed to follow up on key topics. The question guide used in the interviews was designed to help the interviewer pace the interview and make interviewing more systematic and comprehensive. For the purposes of this research, in depth interviews were the preferred method of data collection.

Some advantages of in-depth interviews include obtaining rich data and details. In-depth interviews also allow for new insights, because of face-to-face contact with respondents and in depth exploration of topics. Due to the one on one interaction this allows the interviewer the opportunity to explain or clarify questions, thus increasing the likelihood of useful responses (Creswell, 2009; Mertens, 2005; National Science Foundation, 2012).

The teachers and principals in the sample were interviewed by the researcher and asked open-ended questions pertaining to the leadership actions of their principals. While a question guide was used to direct each interview, the interviewer varied the wording and sequencing of the questions to allow for a fluid conversation (Creswell, 2009). The interview guide also ensured the same issues were researched and discussed in each interview.

Interviews generally take place in a wide range of settings. This limits the interviewer's control over the environment. It is important to select a setting which provides privacy for participants, where there are no distractions and it is easy to hear respondents speak, comfortable, nonthreatening, easily accessible for respondents, minimizes visitor interruptions to respondents interviewed in their office or homes, and provides seating arrangements which encourage involvement and interaction (Creswell, 2009; Mertens, 2005; National Science Foundation, 2012). For the purposes of this study, the individual interviews of eight to ten teacher participants per elementary selected randomly took place in the elementary building that was selected for study and was therefore familiar to all interviewees. Three administrators were selected to interview at random from buildings whose principals have been in place for more than five years.

Participants

Population

The overall study was a population based study using a convenience sample strategy (Mertens, 2005; Creswell, 2007). Mertens (2005) explained the need for each member of the “population to have an equal chance to be selected” (p. 314). Mertens (2005) further explained how a convenience sample may be the “least desirable but it is perhaps the most commonly used” (p. 322). Although this population of teachers was convenient for research, this study focused on the elementary teachers in the Pleasant School District and therefore it was only logical to collect data from this population.

Sample

The sample for this study was limited to participants from three elementary buildings in the Pleasant School District. Individual interviews consisted of ten teachers selected randomly from each building selected. Individual principal interviews were selected randomly from buildings whose principal has been in place for at least five years. It is important to note the results from this sample are not meant to generalize the entire population of Pleasant School District. It is also necessary to note the findings from this research are meant to only reflect the attitudes and views of the participating elementary teachers and administrators in the Pleasant School District at the time of this study.

Evidence and Sources

Human Subjects Protection

Approval was secured from the Institutional Review Board prior to conducting research. Participation in the study will remain confidential. Interview and survey responses and any identifying information collected for this research was only used by

the researcher and the Campus Institutional Review Board (CIRB). Any personal or demographic information that was obtained that may have revealed a teacher's identity was protected by a pseudonym. All participants included in teacher and principal interviews were informed that their participation was completely voluntary. A refusal to participate in the study or withdrawal from the study resulted in no penalty to the participants. Mertens (2005) pointed out specifically when using a convenience sample how all participants need to understand they are volunteers and may withdraw at any time. For this study there were three participants who decided to not participate in this study. Upon the decision to abstain from the study other participants were then selected at random and invited to participate following the same procedure mentioned above.

A quality research design was important to the researcher and also for the validity of this study. Although it was possible for processes to be modified from the initial plan so as to improve the quality of the study and to accommodate for any problems which could have occurred throughout the study, no such modifications were necessary. Additionally, no changes were made to the research design, therefore additional approval was not requested from the CIRB. If changes had occurred in the design during the study, significant enough to change participation requirements, participants would have been notified via their contact information. Participants have received a copy of the results at the end of the study upon written request.

Qualitative Data Collection Procedures

Individual interviews. To begin the study the researcher first obtained permission from the district's central office staff. The district consent letter (Appendix A) allowed for the research to be conducted within the district. Second, the researcher submitted the university IRB consent letter from the university (Appendix B) to the

district's central office, thus verifying with the district that the researcher was granted permission from the university. After permission was granted from the university and the district being studied, the selection process of elementary buildings took place. The names of elementary buildings whose principal has been in place for more than five years were placed in a hat. The researcher then pulled at random the names of three elementary schools in the district. Initial contact was then made via telephone with two principals and in person with the third principal to explain the study and obtain verbal permission to conduct the study. The researcher then sent the principals the cover letter (Appendix C). Prior to interviewing the principals, the informed consent form (Appendix D) was reviewed. The elementary school from that point on was then referred to as a pseudonym to protect the identity of all participants from that building. The identity of the principal of the selected elementary was also given a gender free pseudonym.

After securing the participation of the school and the principal, the names of all elementary teachers from the selected school were then placed in a hat drawn at random to identify ten possible participants for individual teacher interviews. After names were selected, the researcher made initial contact with the potential participants via telephone to explain the study and to obtain verbal permission. Upon verbal permission the participants were scheduled for an interview. At the individual interview the researcher reviewed with the participant the informed consent form (Appendix E) and they were then invited to participate. Upon agreement to participate individual teacher participants received an introductory letter (Appendix F) informing them of procedures, expectations, and their rights for participation in this study. From that point on the participants were referred to by a gender free pseudonym in order to protect their identity. The selection

process was then repeated to select interviewees from each of the three elementary buildings.

All individual interviews consisted of questions that explored what teachers and principals viewed as leadership behaviors that increase or decrease morale. The interviews took place at the selected elementary building to ensure comfort and security for the interviewee and it also allowed for an environment where all parties could speak freely. The use of these interviews as a data collection method began with the assumption that the participants' perspectives were meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit. Interviews, rather than surveys, were selected because they allowed for opportunities for follow-up questioning of interesting comments (National Science Foundation, 2012). The interviews were recorded, with the participant's permission, and were subsequently transcribed.

The interviews took place in an office at each selected building that ensured comfort, familiarity of the space, security for the participants, additional confidentiality, and allowed for an environment where all parties may speak freely (Creswell, 2009). The interviews were recorded, with the participant's permission, for the accuracy of transcription and all recordings will be stored for seven years. Although the researcher also asked participants to refer to the building in which they work, their administrators, and co-workers using pseudonyms, few actually complied with this request and therefore the researcher supplied pseudonyms in these events.

Upon completion of the teacher and principal interviews the compiled data were analyzed to find points of repetition and evidence of prevailing themes for the sample. Transcriptions were written in the form of a narrative to allow the researcher to determine common themes which would help administrators reflect on how teachers might perceive

principal leadership behaviors as they relate to teacher morale. Common themes from the personal interviews were then identified and coded (Creswell, 2009). The conclusions were based on the individual perspectives of the participants about what leadership behaviors have lead to positive morale and which may be responsible for negative morale. The results of individual teacher interviews were then be compared to the findings from the individual principal interviews to identify any prevailing themes that are consistent throughout the data and to determine any differences in what the perceptions may be.

Instrumentation and Tools

The instruments used for this study were separate question guides. One guide was specifically designed for individual interviews for teachers (Appendix G) and the second guide was specific for individual principal interviews (Appendix H). These guides were only meant to facilitate the gathering of rich data and served as a guide throughout the interviews. As participants responded to previously determined questions, the researcher added a few additional questions to acquire clarity in the collecting of needed information and data. Because the participants did not use Likert scales, surveys or other quantitative means to determine their level of morale, or what principal behaviors may be responsible for affecting their morale, it was necessary for the researcher to listen to the responses and adjust follow-up questions as necessary. These follow up questions varied from one interview to the next.

Data Analysis

Teacher and principal interviews were audio recorded and simultaneously summarized by the researcher in notes. These approaches allowed for confirmation of what was seen and heard. Mertens (2005) explained that whatever the approach to

gathering detailed data, informed consent is necessary and confidentiality should be assured. As with observations, detailed recording is a necessary component of interviews since it forms the basis for analyzing the data (Creswell, 2009). All methods require carefully crafted interview guides with ample space available for recording the interviewee's responses (National Science Foundation, 2012).

Transcribing interviews for this data focused on a word-by-word process (National Science Foundation, 2012). The interviewer listened to the recording and wrote a verbatim account of everything that was said, referring to the participants as a pseudonym. Transcription of the recordings included word-for-word quotations of the participant's responses as well as the interviewer's descriptions of participant's characteristics, enthusiasm, body language, and overall mood during the interview (Creswell, 2009; Mertens, 2005; National Science Foundation, 2012).

Transcriptions occurred as soon as possible after the interview (Creswell, 2009). Notes from the interview were used to identify speakers and to clarify comments that were unclear, or unmentioned in the recording. The major advantages of this transcription method are its completeness and the opportunity it affords for the interviewer to remain attentive and focused during the interview (Creswell, 2009; National Science Foundation, 2012).

Role of the Researcher

Patton (1990) explained the role of the interviewer is to be an attentive listener who facilitates the interview to provide the most comfort possible and develop the conversation. Mertens (2005) agreed, explaining how interviewers should be individuals who are sensitive, empathetic, and able to establish a nonthreatening environment in which participants feel comfortable. Poor interviewing skills, poor phrasing of questions,

or inadequate knowledge of the subject's culture or frame of reference may result in a collection that obtains little useful data. The moderator must keep the discussion flowing and make sure one or two people do not dominate the discussion (National Science Foundation, 2012).

Trustworthiness

According to LaBanca (2010), the trustworthiness of a qualitative study can be increased by maintaining high credibility and objectivity. A research definition of trustworthiness might be "Demonstration that the evidence for the results reported is sound and when the argument made based on the results is strong" (LaBanca, 2010, p. 1). While not all researchers agree on what determines trustworthiness in a qualitative study, Krefting (1991) suggested four criteria to ensure valid interpretation of data: truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality. Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that the trustworthiness of research depends on validity and reliability, which ultimately leads to the ability to be confident in the findings. Seale (1999) supported these ideas claiming good quality qualitative studies were validated through reliability and validity.

If the issue of trustworthiness is determined by reliability and validity, increasing them will be important to the research in any paradigm (Golafshani, 2003). If the validity or trustworthiness of a study can be maximized or tested, then more "credible and defensible [the] result" (Johnson, 1997, p. 283), which may lead to more generalizability.

To explain reliability in qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) used the term "dependability" (p. 300). They further emphasized "inquiry audit" (p. 317) as one measure which might enhance the dependability of qualitative research. Dependability can be used to examine both the process and the product of the research for consistency

(Hoepfl, 1997). The consistency of data will be achieved when the steps of the research are verified through examination of data (Campbell, 1996).

Validity can be described by a wide range of terms in qualitative studies. “Validity is not a single, fixed or universal concept, but rather a contingent construct, inescapably grounded in the processes and intentions of particular research methodologies and projects” (Winter, 2000, para. 2). According to Johnson (1997), in qualitative research three types of validity can be discussed. The first type of validity is descriptive validity, or the factual accuracy of the data as reported by the qualitative researcher. Second is interpretive validity, or the degree the participants’ experiences are accurately understood and reported by the researcher. Finally is theoretical validity, or the degree to which a theory is developed and explained from the data of that study.

Since the perspective of the qualitative researcher may be biased due to the relationship with the data and sources, audit strategies were used to confirm findings (Bowen, 2009; Miller, 1997). Triangulation is typically important for improving the validity and reliability of research or evaluation of findings, and was accomplished through the various collections of qualitative data through individual interviews. Mathison (1988) explained how triangulation has become important in qualitative approaches to control researcher bias.

For this study the triangulation procedure included individual interviews with teachers, individual interviews with principals, and the immediate recording and transcribing of all interviews and discussions. Creswell (2009) recommended the researcher double check the transcripts by the participants to ensure they are free of mistakes, and the researcher for this study followed this recommendation. Therefore, the

interviews and discussions were member checked with the participants to ensure quality transcription took place.

Summary

This chapter began with a brief history of the transformation of public schools and accountability. The guiding research questions were then introduced and an overview of how the research was completed was presented. The current and landmark literature tying climate to principals, and principals to teacher morale, and morale to teacher tenure and student success were also emphasized. Research to explain the need for specific methods and research strategies to validate the qualitative multi-site case study situated in the transformational leadership lens used to analyze the guiding questions was presented. The intended population and sample for this study were then defined. Additionally the data collection procedures via various interviews were outlined, along with the study's limitations. Finally an overview was presented for data analysis to find common themes and develop the individual teacher experiences to further understand what principal behaviors affect teacher morale. Chapter Four will present the collected data along with the analysis of those data. Finally Chapter Five will discuss the findings and offer suggestions for future studies and research.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

This study examined the relationship of elementary principal behaviors and their effect on elementary teacher morale in a specific school district in Arkansas to bring about a change of practice. Reported in this chapter will be interviews with three principals and the interviews with teachers of the same three schools of the principals. The research questions for this study were focused on exploring the teachers' and principals' perception of teacher morale and how principals played a role in that. The data collected from the participants were grouped in relation to the research questions. Groupings of findings emerging from the responses are included. Some findings emerged within the responses to each interview question and some findings emerged across the various interview questions. The data gathered from these interviews provided the basis for discussions and recommendations in this chapter.

Purpose of the Study

The intent of this qualitative multi-site case study was to explore how elementary principal behaviors influence teacher morale in the Pleasant School District. For this research, teacher morale was determined through in-depth individual interviews with teachers and principals. Using the transformational leadership lens, the focus was based on gathering more understanding of which principal behaviors affect school culture and climate and therefore influence teacher morale.

Research Questions

The following central question guided the study:

1. How do elementary principal leadership behaviors influence the morale of elementary school teachers?

The following sub questions were used to help add focus to the research:

1. What principal behaviors do teachers attribute to increasing teacher morale?
2. What principal behaviors do teachers attribute to decreasing teacher morale?

The following sub questions were directed toward elementary principals to help add understanding to current practice and teacher morale.

1. What principal behaviors do principals attribute to increasing teacher morale?
2. What principal behaviors do principals attribute to decreasing teacher morale?

Participants

All study participants were taken from the same school district in Arkansas. Each building had to be an elementary school where the principal has been in place for at least five years. The participants included three elementary principals and 10 teachers from each of the participating elementary schools. None of the principals had been a teacher in the building where they were currently filling the role of principal. To preserve the confidentiality of all participants, pseudonyms were used. Because of the sensitivity of some responses, and to provide further confidentiality, the names of all teachers, principals, elementary schools, and the district have been given a pseudonym. The three principals interviewed have each been an administrator for roughly 10 years, with all of their time as an administrator in the Pleasant School District. Principals were asked approximately 19 similar questions, although the interviews varied slightly from one participant to the next, based on the flow of conversation. Teachers were asked approximately 17 similar questions, although the interview questions varied slightly.

All participants answered approximately five questions which allowed them to describe their background, including the number of years in the district, number of years in the building where they are currently serving, their overall experience in the district, their own definition of the term *morale* or *job satisfaction*, how they would describe their own level of morale, and how they would describe the level of morale for their building.

School One

Reed is a principal who has been serving as an administrator for nearly 10 years and has been in this elementary school from the time it was opened. Prior to serving as a principal, Reed spent time as an assistant principal, as well as several years as a teacher in another building in the district. When asked to define the term morale or job satisfaction Reed responded it is how “you are truly making a difference and in this situation like our school and our work is like our mission, it’s our mission field.” When asked about the teachers’ current level of morale Reed responded, “I think the important thing is to kind of be the barometer that sees their work and their moods, their passions, and then make sure that I’m supporting their needs. Teachers are like our students. They have different needs at different times.”

The teachers interviewed in Reed’s building range from 4 to 18 years of experience in the district and 4 to 7 years of experience in the building. The overall average years of experience of those interviewed is 8.3 years in the district and 5.4 years in the building.

School Two

Peyton is a principal who has been serving as an administrator for nearly 10 years and has also been in this elementary building since it was opened. Prior to serving as a principal, Peyton spent a few years as an assistant principal and many years in the

classroom in another state. When asked to define the term morale or job satisfaction Peyton responded it is “How somebody feels about their daily routines at that exact time.” When asked about the teachers’ current level of morale Peyton responded,

At this point in time they are overwhelmed. They have a high level of work and it’s a lot of new things, and creating a lot of new things. It just fluctuates. Sometimes it’s good, sometimes it’s down. It goes back to all those factors that contribute to it. You know when teachers are comfortable in the work that they are doing and they are not having to reinvent a lot of wheels and create a lot of things then it’s very easy to keep that morale high. Just being aware that you have to be more of a support during those tough times, I think that kind of helps.

The teachers interviewed from Peyton’s building range from 4 to 18 years of experience in the district and 4 to 7 years of experience in the building. The overall average years of experience of those interviewed is 9.4 years in the district and 5.9 years in the building.

School Three

Cory is a principal who has been serving as an administrator for nearly 11 years. Prior to serving as the principal, Cory spent multiple years serving as an assistant at another building in the district and also as a teacher for several years at a different elementary building. When asked to define the term morale or job satisfaction Cory responded it is “How someone feels about their job, about their performance.” When asked about the teachers’ current level of morale Cory responded, “Today if I were to guess, positive but a little stressed with testing coming up.”

The teachers interviewed in Cory's building range from 3 to 35 years of experience in the district and 3 to 30 years of experience in the building. The overall average years of experience of those interviewed is 10.5 years in the district and 9.6 years in the building.

Principals' Perceptions of Positive Leadership Behaviors

The principals were asked a series of questions allowing them to discuss different aspects of teacher morale and how principal behaviors may have contributed to that morale. Principals were first questioned on factors that may cause a teacher to have an increase of morale. When asked about specific behaviors of principals that would increase morale the principals interviewed discussed time and again the need to support teachers and the impact it has on the overall morale of the building and on an individual level. The interviews with principals allowed for several principal behaviors to surface as prevailing themes that might contribute to teacher morale including teacher support, feedback, shared leadership, family culture, and valuing teachers.

Teacher Support

The principals stressed the need for supporting teachers. This theme of teacher support came to the surface more than any other from the principal interviews. Reed stressed this opinion saying,

Encouragement, encouragement I feel like that is one of my strengths is to be the encourager and to know when somebody is needing that. A team, an individual. They need to see it in writing, and they need to have it told to them. We can never encourage enough. This is my family and an extension of my family and I want to make sure I'm always giving that to them.

Reed furthered explained,

The number one thing that comes to mind is of course that encouragement piece, and how the way that we need to make sure that we are voicing that encouragement. I think that very thing has helped more than anything else since we started here.

In regards to teacher support Reed concluded saying,

Just making sure that I'm a steady person that's always there making sure that we are coming back to our purpose and what our goal is to have that common vision, the knowing that we're not all going to be on the same page on the same day because life happens but this is their safe haven where they get to contribute and make a difference.

Peyton also mentioned the need to support teachers by saying,

We need to be in tune to the level of support that teachers do need. Just sitting down and listening to them, being part of their planning meetings, being a support if they are having difficulties with students, being that support person, the go between, saying let me call that parent, being that level of support and involvement.

Going in a different direction in regards to teacher support Peyton explained,

My daily attitude affects teachers. I just try and leave it at the door and come in and try and be that same person every day, and try and have that positive attitude every day. With the level of support that I offer them in the building it tends to help out.

Cory also encouraged support by helping to lighten a teacher's load. Cory explained,

If there are things that I can do to take things off their plate in the classroom, that I can personally do if they give me certain information, that frees up time for them to be with the kids and do what they feel like they need to be doing in the classroom. I try to take a lot of the stress on me. There are things that I can take that keeps them from being stressed and I feel like that overall affects their morale.

Cory also emphasized the need for principals to support teachers. Cory claimed that principals need to

Observe teachers, their faces, body language. I mean, you can pick up on it in any type of situation where you're meeting with the faculty. I feel like my teachers are really good in coming to me and saying "this is not working, I'm feeling stressed". I always want them to know they can do that, too, because if they are feeling stressed and are willing to tell me, the other people are feeling stressed but are not going to tell me.

Feedback

Two of the principals highlighted the need to give feedback to teachers to help them maintain a high level of morale. Reed was the most vocal of the principals on the need for feedback and emphasized "I feel like one of the most positive things I've done here lately is to just extend the walkthrough and give them positive feedback. They know they are going to get something positive." Peyton's comment supported Reed's stance on the need for teachers to have feedback explaining, "Writing notes of encouragement is a very powerful thing, and we as principals need to know how to make it individualized for the teachers."

Shared Leadership

Two principals explained the benefits of delegating responsibilities in their building by having teachers share in the leadership opportunities. Reed explained, “I think the very thing that has helped more than anything since we started here is the idea of shared leadership, just look for ways that we can really showcase the teachers.” Cory’s position on shared leadership was similar, but emphasis was placed on the need to highlight teachers’ strengths during faculty meetings or conferences. Cory explained this saying, “Every teacher has a strength somewhere and you can play off the strengths of every teacher, through meetings or conferences where we can share our learning.”

Family Culture

Two of the principals discussed the need to create a family culture in the building and develop the morale of the staff. Reed explained the importance of creating a family at school saying, “I have realized that this is an extension of my family, and that we can never *never* encourage enough.” Cory supported the need to create a family culture at school explaining, “We need to make sure that everyone knows they are a member of the family, the community and our school.”

Valuing Teachers

Finally, two principals commented on their belief that teachers in their building need to feel valued for teacher morale to increase. Reed introduced the need for teacher value saying, “We need to ensure that teachers have opportunities to share their strengths with others and to step up and know they are valued and what they bring to the table is very important.” Peyton also stated, “Teachers like to know you are giving them attention, and we need to pay attention to what their needs are.”

Principals' Perceptions of Negative Leadership Behaviors

The interviews with principals also allowed them to discuss different aspects of teacher morale and how leadership behaviors may have contributed negatively to teacher morale. The interviews with principals allowed the principals to identify several principal behaviors to surface as prevailing themes that might negatively affect teacher morale including negativity, lack of support, change or new initiatives, valuing teachers, and common core.

Negativity

Each of the principals commented on the fact that if they are negative then their staff will also likely be negative. It has been seen in their experiences that the leaders create the attitude in their buildings. Peyton explained,

Having a bad attitude yourself and maybe having a certain tone with teachers can impact morale. I try not to have attitude but you know after a certain period of time if you're still seeing things that aren't getting done, you have to be a little bit more direct and to the point, but that will affect their morale.

Cory supported the idea that negativity breeds negativity by saying, "I have noticed that when we get stressed about different things that we are supposed to do on a building level then that can have an impact on teachers." Reed emphasized the need to be positive saying, "We try and keep a positive atmosphere at school by giving our teachers positive feedback. We know what kind of effect it can have on teachers when we get down."

Lack of Support

Each of the principals discussed briefly the need to support teachers and the damage that can occur in a building when that support is not present. Peyton explained, "Principals need to be aware that they have to be more of a support during those tough

times. I think that kind of helps.” Reed pointed out the need to support teachers saying, “Something that would bring morale down would be not giving them feedback, them not knowing if they are living up to expectations, especially if they have no communication from us.” Peyton pointed out, “We must be that support person and the go between; if we aren’t it will have a negative effect.”

Change/New Initiatives

Due to the recent changes occurring in the state in regards to curriculum, the idea of change is fresh on the minds of principals and teachers. Two of the principals discussed how change can have a negative impact on teachers. Peyton explained how change has affected their school saying, “Anytime we throw something new at teachers it affects them. There are a lot of new things that they are required to do that creates a high level of stress.” Cory expressed similar thoughts by explaining,

We try to make sure that the teachers are only getting the information that they need to be successful right now. Sometimes it’s not necessary to talk about what we are going to be doing next year, especially when we haven’t finished this year yet. It stresses them out. I have to protect them.

Valuing Teachers

Just as was discussed in the positive leadership behavior, two principals found the opposite to also be true. When teachers do not feel like they are valued, principals have found their morale decreases. Cory discussed the need to value teachers saying,

So often teachers don’t feel like they are valued. They don’t feel like their voice is heard. You know, I have teachers say, “well I said that but you just didn’t acknowledge it or whatever.” Teachers want to know that we

understand how hard they work. I mean, I know how hard they work and I value them.

Peyton also expressed the need to value teachers, explaining, “Our teachers need to feel like I value their time and efforts and that I’m giving them that attention. I have to pay attention to what their needs are.”

Common Core

Finally it is necessary to point out that the three principals who participated in the interviews each commented on the fact that the shift from the Arkansas Frameworks to the new Common Core curriculum did have a noticeable impact on their teachers’ current level of morale. Cory emphasized,

The full implementation of Common Core has greatly impacted my teachers. We are being assessed on a completely different curriculum. When so much emphasis is put on your accountability and your current assessment piece, but you’re expected to implement a different type of curriculum. It affects us and it affects our teachers.

Peyton said, “Trying to balance being accountable to the benchmark but teaching Common Core Standards. Anytime you throw something new at them that tends to build a little stress.” Although this cannot be considered a behavior that the principal is participating in or responsible for, it was a reoccurring theme from the participating administrators and an item that must be reported.

Teachers’ Perceptions of Positive Leadership Behaviors

The teachers were asked a series of questions allowing them to discuss different aspects of teacher morale and how principal behaviors may have affected their morale. Teachers were questioned on leadership behaviors that they perceive may cause a teacher

to have an increase or decrease of morale. The interviews with teachers allowed for several principal behaviors to surface as prevailing themes that might contribute to a teacher's morale. Behaviors that teacher participants determined have an increase on teacher morale included principal attitude, teacher support, communication, feedback, relationships, team work, creating a family culture, and shared leadership.

Principal Attitude

Attitude was referenced at least 19 times in the interviews with 30 teachers, and was by far the most reoccurring theme found in this study. Teachers believe that when the leader is positive it helps teachers to also have a positive attitude. Pat expressed the need for a positive attitude from the principal saying,

I think our morale has a lot to do with positive attitude as far as the morale is concerned. And job satisfaction...again I think that comes in to the attitude. If they are going to have a positive attitude and if they can help build morale, that just kind of trickles down.

Sid also discussed the notion of a good attitude, stating,

The principal makes the atmosphere of the building, they just do. I've been in some schools that I wouldn't want to work at. I couldn't work very good in that kind of atmosphere. If the principal doesn't feel good about herself, then the teachers aren't going to feel good about themselves.

Sam supported the idea of attitude in terms of happiness, saying, "It just seems like a happy place. The kids seem very happy here. The teachers are all very friendly everyone says hi to each other. I enjoy coming to work every day." Spencer also emphasized the need for a principal to be a role model of good attitude, saying, "Our principal is definitely an example of how to keep the morale of a building very high. It starts at the

top. If the top is not a strong example then the rest of the building will crumble.” Jordan supported the need for principals to have a positive attitude saying, “They can have a big effect. Just their attitude and how they present themselves can have a big effect on the teachers and how the students feel and act in the school.” Logan supported the need for a positive attitude from the principal by saying, “Our principal is positive all the time. I’ve never seen our principal in a bad mood. They are always smiling and have a way of talking to you that makes you want to do better.”

Jerry further connected the positive attitude of the principal to hope and the need for the principal to share hope with the staff. Jerry said, “If the principals have hope for whatever situation that we might be dealing with, if Peyton transfers hope to the rest of the staff, I see a lot more positive out of teachers, just from Peyton’s attitude.” Lee also emphasized the role a principal plays in teacher morale, saying,

Our principal is a big factor. Reed is always positive and happy and that just kind of filters down. You can tell Reed loves the job and wants to be here. I think the attitude of the principal and their attitude towards teaching is the main thing.

Cody expressed the need for principals to have a positive attitude saying, “Our principal just has more of a positive outlook and is like the morale lifter, and that’s the reason I would never want to leave here.” Chris also supported the need for a positive principal attitude saying, “When you have positive coming from that person it’s just going to bleed through to everyone else.”

Casey continued to strengthen the argument for a positive principal attitude by explaining that it is something that starts at the top. Casey said,

It starts with leadership. Our principals can make anything seem like the best idea ever and it might be something that we all internally dread and despise, but we all literally get excited about it.

Alex also emphasized that attitude starts at the top and will impact teachers. Alex said, “I think just overall your attitude it’s going to trickle down to the teachers and then it’s just going to trickle down to the students so just showing excitement for their job and being a lifelong learner as well.”

Morgan furthered the notion of principals setting the attitude of the building. “I think principals set the tone of the morale in the building, so principal attitude is a lot, principal attitude for sure.” Bailey also supported the need for good attitude affecting others saying, “If you have a principal that is positive then that’s going to breed a positive atmosphere.” Dee highlighted the impact a good attitude can have on teachers when she stated, “I just think having a positive attitude helps morale to increase.” Jaden also expressed how positivity can have a school-wide impact, “Having a positive or good attitude about what’s going on is contagious.”

Terry expressed the need to have a principal that has a positive attitude and how Cory can affect teachers, “Our principal is pretty encouraging and positive and is always very positive about pumping us back up and letting us know that things are going to get better.” Dallas emphasized, “If Cory is always having a positive attitude and being our encourager, then we can have that positive attitude.”

Teacher Support

Several teachers discussed the need to feel supported from their administrator if they are to have high morale while at school. Sam explained,

If you as a teacher feel that you are being supported then you are more willing to try, you are more willing to give things a shot, you know, go that extra...but you have to have that support behind you. Otherwise it just trickles down, and then I think the students eventually feel it.

Taylor discussed the idea that they can always count on support from their principal, “Cory is here to support us in everything. Our principal is behind us. *They* are behind you and their support is there all the time. I don’t think it ever goes away.” Chris also discussed the need to have a principal in your corner saying,

I think my principal is good. I mean if Peyton is always positive and is always behind you, and if you have an issue Peyton is always up to bat for you. When you know you have Peyton’s support, I think that helps.

Jamie explained that support from your principal is important, “Being present is big, and, even more so, knowing that they are there for you.” Jerry’s comment supported this when he said, “Being available for teachers, especially if they need a little support.” Casey also supported the need for principal’s support to have a high morale saying, “We have to have a very high level of support to be satisfied at our jobs. I just think that the support at any time we have a concern to be able to walk into the office is important.”

Chandler also connected the principal support and teacher morale saying, “Both of our principals are really supportive so our morale is pretty high. Overall teachers are looking for their principal to be their cheerleader, believe in us and trust that we are making good choices for our kids.” Dee also supported this stance saying, “They just really believe in us, and they trust us and they are like a happy cheerleader, you know?” Jaden also discussed the need for teachers to feel

supported when he stated, “They set the tone, they provide the support during difficult situations. That support, that positive feedback, just their overall attitude. We always like to be supported.”

Sam also expressed the need for support outside of the school atmosphere saying, “We have families, and it is recognized that we have a life outside of here. Those things are taken into consideration. Our principals understand that we have commitments outside of this life.” Jordan also discussed the need for principals to be supportive inside and outside school saying,

I think as long as the principal is supportive and he goes above and beyond things to help, and doesn’t just care about what’s going on in the classroom, but cares about us personally. I just think support, support and high expectations but definitely support. I think that support is a big one!

Alex shared feelings about how teachers need to feel supported by saying, “If you feel supported and they help you with whatever you need help, if they have your back with a parent, I think that’s very important and those behaviors are important.”

Terry took the idea further explaining that principal support needs to carry on to the need to support teachers in front of parents, “I would say that support in front of parents is important. I think that it’s encouraging to know that your principal always stands behind you.” Bailey expressed that having principal support has been an important thing for teachers saying,

I feel like administration has backed me up and supported me and my decision so I feel like I’ve had a lot of support and that’s been a good experience for me.

Hayden furthered the idea of principal support by explaining that teachers also need support with materials, “My principal makes sure that I have everything that I need, and I know that I’m valued. Teachers have to know they are valued.” Leslie voiced the trust they have in their principal saying, “Our principal is very determined to help us in any way possible.” Dallas emphasized that teachers need to feel supported in all aspects of teaching, “Principals need to be supportive, be absolutely supportive and encouraging. Also respect that we are able to do the job.”

Communication

An open line of communication was repeated time and again throughout the interviews with teachers, as was the need for an open door policy with the principal. Pat explained that the principal has adopted the open door philosophy. Pat noted, “Our principal has made it an open door policy. You know when you start to feel that way, we are supposed to go and talk, because they understand what we are going through.” Sid agreed with Pat saying, “Our principal is open and has an open door policy. Cory is always willing to listen to our side and try to help us, so that makes a difference in the school temperature.”

Kelly expressed how communication is necessary,

Both of our principals are amazing and they do maintain an open line of communication. As long as they keep an open line of communication with us my belief in being an educator is going to stay the same.

Chandler supported the need for an open line of communication with the administrators saying, “Both of our principals are really good about having an open door policy.” Dallas also discussed how they do not feel afraid to discuss any concerns with their administrators, “I feel comfortable when I go to talk to my principal about concerns.”

Ariel supported the idea of being able to talk with the administrators in your building saying, “I just think that there’s more than an open door policy with the principal and assistant principal.” Jaden expressed how comfortable he feels to talk with the principals, “I just feel like I can go to our principals and they just look at me like what’s wrong? What do you need? No matter what it’s about.”

Hayden shared the listening side of communication if the morale is going to be high. Hayden said, “If you’re a principal and you listen not only to your teachers but everything that’s going on around, you are going to have high morale at your school.” Casey expressed how the open communication in the building is appreciated, “I just feel like I can walk into the office when I’m feeling concerned and they always hear our concerns and work to implement something to help us.”

Sam also discussed the need to maintain a professional line of communication. “The way the situations are handled with students and staff is all very professional and it’s all with a personal connection.” Lee also explained how open communication with your principal is necessary, “Our principal is very open for people to come and talk and treats us as equals.”

Spencer shared an experience where communication added to the morale. “My principal and I talked, and she was very understanding, listened, was open and positive in what we were doing and definitely helped us feel like we were on the right track.”

Morgan connected the need for a principal that is a good communicator to have high morale saying, “If principals know what they are doing and they can communicate effectively with their teachers that helps the morale.”

Feedback/Recognition/Encouragement

The teachers interviewed explained the need for feedback, recognition and encouragement and how that helps them to have a better outlook while at school. Sid explained the process of teacher evaluations with the principal. Sid stated, “For our year-end meetings our principal starts out reading something positive about us and builds us up.” Sam expressed how teachers recognize positive feedback from the principal. “Our principal leaves us a lot of positive notes, and we like that.” Spencer showed how they appreciate the positive feedback as teachers, “We will get notes in our mailboxes. Our principal had written every staff member a personal note that was just saying thank you for your hard work.” Jamie shared how teachers in her building appreciate the recognition saying,

I think acknowledgement for the work that we do with the students and acknowledgement that the kids get for their progress and the good work raises everybody’s morale and makes everyone want to work harder. Our principal always leaves little notes on your table that tells you you are doing an amazing job and Peyton will offer a lot of feedback and reinforcement.”

Logan shared how positive feedback from the principal has an impact on morale saying, “Our principal writes notes pretty regularly when she knows somebody needs one or is proud of us or personal notes and puts them in our box. I still have all of my notes.” Dana expressed that the teachers in the building now enjoy having principals in their classroom because “Every time one of our administrators come into our classroom, we get a little note, a little grow and glow, there is always something positive and I think that is very helpful.” Morgan supported the need for positive feedback from principals when they

come into the classroom, “They’ll actually do walk throughs and leave notes that are nice. Sometimes they will leave a note or send an email that gives you positive feedback, and it makes you feel good. Like what I’m doing is being noticed.”

Chandler complimented the administrators and the feedback teachers receive from them. Chandler stated, “Our principals are just really good about complimenting you on the things you do really well.” Jaden explained how it feels as a teacher to get feedback from your principal by sharing, “They give feedback and they like to brag about their teachers, and that feels good to get that kind of positive feedback because you feel like all of your hard work was noticed. That support from positive feedback lets us know that we are valued.”

Dallas emphasized the need for principals to be specific when giving feedback by commenting, “Giving us feedback as to how we are doing, and I mean specific feedback, not just a pat on the back and saying you’re doing a good job, but coming in and letting you know, is helpful to increasing morale.” Riley was specific in connecting feedback and morale saying, “Principals affect morale by encouraging and giving positive feedback.”

Relationships

The idea of relationships is broad in that it is specifically designated to emphasize the need teachers have to be on a personal level, or to have a connection with the administrator on another level than just school. Pat expressed the value of relationships saying, “Our principal works on those relationships, and works on building them and to me that just confirms that Reed cares about us.” Spencer expressed the importance of relationships between administrators and teachers saying, “I just think that your principal has to be connected to the teachers. I mean it’s the little things, how are you, how’s your

day going, what can I do to help you?” Jesse also shared that it is important that the principal treats them like family,

I think first and foremost our principal values me as a person and also my family. Reed doesn't just see me as staff but understands that I have family at home as well. That's one thing that has helped morale. That Reed values us as individuals and has gotten to know me as a person. The principal has also given us time to not just build relationships with just our team but with the whole staff.

Avery expressed the importance of relationships at school by commenting, “They are really good at building that relationship and getting to know me and the other teachers in the building, and building that relationship. I just think that it's really important to have those relationships.”

Taylor moved the discussion from building-wide relationships to creating relationships beyond the school walls by sharing, “They know our families, they know our kids by first name and they probably know our dogs' name. We are important to them just like they are important to us.” Dana also emphasized the need for having relationships beyond just those at school saying, “Most of us hang out after school. We have relationships other than just professional relationships. Our administrators also value our time outside of work and they understand what we are giving up. They seemed vested in our personal lives.” Jordan also shared how it is important to foster relationships outside of school. Jordan said, “We are not just colleagues. We tend to be friends outside of work too.”

Dee shifted the conversation to emphasize the need to be personal when creating relationships. Dee said, “It's the little things, like the little notes. I just like the more personal things. I like the personal touch of writing a note or just remembering

something.” Carson expanded the argument of building personal relationships between principals and teachers saying, “I just think that our principals here generally care about everybody, on a personal level.” Ariel discussed how the relationships can be felt throughout the building when she stated, “Everyone can feel when the principals are being personable and caring, whether it’s about the teachers’ lives or the students’ lives.”

Teamwork

Some teachers discussed the idea of teamwork and the need to feel encouraged from their team members. Although the idea of teamwork does focus mainly on colleagues, teachers believe that their principals play a role in determining the individuals that make up the team. Taylor showed how principals play a role in the teamwork saying, “We all have strengths and weaknesses, but we are truly a team in this building and we’re all here for the kids. My principal made me feel welcomed and made me feel just like one of the group.” Jerry explained how teams are important to morale and how principals are a part of that team, “My morale has always depended on whether I had camaraderie. If I feel like my principals are including me, my morale tends to be much higher.” Cody shared how the principal finds a way to bring teachers together by sharing, “Every summer our principal brings the staff together and it’s like we regroup and build each other up.” Dana’s comment supported the need to find time outside the schedule to bring teams together, stating, “During our summer in-service everyone is glad to see each other and we’re glad to talk school, and kids, and since we all show up it shows that everyone’s on board.” Leslie pointed out that teamwork helps to bring the school together. Leslie said, “Sharing the load and just being considerate of each other, and knowing when you need help, you know you can turn to others and someone else when you need help with something.” Jesse explained how the principals are a part of the team and not outsiders by

stating, “I think that teachers see them as part of the team. Not just the leader, but as a team player and that motivates teachers.”

Jordan discussed the support teachers get from their teams by saying, “Well we have a lot of support. We have a lot of team building experiences which help us build friendships and teams. Teambuilding is important and it helps to making sure it’s a good environment.” Morgan spoke about the need to come together as a team outside of the regular school year. Morgan said, “We spend several days together in the summer and we do professional development and it is positive and fun and it’s not like work.” Casey also supported the idea of strengthening teams to increase morale when sharing, “We spend a few days together every summer. There’s fun and games, but there’s also in-service stuff that bonds us together.”

Family Culture

Although one could arguably place family culture into relationships, several teachers used the word family. Many teachers found that the family culture that is created at school by their principal helps to add to their own personal level of morale. Jesse stressed the importance of principals establishing the family feel early on by sharing, “Our principal told us from day one when this building opened that we are a family, and that feeling has continued.” Sam explained how the family culture adds to their morale, saying, “We feel like family. I just think there’s a caring here that’s personal, and that means a lot.” Casey also explained how the family culture brings everyone together. Casey stated,

One of the big things is that our principal sees us as family. If anybody has a tragedy we’re all going through it together. If anybody has a celebration

we're all celebrating together. So, I just think it goes back to that whole building-wide family that the principal and assistant principal can create.

Avery also supported the idea that administrators create a family feel when she shared, "At the school where I'm at it's a family and I think it has a lot to do with the leadership of the principal and assistant principal."

Sid moved the discussion from a family feel to a personal connection within that family when she shared, "Our principal has a prayer request for us and they never fail to come back and ask us how that's going, it's personal to them." Jamie also shared the importance for principals to connect personally and create a family feel at school, "It's important for principals to connect with you personally too, asking you questions about what's going on in your life, if there is anything that they can help with or how they can be there for you." Hayden also expressed feelings about the importance of a family culture particularly on connecting personally when she shared,

Our principal is the only one that I've ever met that stands on duty every morning and knows all the students by name. And if she doesn't know them, the principal will stand there and talk to them, and through that the whole atmosphere of our school is changed.

Cody shifted the conversation to a deeper connection teachers seem to have made with the principal, defining the specific familial role the principal fills and how it is important, "I just think a lot of it to me is our principal has taken on the mother role and not only cares about what we're doing in the classroom, but also about my family and my personal life." Alex also defined the familial role her principal fills in the building, "Our principal is kind of like our mom, a mother figure and I would never want to disappoint

her, that's for sure. She has created a family atmosphere, and she cares about each one of us.”

Shared Leadership

Some teachers discussed the need to feel as though their input into how the building is managed and the direction of where the building is headed impacts them enough to affect their morale. Taylor shared how the principals have delegated or shared their leadership through team work, Taylor said, “It's everybody working together to find solutions and answers, and our principal makes us feel a part of that instead of just saying we're going to do this, this and this.” Jamie expressed that through shared leadership everyone's opinion is valued by stating, “Our principal doesn't seem like an authority figure over us all the time. Cory will come to you to discuss solutions to problems. Our principals are very approachable.” Logan shared how the leadership style helps morale by suggesting, “I feel like we're let in on making decisions together and that makes me feel like I count.” Riley discussed how it is important for the principal to be open to others' ideas. Riley said, “When the principal is open and receptive to our thoughts and ideas, it helps our morale to increase.” Lee further discussed how sharing the leadership with teachers has shown teachers that they are trusted. Lee said, “Our principal lets us make decisions and lets me do stuff and has told me that you don't have to come and ask me first. My principal said, ‘I trust you, you know your job,’ so I'm trusted to do it.”

Jaden's comments echoed Lee in how shared leadership begets trust by explaining how shared leadership avoids micromanaging. Jaden shared,

Our principal trusts us to make those big decisions in our grade level and wants our opinion in situations. The principal knows that we can take the

leadership without Cory having to pick apart every little thing that we are doing, by micromanaging.

Jesse also emphasized the need to avoid micromanaging saying, “Our principal trusts me to do my job and doesn’t seem to micromanage.” Morgan agreed with Jesse saying, “A micromanager would be a little difficult for me to handle.” Bailey supported this argument by also saying,

If you have a principal that’s kind of a micromanager and she has to have her hand in every little thing that happens, that doesn’t encourage teachers to be risk takers or come up with interesting ideas or something because that just makes them afraid.

Bailey added support for appropriate delegation and avoiding micromanaging, saying “I need to know that our principal trusts us and isn’t going to micromanage us.”

Teachers’ Perceptions of Negative Leadership Behaviors

The teachers were asked a series of questions allowing them to discuss different aspects of teacher morale and how principal behaviors may have negatively affected their morale. While none of the teachers made a direct reference to the principal with whom they currently work, teachers did talk about other principals with negative behaviors. The interviews with teachers allowed for several principal behaviors to surface as prevailing themes that might contribute to a decrease of teacher morale, including lack of support, lack of communication, negativity, change or new initiatives, feeling devalued, and a final theme that was not tied to their leadership, common core curriculum.

Lack of Support

Teachers need to know that they are supported by the principal. Many teachers discussed how a lack of support affects their morale in a negative way. Jaden explained,

“If I don’t feel supported or if we don’t feel supported then our attitude about all of it just plummets.” Taylor shared an experience where a previous principal did not support what the teachers were doing in the classroom to meet the needs of the students. Taylor said, “I was once reprimanded for taking advantage of a teachable moment because I deviated from my lesson plan. I did not feel supported. This affected me and I eventually left the school.” Spencer supported the need for support from your principal by saying, “What has impacted me is when you feel like your boss doesn’t feel like she can trust you to do what you have been trained to do.”

Jamie shared that teachers often feel that they are not supported because administrators are too far removed from the classroom. She commented, “They were classroom teachers at one point, but if they haven’t been in there for a long time, I think sometimes they can get disconnected, so I think it’s really important to be there for us.” Jerry shared that when teachers feel like a principal will not make time for them, the morale decreases. Jerry said, “When they act like, ‘I’ve got my own problems’ and they don’t seem like they understand or want to help you, then I think morale lowers.” Alex echoed Jerry by stating, “If they don’t make time for you and their doors are always closed, that would definitely decrease morale.”

Jerry also expressed the need to be supported when conversing with parents. Jerry said, “I’ve seen in the past a principal who always takes the other person’s side and almost tries to make it look like they’re being open to their criticism, but this lowers morale very quickly.” Lee strengthened this idea that administrators must support teachers in front of parents by saying, “I’ve had principal not back me up whenever I had a problem with a parent, and you can tell when you go in there if they aren’t going to be on your side, and that is very hard.”

Jordan also strengthened the argument for principal support illustrating how favoritism will bring down morale. Jordan shared, “Well I think for negative there is favoritism and that will bring it down fast.” Alex also expressed a lack of support through favoritism as well, explaining, “If you aren’t treated fairly, or if they don’t have time for you, also if you don’t feel supported then you are definitely going to lower your morale.” Spencer expressed a lack of principal support by not being included as one of the favorites. Spencer shared, “Favoritism, showing favoritism I think will definitely decrease morale for all.”

Lack of Communication

Just as an open line of communication was discussed for positive morale, many teachers found that a lack of communication from their principal has an equally negative affect on their morale. Teachers need to feel that they have access to communicate with their administrators. Dee emphasized the need for principals to be good listeners in order to be a good communicator saying, “If they wouldn’t listen to us, that would bring morale down.” Avery explained that “a lack of communication will decrease morale because that can cause chaos and I think communication is really *really* important.” Pat furthered the argument saying, “I think if we don’t hear from them, and all they do is say, just go do this and staying separated from us would have a negative influence.”

Taylor explored this argument further by discussing the fact that teachers must feel comfortable to approach their principal. Taylor said, “What would decrease my morale is not feeling comfortable to talk with my administrators.” Kelly supported the need for communication by saying, “If I have a hard time communicating with them any troubles or issues that I may have with my families or my students, my confidence will be decreased. I need to know that their door is open anytime to go and talk to them.” Jaden

explained a previous experience and the effect it had on their building saying, “I have worked for other principals but they just weren’t approachable, and it wasn’t good.”

Logan deepened the conversation from merely having principals who choose to not be good communicators to a concern about the lack of ability some principals have in communicating saying, “Sometimes I think they don’t know how they come across when they talk to teachers, like it’s demanding or just their demeanor. Sometimes it might be the way they deliver their message or how they talk to people that brings us down.” Sid shared an experience regarding negative communication:

I’ve seen principals put a teacher down in front of other people and if you have something that you need to say to a teacher, then it needs to be in private. That teacher lives in the community of that building and deals with all those other people and the students don’t need to hear that kind of talk.

Negativity

Many teachers discussed the fact that negativity starts at the top. If you have an unhappy principal then that will affect the rest of the building, down to the students. Sam expressed that teachers and staff must be in a location that fosters positivity. She commented, “If you want your students to perform, your teachers have to be in a happy place. The teachers have to feel fulfilled in their profession and that just goes up the ladder.” Bailey discussed the idea that negativity starts at the top. “I think when you are just beat down and every time you try something new and the failures are pointed out instead of the successes, that would bring morale down.” Lee strengthened this argument when saying, “Something as simple as not having a smile on their face when they are

walking down the hall. People will think they are not approachable if they don't seem happy.”

Chandler supported this idea of principal negativity affecting staff when saying, “If your principal has a negative attitude and is not open with the faculty and staff, then you are going to have a bunch of people playing their own game and nobody will be working together.” Leslie continued this point by saying, “When there is something big going on, it tends to have an affect on everyone. You can see it. You can just tell on their faces sometimes.” Carson also supported this idea. “When the principals get really stressed about something like testing, or when the school board is coming to visit, that stress just spills over.” Terry explained the impact negative attitude can have on teachers by saying, “When your principal says negative things to you it's easy to get down.” Riley expressed that negativity could be rephrased to be constructive. She shared, “I would say that negativity, and not giving feedback constructively brings morale down.” Ariel also explained the impact a negative attitude has on teachers when commenting, “We can't just continue to hear only about the negative things going on.”

Change/New Initiatives

Several teachers explained how the changes in education are what bring them down, especially when piled on top of all the other things they are supposed to be accomplishing with their students. Pat shared how change creates lower morale stating, “I think any low morale has a lot to do with all the changes that are coming our way, and the uncertainty of our expectations.” Jamie supported this argument when saying, “Constantly putting new demands on us gets old.” Jesse discussed how change impacts a school by stating, “When things change, morale changes. When different principals come in they have different agendas, and whenever there's change you go backwards a little bit

before you go forwards.” Dallas emphasized the need to reduce the amount of change saying, “I think the changes that have been made impact us. It just seems like we are bombarded with change, change, change.” Terry explained how change has been a negative impact on them saying, “It’s just hard when you can’t keep up and they keep throwing too much at us and we are already trying to balance everything in our classrooms. A lot of teachers are overwhelmed about all the new stuff coming our way.” Casey explained how change has impacted morale at her building by saying, “If they are kind of wishy washy and things change a lot and you don’t know exactly what your expectations are, then you lack that certainty and security of doing what you are supposed to do, and that brings us down.”

Spencer deepened the conversation on change from just change in general to the fact that many times teachers believe there is unnecessary change placed on them by the principal, which decreases morale. Spencer said, “Lots of new additional work that isn’t necessary, busy work, which comes by way of the principal, brings down our morale.”

Feeling Devalued

Some teachers explained the need to feel that their voice is being heard, as well as feeling important to their principals. Sam talked briefly about feeling devalued when she said, “I guess just the feeling of not being heard brings down morale.” Jerry shared how feeling devalued has impacted morale, “The only real problem I’ve had in the past is feeling like I’m not important because I’m not a regular classroom teacher.” Hayden expressed the feeling of being undervalued in another way when she commented, “If you are constantly dismissed and don’t feel like you are part of the team, that doesn’t help.”

Hayden added another layer of feeling devalued by sharing how these feelings can and often do carry over to impact morale beyond school. Hayden said,

Then you have those principals who think your job is your job 24 hours a day, and that directly impacts us if you feel like you can't go home. If I choose to work until six that should be my choice. I shouldn't get 14,000 texts over a break telling me what I need to do.

Cody supported Hayden in feeling like sometimes principals expect too much of them outside of the school day. Cody said, "I think we try and do a lot outside of school, which can be good, but I think sometimes it gets to be too much."

Logan added a final layer to teacher value by illustrating what happens if the feeling continues and is not corrected by the principal. Logan said, "I have a friend and she doesn't feel valued, so she has gotten to the point where she just doesn't care if she has good lessons or not. So now it doesn't just affect her, but it affects the kids that she works with."

Common Core

Although this theme does not reflect on the administration or their leadership behaviors, it is important to note that 10 of the 30 teachers interviewed commented on the implementation of Common Core State Standards as having a negative effect on their morale. This is important to note since the questions were open ended and focused specifically on principals and their behaviors and were not intended to highlight the new curriculum. This should be a concern to principals as it shows there is a high level of stress over the common core at this current time. Pat said, "of course stress has been increased from trying to understand the common core standards." Spencer explained, "Our entire world has been turned upside down this year, but that has more to do with the

common core than anything else. Like last week we all just felt overwhelmed.” Dana also explained, “We all have a lot of pressure with common core and we feel like we’re juggling a lot of balls. More than we’ve ever juggled in the past.” Leslie supported this argument when she said, “this year is slightly more stressful and a little more overwhelming, and that’s due to common core.” Jesse also said, “right now you know with common core and the changes I think that sometimes there is just stress.” Jordan highlighted specifically that common core has taken a toll on morale. Jordan said, “I have noticed this year morale is down. I’m sure it’s a temporary thing that morale has decreased and it’s because of common core and the stress of trying to implement it.” Terry also explained, “a lot of people are overwhelmed about common core and dealing with how it will align to our state tests. I think everyone is just overwhelmed.” Dallas supported this as well. Dallas said, “I think the changes in the curriculum have seemed to bombard us with change right now.” Pat also expressed concern with common core. Pat said, “I think our stress level has a lot to do with all the changes that are coming our way with the common core curriculum.”

Summary

The data from participants in teacher and principal interviews were reported and analyzed in Chapter Four. Responses from the participants were grouped according to the two research questions and separated by principal and teacher to allow for clarity of perception. From Research Question One, behaviors that increase morale, findings for principals included teacher support, feedback, shared leadership, family culture and valuing teachers. Findings for teachers included principal attitude, teacher support, communication, feedback, relationships, team work, creating a family culture, and shared leadership. From Research Question Two, leadership behaviors that decrease morale,

findings for principals included negativity, lack of support, change or new initiatives, valuing teachers and common core curriculum. Findings for teachers included lack of support, lack of communication, negativity, change or new initiatives, feeling devalued and a final theme that was not tied to their leadership, common core curriculum. The groupings were determined from the results of the participants. The data from Chapter Four will guide the discussions and recommendations in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the relationship of elementary principal behaviors and their affect on elementary teacher morale in specific school district in Arkansas to bring about a change of practice. Reported in this chapter will be interviews with three principals and the interviews with teachers of the same three schools of the principals. The research questions for this study were focused on exploring the teachers' and principals' perceptions of teacher morale and how principals played a role in that morale. The data collected from the participants were grouped in relation to the research questions. Some findings emerged within the responses to each research question and some findings emerged across the various interview questions. The data gathered from these interviews will provide the basis for discussions and recommendations in this chapter.

Purpose of the Study

The intent of this qualitative multi-site case study was to explore how elementary principal behaviors influence teacher morale in the Pleasant School District. For this research, teacher morale was determined through in-depth individual interviews with teachers and principals. Using the transformational leadership lens, the focus is based on gathering more understanding of which principal behaviors affect school culture and climate and, therefore, influence teacher morale.

Research Questions

This following central question guided the study:

1. How do elementary principal leadership behaviors influence the morale of elementary school teachers?

The following sub questions were used to help add focus to the research:

1. What principal behaviors do teachers attribute to increasing teacher morale?
2. What principal behaviors do teachers attribute to decreasing teacher morale?

The following sub questions were directed toward elementary principals to help add understanding to current practice and teacher morale.

1. What principal behaviors do principals attribute to increasing teacher morale?
2. What principal behaviors do principals attribute to decreasing teacher morale?

Positive Emergent Themes

During this study the researcher reviewed and analyzed the interviews and conversations with principals and teachers to uncover nine themes present in this study. First, four common themes shared between principals and teachers believed as necessary for increasing teacher morale are discussed including teacher support, teacher feedback, shared leadership, and creating a family culture. Next, the additional positive theme of valuing teachers, found from interviewed principals, will be discussed. Finally the four additional positive emergent themes from interviewed teachers including principal attitude, communication, relationships, and teamwork will be discussed further in depth.

The Common Positive Emerging Themes

The four common positive themes which emerged from principals and teachers believed as necessary for increasing teacher morale are teacher support, teacher feedback, shared leadership and creating a family culture.

Teacher Support. The first common theme to emerge was teacher support. Principals commented more on teacher support than on any other principal behavior. The three principals as a collective group seemed to understand the needs of their teachers. Peyton supported the need to support teachers when saying,

We need to be in tune to the level of support that teachers do need, just sitting down and listening to them, being part of their planning meetings, being a support if they are having difficulties with students, being that support person, the go between, saying let me call that parent, being that level of support and involvement.

While teacher support was not the principal behavior mentioned most often by teachers, it did rank second. Teachers seemed to take on a very confident attitude when speaking about having the principal in their corner when it came time to work with a difficult student or to have a conference with a parent. Several teachers discussed the need to feel supported from their administrator if they are to have high morale while at school. Sam explained,

If you as a teacher feel that you are being supported then you are more willing to try, you are more willing to give things a shot, you know, go that extra...but you have to have that support behind you. Otherwise it just trickles down, and then I think the students eventually feel it.

Taylor discussed the idea that teachers in her building can always count on support from their principal. Taylor commented, "Our principals are here to support us in everything. They are behind us. They are behind you and their support is there all the time. I don't think it ever goes away."

Teacher Feedback. The second common theme to emerge was teacher feedback. Principals discussed the need to give teachers feedback and it ranked second in their responses. Reed explained, "I feel like one of the most positive things I've done here lately, is to just extend the walkthrough and give them positive feedback. They know they are going to get something positive."

Feedback ranked fourth for the teachers who were involved in the interview. Teachers expressed many times how they appreciate the notes and words of encouragement of their principals and their lasting impact. Logan shared how positive feedback from her principal has an impact on morale saying, “Our principal writes notes pretty regularly when she knows somebody needs one, or is proud of us or personal notes and puts them in our box. I still have all of my notes.”

Shared Leadership. The third common theme to emerge was shared leadership. Principals shared their belief that teachers appreciate an administrator who shares the leadership with them and does not strictly dictate. Two of the principals in this study expressed how leadership is shared with staff, thus allowing for teachers to be highlighted during meetings or conferences. Cory’s position on shared leadership was similar but emphasis was placed on the need to highlight teachers’ strengths during faculty meetings or conferences. Cory explained this when saying, “Every teacher has a strength somewhere and you can play off the strengths of every teacher, through meetings or conferences where we can share our learning.”

While the principals are correct that teachers appreciate the shared style of leading a building, this principal behavior ranked eighth for teachers who were interviewed. Teachers did determine that a shared style of leadership is important, but it was not as significant as the principals thought it might be. Jaden shared,

Our principal trusts us to make those big decisions in our grade level and wants our opinion in situations. The principal knows that we can take the leadership without them having to pick apart every little thing that we are doing, by micromanaging.

Creating a Family Culture. The final common theme that emerged is the importance of creating a family culture. Principals discussed this on a few occasions, bringing to light the need for faculty and staff to feel as though they have a professional family to which they are not only accountable, but also love and care for them. Cory supported the need to create a family culture at school, explaining, “We need to make sure that everyone knows they are a member of the family, the community and our school.”

The teachers also brought to light the need to feel as though they are part of something bigger than themselves. Teachers highlighted times when the administrators went above and beyond to create an environment where teachers would feel comfortable. Casey explained how the family culture brings everyone together:

One of the big things is that our principal sees us as family. If anybody has a tragedy we’re all going through it together. If anybody has a celebration we’re all celebrating together. So, I just think it goes back to that whole building-wide family that the principal and assistant principal can create.

An Additional Positive Emergent Theme from Principals

One additional positive theme emerged during principal interviews. Two principals discussed the need to value teachers.

Valuing Teachers. Although teachers did not discuss the need to feel valued to increase morale, two principals commented on their belief that teachers in their building need to feel valued for teacher morale to increase. Reed was the first of the principals to suggest valuing teachers may increase teacher morale saying, “We need to ensure that teachers have opportunities to share their strengths with others and to step up and know they are valued and what they bring to the table is very important.” In a later conversation

with Peyton it was also stated, “Teachers like to know you are giving them attention, and we need to pay attention to what their needs are.”

Additional Positive Emergent Themes from Teachers

Finally there were four additional positive emergent themes that teachers discussed during interviews that principals did not. These four themes include principal attitude, communication, relationships, and teamwork.

Principal Attitude. Attitude was the most reoccurring theme found in this study from the teacher interviews. Teachers believe that when the leader is positive it helps teachers to also have a positive attitude. Pat expressed the need for a positive attitude from the principal saying,

I think our morale has a lot to do with positive attitude as far as the morale is concerned. And job satisfaction...again I think that comes in to the attitude. If they are going to have a positive attitude and if they can help build morale, that just kind of trickles down.

Sid also discussed the notion of a good attitude, stating,

The principal makes the atmosphere of the building, they just do. I’ve been in some schools that I wouldn’t want to work at. I couldn’t work very good in that kind of atmosphere. If the principal doesn’t feel good about herself, then the teachers aren’t going to feel good about themselves.

Spencer also emphasized the need for a principal to be a role model of good attitude, saying, “Our principal is definitely an example of how to keep the morale of a building very high. It starts at the top. If the top is not a strong example then the rest of the building will crumble.” Jordan supported the need for principals to have a positive attitude saying, “They can have a big effect. Just their attitude and how they present

themselves can have a big effect on the teachers and how the students feel and act in the school.” Logan supported the need for a positive attitude from the principal by saying, “Our principal is positive all the time. I’ve never seen our principal in a bad mood. They are always smiling and have a way of talking to you that makes you want to do better.”

Jerry further connected the positive attitude of the principal to hope and the need for the principal to share hope with the staff, Jerry said, “If the principals have hope for whatever situation that we might be dealing with, if Peyton transfers hope to the rest of the staff, I see a lot more positive out of teachers, just from Peyton’s attitude.” Lee also emphasized the role a principal plays in teacher morale, saying,

Our principal is a big factor. Reed is always positive and happy and that just kind of filters down. You can tell Reed loves the job and wants to be here. I think the attitude of the principal and their attitude towards teaching is the main thing.

Morgan furthered the notion of principals setting the attitude of the building. “I think principals set the tone of the morale in the building, so principal attitude is a lot, principal attitude for sure.” Bailey also supported the need for good attitude affecting others saying, “If you have a principal that is positive then that’s going to breed a positive atmosphere.” Dee highlighted the impact a good attitude can have on teachers when she stated, “I just think having a positive attitude helps morale to increase.” Jaden also expressed how positivity can have a school-wide impact, “Having a positive or good attitude about what’s going on is contagious.”

Terry expressed the need to have a principal that has a positive attitude and how Cory can affect teachers, “Our principal is pretty encouraging and positive and is always very positive about pumping us back up and letting us know that things are going to get

better.” Dallas emphasized, “If Cory is always having a positive attitude and being our encourager, then we can have that positive attitude.”

Communication. An open line of communication also came to the surface throughout the interviews with teachers. Again this behavior was not a theme in the interviews with the principal, however teachers believe that there is a need for an open door policy with the principal. Pat explained that the principal has adopted the open door philosophy. Pat noted, “Our principal has made it an open door policy. You know when you start to feel that way, we are supposed to go and talk, because they understand what we are going through.” Sid agreed with Pat saying, “Our principal is open and has an open door policy. Cory is always willing to listen to our side and try to help us, so that makes a difference in the school temperature.” Kelly expressed how communication is necessary,

Both of our principals are amazing and they do maintain an open line of communication. As long as they keep an open line of communication with us my belief in being an educator is going to stay the same.

Chandler supported the need for an open line of communication with the administrators saying, “Both of our principals are really good about having an open door policy.” Dallas also discussed how they do not feel afraid to discuss any concerns with their administrators, “I feel comfortable when I go to talk to my principal about concerns.” Ariel supported the idea of being able to talk with the administrators in your building saying, “I just think that there’s more than an open door policy with the principal and assistant principal.” Jaden expressed how comfortable he feels to talk with the principals, “I just feel like I can go to our principals and they just look at me like what’s wrong? What do you need? No matter what it’s about.”

Hayden shared the listening side of communication if the morale is going to be high. Hayden said, “If you’re a principal and you listen not only to your teachers but everything that’s going on around, you are going to have high morale at your school.” Casey expressed how the open communication in the building is appreciated, “I just feel like I can walk into the office when I’m feeling concerned and they always hear our concerns and work to implement something to help us.”

Sam also discussed the need to maintain a professional line of communication. “The way the situations are handled with students and staff is all very professional and it’s all with a personal connection.” Lee also explained how open communication with your principal is necessary, “Our principal is very open for people to come and talk and treats us as equals.”

Spencer shared an experience where communication added to the morale. “My principal and I talked, and she was very understanding, listened, was open and positive in what we were doing and definitely helped us feel like we were on the right track.”

Morgan connected the need for a principal that is a good communicator to have high morale saying, “If principals know what they are doing and they can communicate effectively with their teachers that helps the morale.”

Relationships. Relationships were discussed in many of the interviews with the teachers. Teachers expressed a need to have a deeper relationship with the administrators than what can be established only at school. Several teachers commented on the closeness that comes to the school when staff and administrators find time to connect on a personal level. Pat expressed the value of relationships saying, “Our principal works on those relationships, and works on building them and to me that just confirms that Reed cares about us.” Jesse also shared that it is important that the principal treats them like family,

I think first and foremost our principal values me as a person and also my family. Reed doesn't just see me as staff but understands that I have family at home as well. That's one thing that has helped morale. That Reed values us as individuals and has have gotten to know me as a person. The principal has also given us time to not just build relationships with just our team but with the whole staff.

Taylor moved the discussion from building-wide relationships to creating relationships beyond the school walls by sharing, "They know our families, they know our kids by first name and they probably know our dogs' name. We are important to them just like they are important to us." Dana also emphasized the need for having relationships beyond just those at school saying, "Most of us hang out after school. We have relationships other than just professional relationships. Our administrators also value our time outside of work and they understand what we are giving up. They seemed vested in our personal lives." Jordan also shared how it is important to foster relationships outside of school. Jordan said, "We are not just colleagues. We tend to be friends outside of work too."

Dee shifted the conversation to emphasize the need to be personal when creating relationships. Dee said, "It's the little things, like the little notes. I just like the more personal things. I like the personal touch of writing a note or just remembering something." Carson expanded the argument of building personal relationships between principals and teachers saying, "I just think that our principals here generally care about everybody, on a personal level."

Teamwork. Various teachers expressed the importance team work plays in their morale and their personal need to feel part of the group. While teamwork overall focuses mainly on colleagues, teachers discussed how their principals play a role in bringing their

teams together which increases morale. Taylor illustrated how principals play a role in the teamwork saying, “We all have strengths and weaknesses, but we are truly a team in this building and we’re all here for the kids. My principal made me feel welcomed and made me feel just like one of the group.” Jerry explained how teams are important to morale and how principals are a part of that team, “My morale has always depended on whether I had camaraderie. If I feel like my principals are including me, my morale tends to be much higher.” Cody shared how the principal finds a way to bring teachers together by sharing, “Every summer our principal brings the staff together and it’s like we regroup and build each other up.” Dana’s comment supported the need to find time outside the schedule to bring teams together, stating, “During our summer in-service everyone is glad to see each other and we’re glad to talk school, and kids, and since we all show up it shows that everyone’s on board.” Leslie pointed out that teamwork helps to bring the school together. Leslie said, “Sharing the load and just being considerate of each other, and knowing when you need help, you know you can turn to others and someone else when you need help with something.” Jesse explained how the principals are a part of the team and not outsiders by stating, “I think that teachers see them as part of the team. Not just the leader, but as a team player and that motivates teachers.”

Jordan discussed the support teachers get from their teams by saying, “Well we have a lot of support. We have a lot of team building experiences which help us build friendships and teams. Teambuilding is important and it helps to making sure it’s a good environment.”

Negative Emergent Themes

During this study the researcher reviewed and analyzed the interviews and conversations with principals and teachers to uncover themes present in this study.

First, five common themes shared between principals and teachers believed as having a negative affect on teacher morale are discussed including negativity, lack of support, change or new initiatives, valuing teachers and common core curriculum. Next, one additional negative emergent theme, lack of communication will be discussed as it was found from the interviewed teachers. The groupings were determined from the results of the participants.

While all themes will be developed it is interesting to note that five of the six emergent negative themes were beliefs shared between principals and teachers as behaviors that play a role in decreasing teacher morale. It is also important to note that all of the themes which emerged from the principal interviews were shared with the teachers. These five common themes are principal negativity, lack of support, change, and not valuing teachers. There is also one additional factor that currently plays a major role in negative teacher morale, Common Core Curriculum.

Principal Negativity. The first common theme that emerged that plays a role in decreasing morale is principal negativity. Principals did not necessarily connect their positive attitude to positive teacher morale but they seemed to understand that negativity breeds negativity. Principal negativity was the most referenced factor negatively affecting teacher morale throughout the principal interviews. Principals have learned by their experiences that the leaders create the attitude in their building. Cory supported the idea that negativity breeds negativity by saying, “I have noticed that when we get stressed about different things that we are supposed to implement on a building level then that can have an impact on teachers.”

Principal negativity was the third most referenced factor negatively affecting teacher morale throughout the teacher interviews, although principal attitude was the first

most referenced for positively affecting morale. Bailey discussed the idea that negativity starts at the top, “I think when you are just beat down and every time you try something new and the failures are pointed out instead of the successes, that would bring morale down.” Lee strengthened this argument when commenting, “Something as simple as not having a smile on their face when they are walking down the hall, people will think they are not approachable if they don’t seem happy.” Teachers showed the amount of impact a negative principal attitude can have on a school, and explained how it affects them personally.

Lack of Teacher Support. The second common theme that emerged that plays a role in decreasing morale is lack of teacher support. Lack of teacher support was the second most referenced factor negatively affecting teacher morale throughout the principal interviews. Principals explained that teachers need to not only feel, but believe, that principals are in their corner and are willing to help them with whatever issue might be troubling them. Peyton explained, “Principals need to be aware that they have to be more of a support during those tough times, I think that kind of helps. We must be that support person and the go between; if we aren’t it will have a negative effect.”

Lack of teacher support was the most referenced factor negatively affecting teacher morale during the teacher interviews. Teachers commented on the need to feel support in various ways, including support with parents, support with students, support with materials, and support with personal issues. While many teachers shared experiences regarding teacher support, Lee illustrated the need for support in a personal experience by saying, “I’ve had principals not back me up whenever I had a problem with a parent, and you can tell when you go in there if they aren’t going to be on your side, and that is very

hard.” Teachers and principals agreed that lack of support for teachers will bring down morale.

Change. The third common theme that emerged that plays a role in decreasing morale is change. Change was the third most referenced factor negatively affecting teacher morale throughout the principal interviews. The principals interviewed seemed to understand that change did have an impact on teachers as they have seen first hand how the new initiatives from the state and federal levels have caused an increase of stress on teachers. Peyton explained how change has affected their school. “Anytime we throw something new at teachers it affects them. There are a lot of new things that they are required to do that creates a high level of stress.” Cory furthered the conversation regarding changing by explaining,

We try to make sure that the teachers are only getting the information that they need to be successful right now. Sometimes it’s not necessary to talk about what we are going to be doing next year, especially when we haven’t finished this year yet. It stresses them out. I have to protect them.

Change was the fourth most referenced factor negatively affecting teacher morale throughout the teacher interviews. During the interviews with teachers, it was expressed in many different ways how change causes a great deal of stress. While many teachers expressed their feelings on change, Spencer explained that many times teachers feel there is unnecessary change placed on them by the principal, which decreases morale. Spencer said, “Lots of new additional work that isn’t necessary, busy work, which comes by way of the principal, brings down our morale.”

Not Valuing Teachers. The fourth common theme that emerged that plays a role in decreasing teacher morale is teachers not feeling valued. Not valuing teachers was the fourth most referenced factor negatively affecting teacher morale throughout the principal interviews. When teachers do not believe they are valued, principals have found their morale to decrease. Cory discussed the need to value teachers, saying,

So often teachers don't feel like they are valued. They don't feel like their voice is heard. You know, I have teachers say, "Well I said that but you just didn't acknowledge it or whatever." Teachers want to know that we understand how hard they work. I mean, I know how hard they work and I value them.

Not valuing teachers was the fifth most referenced factor negatively affecting teacher morale throughout the teacher interviews. There appeared to be several layers to teachers feeling undervalued. Teachers began by defining that feeling undervalued means to feel unimportant. One teacher expressed how this feeling can carry over to when teachers are away from school. Finally Logan explained how feeling undervalued impacts many stakeholders in the school building. Logan said, "I have a friend and she doesn't feel valued so she has gotten to the point where she just doesn't care if she has good lessons or not. So now it doesn't just affect her, but it affects the kids that she works with."

Common Core. Finally, an emerging theme that was unanticipated but that must be mentioned is the common core curriculum. Although this is not a principal leadership behavior, this theme was mentioned on several different occasions from both principals and teachers. Principals acknowledged that the demands of the common core curriculum and the changes that are involved have caused additional stress on teachers and

administrators. Two principals discussed how it impacts daily decisions on what to teach students as the state is expecting us to teach using the common core, yet they hold us accountable using a different set of standards. Teachers also expressed concerns in this regard. On many occasions, teachers referenced that the support and open communication they are receiving from their principal is a direct result of the stress that is placed on teachers due to the common core curriculum.

An Additional Negative Emergent Theme from Teachers

Lack of Communication. The additional emerging negative theme from teacher interviews was lack of communication. Just as an open line of communication was discussed by teachers as a behavior that affects morale in a positive way, many teachers found that a lack of communication from their principal has a negative affect on their morale. Teachers repeatedly expressed a need to feel that they have access to communicate with their administrators or it will decrease their morale. Dee expressed the need for principals to be good listeners in order to be a good communicator saying, “If they wouldn’t listen to us that would bring morale down.” Avery explained that “a lack of communication will decrease morale because that can cause chaos and I think communication is really *really* important.”

Taylor explored this argument further by discussing the fact that teachers must feel comfortable to approach their principal. Taylor said, “What would decrease my morale is not feeling comfortable to talk with my administrators.” Kelly supported the need for communication by saying, “If I have a hard time communicating with them any troubles or issues that I may have with my families or my students, my confidence will be decreased. I need to know that their door is open anytime to go and talk to them.” Jaden

explained a previous experience and the effect it had on their building saying, “I have worked for other principals but they just weren’t approachable, and it wasn’t good.”

Logan deepened the conversation from merely having principals who choose to not be good communicators to a concern about the lack of ability some principals have in communicating saying, “Sometimes I think they don’t know how they come across when they talk to teachers, like it’s demanding or just their demeanor. Sometimes it might be the way they deliver their message or how they talk to people that brings us down.” Sid shared an experience regarding negative communication:

I’ve seen principals put a teacher down in front of other people and if you have something that you need to say to a teacher, then it needs to be in private. That teacher lives in the community of that building and deals with all those other people and the students don’t need to hear that kind of talk.

Discussion of Findings and Literature

In this section, the role of the principal as it may relate to teacher morale through school climate and culture and transformational leadership are connected to the findings of the study. This study was intended to answer two main research questions related to how the behaviors of elementary principals affect the morale of elementary teachers. Responses from the interviews were used freely to add clarity to what principal behaviors may increase morale, and what principal behaviors may decrease morale. Additionally, the school climate and culture and transformational leadership are fused together using the proposed literature and the data collected from teacher and principal interviews. A brief section is also designated to discuss additional connections and concerns the

researcher has with the findings from each set of interviews and how they compare to each other.

Culture and Climate

Deal and Kennedy (1983) defined the climate as the personality or atmosphere that is made up by all participants. They continued by defining climate as the relationship staff members and administrators have developed. Stronge et al, (2008) expressed concerns with the idea of climate because the climate affects the effectiveness of teachers. Hayden, an elementary teacher, explained the importance of creating school culture, particularly on connecting personally. She stated:

Our principal is the only one that I've ever met that sands on duty every morning and knows all the students by name. And if she doesn't know them, the principal will stand there and talk to them, and through that the whole atmosphere of our school is changed.

This research would thus indicate the climate of a school or an organization could change from day to day based on the leader's attitude or demeanor. Research would suggest climate is determined by leaders of an organization who set the mood or attitude for the staff by their daily actions and words (Gruenert, 2008; Rowland, 2008; Tableman, 2004). Sid, an elementary teacher illustrated the need for the principal to have a good attitude when she commented:

The principal makes the atmosphere of the building, they just do. I've been in some schools that I wouldn't want to work at, I couldn't work very good in that kind of atmosphere. If the principal doesn't feel good about herself, then the teachers aren't going to feel good about themselves.

Reed, an elementary principal, also emphasized the need to be positive by saying, “We try and keep a positive atmosphere at school by giving our teachers positive feedback. We know what kind of effect it can have on teachers when we get down.”

Principals and teachers both emphasized the need for positive attitude. Many teachers expressed what happens in a school when the attitude or demeanor of the principal changes to a negative one. Chenoweth (2010) explained how the educators of today need to be “relentlessly respectful—and respectfully relentless as they model the way free citizens should treat another in a democracy—with tolerance, respect, and high expectations” (p. 20). Sid illustrated the importance of respect and professional demeanor when stating,

I’ve seen principals put a teacher down in front of other people and if you have something that you need to say to a teacher then it needs to be in private. That teacher lives in the community of that building and deals with all those other people and the students don’t need to hear that kind of talk.

Norton (1984) emphasized the need for a professional attitude from the principal in creating a positive climate and explained that a climate is a “collective personality of a school or enterprise, the atmosphere as characterized by the social and professional interactions of the individuals in the school” (p. 43). Norton, thus, suggested that a school’s climate is not a set feature, but can and will change based on the events that are transpiring or the attitudes from those who are in the building.

Schein (2005) further suggested culture is “the result of a complex group learning process and that leadership and culture are conceptually intertwined” (p. 361). The term complex group learning allows for others to assume that culture requires a certain amount

of learning that comes by way of team work. Although principals did not mention the term teamwork during the interviews, teachers referred to it often. Taylor explained how teamwork plays a role in culture and how principals play a role in that team saying, “We all have strengths and weaknesses, but we are truly a team in this building and we’re all here for the kids. My principal made me feel welcomed and made me feel just like one of the group.” Casey also supported the idea of strengthening teams to increase morale when saying, “We spend a few days together every summer. There’s fun and games, but there’s also in-service stuff that bonds us together.” Cody, another teacher, shared how her principal finds a way to bring teachers together to form a team. Cody commented, “Every summer our principal brings the staff together and it’s like we regroup and build each other up.” Dana supported the need to find time outside the schedule to bring teams together by stating, “During our summer in-service everyone is glad to see each other and we’re glad to talk school, and kids, and since we all show up it shows that everyone’s on board.” McEwan (2003) reminded us that the effective principal is a “culture builder – an individual who communicates and models a strong and viable vision based on achievement, character, personal responsibility, and accountability” (p. 89). Leslie explained how the principal has developed the culture of teamwork and how it brings the school together and holds each other accountable. Leslie said, “Sharing the load and just being considerate of each other, and knowing when you need help, you know you can turn to others and someone else when you need help with something.”

Bush (2009) furthered this idea by saying “leaders also have a responsibility for sustaining culture and cultural maintenance is often regarded as a central feature of effective leadership” (p.170). It is crucial for leaders to understand the role culture plays if they are going to be successful leaders (Bush, 2009; Schein, 2005). Cory, an

elementary principal, supported Bush's plea to understand the role of culture at school by explaining, "We need to make sure that everyone knows they are a member of the family, the community and our school." Reed, another elementary principal, also showed the need for a family culture when sharing, "I have realized that this is an extension of my family, and that we can never *never* encourage enough." Jesse, an elementary teacher supported the need for an appropriate culture and stressed the importance of principals establishing the family feel early on saying, "Our principal told us from day one when this building opened that we are a family, and that feeling has continued." Avery, another elementary teacher, also supported the idea that administrators create a family atmosphere. Avery said, "At the school where I'm at it's a family and I think it has a lot to do with the leadership of the principal and assistant principal."

Bolman and Deal (2008) supported the idea that the leader creates the morale of the establishment and that it gives them an identity. According to Bolman and Deal, "An organization's culture is built over time...culture anchors an organization's identity and sense of itself" (p. 278). Alex also furthered this discussion of the leader's role in creating morale and defined the familial role their principal fills in their building, "Our principal is kind of like our mom, a mother figure and I would never want to disappoint her, that's for sure. She has created a family atmosphere, and she cares about each one of us."

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership involves transforming the attitudes, motivations, and behaviors of leaders and followers (Jackson & Parry, 2008; McDowelle, 2009). Bass (1985) explained transformational leadership as a process by which followers trust, admire, and respect their leader, and as a result are motivated to do more than they were expected to do. McEwan (2003) discussed the traits of highly effective principals,

including the need to be a communicator, educator, envisioner, facilitator, change master, culture builder, activator, producer, and character builder. Cherry (2011) explained “transformational leaders are generally energetic, enthusiastic and passionate. Not only are these leaders concerned and involved in the process, they are also focused on helping every member of the group succeed as well” (para. 2). Straker (2010) further explained how a transformational leader should act by explaining how the leader must make continued efforts to motivate and inspire his followers, constantly observing, listening, consoling and motivating. Jaden, a teacher, explained, “If I don’t feel supported or if we don’t feel supported then our attitude about all of it just plummets.” Lumsden (1998) also emphasized several ways administrators can influence teacher morale, including empowering teachers, guarding instructional time, supporting teachers with discipline matters, and ensuring teachers have the necessary materials to teach. Devi and Mani (2010) suggested several steps administrators can take to boost teacher morale, including opening the lines of communication, staying visible, developing a faculty reward system, thanking everyone, and consistency, all of which center on leaders creating a positive environment. Some key elements of transformational leadership may include: (a) idealized influence, (b) inspirational motivation, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) individualized consideration (Kim, 2006; Leithwood & Duke, 1999; Northouse, 2007). The principals and teachers in this study brought to light several characteristics of transformational leadership including principal attitude, communication, feedback, relationships and shared leadership.

Principal Attitude. Although principal attitude was the most commented behavior from the elementary teachers involved in this study, the principals involved only mentioned it one time. Straker (2010) explained transformational leaders show through

their example of attitude and actions how the staff should behave. Peyton, a principal, explained,

Having a bad attitude yourself and maybe having a certain tone with teachers can impact morale. I try not to have attitude but you know after a certain period of time if you're still seeing things that aren't getting done, you have to be a little bit more direct and to the point, but that will affect their morale.

Sam, an elementary teacher, supported the idea of attitude in terms of happiness, saying, "It just seems like a happy place, the kids seem very happy here, the teachers are all very friendly, everyone says hi to each other. I enjoy coming to work every day."

Yukl (2006) discussed "acting confident and optimistic, expressing confidence in followers, use dramatic, symbolic actions to emphasize key values, lead by example," (p. 274). Spencer, another teacher, emphasized the need for a principal to be a role model of good attitude by saying, "Our principal is definitely an example of how to keep the morale of a building very high. It starts at the top. If the top is not a strong example then the rest of the building will crumble." Jordan supported the need for the principal to have a positive attitude when saying, "They can have a big effect. Just their attitude and how they present themselves can have a big effect on the teachers and how the students feel and act in the school."

Bailey discussed how a negative attitude is also detrimental to the school climate and how it greatly affects the morale of the building. Bailey explained how negativity starts at the top. "I think when you are just beat down and every time you try something new and the failures are pointed out instead of the successes that would bring morale down." Lee strengthened this argument when she commented, "Something as simple as

not having a smile on their face when they are walking down the hall, people will think they are not approachable if they don't seem happy." Leslie continued this point by saying, "When there is something big going on it tends to have an effect on everyone. You can see it. You can just tell on their faces sometimes." Carson supported Leslie's comment by saying, "When the principals get really stressed about something like testing, or when the school board is coming to visit, that stress just spills over."

Communication. Teachers and principals alike discussed the need for an open line of communication. For teachers, communication was present as a common term for increasing morale, as well as a poor communicator decreases morale. Principals, on the other hand, only discussed the effects of being a poor communicator and undervalued communication as a tool to increase morale. Ryan (2012) summarized the duties of a public principal by stating, "Gone are the days when principals could hide in their offices, administering behind closed doors" (p. 1). In reference to the principal, Ryan (2012) continued by saying, "they're the visible face of the school and set its instructional and moral tone" (p. 1). Smith and Piele (2006) explained that a principal must communicate with everyone that is inside and outside of the building if he wants to make significant changes to the culture. Pat discussed how her principal has impacted morale by being a good communicator saying, "Our principal is open, and has an open door policy. Peyton is always willing to listen to our side and try to help us, so that makes a difference in the school temperature."

Kowalski, Petersen, and Fusarelli (2007) also emphasized this need for good communication when they found that principals who are inefficient communicators are at a disadvantage in regards to leading and facilitating school change. Hayden said, "If you're a principal and you listen not only to your teachers but everything that's going on

around you are going to have high morale at your school.” Urban (2004) also emphasized the need for effective communication skills by saying, “words have the power to tear down or to build up depending on how they are delivered” (p. 16). Sam also discussed the need to maintain a professional line of communication. Sam commented, “The way the situations are handled with students and staff is all very professional and it’s all with a personal connection.” Morgan connected the need for a principal that is a good communicator to have high morale saying, “If principals know what they are doing and they can communicate effectively with their teachers that helps the morale.” Alex echoed Jerry when saying, “If they don’t make time for you and their doors are always closed that would definitely decrease morale.” Avery explained that “a lack of communication will decrease morale because that can cause chaos and I think communication is really *really* important.” Logan deepened the conversation from merely having principals who choose to not be good communicators to a concern about the lack of ability some principals have in communicating when she shared, “Sometimes I think they don’t know how they come across when they talk to teachers, like its demanding or just their demeanor. Sometimes it might be the way they deliver their message or how they talk to people that brings us down.”

Feedback. Teachers and principals both agreed on the need for feedback, encouragement and recognition in order to increase teacher morale. Hornstein (1997) explained that the ability to give feedback is a crucial component of a leader. Dweck (2006) also explained that too often constructive criticism is often filled with judgment. Dweck (2006) explained this idea of feedback saying, “Constructive [criticism] means to help fix something, build a better product, or do a better job” (p. 182). Peyton, an elementary principal, illustrated how important feedback is, saying, “writing notes of

encouragement is a very powerful thing and we, as principals, need to know how to make it individualized for the teachers.”

Blase and Blase (1994) explained how praise by the principal increases the efficiency of teachers, the teachers’ self-esteem, and creates greater motivation within staff. Sid agreed, explaining how the process of teacher evaluations has improved since the principal now begins with positive feedback. Sid explained, “For our year end meetings our principal starts out reading something positive about us and builds us up.” Jaime, another teacher, strengthened the need for feedback saying, “Our principal always leaves little notes on your table that tells you, you are doing an amazing job and Peyton will offer a lot of feedback and reinforcement.” Logan shared how positive feedback from their principal has had a profound impact on their morale. Logan shared, “Our principal writes notes pretty regularly when she knows somebody needs one or is proud of us, or personal notes and puts them in our box. I still have all of my notes.” Dallas also emphasized the need for principals to be specific when giving feedback, saying, “Giving us feedback as to how we are doing, and I mean specific feedback, not just a pat on the back and saying you’re doing a good job, but coming in and letting you know, is helpful to increasing morale.”

Relationships. Cherry (2012) discussed relationship theory, also known as transformational leadership. This theory focuses on the connections and relationships formed between leaders and followers. Leaders using a transformational approach strive to motivate and inspire people by helping group members see the importance of their overarching goals. “These leaders are focused on the performance of group members, but also want each person to fulfill his or her potential. Leaders with this style often have

high ethical and moral standards” (Cherry, 2012, para. 9). The teachers and principals of this study also discussed the need for authentic relationships among staff.

Sterrett (2011) explained how successful principals lead with a differentiated approach specific to their schools’ needs. In situational leadership theory Cherry (2012) suggested that leaders must choose the best course of action based upon current events. Situational theory suggests different styles of leadership may be more appropriate for certain types of decision-making (Cherry). These styles of leadership are best used only when the administrator has built a relationship with staff and can then differentiate their approach to each member of the team. Pat, a teacher, expressed the value of relationships saying, “Our principal works on those relationships, and works on building them and to me that just confirms that they care about us.” Ryan (2012) explained how these relationships might be built saying, “Effective school leaders interact daily with students, teachers, staff, and parents, and make themselves accessible both inside the building and out in the community” (p. 1). Jesse, a teacher, shared that it is important that her principal treats the faculty and staff like family:

I think first and foremost our principal values me as a person and also my family. Reed doesn’t just see me as staff but understands that I have family at home as well. That’s one thing that has helped morale. That Reed values us as individuals and has have gotten to know me as a person. The principal has also given us time to not just build relationships with just our team but with the whole staff.

According to Sterrett (2011), “successful leaders understand relationships are key in leading, learning, and living as an educator” (p.50). Fullan (2001) also pointed this out, noting “you can’t get anywhere without them...It’s the relationships that make the difference” (p. 51). Sterrett (2011) explained how successful educational leaders “build

regular touch points into their day, during which point they reach out to the school community” (p. 11). Sid explained how her principal has moved from just making touch points during school to continuing those touch points in their personal lives, thus fostering relationships beyond the school day. Sid said, “Our principal has a prayer request for us and she never fails to ask us how it’s going. It’s a personal remembrance.” Taylor also shared how relationships include principals getting to know teachers beyond the school walls by saying, “They know our families, they know our kids by first name and they probably know our dogs’ name. We are important to them just like they are important to us.”

Shared Leadership. Shared leadership was a topic of discussion for both principals and teachers and it was referenced several times for each group. Cherry (2012) discussed participative theories of leadership which petitions the input of others. Participative leadership theory introduces the idea of including and welcoming the ideas and input of others who are not the leader. Cory, a principal, explained, “Every teacher has a strength somewhere and you can play off the strengths of every teacher, through meetings or conferences, where we can share our learning.” Leaders using this theory encourage participation and contributions from group members and ensure group members feel more committed to the decision-making process (Cherry, 2012). Reed, a principal, explained, “I think the very thing that has helped more than anything since we started here is the idea of shared leadership, Just look for ways to showcase the teachers.” In quoting Jack Welch, former CEO of GE, Dweck (2006) pointed out the need for leaders to be open minded as he said, “True self-confidence is the courage to be open—to welcome change and new ideas regardless of their source. Real self-confidence is not reflected in a title, an expensive suit, a fancy car, or a series of acquisitions. It is reflected

in your mindset; your readiness to grow” (p. 127). According to Sterrett (2011), “A leader may need to vary his or her approach to recognize and capitalize on the diverse strengths of the organization while also working to optimize consistency and coherence” (p. 53). Reed, a principal, introduced the need for teacher value, saying, “We need to ensure that teachers have opportunities to share their strengths with others and to step up and know they are valued for what they bring to the table is very important.”

Jamie, a teacher, expressed that through shared leadership everyone’s opinion is valued. Jamie said, “Our principal doesn’t seem like an authority figure over us all the time. Cory will come to you to discuss solutions to problems. Our principals are very approachable.” Logan, another teacher, shared how the leadership style helps morale, saying, “I feel like we’re let in on making decisions together and that makes me feel like I count.” Riley, yet another teacher, discussed how it is important for the principal to be open to others’ ideas. Riley, a teacher, said, “When the principal is open and receptive to our thoughts and ideas, it helps our morale to increase.”

Many teachers also expressed that a top down or micromanaging approach from the leader decreases morale. Cherry (2012) explained how certain “transactional theories, focus on the role of supervision, organization and group performance, based on a system of rewards and punishments” (para. 8). Jaden shared how shared leadership might look in a public school,

Our principal trusts us to make those big decisions in our grade level, and wants our opinion in situations. The principal knows that we can take the leadership without her having to pick apart every little thing that we are doing, by micromanaging.

Jesse, a teacher, also emphasized the need to avoid micromanaging by saying, “Our principal trusts me to do my job and doesn’t seem to micromanage.” Morgan’s comment agreed with Jesse. “A micromanager would be a little difficult for me to handle.” Bailey supported this argument by also saying,

If you have a principal that’s kind of a micromanager and she has to have her hand in every little thing that happens that doesn’t encourage teachers to be risk takers or come up with interesting ideas or something because that just makes them afraid.

Finally, a few teachers also spoke to the need to avoid favoritism, or even the appearance of it, as it, too, can decrease morale. Jordan, a teacher, illustrated how favoritism will bring down morale by saying, “Well I think for negative there is favoritism and that will bring it down fast.” Alex also expressed a lack of support through favoritism as well, explaining, “If you aren’t treated fairly, or if they don’t have time for you, also if you don’t feel supported, then you are definitely going to lower your morale.”

Connections and Concerns

The findings of two studies, Hipp (1997) and The National Science Foundation (2012) both highlighted in the literature review, align very closely with the findings of this study. Hipp (1997) performed a qualitative study with several teachers, examining the relationship of leadership to teacher morale. The study consisted of interview questions designed to explore teacher morale and principal behaviors. The following principal behaviors were found to impact teacher morale: modeling behavior, inspiring group purpose, teacher recognition, providing support, managing student behavior, and developing a sense of community. The findings in this current study are similar to the

findings from Hipp's study in that principal attitude, feedback or recognition, teacher support, and a family culture were commonalities between the two studies.

The study conducted by The National Science Foundation (2012) also found several administrative practices which maintain positive teacher morale, including having good morale yourself, being a good communicator, involving others in decision-making, knowing the values of your community, holding high expectations, giving credit where credit is due, and obtaining the best staff possible. Again the findings in this current study are similar to the findings from the study conducted by the National Science Foundation in that principal attitude, communication, shared leadership, feedback or recognition, and creating a family culture were commonalities between the two studies. The behaviors teachers identified in this current study are similar to the behaviors noted by Hipp (1997) and The National Science foundation (2012). These behaviors include principal attitude, feedback or recognition, communication, teacher support, shared leadership, and creating a family culture. It is important to point out that these were six of the eight behaviors identified from the teachers included in this study.

Throughout this current study, a certain amount of disconnect between the teachers and the principals was noted. While there were several commonalities in what both groups viewed as principal behaviors that are important for a positive morale, there were several items teachers discussed that principals did not discuss, including principal attitude, communication and team work. Principal attitude was the principal behavior most mentioned by teachers that positively affects teacher morale, and was only mentioned one time by the principals. The next behavior is having an open line of communication, which was the third most frequently referenced behavior by teachers as a principal behavior having a positive effect on teacher morale. Again, principals did not

identify this leadership behavior or skill as one that would help teacher morale increase. Finally, teamwork was the sixth most referenced principal behavior mentioned by teachers that has a positive effect on teachers, and yet again the principals did not identify teams as an important part of education for which the leaders are responsible.

It is also important to note that the principals suggested maintaining high expectations as a behavior of principals that is responsible for increasing teacher morale, while teachers did not identify this behavior. These concerns, therefore, leave one to question why? Is the disconnect between principals and teachers based on the fact that the interview questions were open ended and principals just simply overlooked the aforementioned behaviors? Or is there a difference in philosophy from teacher to administrator that has not been discussed at the building, district, state or national level?

Finally it is also important to point out the concern that continues to come to mind concerning common core curriculum. This topic was referenced frequently from principals and teachers as a factor that plays a role in morale. While a direct connection to teacher attrition cannot be made with only the comments of these participants it does cause reason to wonder if there is a connection to the number of teachers leaving the profession to the changes in standards and expectations. The pressures and demands on school personnel can be very burdensome and can cause teachers to have a lower morale level or even to exit the profession (Hardy, 1999; Tye & O'Brien, 2002).

Conclusions

Research Question 1: What Principal Behaviors Increase Teacher Morale?

When teachers were interviewed, they referenced, in order of reoccurrence, principal attitude, teacher support, communication, feedback, relationships, teamwork, family culture, and shared leadership.

When principals were interviewed separately they referenced, in order of reoccurrence, teacher support, feedback, shared leadership, creating a family culture, and valuing teachers as having the biggest impact on increasing teacher morale.

In comparing the findings from the two separate groups one is immediately drawn to the number of similarities of emergent themes as well as the order in which the behaviors were ranked. Both groups ranked teacher support and feedback very high. It is also important to note the other characteristics the two groups had in common including creating a family culture and shared leadership. With the open-ended style of questioning in the interviews it is interesting the two groups indicated so many principal behaviors that were in common.

In contrast, it appears there is a difference between the two groups, specifically the need teachers have for a positive principal attitude and open communication. While there may be multiple reasons as to why principals did not mention these two behaviors, teachers referred to them often as having a positive impact on their morale.

Considering the data from the Pleasant School District one is left to conclude that there seems to be a minor communication barrier between teachers and principals. Although we cannot assume that this barrier is to blame for any of the nationwide increase in teacher attrition rates, it does lend itself to additional exploration. It appears that the teachers' perception of what increases teacher morale does not fully match up with what principals perceive to increase morale. Therefore, it is recommended that principals provide an opportunity for teachers to communicate to their principal, whether verbally or in writing, the behaviors they believe will impact their morale in a positive way.

The researcher thus concludes that although there are many elementary principal behaviors that principals and teachers agree upon which are responsible for increasing morale, there are still several others that need to be discussed between the two groups. If the principals continue to assume they know what increases their teachers' morale, school leaders will continue to have teacher morale issues. While the information gathered from each of the groups interviewed is valuable as they are current concerns in the Pleasant School District at this time, it is important to remember that they provide one small piece of the puzzle to better understand teacher morale.

Research Question 2: What Principal Behaviors Decrease Teacher Morale?

When teachers were interviewed separately they referenced, in order of reoccurrence, lack of teacher support, lack of communication, negativity, change or new initiatives, and feeling devalued. One is left to conclude that these are the emergent themes for this study in the Pleasant School District at this time as they were thus presented from the interview participants. When principals were interviewed separately they referenced, in order of reoccurrence, negativity, lack of teacher support, change or new initiatives, and valuing teachers.

When comparing the findings from the teacher and principal groups, one is immediately drawn to the number of similarities of emergent themes, as well as the order in which the behaviors were ranked. Of the five major emergent themes, four were similar. Again, with the open-ended style of questioning in the interviews it is interesting the two groups indicated many principal behaviors that were in common.

In contrast, it appears there continues to be one main difference between the two groups, the teachers' need for communication to increase. Teachers again commented multiple times about the fact that a lack of communication will decrease teacher morale.

One cannot assume that the principals in the study do not understand the need for communication, but it is interesting that teachers commented on the lack of communication and how it decreases morale. Again, communication failed to be a reoccurring theme for principals, while it reoccurred in teacher interviews multiple times.

With the data from the Pleasant School District one is left to conclude that the teachers' perception of what decreases teacher morale is closely related to what principals perceive to increase morale. It is still recommended that principals provide teachers and opportunity to communicate to their principal the behaviors they believe as having an impact on their morale in a negative way.

The researcher thus concludes that although there are many elementary principal behaviors that principals and teachers agree upon which are responsible for decreasing morale, there are still several others that need to be discussed between the two groups. If the principals continue to assume they know what decreases their teachers' morale, school leaders will continue to have teachers with low morale. These concerns must be discussed at a building level if they are to improve.

Finally, it is necessary to point out that there seems to be a connection between transformational leadership behaviors and positive teacher morale, as well as a connection between transactional leadership behaviors and negative teacher morale. Cory specifically pointed out time and again a feeling of needing to be a "barrier" between the powers that be and the teachers. Cory also explained how there are times when there are certain things the teachers do not need to know and will keep it off of their plate until next year. These explanations indicate Cory's understanding of the negative impact top down management can have on teachers, as Cory explained the need to protect them.

Cory is thus responding to a transactional leadership style and acting as a transition piece to change that into a transformational leadership style.

Implications for Educational Leaders

Findings from this study lead to several implications for leaders of education and their practices and behaviors. First, leaders should be made aware of the impact they have on teacher and building morale. Many teachers shared how they believed their principal's behavior impacted or could change teacher morale. Throughout the interviews teachers explained how something as small as not smiling at them in the hallway could have an impact on teacher morale. Principals must be more aware of their impact on teacher morale as they interact with teachers.

Second, leaders should send a survey to their teachers asking for feedback on how to best impact morale in their building. Although there were several themes that surfaced during this study it is necessary to remind readers that these findings are specific for the buildings that were studied. If a leader truly wants to know what will affect the morale of the teachers in her building she needs to talk with them and survey them to find out. A building-wide survey may allow for a leader to have a greater impact on teacher morale, while also being able to find out a few specific ideas that the leader may implement to help improve morale throughout the building. Using the themes from a building-wide generic survey would provide quick feedback to a principal to know how to best reach the majority of staff. Although there were themes that came from this study, it was interesting that every teacher had her own ideas, sometimes very personal ideas as to what she thought was the most impactful behavior from a principal.

Just as every teacher had her unique leadership behavior that she attributed to impacting morale, each principal had her own interpretation of what behaviors impacted

morale. School leaders must understand that their perception of what impacts teacher morale is not necessarily the same perception of their teachers. Again, leaders need to understand that their perception is not the same as their teachers' and morale is unique to every individual. Throughout the interviews it was brought to the surface that each and every teacher has her own favorite leadership behavior that will impact her morale in a positive way. Principals must not assume that impacting morale can be approached in the same manner for each individual. Boosting morale is not one size fits all. Principals must communicate with their staff on a personal level if they are to learn what impacts teachers on an individual level.

Next, leaders must understand that teachers believe principal attitude can have both a positive and negative affect on teacher morale. Principals included in this study seemed to understand that their negative attitude would have a negative impact on teachers, yet these same principals failed to mention that a positive attitude would have a positive impact on teachers. As was noted before, teachers mentioned a positive principal attitude more than any other behavior as having a positive impact on teacher morale. This must be a behavior that principals are continuously thinking about if they want to increase or maintain a high level of teacher morale. According to teachers, having a positive attitude is as simple as smiling at them, saying hello or good morning, asking them about their families, or just approaching unpleasant situations in a positive way. Many times teachers commented that a positive attitude from their principal impacted their morale in a positive way. For leaders this should be good news. Increasing or maintaining high levels of teacher morale may be as easy as being a positive person and having a positive disposition or outlook towards the many tasks at hand.

Finally, it is important for leaders to know that there is not a prescribed way of leading or a magic pill that will fix the morale issues in a specific building. What is working in one elementary school may not work in another because of the people and their unique attitudes, needs and experiences that have been shared. The teachers from each of the buildings in this study believed the morale in their building to be good, yet all of the administrators were leading their school in their own unique way. One could assume that these principals were implementing the positive behaviors identified by the teachers in these buildings. However, the principals' own style of leadership and their approach to how they individually worked with the personnel in their buildings came out during their interviews. It was easy to identify the common language these principals shared from one school to another and that each of these administrators understands the culture, climate, history and personnel unique to her building so as to know how to best impact the morale of each building.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following suggestions are recommendations for future research:

1. Future studies should include a list of principal behaviors for teachers to explore during the individual interviews to help generalize data.
2. Future studies could include a list of leadership behaviors from literature reviews assumed to impact morale and teachers could place them in rank order.
3. A mixed methods study would bring to light many factors which a qualitative study did not allow.
4. Future qualitative studies should be focused strictly on negative morale.
5. Future studies could compare what teachers are saying in interviews in terms of morale to how they are observed on a certain number of classroom observations.

6. Future research should be conducted strictly on the common core state standards and how they have had a direct result on teacher morale.
7. Future qualitative research could be done asking the principal and teacher participants to rank the identified behaviors to see if there is a correlation in how the behaviors are perceived in terms of importance.
8. Future study that allowed participants to respond by way of computer would allow for added confidentiality and would thus allow for additional feedback not obtained in an interview.
9. A future study may include individuals who have left the field of education to gain additional insight to some of the factors that cause teachers to change professions.
10. A study might include a teacher who would be willing to discuss more in depth about teacher morale and her experiences or specific factors that have increased or decreased her morale.

Summary

This study began with a concise history of education and the level of accountability schools are now faced with. The roles of the teachers and administrators were introduced, including the duty principals have in creating a positive environment. Transformational leadership was then introduced and connected to climate and culture of the school. Several pieces of literature were introduced to illustrate how the principal is responsible for environmental change in the building through culture, climate and leadership practices.

In Chapter Two several pieces of literature were explored as they related to the relationship between the morale of elementary teachers and the leadership behaviors of

elementary school principals. School climate and culture were discussed, followed by several current leadership theories and qualities. These leadership characteristics were then compared to those traits viewed as necessary for elementary principals. The leadership of the principal was also introduced. A brief history of the public school principal was explored, followed by a glimpse into the roles of the principal, both past and present. Principals and their role as the leader for building the climate and culture for the school were discussed. The literature then provided insights to teacher morale and factors which affect it. The effect teacher morale has on tenure and student achievement and how the elementary principal's behaviors may affect that morale were also discussed.

Leadership theories were then explored, adding insight to a myriad of different styles or techniques towards leadership. Teacher morale was also examined as teacher roles were introduced and factors which contribute to morale were developed. As the chapter was brought to a close, additional research was provided to support the need to build relationships specifically through the transformational leadership style. A case was also made for the need to increase teacher morale specifically as it is directly correlated to student achievement levels.

Finally, literature was introduced which explored the effect a principal has on teacher morale. This review of the related literature included several quantitative studies, some of which show a link between the leadership of the principal and the morale of the teachers. There was also qualitative research included which gave additional insight as to the perceptions of teachers on the relationship between teacher morale and leadership behaviors.

Chapter Three began with a brief history of the transformation of public schools and accountability. The guiding research questions were then introduced and an

overview of how the research was completed was presented. The current and landmark literature tying climate to principals, principals to teacher morale, and morale to teacher tenure and student success were also emphasized. Research to explain the need for specific methods and research strategies to validate the qualitative multi-site case study situated in the transformational leadership lens used to analyze the guiding questions was presented. The intended population and sample for this study were then defined. It was explained that the names of all elementary principals who had been in their buildings for at least five years would be placed in a hat and then selected at random. It was also explained that the names of the teachers of those three buildings would then be placed in a hat and also selected at random. The data collection procedures through these various interviews were then outlined, along with the study's limitations. Finally an overview was presented for data analysis to find common themes and develop the individual teacher experiences to further understand what principal behaviors affect teacher morale.

The data from participants in teacher and principal interviews were reported and analyzed in Chapter Four. Responses from the participants were grouped according to the two research questions and separated by principal and teacher to allow for clarity of perception. From Research Question One, behaviors that increase morale, findings for principals included teacher support, feedback, shared leadership, family culture and valuing teachers. Findings for teachers, again behaviors that increase morale, included principal attitude, teacher support, communication, feedback, relationships, team work, creating a family culture, and shared leadership. From Research Question Two, leadership behaviors that decrease morale, findings for principals included negativity, lack of support, change or new initiatives, valuing teachers and common core curriculum. Findings for teachers, again leadership behaviors that negatively affect morale, included

lack of support, lack of communication, negativity, change or new initiatives, feeling devalued and a final theme that was not tied to their leadership, common core curriculum.

The groupings were determined from the results of the participants.

Explored in Chapter Five were the data collected and presented in Chapter Four. Themes were pulled from the data and compared from one group of participants to the next. Findings were then compared to other research that had been conducted and the emergent themes were reported beginning with those themes that the principals and teachers had in common. The additional themes from the separate groups were then reported and discussed. The research questions were then answered with the data that was collected throughout the study. The data analysis allowed for the researcher to make connections to previous qualitative studies and then discuss any concerns that emerged from the findings. Finally the implications for elementary leaders were presented along with recommendations for future studies.

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(Appendix A) District Consent Letter (Approval)

To Whom It May Concern:

I have received and reviewed documentation indicating and explaining the intentions of Jacob S. Sherwood, doctoral student at the University of Missouri-Columbia, to study and to conduct research regarding elementary teacher morale and its relationship to the behaviors of elementary school principals in our school district. This letter is to acknowledge the study will be permitted in the [redacted] District upon approval by Internal Review Board (IRB) of the University of Missouri-Columbia. The study must also adhere to the following:

1. Confidentiality of the school district is to be strictly guarded.
2. Confidentiality of principal participation is to be strictly guarded.
3. Confidentiality of teacher participants, for both individual interviews and focus group Discussions, is to be strictly guarded.
4. All participants must be issued appropriate paperwork informing them of confidentiality, risk, and their ability not to participate if they so choose.
5. [redacted] students are not permitted to be interviewed or researched for this study.
6. The researcher will inform the central office administration team when the research is completed.
7. Upon completion of the research, the researcher will make the report available for district use.
8. No professional or individual publication, other than submittal of the dissertation, will occur without written approval of the [redacted] School District.

If you have questions, please contact me at |

Sincerely,

[redacted]
Assistant Superintendent

cc: Supervisor

Appendix B University Consent Letter (Approval)



Campus Institutional Review Board
University of Missouri-Columbia

485 McReynolds Hall
Columbia, MO 65211-1150
PHONE: (573) 882-9585
FAX: (573) 884-0663

December 19, 2012

Principal Investigator: Sherwood, Jacob S
Department: Education

Your Application to project entitled *A Study of the Perceptions of Leadership Behaviors and the Morale of Elementary Teachers in a Selectal School District* was reviewed and approved by the MU Campus Institutional Review Board according to terms and conditions described below:

IRB Project Number	1206137
Initial Application Approval Date	December 19, 2012
IRB Expiration Date	December 19, 2013
Level of Review	Expedited
Project Status	Active - Open to Enrollment
Expedited Categories	45 CFR 46.110 a(f)(6) 45 CFR 46.110 a(f)(7)
Risk Level	Minimal Risk
Type of Consent	Waiver of Documentation

The principal investigator (PI) is responsible for all aspects and conduct of this study. The PI must comply with the following conditions of the approval:

1. No subjects may be involved in any study procedure prior to the IRB approval date or after the expiration date.
2. All unanticipated problems, serious adverse events, and deviations must be reported to the IRB within 5 days.
3. All modifications must be IRB approved prior to implementation unless they are intended to reduce risk.
4. All recruitment materials and methods must be approved by the IRB prior to being used.
5. The Continuing Review Report must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval at least 30 days prior to the project expiration date.
6. Maintain all research records for a period of seven years from the project completion date.
7. Utilize the IRB stamped consent documents and other approved research documents located within the document storage section of eIRB.

If you have any questions, please contact the Campus IRB at 573-882-9585 or umcresearchcibr@missouri.edu

Thank you.

Charles Borduin, PhD
Campus IRB Chair

(Appendix C) Cover Letter to Principals Asking for Participation

Cover Letter

To Whom It May Concern:,

I am a student at the University of Missouri - Columbia and I am conducting a research study on the morale of elementary school teachers as it compares to the leadership behaviors of elementary school principals. The results of this study may benefit others by helping the Elementary Principals of the School District gain additional insight as to what elementary teachers perceive as leadership behaviors that increase or decrease teacher morale. The study results will be available for use to the administrators of the school district.

I am interested in your experiences in regard to what principal behaviors have increased or decreased your teacher morale in order to improve the practices of elementary principals throughout the district. I want to stress that **your participation in this study is voluntary and all efforts will be taken to protect your identity and keep any collected data and information confidential.**

I have enclosed a consent form for your review that offers more information. Please read the form and feel free to contact me if you have any questions about the study. If you choose to participate, please sign, and date the consent information form. Your participation will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Jacob Sherwood
University of Missouri ELPA Doctoral Student
1013 Sloane Sq.
Cave Springs, AR 72718

1-417-229-3021

Questions concerning your rights as a participant in this research may be addressed to the Campus Institutional Review Board at (573) 882-9585.

INFORMED CONSENT FORM (Interview)

Name of Study: A Research Study on Elementary Teacher Morale and Principal Leadership Behaviors.

Identification of Researchers: This research is being conducted by Jacob Sherwood, a doctoral student in the University of Missouri-Columbia statewide EdD program in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis. Jacob Sherwood is working in conjunction with Dr. Sandy Hutchinson.

Jake Sherwood	Phone: 417-229-3021	e-mail: jkshrwd@yahoo.com
Sandy Hutchinson	Phone: (816) 405-9306	e-mail: hutchinson@ucmo.edu

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to determine what elementary principal behaviors teachers perceive to be responsible for increasing and decreasing elementary teacher morale.

Request for Participation: We are inviting you to participate in a study as part of research to determine what principal leadership behaviors have attributed to teacher morale in your building. Participants are being asked to participate in a 1 hour individual interview with open-ended questions. It is up to you whether you would like to participate. If you decide not to participate, you will not be penalized in any way. You can also decide to stop the interview at any time without penalty. If you do not wish to answer any of the questions, you may simply skip them.

Exclusions: You must be an elementary principal or assistant principal in the school district.

Description of Research Method: This interview is intended to gather information about overall teacher morale and how your behaviors as the school administrator may play a role in those feelings. You will be given an opportunity to supply information and opinions through open-ended questions.

Privacy: All personally identifiable information will be kept confidential. Only the researcher will have access to your contact information and responses. Your responses will be recorded on a form that contains a code created by the researcher. Your responses will not be shared. Although interviews for this portion of the research are completed in a one on one setting, participants will be referred to by a pseudonym. All data will be kept in a locked, secure, filing cabinet.

Explanation of Risks: By participating in the interview, we assume that you give informed consent and understand the conditions, risks, and safeguards of this interview as described in this form. The risks associated with this study are no greater than those risks involved with teachers talking as they usually would about their school climate/culture/morale. Risks are no greater than those associated with the everyday

conversations of teachers in school buildings. Your participation is voluntary. You can exit from the interview at any time. If you choose to exit the interview any data supplied by you will be eliminated from the findings.

It is not the policy of the University of Missouri to compensate human subjects in the event the research results in injury. The University of Missouri, in fulfilling its public responsibility, has provided medical, professional and general liability insurance coverage for any injury in the event such injury is caused by the negligence of the University of Missouri, its faculty and staff. The University of Missouri also provides, within the limitations of the laws of the State of Missouri, facilities and medical attention to subjects who suffer injuries while participating in the research projects of the University of Missouri. In the event you have suffered injury as the result of participation in this research program, you are to contact the Risk Management Officer, telephone number (573) 882-1181, at the Health Sciences Center, who can review the matter and provide further information. This statement is not to be construed as an admission of liability.

Explanation of Benefits: Your participation may benefit others by helping the Elementary Principals of the school district understand what leadership behaviors may increase or decrease teacher morale. This study may also benefit others by identifying areas of strengths and weakness in the preparation of administrators. Ultimately it is hoped that students will benefit by increased teacher morale.

Questions: If you have any questions about this study, please contact Dr. Sandy Hutchinson. She can be reached at hutchinson@ucmo.edu or at (816) 405-9306. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Campus Institutional Review Board at (573) 882-9585.

I have read the material above and any questions I asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand a copy of this form will be made available to me for the relevant information and phone numbers. I realize that I may withdraw without prejudice at any time.

INFORMED CONSENT FORM (Teacher Interview)

Name of Study: A Research Study on Elementary Teacher Morale and Principal Leadership Behaviors.

Identification of Researchers: This research is being conducted by Jacob Sherwood, a doctoral student in the University of Missouri-Columbia statewide EdD program in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis. Jacob Sherwood is working in conjunction with Dr. Sandy Hutchinson.

Jake Sherwood	Phone: 417-229-3021	e-mail: jkshrwd@yahoo.com
Sandy Hutchinson	Phone: (816) 405-9306	e-mail: hutchinson@ucmo.edu

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to determine what elementary principal behaviors teachers perceive to be responsible for increasing and decreasing elementary teacher morale.

Request for Participation: We are inviting you to participate in a study as part of research to determine what principal leadership traits have attributed to your morale. Participants are being asked to participate in a 1 hour individual interview with open-ended questions. It is up to you whether you would like to participate. If you decide not to participate, you will not be penalized in any way. You can also decide to stop the interview at any time without penalty. If you do not wish to answer any of the questions, you may simply skip them.

Exclusions: You must be an elementary certified teacher employed as an elementary teacher in the school district.

Description of Research Method: This interview is intended to gather information about your overall morale and how the behaviors of your school administrator may play a role in those feelings. You will be given an opportunity to supply information and opinions through open-ended questions.

Privacy: All personally identifiable information will be kept confidential. Only the researcher will have access to your contact information and responses. Your responses will be recorded on a form that contains a code created by the researcher. Your responses will not be shared with your principal. Although interviews for this portion of the research are completed in a one on one setting, participants will be referred to by a pseudonym. All data will be kept in a locked, secure, filing cabinet.

Explanation of Risks: By participating in the interview, we assume that you give informed consent and understand the conditions, risks, and safeguards of this interview as described in this form. The risks associated with this study are no greater than those risks involved with teachers talking as they usually would about their school climate/culture/morale. Risks are no greater than those associated with the everyday

conversations of teachers in school buildings. Your participation is voluntary. You can exit from the interview at any time. If you choose to exit the interview any data supplied by you will be eliminated from the findings.

It is not the policy of the University of Missouri to compensate human subjects in the event the research results in injury. The University of Missouri, in fulfilling its public responsibility, has provided medical, professional and general liability insurance coverage for any injury in the event such injury is caused by the negligence of the University of Missouri, its faculty and staff. The University of Missouri also provides, within the limitations of the laws of the State of Missouri, facilities and medical attention to subjects who suffer injuries while participating in the research projects of the University of Missouri. In the event you have suffered injury as the result of participation in this research program, you are to contact the Risk Management Officer, telephone number (573) 882-1181, at the Health Sciences Center, who can review the matter and provide further information. This statement is not to be construed as an admission of liability.

Explanation of Benefits: Your participation may benefit others by helping the Elementary Principals of the school district understand what leadership behaviors may increase or decrease teacher morale. This study may also benefit others by identifying areas of strengths and weakness in the preparation of administrators. Ultimately it is hoped that students will benefit by increased teacher morale.

Questions: If you have any questions about this study, please contact Dr. Sandy Hutchinson. She can be reached at hutchinson@ucmo.edu or at (816) 405-9306. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Campus Institutional Review Board at (573) 882-9585.

I have read the material above, and any questions I asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand a copy of this form will be made available to me for the relevant information and phone numbers. I realize that I may withdraw without prejudice at any time.

(Appendix F) Introductory Letter for Teacher Interviews

To Whom It May Concern:,

I am a student at the University of Missouri - Columbia, and I am conducting a research study on the morale of elementary school teachers as it compares to the leadership behaviors of elementary school principals. The results of this study may benefit others by helping the Elementary Principals of the School District gain additional insight as to what elementary teachers perceive as leadership behaviors that increase or decrease teacher morale. This study may also benefit others by identifying areas of strengths and weakness in the preparation of administrators. The study results will be available for use to the administrators of the school district.

I am interested in your experiences in regards to what principal behaviors have increased or decreased your personal morale in order to improve the practices and behaviors of elementary principals throughout the district. I want to stress that **your participation in this study is voluntary and all efforts will be taken to protect your identity and keep any collected data and information confidential.**

I have enclosed a consent form for your review, that offers more information if you are willing to participate in this study I have enclosed a consent form for your review. Please read the form and feel free to contact me if you have any questions about the study. If you choose to participate, please sign, initial and date the consent information form and return it to Jacob Sherwood at Harp Elementary. Your participation will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Jacob Sherwood
University of Missouri ELPA Doctoral Student
1013 Sloane Sq.
Cave Springs, AR 72718

1-417-229-3021

Questions concerning your rights as a participant in this research may be addressed to the Campus Institutional Review Board at (573) 882-9585.

(Appendix G) Individual Interview Guiding Questions for Teachers

Guiding Questions for Individual Interviews

1. How long have you taught for the Pleasant School District?
2. What grades have you taught during your tenure?
3. How long have you taught in this building?
4. What is your educational background, including degrees?
5. What leadership roles have you had in your building?
6. How has your overall experience been with the district?
7. How would you define the term “morale?” (For the sake of this study teacher morale will be defined as a representation of the teachers’ job satisfaction.)
8. How would you describe your current level of morale? Why?
9. How would you describe the morale of the building? Why?
10. What factors have contributed to your morale during your tenure with Pleasant Schools?
11. What specific experiences have you had that had an effect on your morale?
12. How has your principal played a role in determining your morale?
13. What principal behaviors can you identify that caused your morale to increase/decrease?
14. Have you ever considered changing professions?
 - a. When did this occur?
 - b. What contributed to the reasons for wanting to make this change?
 - c. How did your principal contribute to your wanting to leave?
 - d. How did your principal contribute to your decision to continue as a teacher?
15. How do elementary principal leadership behaviors influence the morale of elementary school teachers?
16. What principal behaviors do elementary teachers attribute to increasing teacher morale?

17. What principal behaviors do elementary teachers attribute to decreasing teacher morale?
18. In what ways does your principal's behavior influence the way teachers behave?
19. Is there any other information you would like to mention in regards to your principal's behaviors that have had an effect on your morale or your overall effectiveness as a teacher?

(Appendix H) Individual Principal Interview Guiding Questions

Guiding Questions for Individual Principal Interviews

1. How long have you been a principal for the Pleasant School District?
2. Prior to being an administrator what grades have you taught?
3. How has your overall experience been with the district?
4. How would you define the term “morale?” (For the sake of this study teacher morale will be defined as a representation of the teachers’ job satisfaction.)
5. How would you describe your teachers’ current level of morale? Why?
6. What factors have contributed to your teachers’ morale during their tenure with Pleasant Schools?
7. How do you as the principal play a role in determining your teachers’ morale?
8. What principal behaviors can you identify that cause your teacher’s morale to increase/decrease?
9. Have you ever thought a teacher might change professions due to your behavior?
 - a. What principal behaviors might contribute to teacher to change?
 - b. What principal behaviors might contribute to teachers continuing on as a teacher?
10. How do elementary principal leadership behaviors influence the morale of elementary school teachers?
11. What principal behaviors might elementary teachers attribute to increasing teacher morale?
12. What principal behaviors might elementary teachers attribute to decreasing teacher morale?
13. What do you do that you believe improves the morale of teachers in your building?
14. What are some things you have done that you believe had a negative influence on teacher morale?
15. Can you tell me about specific experiences, or conversations you have had with a teacher where you knew you were affecting their morale either for good or bad?
16. In what ways does your behavior as the principal influence the way teachers behave?

17. Is there any other information you would like to mention in regards to principal behaviors that have had an effect on teacher morale or their overall effectiveness as a teacher?

(Appendix I) Debriefing Form

Participant Debriefing Form

Thank you for participating in the study focused on elementary teacher morale as it relates to elementary principal behaviors. The study was designed to identify specific behaviors of principals that may increase or decrease teacher morale, and I appreciate your individual experiences and insight in identifying those behaviors. Please note that your privacy and personal information will remain in confidence. The results of this study will be available in dissertation form in the near future, and results will be shared.

I thank you for your participation in this study. If you have any questions regarding this study, please feel free to ask the researcher at jsherwood@sdale.org or at (417) 229-3021 or you may contact Dr. Hutchinson at hutchinson@ucmo.edu or at (816) 405-9306. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Campus Institutional Review Board at (573) 882-9585.

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Vita

Jacob Sherwood has served in public education for ten years, beginning his career in Missouri as an Elementary and Middle School Migrant teacher, Spanish teacher and basketball coach. Mr. Sherwood also served as a K-12 Principal and High School Athletic Director in Missouri before accepting a position as an administrator in Arkansas, where he currently resides with his wife and four children. Mr. Sherwood plans on continuing in the field of education and serving the parents and students of Arkansas for many years to come.