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by

Jennifer Winans Muraco

May 2013

A COMPARISON OF PRINCIPALS' AND ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS'  
PERCEPTIONS OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD SCHOOL  
AND CULTURE

A Doctoral Thesis Presented to the  
Faculty of the College of Education  
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education  
in Professional Leadership

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## **Dedication**

For Doug and Irene Winans,

This book is dedicated to my parents, Doug and Irene Winans. Without your support, I would not be the person I am today. You have always encouraged me to pursue aspirations I never thought I could achieve. Your constant support and faith has helped me realize anything is possible and helped my dreams become a reality.

For your love, patience, and unyielding guidance throughout my entire life, from the bottom of my heart, I truly want to thank you. I dedicate this, my doctoral dissertation, to you. I love you both very much.

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to compare the principals' and assistant principals' perceptions of the characteristics of a good school and culture. This study is significant because of the expectations school leaders face today in improving student achievement as measured by the new State of Texas accountability assessment. Research indicated that improving the school's climate and culture will increase student achievement (Hoy and Tarter, 1997). Research also stated that school leaders have a great impact on school climate and student achievement (Guthrie and Schuermann, 2011). Principals and assistant principals work together to create quality schools and build school cultures.

This study was composed of archival data collected by interviewing 311 campus principals and 371 assistant principals in the Gulf Coast Region of Southeast Texas. This study examined the responses from two open-ended questions part of a larger, multiphase study. The results from both research questions identified five major characteristics by principals and assistant principals. The characteristics were (1) student achievement and academic focus, (2) professional development and professional learning communities, (3) parental and community involvement, (4) positive climate and (5) strong leadership. In this comparative study, the researcher used a descriptive model to compare the perceptions that principals and assistant principals have regarding good schools and cultures.



## Table of Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Chapter 1 .....   | 1  |
| Introduction .....  | 1  |
| Statement of the Problem .....                                    | 3  |
| Purpose of the Study .....  | 5  |
| Overview of Methodology .....                                     | 6  |
| Research Questions .....  | 6  |
| Definition of Terms .....   | 7  |
| Limitations .....   | 8  |
| Chapter 2 .....   | 9  |
| Literature Review .....   | 9  |
| The Role of the Principal .....                                   | 9  |
| The Role of the Assistant Principal .....                         | 13 |
| The Difference Between School Climate and Culture .....           | 16 |
| Climate .....   | 18 |
| The Ten Dimensions of Organizational Health .....                 | 22 |
| Culture .....   | 23 |
| Student Achievement .....   | 29 |
| Professional Development .....                                    | 34 |
| Professional Learning Communities .....                           | 38 |
| Parental and Community Involvement .....                          | 41 |
| Strong Leadership .....   | 44 |
| Chapter 3 .....   | 51 |
| Methodology .....   | 51 |
| Introduction .....  | 51 |
| Setting .....   | 53 |
| Sample .....  | 53 |
| Data Collection Procedures .....                                  | 58 |
| Methodology Instrumentation .....                                 | 59 |
| Data Analysis .....   | 60 |
| Limitations .....   | 61 |
| Chapter 4 .....   | 62 |
| Results .....   | 62 |
| Research Question One .....                                       | 66 |
| Student Achievement/ Academic Focus .....                         | 68 |
| Student Centered .....  | 73 |
| Strong Leadership .....   | 77 |
| Positive Climate .....  | 82 |
| Parental and Community Involvement .....                          | 86 |
| Professional Development/ Professional Learning Communities ..... | 90 |
| Student Discipline .....  | 94 |
| Research Question Two .....                                       | 98 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Student Achievement/Academic Focus .....                          | 101 |
| Positive Climate .....  | 106 |
| Student Centered and Valuing the Student .....                    | 110 |
| Parental and Community Involvement .....                          | 115 |
| Professional Development/ Professional Learning Communities ..... | 120 |
| Conclusion .....  | 124 |
| Chapter 5 .....   | 126 |
| Conclusions .....   | 126 |
| Overview of Study .....   | 126 |
| Discussion of Results .....                                       | 127 |
| Research Questions .....  | 128 |
| Research Question One .....                                       | 128 |
| Research Question Two .....                                       | 129 |
| Characteristics Describing a Good School and Culture .....        | 130 |
| Implications for School Leaders .....                             | 136 |
| Implications for Further Research .....                           | 137 |
| Conclusions .....   | 138 |
| References .....  | 141 |
| Appendix A .....  | 150 |
| Appendix B .....  | 151 |

## **List of Tables**

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Table 3-1 Gender Breakdown of 311 Campus Principals .....                           | 53 |
| Table 3-2 Ethnic Breakdown of 311 Campus Principals.....                            | 53 |
| Table 3-3 Texas Accountability Ratings of 311 Campus Principals .....               | 54 |
| Table 3-4 Setting of Schools of 311 Campus Principals .....                         | 55 |
| Table 3-5 Gender Breakdown of 371 Campus Assistant Principals.....                  | 56 |
| Table 3-6 Ethnic Breakdown of 371 Campus Assistant Principals .....                 | 56 |
| Table 3-7 Texas Accountability Ratings of 371 Campus Assistant Principals .....     | 57 |
| Table 3-8 Setting of Schools of 371 Campus Assistant Principals.....                | 58 |
| Table 4-1 Frequency and Percentage of Participants' Gender .....                    | 62 |
| Table 4-2 Frequency and Percentage of Participants' Ethnicity .....                 | 63 |
| Table 4-3 Frequency and Percentage of Participants' State Accountability.....       | 64 |
| Table 4-4 Frequency and Percentage of Participants' Setting of Schools.....         | 65 |
| Table 4-5 Frequency and Percentage of Participants' Administrative Experience ..... | 65 |
| Table 4-6 Combined Responses of Participants' Descriptions of a Good School .....   | 67 |
| Table 4-7 Student Achievement/Academic Focus and Participants' Gender.....          | 70 |
| Table 4-8 Student Achievement/Academic Focus and Administrative Experience .....    | 71 |
| Table 4-9 Student Achievement/Academic Focus and State Accountability .....         | 72 |
| Table 4-10 Student Achievement/Academic Focus and Setting of Schools.....           | 73 |
| Table 4-11 Student Centered and Participants' Gender .....                          | 74 |
| Table 4-12 Student Centered and Administrative Experience.....                      | 75 |
| Table 4-13 Student Centered and State Accountability .....                          | 76 |
| Table 4-14 Student Centered and Setting of Schools .....                            | 77 |
| Table 4-15 Strong Leadership and Participants' Gender .....                         | 79 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Table 4-16 Strong Leadership and Administrative Experience .....                      | 80  |
| Table 4-17 Strong Leadership and State Accountability .....                           | 81  |
| Table 4-18 Strong Leadership and Setting of Schools.....                              | 82  |
| Table 4-19 Positive Climate and Participants' Gender .....                            | 84  |
| Table 4-20 Positive Climate and Administrative Experience.....                        | 84  |
| Table 4-21 Positive Climate and State Accountability .....                            | 85  |
| Table 4-22 Positive Climate and Setting of Schools .....                              | 86  |
| Table 4-23 Parental & Community Involvement and Participants' Gender .....            | 88  |
| Table 4-24 Parental & Community Involvement and Administrative Experience.....        | 88  |
| Table 4-25 Parental & Community Involvement and State Accountability .....            | 89  |
| Table 4-26 Parental & Community Involvement and Setting of Schools .....              | 90  |
| Table 4-27 Professional Development/PLCs and Participants' Gender.....                | 92  |
| Table 4-28 Professional Development/PLCs and Administrative Experience .....          | 92  |
| Table 4-29 Professional Development/PLCs and State Accountability .....               | 93  |
| Table 4-30 Professional Development/PLCs and Setting of Schools.....                  | 94  |
| Table 4-31 Student Discipline and Participants' Gender .....                          | 95  |
| Table 4-32 Student Discipline and Administrative Experience.....                      | 96  |
| Table 4-33 Student Discipline and State Accountability .....                          | 97  |
| Table 4-34 Student Discipline and Setting of Schools .....                            | 98  |
| Table 4-35 Responses of Participants' Descriptions of the Culture of a Good School... | 100 |
| Table 4-36 Student Achievement/Academic Focus and Participants' Gender .....          | 103 |
| Table 4-37 Student Achievement/Academic Focus and Administrative Experience .....     | 104 |
| Table 4-38 Student Achievement/Academic Focus and State Accountability .....          | 105 |
| Table 4-39 Student Achievement/Academic Focus and Setting of Schools.....             | 106 |
| Table 4-40 Positive Climate and Participants' Gender .....                            | 108 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Table 4-41 Positive Climate and Administrative Experience.....   | 108 |
| Table 4-42 Positive Climate and State Accountability .....   | 109 |
| Table 4-43 Positive Climate and Setting of Schools .....   | 110 |
| Table 4-44 Student Centered and Participants' Gender .....   | 112 |
| Table 4-45 Student Centered and Administrative Experience.....   | 113 |
| Table 4-46 Student Centered and State Accountability .....   | 114 |
| Table 4-47 Student Centered and Setting of Schools .....   | 115 |
| Table 4-48 Parental & Community Involvement and Participants' Gender .....                                     | 117 |
| Table 4-49 Parental & Community Involvement and Administrative Experience.....                                 | 118 |
| Table 4-50 Parental & Community Involvement and State Accountability .....                                     | 119 |
| Table 4-51 Parental & Community Involvement and Setting of Schools .....                                       | 120 |
| Table 4-52 Professional Development/PLCs and Participants' Gender.....   | 122 |
| Table 4-53 Professional Development/PLCs and Administrative Experience .....                                   | 122 |
| Table 4-54 Professional Development/PLCs and State Accountability .....  | 123 |
| Table 4-55 Professional Development/PLCs and Setting of Schools.....   | 124 |
| Table 4-56 Comparison of Principals' and Assistant Principals' Perceptions of a Good<br>School & Culture ..... | 125 |

## **List of Illustrations**

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Illustration 4-1 Participants' Descriptions of a Good School.....                 | 68  |
| Illustration 4-2 Participants' Descriptions of the Culture of a Good School ..... | 101 |

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

The school principal must fill many roles on a campus. One of the most important roles of the principal is to build a positive school climate. Gonder & Hymes (1994) declared that a principal's attention to climate is important to ensure that morale stays high and the staff can be most effective. A positive school climate promotes a better learning environment, a more collaborative decision making process, and collegial faculty relationships. In addition, healthy school climates promote student achievement. Lezotte and McKee (2006) argued, "Only healthy organizations will be able to create and maintain places where all students succeed." The new State of Texas assessment has raised the expectations for student performance. The principal's role is to maintain an effective school and build a positive school culture in an effort to increase student achievement.

Second only to the campus principal is the assistant principal. The assistant principal serves in a mid-management position, which may lead to the principalship. The principal often serves as a mentor to the assistant principal. Traditionally, assistant principals managed the daily operations of the school, such as lunch duty and student discipline. Today, assistant principals find themselves more involved regarding instruction and school climate. The assistant principal has a major role in influencing and shaping the school climate and culture.

Much of the current literature focuses on 'effective' schools and how we develop our schools as community. The latest nomenclature used is 'good' schools. Sergiovanni (2009) explained in a good school there is an atmosphere of encouragement in which "students are praised and rewarded; a work centered environment; and high optimism and

expectations for student learning” (p 198). Hudson (2009) described a good school as being collaborative, is student centered, has explicit high expectations, has shared values and goals, is linked with the business community and home, and provides an effective learning environment. Research found on good schools includes student achievement, collegiality, positive culture and climate, and strong leadership.

This study compared the perceptions of the principal and assistant principal in regard to the characteristics of a good school and culture. Research indicated that improving the school’s climate and culture will increase student achievement (Hoy and Tarter, 1997). Research also stated that school leaders have a great impact on school climate and student achievement (Guthrie and Schuermann, 2011). The principal and assistant principal must work together to improve the school and culture for student success.

School leaders are under pressure to establish good schools. Johnson (2012) acknowledged the state and federal governments’ policies pressure school leaders, “to address the problems of persistently low-performing schools squarely and forcefully, and there are no guarantees about which options work best in every circumstance” (p 114). In order to respond to the public concern regarding education and the governments’ pressure, school leaders must reflect on what it takes to maintain a good school. Each school and situation is uniquely different, but the survey responses from 311 principals and 371 assistant principals in the Gulf Coast Region of Southeast Texas agreed on the major characteristics of a good school and culture. The characteristics included a focus on student achievement and academic focus, professional development and professional learning communities, parental and community involvement, positive climate and strong



leadership. The school leaders need to determine which areas of their school needs adjustments and design a plan to make it happen. School leaders need to collaborate with stakeholders including parents, community members, and teachers in designing the plan and rely on the stakeholders to help ensure the plan becomes a reality.

School leaders should also reflect on what it takes to build a good school culture. Research confirmed that schools with good cultures are able to adapt to change and improve student achievement. Hoy and DiPaola (2007) asserted, “Climate has a major impact on organizational performance because it affects the motivations of individuals. Interpersonal relationships among teachers and between principals and teachers directly shape motivation and behavior” (p 28). The school principals and assistant principals agreed that student achievement, positive climate, strong leadership, parent and community involvement, and professional development help shape a positive school culture. Lunenburg and Ornstein (2012) positioned that administrators are judged on the results they achieve and, “the organization’s culture is an important concept because of the results it produces” (p 62).

This study provided evidence that in order for a school to be considered a “good school”, based on the perceptions of the principals and assistant principals, a positive school climate and culture must be established first. The positive school climate and culture provides the best learning environment for students, the best working environment for staff, and the best supporting environment for change.

### **Statement of the Problem**

School leaders are under pressure from the state and federal governments to improve student achievement and establish effective schools. In order to respond to the

public concern regarding education and the governments' pressure, school leaders must reflect on what it takes to make a good school. School leaders face greater expectations today in improving student achievement. The pressure is at an all time high with the new State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness or STAAR test. There is an increase in rigor in this state assessment, which makes the need for the campus faculty to work together even more important to ensure student success. The school leadership needs to be able to motivate teachers and encourage students to succeed in order to achieve STAAR's high academic standards. Principals need to build positive working relationships, set a vision for the staff, and get the team inspired. Assistant principals need to provide support for the principal in an effort to improve the qualities of the school and culture. Hoy and Tarter (1997) asserted that quality schools develop climates and cultures that promote academic achievement. The principal and assistant principal should work collegially with the staff to ensure student success in an effort to answer the demands of state assessment accountability.

Furthermore, the principal and assistant principal need to work together to lead the school to success. The principal cannot work alone in a quest to ensure student success. Very little research exists on the role of the assistant principal. Marshall (1992) argued if the assistant principal is critical to the overall success of the school, researchers should explore deeper into the assistant principalship. This study contributed to the research examining the role of the assistant principal. The principal depends on the assistant principal to handle most of the daily management of the school. The assistant principal is also involved in curriculum and instruction, professional development, professional learning communities, parent-teacher conferences, and continuous student

involvement. Due to the active role the assistant principal plays in the overall success of the school, the principal and assistant principal must work collaboratively to ensure the success of the school and to build a positive school culture.

School leaders should improve their schools and foster a positive school culture in order to increase student achievement. Chapter Two of this study reviewed many books and articles which explained the need for good schools and positive school cultures. Despite all of the research, not every school has one or even seems to be working toward a positive school climate. School administrators struggle with the best course to take to improve their school and culture. With the new state assessment and accountability expectations, it would benefit all principals and assistant principals to review their school climates and make improvements. Job satisfaction, productivity, and student achievement will improve with a positive school environment. Gonder and Hymes (1994) found that school leadership is imperative in shaping and maintaining a positive culture and climate. In an effort to improve the school, principals and assistant principals must collaborate as the leadership of the school to foster a positive school culture and increase student achievement.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to compare the beliefs and perceptions of principals and assistant principals about what constitutes a good school and what shapes a positive school culture. The study compared the perceptions of the principal and assistant principal to find similarities and differences about their descriptions of good schools and cultures. The study focused on the survey responses of principals and assistant principals

from the Gulf Coast Region of Southeast Texas for a school to be considered a good school and their descriptions of healthy school climates and cultures.

### **Overview of Methodology**

Archival data was used in this survey. Participants in the study consisted of 311 principals and 371 assistant principals. The survey was the instrument of a multiphase project. The survey included 115 items, twenty-two items gathered information regarding the participants, such as demographic information and school accountability ratings. There were sixty-two Likert scale items, which provided quantitative data. There were also thirty-one open-ended questions, which collected qualitative data. This study focused on the responses of the principals and assistant principals on two of the open-ended questions in Section B.

The design of this study used a combination of traditional survey and cognitive interviewing techniques to address the questions related to good schools and cultures. A mixed methods approach was used since the traditional survey portion was quantitative and the interview portion contained open-ended questions provided qualitative data.

### **Research Questions**

The goal of this study was to compare the responses and examine the differences of principals and assistant principals in regard to good schools and cultures. The two guiding research questions were:

1. Do principals' and assistant principals' perceptions differ on the characteristics of a good school?
2. Do principals' and assistant principals' perceptions differ on how they describe the culture of a good school?

## **Definition of Terms**

- Principal- a person who fulfills the role of the campus leader and does not report to any other personnel on a school campus.
- Assistant Principal- A mid-management level position for those interested in a career in school administration and may be responsible for many of the same tasks as principals.
- Culture- deep patterns of values, beliefs and traditions and that have been formed over time in a school's history.
- Climate- the traditions, values, language, purpose, unwritten rules, assumptions, symbols and artifacts of a school.
- Organizational Health Inventory (OHI)- an instrument used to measure organizational health within ten different dimensions.
- TEA- Texas Education Agency is a branch of the state government of Texas responsible for public education and headquartered in Austin, Texas.
- Accountability Rating- ratings from TEA that include Exemplary schools, Recognized schools, Acceptable schools, and Unacceptable schools. The ratings are based on the students' passing rate of the state assessments.
- TAKS- Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills is the test formerly used within the State of Texas to measure student achievement.
- STAAR- State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness is the state assessment, which began Spring 2012, replaced the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). The STAAR program at grades 3–8 assesses the same subjects and grades that TAKS assessed. At high school, however, grade-

specific assessments were replaced with 12 end-of-course (EOC) assessments:

Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, English I, English II, English III, World Geography, World History, and U.S. History.

- AEIS- Academic Excellence Indicator System is a collection of annual reports pulled together consisting of a wide range of information on the performance of students in each school and district in Texas.
- Likert-scale- an individual responds to a series of statements or questions by indicating the extent of agreement. Each choice is allotted a numerical value and the total score is presumed to indicate the attitude or belief in question (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009).

### **Limitations**

The study was limited by:

1. Graduate students were allowed to select the principals and assistant principals they would interview. This often included administrators from the same district in which they worked. The population sample was limited.
2. Not all active principals and assistant principals in the area were asked to participate in the study. This study used archival data of an exploratory study given to principals and assistant principals in the Gulf Coast Region of Southeast Texas. The administrators who participated in the survey were asked specifically by graduate students who administered the survey.
3. Candid responses of the survey. Participants provided their names to the survey and often personally knew the graduate student interviewing them. Participant responses may be skewed, since the answers were not anonymous.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

This review of literature examined the following areas: the role of the principal and assistant principal and the difference between climate and culture. It reviewed the characteristics identified by principals and assistant principals as being important to a good school and culture including student achievement, professional development, professional learning communities, parental and community involvement, and strong leadership.

#### **The Role of the Principal**

A school principal is the primary leader in a school building. Meador (2013) asserted a principal should be enthusiastic, positive and, “have their hand in the day to day activities of school and listen to what their constituents are saying” (p 1).

The school principal is responsible for the overall operations of the school. The role of the principal covers many different areas, including hiring and evaluating the staff, student learning, parent and community relations, setting schedules and well-being of all students. The school principal must prioritize tasks and be flexible with his or her schedule to hear the concerns of teachers and ensure student safety.

The role of the school principal has changed over the years. Wilmore (2002) explained that in the past, the principal served as the ‘principal teacher’, a master teacher responsible for the overall organization and operations of the school. The principal has also been known to be the manager of the school, with the focus being on management and operations. Today’s principal is no longer simply a manager, but also an instructional leader, student advocate, teacher motivator, and culture builder. Place (2011) argued that true leadership comes from a caring attitude toward everyone in the

organization and, “leadership without good management will fail, just as management without good leadership will also fail” (p 41). The principal must collaborate with all stakeholders in an effort to serve as instructional leader and manager of a school.

Qualifications to serve as a school principal in the State of Texas include a master’s degree or higher, a valid state certificate to practice as a school principal, and at least two years experience as a classroom teacher. In order to be eligible for the principal certificate, potential administrators must pass the TExES (Texas Examinations of Educator Standards) Principal exam. According to the TExES Principal Preparation Manual, the exam consists of three domains and nine competencies.

The domains include: Domain I- School Community Leadership, Domain II- Instructional Leadership, and Domain III- Administrative Leadership.

School Community Leadership represents Domain I. The three competencies include:

- The principal knows how to shape campus culture by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.
- The principal knows how to communicate and collaborate with all members of the school community, respond to diverse interests and needs, and mobilize resources to promote student success.
- The principal knows how to act with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical and legal manner.

Instructional Leadership represents Domain II. The four competencies include:

- The principal knows how to facilitate the design and implementation of curricula and strategic plans that enhance teaching and learning; ensure alignment of



curriculum, instruction, resources, and assessment; and promote the use of varied assessments to measure student performance.

- The principal knows how to advocate, nurture, and sustain an instructional program and a campus culture that are conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.
- The principal knows how to implement a staff evaluation and development system to improve the performance of all staff members, select and implement appropriate models for supervision and staff development, and apply the legal requirements for personnel management.
- The principal knows how to apply organizational, decision-making, and problem solving skills to ensure an effective learning environment.

Administrative Leadership represents Domain III. The two competencies include:

- The principal knows how to apply principles of effective leadership and management in relation to campus budgeting, personnel, resource utilization, financial management, and technology use.
- The principal knows how to apply principles of leadership and management to the campus physical plant and support systems to ensure a safe and effective learning environment (TExES, 2012).

Instructional leadership is important to a good school. Principals are the most important factor in terms of moving an ineffective school to effective and sustaining a highly successful school. McEwan (2009) argued principals are responsible for, “communicating the mission, setting the agenda, determining what gets measured, then holding teachers and students accountable for accomplishing specific goals” (p 12). The

school principal sets the expectations, evaluates the process, and is responsible for the results. O'Hanlon and Clifton (2004) declared that the effective principal remains focused on high student achievement by setting high academic standards, establishing a positive working environment, recognizing progress, and staying persistent.

The daily role of the principal begins predictably, but each day brings new challenges. Bolman and Deal (1997) described most principals begin their daily activities by, "confirming that classrooms are staffed and that substitute teachers are managing their classes well. Throughout the day they monitor work operations; schedule, organize and allocate resources and deal with matters of safety and orderliness" (p 19). Principals who try to plan too much of their day will become frustrated. Weldy (1979) stated a principal learns to live, "with interruptions and many unexpected crises and emergencies" (p 7). The principal should learn to balance the day with essential tasks and ensure engaged learning is taking place.

School principals must be aware of their school climate and culture. Today's principal is constantly multitasking and shifting roles at a moment's notice. Habegger (2008) found principals know that positive school culture is, "the heart of improvement and growth" (p 42). Habegger declared creating a sense of belonging for both students and staff is crucial. Principals that foster positive working relationships with staff, parents, and the community are successful in student achievement. Habegger concluded the principal understands the importance of positive school culture and, "how it can help student achievement and professional growth in the school building" (p 45). Principals and teachers feel empowered to work together to solve challenges and improve student success. Beaudoin and Taylor (2004) confirmed that research indicated, "What makes

good leaders is not so much what they accomplish, but how they make people feel” (p 132). McEwan (2004) explained that the principal serves as the cultural builder in the development of, “a culture that has as its fuel, caring, concern collegiality, humor, collaboration, communication, and character, combined with accountability, responsibility and achievement” (p 101). The role of the principal is to lead the teachers and students to academic success.

### **The Role of the Assistant Principal**

The assistant principal is the second in command at a school, yet very little research can be found regarding the assistant principalship. Few researchers have paid attention to the assistant principalship. Marshall (1992) argued if the assistant principal is critical to the overall success of the school, researchers should explore deeper into the assistant principalship. The assistant principalship is a critical position in education for several reasons. Duties include discipline, teacher appraiser, testing coordination, and more. It is a frequently an entry-level position for aspiring principals. Assistant principals also have the opportunity to assume administrative responsibilities as assigned by the principal and observe situations that would prepare them for the principal position in the future. Mason (2007) explained the importance of the assistant principal’s role, even with the scope appearing narrow, “the importance of the assistant principal’s position cannot be overstated” (p 13). The assistant principal is important in the overall success of the school.

The role of the assistant principal is important to the success of students. Assistant principals work closely with students and monitor students on a daily basis. Marshall (1992) explained the importance that the assistant principal plays in the daily

lives of students and, “part of their work is being highly visible to students” (p 39).

Assistant principals can help with the success of students due to their role of frequent interaction.

Preparing for the assistant principal position has not changed much over the last few decades. A research study conducted in 1969 by the National Association of Elementary School Principals concluded that, “on the job experience with a competent principal” was the most frequently reported experience that prepared most assistant principals. The assistant principal most often must meet the same qualifications and certifications as the principal, including passing the principal exam. The assistant principal learns from the principal on campus and other mentors in the district.

The principal’s perception is crucial to the assistant principal’s success. The relationship between the principal and assistant principal is vital to each other’s success. Mason (2007) described the principal’s role in the growth and development of the assistant, “cannot be overstated” (p 2). The principal’s perception of the assistant’s role can aid or hamper the professional growth of the assistant. The assistant principal should take an active role in his or her own professional development.

The assistant principal’s role varies from school to school, but the duties are often the same. The assistant principal’s role is to assist the principal as needed. Marshall (1992) described some of the responsibilities include student discipline, conferences with students and parents, evaluation of teachers, school master schedule, emergency arrangements, and teacher incentives. Assistant principals aspiring to advance to the principalship often carve time to be involved with curriculum. Assistant principals also substitute for the principal as needed. If the principal is off campus for a meeting, the

assistant principal must be able to make sound decisions for the betterment of the students and staff in the principal's absence.

Assistant principals learn their roles in formal and informal ways. Marshall (1992) explained that the potential assistant principal candidate contemplates the options before making a career changing decision. The candidate assesses if he or she has the talent and education to perform the required duties. Personal and family decisions are considered. Success in his or her current teaching position will gain insight if the candidate has the skills necessary to be a successful administrator. The next step is for the candidate to learn under a good role model or mentor. Marshall (1992) found that assistant principals seek role models, "whose style in managing situations, students, parents and superiors seems to be workable, practical and functional" (p 29). The candidate learns how to perform certain tasks, often under the leadership of a current assistant principal. Marshall (1992) explained when task learning is guided by a mentor, "the aspiring administrator will have feedback, assistance and support" (p 30). Once the training is completed, it is the candidate's decision to move forward and apply for open administrator positions.

The assistant principal faces many challenges. Marshall (1992) discussed that role conflict and overload occurs when job responsibilities demand so much time, energy, and emotion from the assistant principal. The assistant principal sacrifices time with family and education advancement to answer the job demands and, "as a result, they may become angry, confused and depressed. They are suffering from the dilemmas of role conflict and overload"(p 7). Role ambiguity is also a challenge for the assistant principal. While a job description may be provided, there are often duties expected not included in

the description. The assistant principal may experience a lack of job satisfaction or confidence due to role ambiguity.

The day to day expectations of the assistant principal are a challenge. The assistant principal's workday is often unscheduled and they respond immediately to unpredicted events. Marshall (1992) declared they control extracurricular activities and, "use them as a way to enforce community values through student attitudes" (p 39). They must fit state expectations, such as curriculum and testing, into everyday activities, such as the master schedule. Each day is different in the life of an assistant principal.

Assistant principals can help create a culture of learning for the school. The assistant principal plays a key role in maintaining the culture of a school. Marshall (1992) explained that assistant principals, "maintain the norms and rules of the school culture" (p 2). Assistant principals traditionally handle discipline for the school and daily operations to keep the schools safe and orderly, such as fire drills and cafeteria schedules. Marshall (1992) declared the importance of the assistant principal in, "supporting organizational regularity and in promoting organizational values" (p 38).

### **The Difference Between School Climate and Culture**

Principals and assistant principals agreed that good schools have a positive school climate and culture. Gonder and Hymes (1994) observed that school culture and climate are two related concepts that affect how well schools function. Hoy and Tarter (1997) offered a distinction between the two by stating, "Culture, the more abstract term, provides thick descriptions of school life. Climate, on the other hand, offers a sharper focus on the character of the workplace. Climate refers to shared perceptions of behavior" (p 12). Climate is often seen as behavior and culture is the values and norms

of an organization. Hoy and Tarter (1997) concluded that positive school climate and strong culture have become part of the effective school and are advocated by educational practitioners and reformers to improve student achievement.

A culture that is focused on student achievement and learning is part of a good school. Sergiovanni (2009) declared all schools have cultures, “but successful schools seem to have strong and functional cultures aligned with a vision of quality schooling” (p 140). Expectations of high student achievement must be part of a positive school culture. Student engagement is one of the measures of a positive school culture. An aspect of school culture is an atmosphere conducive to engaged learning and student engagement. Evans-Andris (2010) observed the positive school climate carried over, “to students in that they appeared engaged most of the time” (p 125). Good schools have a clear organizational personality, with stated missions goals and values and standards of performance. Sergiovanni (2009) explained there is an atmosphere of encouragement in which, “students are praised and rewarded; a work-centered environment; and high optimism and expectations for student learning” (p 198).

A positive school climate can be measured by teacher morale. Litwin and Stringer (1968) studied organizational climate and its result on performance. Their study found two major implications, “First, it seems clear that distinct organizational climates can be created by varying leadership styles. Second, once created, these climates seem to have significant, often dramatic, effects on motivation and, correspondingly, on performance and job satisfaction” (p 144). Teachers perform better and have higher job satisfaction in healthy school climates.

Gonder and Hymes (1994) identified the difference in culture's and climate's timetable. Climate reflects what is happening today and culture develops over a long period of time. Terrance Deal of Vanderbilt University (as cited in Gonder and Hymes, 1994) concluded, "The climate of a school refers to the short term, malleable aspects of a school's physical and psychological environment and culture refers to the long-term, deeply embedded beliefs of an organization, the 'feel' of a school, its myths and its moral code" (p 6). Gonder and Hymes (1994) concurred leadership is essential in forging positive climates and achievement-oriented cultures.

Climate is preferred when measuring the organizational health of a school. Hoy and Tarter (1997) explained, "Studies of climate are concrete and deal with perceptions of behavior, use survey research techniques, employ statistics and are used to improve organizations. Studies of culture are typically focused on assumptions, values, norms, use of quantitative analysis" (p 6-7).

While there is a difference between climate and culture, it is recommended to observe both in an effort to improve the overall success of the school. Guthrie and Schuermann (2011) affirmed, "A culture can shape climate" (p 10). While both climate and culture are different, they are related and one can affect the other.

### **Climate**

Climate is usually referred to as the 'personality' of the organization. Hoy and Tarter (1997) explained, "Climate is to organization as personality is to an individual" (p 6). Freiberg and Stein (as cited in Freiberg, 1999) described school climate as, "The heart and soul of a school" (p 11). Gonder and Hymes (1994) agreed that climate reflects how students and staff feel about being at school each day. Climate is essential in



creating healthy learning environments for students and better working environments for staff.

Gonder and Hymes (1994) reported that research conducted in the 1970s and 1980s found a distinct link among positive school climate, high staff productivity and student achievement. In a national survey of school administrators, three-fourths said climate played a 'very important' role in student achievement while 97 percent agreed that climate was either 'very important' or 'important' in student achievement. Gonder and Hymes (1994) asserted attention to climate is even more important to, "ensure that morale stays high and the staff can be most effective" (p 6).

Connors (2000) defined climate as, "the prevailing circumstances or set of attitudes influencing environmental conditions characterizing a group" (p 44). A positive climate is what sets the tone for success in schools. Gonder and Hymes (1994) concluded that climate is usually considered positive or negative, "although some aspects of a school climate can be positive while others are negative. Climate affects morale, productivity and satisfaction of persons involved in an organization" (p 11). Hoy and Tarter (1997) affirmed, "The climate of a school uses the set of internal characteristics that distinguishes one school from another and influences the behaviors of its members" (p 6). Freiberg (1999) described the importance of belonging in a school climate as follows, "School climate is about that quality of a school that helps each individual feel personal worth, dignity and importance, while simultaneously helping create a sense of belonging to something beyond ourselves" (p 11).

School climate is important in creating productive learning places for students. A school's climate can define the quality of a school that creates healthy learning places.

Freiberg (1999) explained while climate is mostly an affective or feeling element of learning, “it has clear implications for achievement and academic well-being” (p 209). Covey (1989) asserted only the organizations that have a passion for learning will have an enduring influence. School climate is important for improving the overall learning environment for students.

School climate is also important in creating healthy working environments for staff members. DuFour and Eaker (1998) argued that the most promising strategy for sustained, substantive school improvement is developing the ability of school personnel to function as professional learning communities. Jensen (2009) concurred that staff collaboration and collegiality are keys to making a school a success for staff members.

Maintaining the health of a school climate is an on-going and ever-changing process. Climate is often unnoticed, until something goes wrong. Freiberg (1999) compared climate to the air we breathe, “school climate is ignored until it becomes foul” (p 208). Jensen (2009) recommended keeping the climate focused on the overarching mission. Freiberg and Stein (as cited in Freiberg, 1999) declared that sustaining climate efforts is a constant in the schooling process.

School climate can improve student and teacher productivity. Fairman and McLean (2003) reported that during the past twenty years of research, the Organizational Health Diagnostic and Development Corporation (OHDDC) have repeatedly and consistently found a strong relationship between organizational health and productivity. Climate places a priority on giving individuals an opportunity for input. Gonder and Hymes (1994) explained the importance of measuring climate to, “identify problems

through climate surveys” (p 16). DuFour and Eaker (1998) affirmed each school should assess the climate of its own community.

The organizational health inventory can be used to measure the climate of a school. The principal of a school can diagnose the health and openness of school climate by surveying the staff. Hoy and Tarter (1997) asserted, “The organizational health inventory (OHI) is such an instrument” (p 1). Hoy and Tarter (1997) agreed the OHI provides reasonably valid and reliable descriptions of school health. Gonder and Hymes (1994) explained school improvement efforts start with gathering information to identify strengths on which to build and weaknesses to correct. OHI does not explain, but simply describes. Hoy and Feldman (1999) acknowledged it is a tool for, “reflection and action” (p 99). The dimensions of organizational health and school climate are significant predictors of how well students perform on standardized tests (Hoy and Tarter, 1997).

Fairman and McLean (2003) identified six core principles that serve as the foundation for building the capacity of leaders.

1. A principal-centered mission provides purpose and true north direction.
2. Choices rather than circumstances control outcomes. People and organizations have the freedom to choose and are responsible for their choices.
3. Trust empowers others.
4. The whole is greater than the sum of the parts.
5. Effective relationships require mutual benefit.
6. Quality production (results) requires continual development of production capability.

## **The Ten Dimensions of Organizational Health**

The Ten Dimensions of Organizational Health are Goal Focus, Communication Adequacy, Optimal Power Equalization, Resource Utilization, Cohesiveness, Morale, Innovativeness, Autonomy, Adaptation, and Problem-Solving Adequacy. The dimensions are defined below (pg 110- 112, Fairman and McLean, 2003):

1. Goal Focus: The ability of persons, groups, or organizations to have clarity, acceptance, support, and advocacy of goals and objectives.
2. Communication Adequacy: Exists when information is relatively distortion free and travels both vertically and horizontally across the boundaries of an organization.
3. Optimal Power Equalization: The ability to maintain a relatively equitable distribution of influence between leaders and team members.
4. Resource Utilization: The ability to coordinate and maintain inputs, particularly personnel, effectively with a minimal sense of strain.
5. Cohesiveness: The state when persons, groups, or organizations have a clear sense of identity. Members feel attracted to membership in an organization. They want to stay with it, be influenced by it, and exert their own influence within it.
6. Morale: The state in which a person, group or organization has feelings of well-being, satisfaction, and pleasure.
7. Innovativeness: The ability to allow others to be inventive, diverse, creative, and risk taking.

8. Autonomy: The state in which a person, group, or organization has the freedom to fulfill their roles and responsibilities.
9. Adaptation: The ability to tolerate stress and maintain stability while coping with demands of the environment.
10. Problem-Solving Adequacy: An organization's ability to perceive problems and solve them with minimal energy. The problems stay solved and the problem-solving mechanism of the organization is maintained and/or strengthened.

## **Culture**

Positive school culture is evident in good schools, but it is more difficult to measure. Hoy and Tarter (1997) explained culture describes, "the feel or atmosphere of an organization" (p 2). Gonder and Hymes (1994) identified a key element of culture is values, "the group's shared understanding originally promised by one individual of the way things 'ought' to be" (p 14). School culture's beliefs are shared. Guthrie and Schuermann (2011) found most of a culture's mutually shared beliefs and traditions are, "unwritten, informal, and conveyed through casual and continuous contact and socialization, rather than through direct indoctrination or formal education" (p 9). Organizational culture reflects practices and beliefs that are deeply ingrained and taken for granted (Gonder and Hymes, 1994). Climate is better to assess with collected data and culture needs to have a more intuitive indicator. Climate uses concrete tools such as surveys and culture relies more on intuition. Gonder and Hymes (1994) found leaders, "must be able to 'read' the culture" (p 16). A positive school culture is important. Langer (2004) argued a positive school culture is, "the critical first step administrators

need to foster and is the outgrowth of much collaborative inquiry, extensive discussion in the development of common values” (p 83).

School culture is comprised of many important traits. There is no such thing as a perfect school culture. Guthrie and Schuermann (2011) affirmed successful schools carry traits such as, “positive relationships, individual and collective confidence, a sense of efficacy, high performance expectations, and continuous learning lead to a positive community in which students learn more, and innovative strategies may lead students to love learning” (p 31). A universal cultural element is a set of core beliefs. Guthrie and Schuermann (2011) explained that culture is, “a collectivity’s historically rooted, but continually evolving, set of shared beliefs and preferred behaviors” (p 11). There are several cultural traits including values, communication, trust, relationships, and listening. A positive school culture containing these elements will improve student achievement and ease the process of inevitable change.

Values are important to a healthy school culture. Langer (2004) concluded schools that work well have a culture of community because, “they exude caring and go the extra mile to make it happen” (p 63). Successful leaders are propelled by their values. Brock and Grady (2012) described that successful principals strive, “to do the right thing every day and in all situations. They became leaders out of a desire to serve the needs of others. They possess internal accountability. When faced with difficult decisions, they are guided by ethics, the right thing to do” (p 85). Brock and Grady (2012) encouraged principals to lead with integrity while acting ethically. The reason many educators enter the teaching profession is to make a difference in a child’s life. DuFour and Eaker (1998) agreed, “There is a basic human desire to love a life of meaning, to serve a higher

purpose, to make a difference in this world. The desire to make a difference in the lives of their students is the single most powerful factor that attracts people to the teaching profession” (p 281). School leadership must instill the values into the culture.

Chirichello and Richmond (2007) concurred, “Leaders who acknowledge the value of community consciously work to build unity, sense of purpose, and shared values among members of the school” (p 18).

Open communication is important to a healthy school culture. Values and communication are important in school culture. Gonder and Hymes (1994) reflected in excellent companies, “cohesiveness is fostered through an emphasis on core values that are communicated regularly to the staff” (p 25). Communication plays a vital role in shaping both climate and culture. Gonder and Hymes (1994) agreed, “...school leaders must mobilize all channels of communication to transmit messages that will inform, inspire, and persuade students, staff and the community” (p 113). Fairman and McLean (2003) affirmed, “Effective communication is the glue that holds organizations together, the very essence of an organization” (p 124). Many theorists agreed that positive communication is important to the overall school culture. Gonder and Hymes (1994) asserted, “Giving positive feedback to staff promotes an achievement-oriented culture by reinforcing behavior that should be encouraged” (p 26). A school leader should always speak positively about student and teacher abilities. Bell, Thacker, Schargel (2011) warned, “Never get caught up in the negativity” (p 7). Theorists encouraged leaders not to be afraid of confrontation. Conflict is inevitable. Blase and Blase (1994) remind us that conflict allows us to, “discuss our problems and explore ways to solve them. With good communication, we are able to work through our conflicts and create a better school

where all concerns, ideas, and needs are respected and where all people strive to be their best” (p 25). Bell, Thacker, Schargel (2011) concurred that communication and trust are essential to share information, admit mistakes, provide feedback, and speak with purpose. Communication can help gain trust from others. Blase and Blase (1994) concluded the power of honest, open, and accepting communication, “cannot be overemphasized in developing trust” (p 21). Good communication leads to trust.

Trust is a key element to a positive school culture. Covey (1989) defined trust as the amount of “safeness” we feel with others. Openness and health are critical for school quality. Hoy and Tarter (1997) asserted that both predict, “an atmosphere of trust, commitment, effectiveness, and student achievement” (p 10). Blase and Blase (1994) agreed, “In an atmosphere of trust we are able to work together to identify and solve our problems. The reward of a trusting environment is immeasurable, yet the price of a lack of trust is dear” (p 20). Brock and Grady (2012) advised getting to know people and letting them get to know you as the first step in earning trust. Engelking (2008) expressed the importance of the school leader to gain and hold the trust in others. A successful leader has the capacity to win and hold the trust of others. Brock and Grady (2012) noted that successful principals are interested in others and project an image of trustworthiness. Smylie (2010) argued that trust is an important source of support in the effort of improvement. Trust can lead to healthy relationships. Brock and Grady (2012) acknowledged successful schools are, “composed of teams of people working in concert toward a common goal, a task that requires trust in the leader and relational trust between members” (p 93). Trust can foster collegial relationships among a school’s staff.



Relationships are critical to a healthy school culture. Barth (1990) declared that the success of a school depends on the interactions of others, namely between teacher and teacher, and teacher and administrator. Hunter and Waddell (2008) found that relationships are the building blocks of any organization, with leaders working diligently to develop relationships. Building relationships begins with connecting. Hunter and Waddell (2008) explained in business, “If you do not connect with your customer, with your coworkers, with your vendors, you are out of business” (p 3). Effective school leaders know the importance of building trusting relationships and that relationships grow and strengthen over time. Chirichello and Richmond (2007) acknowledged, “that accessibility and proximity are essential to building relationships” (p xi). Engelking (2008) asserted school leadership must be skilled in dealing with people. Brock and Grady (2012) argued successful principals achieve uncommon results through teamwork that operates within and beyond the school. Hunter and Waddell (2008) noted leaders realized the power of professional relationships after such relationships have developed.

Listening is an important key for building relationships and improving the culture. Bell, Thacker, Schargel (2011) noted that Barth advised, “Listening, rather than speaking, is the basis of relationship building. Building relationships is the only way schools will improve and do what is best for students” (p 34-35). The power of emphatic listening is connected to relationship building. Convey (1989) explained empathic listening is, “the key to making deposits in emotional bank accounts” (p 241). Empathic listening first seeks to understand, then to be understood by providing powerful data to work with while deeply understanding the other person’s concern. A successful leader knows how to listen well. Engelking (2008) explained the leader understands, “the need to question,

restate, and articulate what he or she hears and interpret information correctly. The leader is a sounding board for the ideas of others” (p 51). Colan (2006) declared the higher the leadership position, the more listening a leader will need to do. Bell, Thacker, and Schargel (2011) advised to listen with integrity, with the full intent of hearing what others are saying. Hamlin (2006) expressed the importance of listening to help the effort of change:

“At work, one of your major goals is to make yourself understood and get others to listen to your good ideas or what you want, right? And, most of all, to get others to agree. In order to achieve this goal, you need to overcome certain basic obstacles to listening and learning. People are inherently conservative at first. They don’t like newness and change. Here’s why. They may be resistant, competitive or intimidated” (p 70-71).

Leaders need to be able to guide their staff through change to improve the culture and climate of the school. Fairman & McLean (2003) asserted the only thing constant is change. School climate should be measured throughout the school year in different ways. Freiberg and Stein (as cited in Freiberg, 1999) noted continuous improvement requires, “continuous information about the learner and the learning environment” (p 24). Smylie (2010) reported that research supports organizations that are successful in continuous improvement as a defining element of their cultures, identities and goals. Two essential elements are needed in any successful change process, accountability and clarity of expectations. Skoglund and Ness (2011) stated if both of these elements are present, “the change process has a very strong chance of succeeding” (p 115). Brock and Grady (2012) found after interviewing several principals, many agreed that making changes

toward school improvement was a job responsibility. Major changes need to be based on data from different sources. Brock and Grady (2012) explained that all of the principals mentioned, “the importance of getting out of the office to know what is happening in the building” (p 50). Jensen (2009) affirmed the importance for staff members to feel ownership for change. Staff members should feel they have some control over the change process. Brock and Grady (2012) concluded that decades of research confirmed that one of the most important tasks of the principalship is managing school change.

The school leadership is a key element in ensuring a smooth transition during change. Gonder and Hymes (1994) asserted good leadership facilitates change. Strong leadership is critical in any change process. DuFour and Eaker (1998) declared it is difficult to imagine, “implementing and sustaining a school change process through all of the inevitable setbacks and frustrations without strong leadership from a competent principal” (p 183). Organizational Healthy Inventory may provide the leader with information needed to ease the change process. Fairman and McLean (2003) explained, “Organizational health is an organization’s ability to function effectively, to cope adequately, to change appropriately, and to grow from within” (p 110). Improving culture and climate is a never-ending task for a school leader. DuFour and Eaker (1998) remind us that, like a garden, “a healthy culture requires constant cultivation” (p 149).

### **Student Achievement**

Both principals and assistant principals agreed that student achievement is a characteristic of a good school. Student achievement is achieved in a joint effort with all stakeholders by setting high academic standards and focusing on learning in the classroom. Student achievement is measured in several ways, officially measured by the

state reporting agencies. Many educators report the reason they chose education is to make a difference in a child's life. It is in the best interest of the educator to teach the students as much as possible and help the students reach their full potential.

Administrators' success is measured by students' state test scores. One of the biggest responsibilities of a school leader is to make sure students reach their full potential and perform well on state tests.

The pressure of high-stake testing is not new. The effectiveness of schools is measured by student achievement. Davis and Thomas (1989) explained the main criterion of success has been higher achievement, virtually always measured by, "standardized tests for reading and/or mathematics" (p 5). Wagner, Kegan, Lahey, Lemons, Garnier, Helsing, Howell and Rasmussen (2006) noted the pressures of high stake testing on administrators. Wagner (et.al 2006) affirmed that most of the state reform initiatives of the past decade attempt to, "create more accountability in public education, but they do not directly challenge the basic tenets of what leading, teaching, and learning in schools and districts should look like in the new context of the twenty-first century" (p 9). Administrators have higher expectations, yet they are not offered suggestions on how to achieve the mandates. Day (as cited in Moos, Johansson and Day 2011) explained that schools have been, "forced to focus more than before upon raising students' test and examination scores because their quality is judged and reported publicly in this way" (p 91). Schools in Texas are awarded accountability ratings based on students' passing rate on state assessments. The accountability rating is public information and is available to parents and members of the community as to the competency of each school.

It is difficult for administrators to talk about school success without discussing student achievement. Hoy and Tarter (1997) declared student achievement is, “an important dimension of effectiveness” (p 12). Smylie (2010) asserted demands for better performance and outcomes, as well as effective and efficient use of scarce resources, are related to calls for schools to be ever more accountable. Guthrie and Schuermann (2011) concluded student achievement data is the ultimate source of insight regarding educational program effectiveness.

Accurate, real-time data is vital of any organization’s effort to improve performance. Skoglund and Ness (2011) found this is especially true in education, “where teaching and learning activities must be continuously monitored and improved to ensure that every student learns at his maximum capacity” (p 99). Schools are unlikely to develop the results orientation of a learning community without principals who are focused on results. DuFour and Eaker (1998) observed strong leaders go beyond declaring intent, “they turn aspirations into actions” (p 194). The district and statewide focus on testing can be daunting to a principal. Jensen (2009) explained the challenge for the principal is to, “help teachers get a bigger picture of what they really need to do. Provide support and encourage the staff to do what is fun and right for students” (p 101).

Data can be an important tool for creating and supporting the professional relationships and sense of community at the center of organizational learning (Guthrie and Schuermann, 2011). Skoglund and Ness (2011) remind us that intuitive principals ask this question, “Who are the students who did not meet the academic mission and what will we do to address their needs?” Skoglund and Ness (2011) also found people tend to want to do their work effectively and they find being held accountable is both appropriate

and motivating. Langer (2004) affirmed schools that work well have been using this era of high-stakes testing as an opportunity to do what good educators always want to do, improve student learning. Kohn (2000) argued our children are tested to an extent that is unprecedented in our history and unparalleled anywhere else in the world. There are conflicting views regarding state assessment testing in education. As long as testing is an expectation of students, it remains a concern for school leaders. Boyer (1983) observed in schools where achievement was high and where there was a clear sense of community that the principal made the difference. Despite the pressures of high-stake testing, educators must design a plan for students to be successful. Barth (1990) concluded, “Good education is more than the generation of good scores on tests” (p 39). Student achievement is obtained through setting high goals, designing effective learning programs, and supportive leadership.

In order for a school to be successful, principals and assistant principals agree that learning must be the priority. Davis and Thomas (1989) asserted, “Effective principals believe and emphasize to staff that learning is the most important reason for students to be in school; that all children can learn; and that school makes the difference between success and failure” (p 24). School leaders must keep an eye on learning in the classroom by offering relevant staff development, promoting professional learning communities, and providing teachers with textbooks, computers, and other educational tools necessary. Once the tools are provided, educators should ensure that learning is taking place with frequent walkthroughs and observations. Good schools are student centered. Sergiovanni (2009) declared good schools make an effort to, “serve all students, create support networks to assist students, involve students in school affairs,

respect and celebrate the ethnic and linguistic differences among students and have student welfare as a first priority” (p 198). Learning is measured informally with teacher observations and formally with state testing scores.

Setting high expectations for student learning is necessary in good schools. Educators in highly effective schools set high expectations for their students. McEwan-Adkins (2009) affirmed that administrators believe in their students’ ability to achieve, explicitly teach them how to do that, “and convey a profound and unwavering commitment to their academic success” (p 117). High expectations are set and are continuously monitored with student data collected from teachers throughout the school year. Expectations should be set early, measured frequently, and evaluated at the end of the school year.

The school culture and climate plays an important role in student achievement. Davis and Thomas (1989) affirmed, “In an academic climate, staff and students are aware of and they value goals of high achievement” (p 24). School leaders should work diligently to create a school culture and climate supportive to learning and promoting student achievement. Changes that are needed to increase student achievement are made easier in a climate that supports learning. Good schools design programs to ensure academic success and support instruction. Sergiovanni (2009) declared teachers and administrators believe that, “all students can learn and feel responsible for seeing that they do” (p 198). Good schools set high academic standards, regularly monitor student performance, and reward efforts and success.

School leaders set the tone for their expectations of student achievement. Good schools have strong principals that understand the importance of student achievement.

Davis and Thomas (1989) declared that the principal's vision is logically and intimately tied to two other premier and frequent cited characteristics of effective schools, "an academic school climate (or culture) and high expectations for student achievement" (p 24). It is the school principal who leads the way in student achievement. Day (as cited in Moos, Johansson and Day 2011) observed resilient leadership promoting improved learning for children is characterized by a, "clear sense of moral/ethical purpose related to how to create a learning environment in which all students and staff may not only feel they belong to, but also may be successful" (p 91).

It is important for school leaders to create a culture of learning to promote student achievement. Teachers and school leaders must work diligently towards creating a culture of achievement. Hudson (2009) asserted that teachers, particularly school leaders and managers, "must be ever vigilant in order to ensure that a culture of achievement exists in their school" (p 73). Hudson recommended that school leaders should set learning expectations high, students should be organized and keep a daily planner, challenge negativity, follow school rules, celebrate successes when possible, and maintain pride within the school.

### **Professional Development**

The purpose for staff development is to provide teachers and staff training necessary for students to be successful. The goal for staff development in education is help students learn. DuFour and Eaker (1998) affirmed the purpose of staff development is to, "help personnel become more individually and collectively effective in helping all students achieve the intended results of their education" (p 276).



There are many definitions of professional development in education. Wagner et. al (2006) defined professional development, “Professional development is primarily on-site, intensive, collaborative, and job-embedded, and it is designed and led by educators who model the best teaching and learning practices” (p 31). Professional development should be training designed with a specific goal in mind and should be administered by experts in the field. Professional development is the next step after the recruitment and selection of highly qualified teachers. Lunenburg and Ornstein (2012) confirmed that school administrators need to, “help all personnel fulfill their potential by learning new skills and developing their abilities to the fullest” (p 463). Professional development elements include training and evaluation. The most frequent staff development offered is in-service programs.

In-service programs are professional development provided to teachers on the school campus. In-service programs are beneficial in many ways including convenience to teachers and budget friendly to administrators. Effective schools have extensive, meaningful staff development. Sergiovanni (2009) declared teachers and administrators conduct in-service programs and are, “provided with ample staff-development opportunities to help them develop further” (p 199). In-service programs provide optimal professional development opportunities for teachers. Leithwood (as cited in Holmes, 1989) noted that perhaps the most visible option, and one over which the school system has control, “is in-service programs offered by school systems” (p 83). Leithwood also acknowledged the school system is a source of role models, colleagues and ongoing professional coaching to support the teacher.

It is important to provide professional development opportunities that are specific and meaningful. Hawley (2007) confirmed that professional development should be connected to change focused on specific goals for improving student learning. He also noted the evaluation of professional development should come from a variety of sources, including student data and administrator observations. Wagner et. al (2006) stated, “It seems clear that professional development activities must be aligned to a few carefully chosen improvement priorities that are informed by and monitored with data” (p 31).

Research supported the effects of staff development on student success. Providing teachers with opportunities to learn and grow will improve student achievement. Hawley and Valli (as cited in Hawley and Rollie, 2007) observed that schools need to provide educators with, “ongoing opportunities to learn as they collectively address the challenges posed by the inevitable gap between high standards and actual student performance” (p 132). Staff development is more successful if the staff works collaboratively to focus on student success. Teachers working together to improve student achievement is one of the keys to good schools. Newmann (as cited in Hawley and Rollie, 2007) observed in effective schools, “student success becomes a collective responsibility to the staff” (p 38).

There are many benefits to staff development in education, including building teacher efficacy, esteem, and reflection. Esteem is a powerful motivator for teachers. Sergiovanni and Carver (1980) agreed teachers need to feel, “important as persons and as recognized, respected, and competent professionals” (p 94). Teachers feel supported with meaningful staff development. It is also important for administrators to provide opportunities for teachers to reflect to build success. It is important for school leaders to

develop teachers. Sergiovanni and Starratt (1993) asserted that improving schools by helping teachers reflect on their practice, “is at the heart of what supervision seeks to accomplish” (p 104).

Staff development can be enhanced by follow up and further discussion in professional learning communities. Evans-Andris (2010) declared, “Professional development is most effective when it is content based, offers strong pedagogical strategies, and provides opportunities for educators to develop professional communities and build on that culture of support in and across schools for peer learning and information sharing” (p 20). Researchers have questioned whether professional development or professional learning communities is better to improve teaching. The answer is both work together and compliment each other. Hawley and Valli (as cited in Hawley and Rollie, 2007) agreed that, “Well designed professional development activities and the conditions that support professional learning communities are interdependent and need to be aligned if either is to be productive” (p 119). Meaningful professional development can help a teacher become better prepared to help achieve student success. Teachers learn from one another, and it is necessary for good schools to provide professional learning communities.

Staff development is an important part of creating a culture of learning. The benefit of staff development will trickle down to students’ success. Taylor (2010) concluded, “If the culture is focused on continuous improvement of learning for both adults and students, it tends to have gains in student achievement” (p 20). Administrators improve school culture by providing meaningful staff development.

## **Professional Learning Communities**

A professional learning community is an intensive learning opportunity for teachers to learn from each other in small, collaborative groups. The teacher groups are often coordinated by the school principal. The group focuses on student learning, working collaboratively, and student results. An important follow up to professional development is the professional learning community. Principals and assistant principals agreed that good schools have professional learning communities. Professional learning communities have a vision, work collaborative on clear goals, and are measured by student success. DuFour and Eaker (1998) declared, "...schools to function as professional learning communities are characterized by a shared mission, vision, and values; collective inquiry, collaborative teams; an orientation toward action and a willingness to experiment; commitment to continuous improvement; and a focus on results" (p 45). All characteristics are vital for the professional learning community's success.

The campus principal is needed to ensure the success of the professional learning community. Bolman and Deal (1997) asserted, "The task of leadership is to help groups develop a shared sense of direction and commitment" (p 157). The principal should allow time in the instructional day for teachers to meet and collaborate. Strong leadership is crucial to the success of the professional learning community.

Student learning and student achievement should be the first and overall goal of the professional learning community. The foundations of a professional learning community include student learning, shared purpose, collaborative teamwork, teacher capacity, leadership capacity, and professional development. Massey (2009) affirmed

student learning and the commitment to improved student achievement, “is the first and most essential attribute of professional learning communities” (p 10).

There are many benefits to having a professional learning community at the campus level. McEwan-Adkins (2009) identified some of the benefits of a professional learning community in successful schools as being lower drop-out rates, lower absenteeism, increased learning, greater academic gains, and smaller achievement gaps among students with different backgrounds. McEwan-Adkins mentioned the benefits that professional learning communities have on teachers including reduction in isolation, higher morale, lower rates of absenteeism, and commitment to change. Teachers often commented about the presence of collaboration among the staff as a predictor of job satisfaction. Beaudoin and Taylor (2004) reported in their research, “We found that teachers experienced being a team member, collaborating, and sharing as the top three most helpful aspects of their staff relationships” (p 119).

Professional learning communities allow teachers to reflect and dialogue about student progress. There is growing evidence that professional learning communities are powerful in allowing teachers to meet and reflect about students’ learning. Liebermann and Miller (as cited in Hawley and Rollie, 2007) declared professional learning communities, “reverse the isolation of teachers and offer a place for teachers to work together to connect with each other about their own work and the work of their students” (p 105). Professional learning communities reduce isolation and promote interaction.

Good schools foster collegial interaction. Sergiovanni (2009) found effective schools, “strive to create professional environments for teachers that facilitate the accomplishments of their work” (p 199). Teachers have the opportunity to discuss

challenges and successes in professional learning communities. A professional learning community is about the interaction of collaborative efforts. Massey (2009) declared, “Effective PLCs provide the conditions necessary for the synergy that drives school improvement” (p 5). Well trained teachers working collaboratively in groups will improve student achievement.

The importance of relationships and staff interactions is critical for the overall success of the school. Bolman and Deal (1997) observed employees spend much of their time, “in organizations interacting with others. Both individual satisfaction and organizational effectiveness depend heavily on the quality of interpersonal interactions” (p 158). Teachers agree that teaching is best when it is collaborative. In addition to learning from each other, teachers appreciate the input and advice from their principal. Johnson (2012) explained, “Many teachers regularly seek out advice from their colleagues, and school leaders who reinforce and enable this kind of collaboration among teachers will find a receptive audience” (p 56). Teachers appreciate the efforts of their principal to encourage collaboration and teamwork. Student learning improves best in a collegial working environment. Langer (2004) affirmed when teachers work and learn together, “they have a shared understanding of what their students need and how best to help them learn” (p 21). Professional learning communities promote better working relationships among teachers.

The top priority of a professional learning community is student success. Student success is formally measured by state reporting agencies. DuFour and Eaker (1998) asserted that professional learning communities are committed to results-driven education. Professional learning communities often analyze data from district

assessments to determine which curriculum needs to be reviewed to ensure student success. Students benefit when teachers form a professional learning community. Leithwood (as cited in Hawley and Rollie, 2007) confirmed participation in such communities, “promotes instructional program coherence. It also builds teachers’ sense of responsibility for student learning” (p 144). Wagner et. al (2006) stated, “A key component to the system was the recruitment and training of the best teachers to work part of each school day on instructional improvement with small groups of teachers in their own buildings” (p 31). Teachers work together to ensure the success of all students and professional learning communities promote teacher collegiately and cohesiveness.

### **Parental and Community Involvement**

School leaders agreed that parental and community involvement is important to the effectiveness of a school. School leaders cannot tackle the nation’s must-solve problems in education alone. Schools cannot solve problems like truancy and drop-outs independently. Johnson (2012) declared they require action from, “the community as a whole- parents, grandparents, mentors, community and religious groups, businesses and local agencies” (p 10). School leaders must find a way to get parents and community members involved in their schools. Working with the community is important for a school’s success. Moos, Johansson, and Day (2011) observed principals, “reached out to their communities. They clearly understood that they could not succeed in isolation” (p 227). It is in the best interest of the school leader to get parents and community members involved in education. Principals and assistant principals benefit when parents and the community are active participants in school endeavors.

It is important for the school leader to reach out and get all stakeholders involved. Good schools involve parents and the community. Sergiovanni (2009) observed principals involve, “parents and community members in teaching and learning activities of the school” (p 199).

Parents and community members can share a variety of different responsibilities on campus. There are many roles in which the parents and community can help the school’s success. Kelley (1980) agreed parents and patrons, “should be involved in such tasks as setting goals, reviewing instructional materials, assisting with classroom and non-classroom activities offered by schools” (p 65). It is important for school leaders to make parents and community leaders feel welcome and needed in their school.

Beaudoin and Taylor (2004) provided advice to educators when conflict arise with parents. The advice included viewing parents as knowledgeable allies, staying open to cultural differences, being realistic and documenting meetings for future reference, accepting unpredictability, putting yourself in their shoes, remembering the humanity, and holding on to kindness.

An indicator of a good school is parental involvement. Lunenburg and Ornstein (2012) declared an effective school has, “positive home-school relations in which parents support the school’s basic mission and play an important part in helping achieve it” (p 308). Successful partnerships between the school and parental/community members requires communication. Ward (2004) asserted that meaningful parent and community involvement activities provide schools with support to overcome challenges. Ward (2004) suggested that parents and community members could be well utilized as volunteers in schools (p 52). Communication is important to ensure both parties’ needs



are adequately met. Principals should strive to form strong partnerships with businesses in the community. Creating a sense of community amongst all stakeholders is important. Leithwood (2007) agreed, “When the reputation of the school in the local community is positive and there is considerable support by parents and the wider community for the efforts and directions of the school, teachers’ work with students is enhanced” (p 146). Parents and community members can serve as allies to school leaders during times of change, challenge, conflict and emergency situations.

Teachers benefit from parent and community involvement. There are great advantages for teachers when parents become involved in their child’s education. Beaudoin and Taylor (2004) affirmed when educators, “are able to see parents as teammates in the education of children and a variety of interactions become possible” (p 154).

Parental involvement is correlated to student achievement. DuFour and Eaker (1998) acknowledged when educators make, “a systematic effort to link the school with parents, they are building a support system for both enhanced student achievement and an effective learning community” (p 239). Parental involvement can help a school increase student success. Parental and community involvement is important in sustaining school improvement. Evans-Andris (2010) explained that when the community becomes involved and parents invest in their children’s academic careers, “they share the school’s responsibility of increasing student performance” (p 128). Efforts to increase parental and community involvement will have a great impact on student academic and social behaviors. Kelley (1980) asserted parental involvement is most effective, “when parents

view their participation as directly linked to their child's opportunity to meet the expectations of the school" (p 64).

Parents and community members can help create a healthy school climate.

Parental involvement is important in building a good school culture. Elbot and Fulton (2008) affirmed relations to parents, "also help define the quality of a school's culture" (p 81). Efforts to improve the climate of a school must be understood and acceptable to all stakeholders who will be influenced by what happens. Kelley (1980) reminded us active involvement of parents and patrons, "can increase the levels of effectiveness and efficiency as well as the levels of satisfaction which are experienced by staff and students in schools and classrooms" (p 67). Parents and community members can help shape the culture of a school with their contributions to student success. Parents and community members are needed in the success of good schools. Communication, active participation and appreciation will ensure their continued involvement.

### **Strong Leadership**

A good school has strong leadership. The most important element to a successful school is the leadership. Davis and Thomas (1989) declared that strong instructional leadership by a principal with vision "is the single most critical component of a successful, effective school. Such principals have high achievement expectations, observe teachers teaching, and monitor individual and collective student achievement" (p 39). Sergiovanni and Carver (1980) agreed, "The influence of a school's executive's philosophy on his administrative behavior cannot be overemphasized" (p 48). The school leader's actions will determine the destiny of a school.

Leadership is important in sustaining and promoting growth and improvement. Drysdale, Goode and Gurr (as cited in Moos, Johansson and Day, 2011) declared the leadership characteristics of the principals includes, “Vision and passion, appropriate leadership style, clear and articulated values, personal qualities and skills, ability to build relationships, being highly engaged and connected to the school and community, and managing change” (p 36).

School leaders are needed to support the teachers and staff. Teachers and staff depend on supportive leaders; Leaders need to be supportive administrators. They should provide needed materials. Beaudoin and Taylor (2004) urged leaders to “Encourage professional growth, show interest in teachers and students as humans, be flexible on how to achieve goals, take necessary action to support staff, value teacher and student input, and handle changes cautiously” (p 135). School principals need to be sensitive to all stakeholders’ needs.

School leadership is influential on school culture. Davis (1989) declared, “Leadership is the hinge upon which school cultures swing. Strong leadership is necessary to implement a school effectiveness program, and although other administrators or groups of teachers may provide this, ideally it should emanate from the principal” (p 121). School culture begins with the school’s leadership.

The school leader is needed for establishing a positive school climate and setting the tone for professional learning communities. Chirichello and Richmond (2007) concluded the leader, “must create both the climate and the structure in which teams can flourish” (p 40). Teams do not just happen. Trusting relationships are built within a positive climate and the professional learning community can grow.

Successful principals lead schools in which students are learning, parents are supportive, and teachers are excited to teach (Brock and Grady, 2012). Leaders are also able to respond to change successfully. Hoy and Feldman (1999) agreed, “The principal of a healthy school is a dynamic leader, integrating both task-oriented and relations-oriented leader behavior” (p 91).

Skoglund and Ness (2011) found that leadership is the ability to understand the present and impact the future. Brock & Grady (2012) declared that successful principals are passionate about improving student learning and care about student success. Connors (2000) reminded us that teachers admire administrators that take time to personally interact with students.

The school principal must involve the staff to move the school forward. Rogers (1969) observed, “He can operate in a way which involves his staff as participants, which draws upon their knowledge and abilities, which relies upon the basic human trend toward learning and self-fulfillment. To do so is not easy, and the extent to which it can be achieved depends primarily upon the attitude of the administrator” (p 212).

The principal is responsible for the professional development of each staff member. Rogers (1969) reflected, “I believe I have had a part in ‘growing people’, which to me is the most important function of an administrator” (p 205). The principal’s role includes advancing staff members from dependent to independent to finally interdependent. Fairman and McLean (2003) discussed, “Since only independent individuals have the capacity to function interdependently, it is the leader’s responsibility to provide the environment that fosters growth from dependence to interdependence” (p 34).

Barth (1990) declared the principal is the most potent factor in determining school climate. Hoy and Tarter (1997) affirmed, “Positive school climate and strong culture have become part of the effective school and are advocated by educational practitioners and reformers to improve student achievement” (p 2). Jensen (2009) advised leaders to put staff first on the list of priorities.

The leader must work with the staff collectively as a whole to accomplish goals. Rogers (1969) asserted, “The educational administrator who follows the usual pattern in carrying responsibility for his school sees his task as that of harnessing the energy of faculty and students so that the goals and requirements of the educational system will be met” (p 206). Principals cannot transform a school through their individual efforts. DuFour and Eaker (1998) found creating a professional learning community, “is a collective effort, but that effort has little chance of success without effective leadership from the principal” (p 203).

The principal’s role is important in creating culture. Guthrie and Schuermann (2011) observed central to a school leader’s success is his or her ability to focus on two goals amidst numerous other responsibilities: “(a) ensuring high-quality teaching and instruction and (b) creating a culture of learning that both challenges and supports students” (p 47). Leaders shape cultures by what they pay attention to everyday. Gonder and Hymes (1994) asserted the cultural leaders, “assumes the role of ‘high priest’, seeking to define, strengthen, and articulate those enduring values, beliefs, and cultural strands that give the school its unique identity” (p 28).

Leaders align their actions with their values when they act ethically and with integrity (Brock and Grady, 2012). No leader can hope to establish a community of

learners if students and teachers do not believe they can be successful. Bell, Thacker, Schargel (2011) declared a strong leader, “helps a school refrain from the negative attitudes about teaching and learning that so often create downward spirals leading to low expectations” (p 7). Connors (2000) stated that the outstanding leaders of our schools model this consistently and everything revolves around one’s attitude. School leaders should not fall into unethical traps. Guthrie and Schuermann (2011) advised, “Two things can interrupt an ambitious leader’s otherwise brilliant upward ascendancy quickly. One is personal arrogance. The other is falling prey to the myriad unethical temptations strewn in the day-to-day path before successful leaders” (p 101).

Leaders should model trust and promote it within the school culture. Brock and Grady (2012) confirmed that trusting relationships must be, “earned, nurtured and maintained” (p 93). The principal should build trust to be successful. Blase and Blase (1994) suggested as successful shared governance principals demonstrate, “the challenge is to build a trusting environment by encouraging openness, facilitating effective communication, and modeling understanding, the cornerstone of trust” (p 20). Sizer (as cited in Barth’s 1990 forward) concluded, “Educational policy must start with high expectations for schools and ample trust in professionals.”

One of the school leader’s roles is to foster positive school relationships. Jensen (2009) agreed the staff needs to feel they are supported by the administration. Engelking (2008) concurred a successful leader has the capacity to motivate others. Hunter and Waddell (2008) quoted Ken Blanchard’s knowledge about connecting. He affirmed, “In the past, a leader was a boss. Today’s leaders must be partners with their people- they no longer can lead solely based on positional power”(p 5). Hunter and Waddell restated this

as relationships are more important than a position. Principal leadership is the most important factor that contributes to teacher's empowerment. Blase and Blase (1994) confirmed empowerment, "through shared governance- including involvement of staff, parents, and students, lies at the heart of successful principals' practice" (p 3). It is the school leader's efforts that empower teachers to strive for success.

It is the school leader's responsibility to facilitate change. The school principal is equipped for change with feedback from the staff. Fairman and McLean (2003) explained that with diagnostic feedback from organizational members, "The leader is in a position to capitalize on leadership and organizational strengths and to use those strengths to facilitate the designing of improvement strategies for a specific dimension" (p 114). Change takes vision. Rogers and Freiberg (as cited in Freiberg, 1999) declared that vision is, "the ability to see what is unseen, realize what has yet to be, and act upon one's beliefs in the face of uncertainty" (p 214).

There are many different leadership styles. Styles recommended by theorists regarding school climate include servant, situational, and transforming. The successful principals take care of needs of the staff, as described in servant leadership. Brock and Grady (2012) concluded that servant leaders achieve success for their organization, "by prioritizing attention to the needs of their colleagues and the individuals they serve" (p 85). Guthrie and Schuermann (2011) stated that leadership style refers to the composite of and interactions among all of the personal and professional traits and components. Situational leadership theorists, such as Ken Blanchard, believed there is not a best style of leadership. Each situation will require a different style of leadership for a favorable solution. Fairman and McLean (2003) declared situational leadership is a common-sense

conceptual approach to help individuals improve their leadership effectiveness. Fairman and McLean (2003) explained that the OHI, “provides a framework for helping leaders match their leadership styles to readiness levels of their followers and other situational variables” (p 13). Transforming leadership is concerned with the morale and motivation of the group towards the overall goals of the organization. Leithwood (as cited in Hawley, 2007) agreed, “Transforming leadership is a leadership that facilitates the redefinition of a people’s mission and vision, a renewal of their commitment and the restructuring of their systems for goal accomplishment” (p 106).

Fairman and McLean (2003) explained the two key leadership behaviors to consider are initiating structure (tasks behavior) and consideration (relationship behavior). Initiating structure refers to leaders’ behaviors in delineating the relationship between themselves and members of the work group and in endeavoring to establish well-defined patterns of organization, channels of communication and methods of procedure. Fairman and McLean (2003) declared effective leaders are those individuals, “who can initiate structure and can get tasks accomplished through the efforts of other people.” (p 9-10). Fairman and McLean (2003) noted that consideration refers to leader’s behaviors indicative of friendship, mutual trust, respect, and warmth in the relationship between themselves and members of their staff

The best leadership style is a combination of servant, situational, and transforming. Leithwood (2002) explained efforts to describe school leadership should acknowledge the importance of situation and context; this means allowing for variation in leadership style and behavior. A school leader should incorporate all three leadership styles in their daily actions to ensure a good school and culture.



## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

School leaders are under pressure from the federal and state governments to improve student achievement and establish effective schools. In order to respond to the public concern regarding education and the governments' pressure, school leaders should reflect on what it takes to make a good school. Research indicated that improving the school's climate and culture will increase student achievement (Hoy and Tarter, 1997). Research also stated that school leaders have a great impact on school climate and student achievement (Guthrie and Schuermann, 2011). This study compared the perceptions that principals and assistant principals have regarding good schools and cultures as they lead their efforts for student success.

The purpose of this study was to compare the perceptions of principals and assistant principals in regards to the characteristics of a good school and culture by building on the studies previously conducted by Bryan J. Williams (2011), *Principal Descriptions of a Good School and the Culture of a Good School*, and Ted J. Landry (2012), *The Role of School Assistant Principals and Their Perceptions Regarding the Characteristics and Culture of a Good School*. This study used the results recorded in Williams' and Landry's study to compare the responses of both principals and assistant principals regarding good schools and cultures. In both cases, the survey used to gather data from the principals and assistant principals was the same. No additional statistical treatment took place in this study.

Archival data from a previous survey project was used for this study. No additional statistical treatments were applied to the survey results. This study was a part

of a larger, multiphase study of principals and assistant principals in the Gulf Coast Region of Southeast Texas. There were three phases of the multiphase study. Phase one included a quantitative survey of principals' and assistant principals' attitudes and perceptions about their administrative duties, influence, and effectiveness. Phase two was a longitudinal study of how principals' and assistant principals' attitudes and perceptions change over time. Phase three was the development, implementation, and evaluation of a new principal development program based upon research from the first two stages. This study was part of phase one and focused on the questions related to the characteristics of a good school and culture.

The purpose of the larger study was to gain a better understanding of the day to day responsibilities of campus administrators and learn about the challenges they face today. The study was conducted by a large, urban research university in the region. As part of their course requirements, graduate students in the master's degree program administered the questionnaire to administrators over an eighteen-month period. Graduate students were able to select the administrators to interview, which also may have happened to be in the same district they work for. Administrators were questioned about their administrative duties and effectiveness. The data collected was compiled and reserved for future studies in relation to school leadership.

This chapter was divided into the following sections: (1) setting; (2) sample; (3) data collection procedures; (4) methodology instrumentation; (5) data analysis; and (6) limitations.

## Setting

This study was an extension of a larger, multi-phase study of principals and assistant principals in the Gulf Coast Region of Southeast Texas. This study used archival data collected by a research university in the same region.

## Sample

The convenient sample for this study consisted of 311 campus principals and 371 campus assistant principals from districts in the Gulf Coast Region of Southeast Texas.

The 311 campus principals included 183 females and 128 males. The ethnic breakdown included 202 White, 62 African-American, 42 Hispanic, and 5 other. Tables 3-1 and 3-2 illustrated the demographic breakdown of the campus principals below.

*Table 3-1 Gender Breakdown of 311 Campus Principals*

| Gender | Number of Respondents | Percentage of Respondents |
|--------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Male   | 128                   | 41.2%                     |
| Female | 183                   | 58.8%                     |

*Table 3-2 Ethnic Breakdown of 311 Campus Principals*

| Ethnicity        | Number of Respondents | Percentage of Respondents |
|------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| White            | 202                   | 65.0%                     |
| African American | 62                    | 19.9%                     |
| Hispanic         | 42                    | 13.5%                     |
| Other            | 5                     | 1.6%                      |

Principals were asked to provide their school's accountability rating. Every school in the State of Texas has an accountability rating, including Exemplary, Recognized, Academically Acceptable and Academically Unacceptable. The ratings were based on student achievement, dropout rates and attendance. Table 3-3 illustrated the accountability ratings for campus principals including 29 Exemplary, 102 Recognized, 148 Academically Acceptable, and 7 Academically Unacceptable. Accountability ratings were not available for 25 of the schools.

*Table 3-3 Texas Accountability Ratings of 311 Campus Principals*

| Accountability Rating     | Number of Respondents | Percentage of Respondents |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Exemplary                 | 29                    | 9.3%                      |
| Recognized                | 102                   | 32.8%                     |
| Academically Acceptable   | 148                   | 47.6%                     |
| Academically Unacceptable | 7                     | 2.3%                      |
| Exempt                    | 25                    | 8.0%                      |

For the purpose of this study, the schools were divided into three settings: elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools. Elementary schools tend to service students in grades pre-kindergarten through fourth or fifth grade. Middle schools tend to service students in grades fifth through eighth. High schools traditionally service students in grades nine through twelve. The 24 mixed-level category was from schools which serviced students from one or more settings. Table 3-4 illustrated the setting of schools for the sample campus principals.

*Table 3-4 Setting of Schools of 311 Campus Principals*

| Setting of Schools | Number of Respondents | Percentage of Respondents |
|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Elementary         | 149                   | 47.9%                     |
| Middle School      | 65                    | 20.9%                     |
| High School        | 73                    | 23.5%                     |
| Mixed              | 24                    | 7.7%                      |

The 371 campus assistant principals included 235 females and 105 males, with 31 not reporting. The ethnic breakdown included 195 White, 94 African-American, 70 Hispanic, 11 other, and 1 not reporting. Tables 3-5 and 3-6 illustrated the demographic breakdown of the campus assistant principals below.

*Table 3-5 Gender Breakdown of 371 Campus Assistant Principals*

| Gender       | Number of Respondents | Percentage of Respondents |
|--------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Male         | 105                   | 28.3%                     |
| Female       | 235                   | 63.3%                     |
| Not Reported | 31                    | 8.4%                      |

*Table 3-6 Ethnic Breakdown of 371 Campus Assistant Principals*

| Ethnicity        | Number of Respondents | Percentage of Respondents |
|------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| White            | 195                   | 52.6%                     |
| African American | 94                    | 25.3%                     |
| Hispanic         | 70                    | 18.9%                     |
| Other            | 11                    | 3.0%                      |
| Not Reported     | 1                     | 0.2%                      |

Assistant principals were asked to provide their school's accountability rating. Table 3-7 illustrated the accountability ratings for campus assistant principals including 35 Exemplary, 101 Recognized, 190 Academically Acceptable, and 20 Academically Unacceptable. Accountability ratings were not available for 25 of the schools.

*Table 3-7 Texas Accountability Ratings of 371 Campus Assistant Principals*

| Accountability Rating     | Number of Respondents | Percentage of Respondents |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Exemplary                 | 35                    | 9.5%                      |
| Recognized                | 101                   | 27.2%                     |
| Academically Acceptable   | 190                   | 51.2%                     |
| Academically Unacceptable | 20                    | 5.4%                      |
| Not Reported              | 25                    | 6.7%                      |

Out of the 371 assistant principals, 126 represented the elementary setting, 71 represented the middle school setting, and 58 represented the high school setting. 116 schools' grade levels were not reported. Table 3-8 illustrated the setting of schools for the sample campus assistant principals.

*Table 3-8 Setting of Schools of 371 Campus Assistant Principals*

| Setting of Schools | Number of Respondents | Percentage of Respondents |
|--------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Elementary         | 126                   | 34.0%                     |
| Middle School      | 71                    | 19.1%                     |
| High School        | 58                    | 15.6%                     |
| Not Reported       | 116                   | 31.3%                     |

### **Data Collection Procedures**

The designers of the survey derived a way to administer the survey that would benefit both the campus administrators and graduate students. The survey was too lengthy and robust to send out via mail or email with the realistic expectation of receiving responses back. Since administrators are extremely busy, the probability of receiving completed surveys back in a timely manner was slim. The designers decided the best method to use was a cognitive interview guided by graduate student interviewers.

The graduate students were enrolled in the master's Educational Leadership program at a major university in the region. As part of their course requirements, students needed to complete four surveys by four different administrators. Professors reviewed the survey instrument with students during class to ensure accuracy. A portion of the student's grade was part of the successful completion of the four surveys.



Students had the flexibility to decide which administrators would be selected to participate in the study. Both the administrator and student had a vested interest in completing the survey accurately. The cognitive interviews improved the reliability and validity of the survey results. The cognitive interviews provided data to the survey designers that were qualitative in nature, but also had the qualities of quantitative traditional surveys.

Ninety-nine graduate students completed the required interviews at the university over an eighteen-month timeframe. The data collected from the open-ended questions were identified, sorted and coded into recurring characteristics for analysis. Once characteristics emerged, responses were assigned into appropriate categories. If a response had multiple categories, the main category from the response was used for coding. The data was collected and maintained at the university for future studies regarding school leadership.

### **Methodology Instrumentation**

This study used archival data collected from the survey sent to principals and assistant principals as part of a larger, multiphase study. The survey included 115 items, twenty-two items identified the administrators' background and school information, sixty-two items were Likert scaled, and thirty-one were open-ended questions. The open-ended questions provided administrators an opportunity to elaborate thoughtfully on the answers. The questions encouraged dialogue between the administrator and the student in an effort for the student to learn as much as possible from the administrator.

The two open-ended questions used in this study can be found in Section B of the survey. The first question asked, "In this section, we are trying to establish how

principals conceptualize their notions of what makes a school a ‘good’ school as opposed to a ‘fair or poor’ school. Much of the current educational leadership literature focuses on effective schools and more currently how we develop our schools as community. The new nomenclature currently used is ‘good school.’ How would you describe a good school?” The second question asked, “For our purposes school culture is described as ‘What the school values.’ How would you describe the culture of a good school?” A full copy of the principal survey instrument can be found in Appendix B of this study.

### **Data Analysis**

Comparisons were made from the two sets of survey participants, the principals and assistant principals. Similarities and differences were examined in the responses regarding a good school and culture. Two data sources were used to conduct a descriptive, comparative data analysis. This study used the results recorded in Williams’ (2011) *Principal Descriptions of a Good School and the Culture of a Good School* and Landry’s (2012) *The Role of School Assistant Principals and Their Perceptions Regarding the Characteristics and Culture of a Good School*. This study compared the responses of both principals and assistant principals regarding good schools and cultures. No new statistical treatment was applied to the survey results. Both studies used the exact survey to obtain responses. In this comparative study, the researcher used a descriptive model to compare and contrast the data. The open-end responses were categorized into general, reoccurring characteristics for examination by Williams and Landy. This researcher compared the characteristics of the original researchers to look for similarities and differences between the principals’ and assistant principals’ responses.

**Limitations**

This study was limited in three specific areas. First, graduate students were allowed to select the principals and assistant principals they would interview. The administrators were often from the same district in which the student worked. The population sample was limited.

Second, not all active principals and assistant principals in the area were asked to participate in the study. This study used archival data of an exploratory study given to principals and assistant principals in a large, metropolitan area in Southeast Texas. The participants who participated in the survey were asked specifically by graduate students who administered the survey. The administrator participants were limited.

Finally, the candidness of the responses in the survey was limited. Participants provided their names to the survey and often personally knew the graduate student interviewing them. Participant responses may be skewed, since the answers were not anonymous.

## Chapter 4

### Results

The purpose of this study was to compare the perceptions of principals and assistant principals in regard to the characteristics of a good school and culture. The survey data was collected during a multi-phased study of principals and assistant principals in the Gulf Coast Region of Southeast Texas. This study compared the open-ended responses in Section B of the survey instrument. The original survey project utilized a combination of traditional survey design, along with cognitive interview techniques. Graduate students from a research university in the same region selected and interviewed current principals and assistant principals as part of their final class grade.

The survey instrument collected individual and campus data on each participant. Individual data collected included gender, ethnicity, and years of experience. Campus data collected included state accountability rating, community type, and grade levels served on the campus. Tables 4-1 – 4-5 compared the participants' demographic data. Table 4-1 reported there were more female administrators interviewed.

*Table 4-1 Frequency and Percentage of Participants' Gender*

| Gender       | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|--------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| Male         | 128        | 41.2%  | 105                  | 28.3%  |
| Female       | 183        | 58.8%  | 235                  | 63.3%  |
| Not Reported | 0          | 0.0%   | 31                   | 8.4%   |
| Total        | 311        | 100.0% | 371                  | 100.0% |

Table 4-2 reported the administrators' ethnicity. More than half of the administrators surveyed were white. African American and Hispanic ethnicities combined do not equal the amount of white administrators interviewed.

*Table 4-2 Frequency and Percentage of Participants' Ethnicity*

| Ethnicity        | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
|                  |            |        |                      |        |
| White            | 202        | 65.0%  | 195                  | 52.6%  |
| African American | 62         | 19.9%  | 94                   | 25.3%  |
| Hispanic         | 42         | 13.5%  | 70                   | 18.9%  |
| Other            | 5          | 1.6%   | 11                   | 3.0%   |
| Not Reported     | 0          | 0.0%   | 1                    | 0.2%   |
| Total            | 311        | 100.0% | 371                  | 100.0% |

Table 4-3 reported the administrators' state accountability ratings. Academically acceptable was the highest reporting category out of both sets of administrators.

*Table 4-3 Frequency and Percentage of Participants' State Accountability*

| Accountability Rating     | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|---------------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| Exemplary                 | 29         | 9.3%   | 35                   | 9.4%   |
| Recognized                | 102        | 32.8%  | 101                  | 27.2%  |
| Academically Acceptable   | 148        | 47.6%  | 190                  | 51.2%  |
| Academically Unacceptable | 7          | 2.3%   | 20                   | 5.4%   |
| Exempt                    | 25         | 8.0%   | 0                    | 0.0%   |
| Not Reported              | 0          | 0.0%   | 25                   | 6.7%   |
| Total                     | 311        | 100.0% | 371                  | 100.0% |

Table 4-4 reported the administrators' setting of schools. Most administrators served at the elementary level. A large percentage of assistant principals did not report their school setting.

*Table 4-4 Frequency and Percentage of Participants' Setting of Schools*

| Setting of Schools | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|--------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| Elementary         | 149        | 47.9%  | 126                  | 34.0%  |
| Middle School      | 65         | 20.9%  | 71                   | 19.1%  |
| High School        | 73         | 23.5%  | 58                   | 15.6%  |
| Mixed              | 24         | 7.7%   | 0                    | 0.0%   |
| Not Reported       | 0          | 0.0%   | 116                  | 31.3%  |
| Total              | 311        | 100.0% | 371                  | 100.0% |

Table 4-5 reported the administrators' experience. More than 70% of the administrators have served less than ten years as a principal or assistant principal.

*Table 4-5 Frequency and Percentage of Participants' Administrative Experience*

| Years of Experience | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|---------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| 0 -10 years         | 231        | 74.3%  | 315                  | 84.9%  |
| 11-15 years         | 42         | 13.5%  | 40                   | 10.8%  |
| 16 or more years    | 29         | 9.3%   | 11                   | 2.9%   |
| Not Reported        | 9          | 2.9%   | 5                    | 1.3%   |
| Total               | 311        | 100.0% | 371                  | 100.0% |

A comparison of the participants self-reporting results indicated that most of the administrators surveyed in the original study were female, white, with ten years or less of administrative experience, and served at an academically acceptable elementary school.

In addition to the participants' demographic information, this study compared principals' and assistant principals' responses to the two open-ended questions found in Section B of the original survey instrument. The open-end responses were categorized into general, recurring characteristics for examination by Williams and Landy. This researcher compared the characteristics of the original researchers to look for similarities and differences between the principals' and assistant principals' responses.

**Research Question One:** *Do principals' and assistant principals' perceptions differ on the characteristics of a good school?*

Each principal and assistant principal provided their own original response on the characteristics of a good school. Some respondents provided answers that fell into several different categories due to the open-ended nature of the survey questions.

There were a total of 602 combined principals' responses. Six characteristics were identified from the principals' responses in Williams' study. The six characteristics included: (1) a good school has an academic focus- 209 responses (34.7%); (2) a good school is student-centered- 100 responses (16.6%); (3) a good school has strong leadership- 99 responses (16.5%); (4) a good school has a positive climate- 91 responses (15.1%); (5) a good school has parental and community involvement- 73 responses (12.1%); and (6) a good school provides professional development experiences for teachers- 30 responses (5.0%).



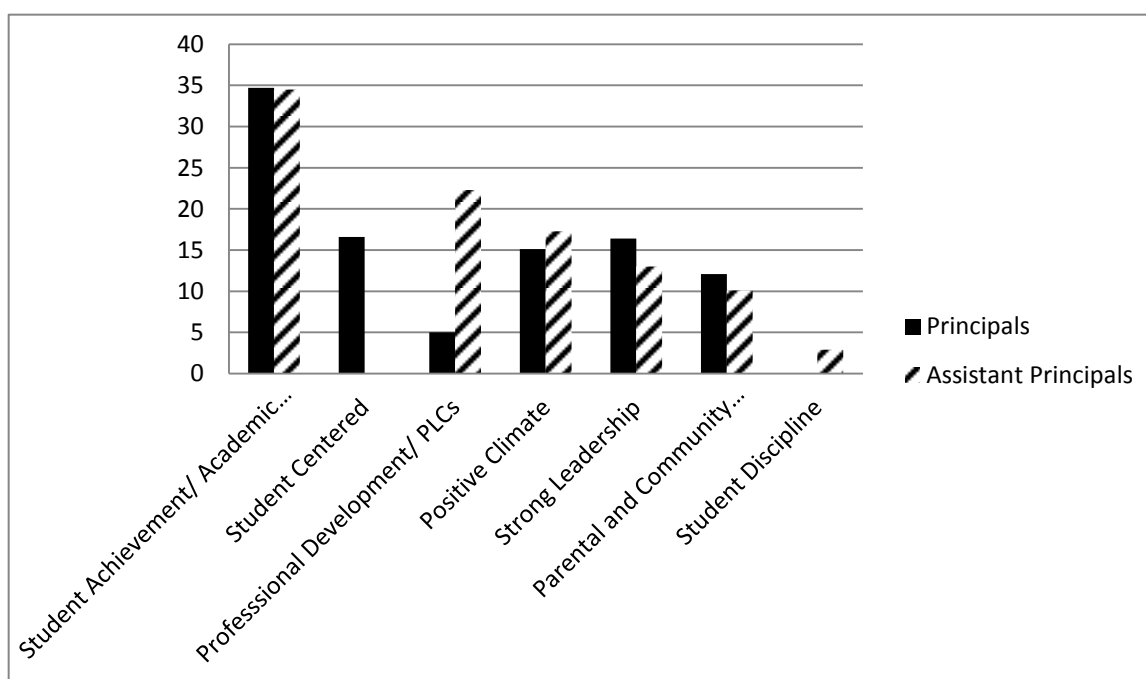
Table 4-6 reported there were a total of 525 combined assistant principals' responses. Six characteristics were identified from the assistant principals' responses in Landry's study. The six characteristics included: (1) a good school is focused on student achievement- 181 responses (34.5%); (2) a good school functions in a collaborative manner in terms of professional development, such as is in a professional learning community- 117 responses (22.3%); (3) a good school has a positive school climate- 91 responses (17.3%); (4) a good school has strong leadership- 68 responses (12.9%); (5) a good school has parental and community involvement- 53 responses (10.1%); and (6) a good school has a focus on student discipline and strong structures and procedures with 15 responses (2.9%).

*Table 4-6 Combined Responses of Participants' Descriptions of a Good School*

| Responses  | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|--|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| Student Achievement/<br>Academic Focus                                   | 209        | 34.7%  | 181                  | 34.5%  |
| Student Centered   | 100        | 16.6%  | 0                    | 0.0%   |
| Strong Leadership  | 99         | 16.5%  | 68                   | 12.9%  |
| Positive Climate   | 91         | 15.1%  | 91                   | 17.3%  |
| Parental & Community<br>Involvement                                      | 73         | 12.1%  | 53                   | 10.1%  |
| Professional Development /<br>Professional Learning<br>Communities (PLC) | 30         | 5.0%   | 117                  | 22.3%  |
| Student Discipline   | 0          | 0.0%   | 15                   | 2.9%   |
| Total Responses  | 602        | 100.0% | 525                  | 100.0% |

Illustration 4-1 indicated that both principals and assistant principals agreed on five major characteristics of a good school including student achievement/academic focus, professional development/professional learning communities, positive climate, parental and community involvement, and strong leadership. Principals responded that a good school is student centered, but the assistant principals did not respond to this category. Assistant principals responded that a good school has a focus on student discipline and strong structures and procedures, but the principals did not respond to this category.

*Illustration 4-1 Participants' Descriptions of a Good School*



### **Student Achievement/ Academic Focus**

There were multiple responses that categorized a good school as having a focus on student achievement and academic focus.

Examples of the responses that assistant principals provided regarding student achievement were:

- *“A good school has high educational standards.”*
- *“Focus is always on student achievement.”*
- *“One in which all stakeholders are vested and the focus on student achievement is evident.”*
- *“Students are actively engaged in learning and teachers are involved in staff development to improve teaching.”*

Examples of the responses that principals provided regarding academic focus were:

- *“A good school is focused on high academic achievement for all students.”*
- *“Successful on TAKS, SDAA, and TELPAS.”*
- *“A good school is one in which the focus is on teaching and learning.”*
- *“Students are successful at accomplishing grade level and state goals.”*

The common theme in the principals’ and assistant principals’ responses was that student achievement and academic focus is a characteristic of a good school. The respondents declared that setting high academic expectations for every student, with a focus on teaching and student learning, ensures student success.

Table 4-7 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by gender. One hundred and thirty female principals (62.2%) identified academic focus as a characteristic of a good school. Only 79 male principals (37.8%) identified academic focus as a characteristic of a good school. One hundred and eight female assistant principals (59.7%) identified student achievement as a characteristic of a

good school. Only 57 male assistant principals (31.5%) identified student achievement as a characteristic of a good school.

Student achievement and academic focus was the highest category from both the principals and assistant principals as a characteristic of a good school. Most of the respondents were female administrators from both categories.

*Table 4-7 Student Achievement/Academic Focus and Participants' Gender*

| Gender       | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|--------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| Male         | 79         | 37.8%  | 57                   | 31.5%  |
| Female       | 130        | 62.2%  | 108                  | 59.7%  |
| Not Reported | 0          | 0.0%   | 16                   | 8.8%   |
| Total        | 209        | 100.0% | 181                  | 100.0% |

Table 4-8 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by years served as administrator. More than 70% of the respondents who had ten years or less of experience identified student achievement/academic focus as a characteristic of a good school more often than the administrators with more experience.

*Table 4-8 Student Achievement/Academic Focus and Administrative Experience*

| Years of Experience | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|---------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| 0 -10 years         | 156        | 74.6%  | 150                  | 82.9%  |
| 11-15 years         | 30         | 14.4%  | 20                   | 11.0%  |
| 16 or more years    | 15         | 7.2%   | 5                    | 2.8%   |
| Not Reported        | 8          | 3.8%   | 6                    | 3.3%   |
| Total               | 209        | 100.0% | 181                  | 100.0% |

Table 4-9 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by campus rating. Most of the respondents served an academically acceptable campus in this category.

*Table 4-9 Student Achievement/Academic Focus and State Accountability*

| Accountability Rating     | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|---------------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| Exemplary                 | 15         | 7.2%   | 13                   | 7.2%   |
| Recognized                | 78         | 37.3%  | 37                   | 20.4%  |
| Academically Acceptable   | 94         | 45.0%  | 103                  | 56.9%  |
| Academically Unacceptable | 7          | 3.3%   | 13                   | 7.2%   |
| Exempt                    | 15         | 7.2%   | 0                    | 0.0%   |
| Not Reported              | 0          | 0.0%   | 15                   | 8.3%   |
| Total                     | 209        | 100.0% | 181                  | 100.0% |

Table 4-10 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by campus level. A large percentage of assistant principals did not report.

*Table 4-10 Student Achievement/Academic Focus and Setting of Schools*

| Setting of Schools | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|--------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| Elementary         | 106        | 50.7%  | 44                   | 24.3%  |
| Middle School      | 38         | 18.2%  | 40                   | 22.1%  |
| High School        | 49         | 23.4%  | 35                   | 19.3%  |
| Mixed              | 16         | 7.7%   | 0                    | 0.0%   |
| Not Reported       | 0          | 0.0%   | 62                   | 34.3%  |
| Total              | 209        | 100.0% | 181                  | 100.0% |

### **Student Centered**

There were many responses that categorized a good school is student centered by the principals. Assistant principals did not report in this category. Examples of the responses that principals provided regarding good schools being student centered were:

- *“A good school meets the needs of the students.”*
- *“A good school is a student-centered school.”*
- *“A good school cares about students.”*
- *“A good school strives to meet the educational, emotional, and physical needs of its students.”*
- *“A good school is where students come first.”*
- *“A good school has high extracurricular student involvement.”*
- *“A good school meets the needs of all kids wherever they are from.”*

The common theme in the principals' responses was that being student centered is a characteristic of a good school. The respondents explained that good schools accomplish more than just meeting the academic needs of the students. Good schools meet the physical, social, and emotional needs of all students. Good schools build positive relationships with students by first nurturing them, then, and only then, can academic success can be achieved. Good schools care about the overall success of students, not just academics.

Table 4-11 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by gender. Fifty-six female campus principals (56.0%) identified student centered as a characteristic of a good school more often than male principals.

*Table 4-11 Student Centered and Participants' Gender*

| Gender | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |      |
|--------|------------|--------|----------------------|------|
| Male   | 44         | 44.0%  | 0                    | 0.0% |
| Female | 56         | 56.0%  | 0                    | 0.0% |
| Total  | 100        | 100.0% | 0                    | 0.0% |



Table 4-12 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by years served as administrator. Seventy-two principals with ten years of experience or less (72.0%) identified student centered as a characteristic of a good school.

*Table 4-12 Student Centered and Administrative Experience*

| Years of Experience | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |      |
|---------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|------|
| 0 -10 years         | 72         | 72.0%  | 0                    | 0.0% |
| 11-15 years         | 12         | 12.0%  | 0                    | 0.0% |
| 16 or more years    | 12         | 12.0%  | 0                    | 0.0% |
| Not Reported        | 4          | 4.0%   | 0                    | 0.0% |
| Total               | 100        | 100.0% | 0                    | 0.0% |

Table 4-13 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by campus rating. Over 40% of the reporting principals served on academically acceptable campuses.

*Table 4-13 Student Centered and State Accountability*

| Accountability Rating     | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |      |
|---------------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|------|
| Exemplary                 | 6          | 6.0%   | 0                    | 0.0% |
| Recognized                | 37         | 37.0%  | 0                    | 0.0% |
| Academically Acceptable   | 44         | 44.0%  | 0                    | 0.0% |
| Academically Unacceptable | 2          | 2.0%   | 0                    | 0.0% |
| Exempt                    | 11         | 11.0%  | 0                    | 0.0% |
| Total                     | 100        | 100.0% | 0                    | 0.0% |

Table 4-14 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by campus level. Half of the elementary principal respondents (50.0%) identified student centered as a characteristic of a good school more than the principals at the other campus levels.

*Table 4-14 Student Centered and Setting of Schools*

| Setting of Schools | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |      |
|--------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|------|
| Elementary         | 50         | 50.0%  | 0                    | 0.0% |
| Middle School      | 19         | 19.0%  | 0                    | 0.0% |
| High School        | 25         | 25.0%  | 0                    | 0.0% |
| Mixed              | 6          | 6.0%   | 0                    | 0.0% |
| Total              | 100        | 100.0% | 0                    | 0.0% |

### **Strong Leadership**

There were multiple responses that categorized a good school as having strong leadership. Examples of the responses that principals provided regarding strong leadership include:

- *“A good school has strong leadership with a strong commitment of administrators and teachers. A good school has a clear mission.”*
- *“Good schools have a leader verses a manager. The leader has a vision beyond one year.”*
- *“A good school has open communication and effective leadership.”*
- *“Good schools constantly assess programs, communicate consistently, and have vision, good hiring practices, and low teacher turnover.”*

Examples of the responses that assistant principals provided include:

- *“Effective and instructional leader who guides the staff.”*
- *“Leadership is critical to bringing all of the pieces together.”*
- *“A good school is one that has strong leadership, collaboration is evident, and high expectations are in place.”*
- *“A good school has good leaders that understand that nurturing and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning.”*

The common theme in the principals’ and assistant principals’ responses was that strong leadership is a crucial element of a good school. The respondents declared that strong leadership encourages collaboration, communicates effectively, and sets a clear vision for the staff.

Table 4-15 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by gender. Sixty-five female principals (66%) identified strong leadership as a characteristic of a good school. Only 34 male principals (34%) identified strong leadership as a characteristic of a good school. Forty-six female assistant principals (67.6%) identified strong leadership as a characteristic of a good school. Only 18 male assistant principals (26.5%) identified strong leadership as a part of a good school.

*Table 4-15 Strong Leadership and Participants' Gender*

| Gender       | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|--------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| Male         | 34         | 34.0%  | 18                   | 26.5%  |
| Female       | 65         | 66.0%  | 46                   | 67.6%  |
| Not Reported | 0          | 0.0%   | 4                    | 5.9%   |
| Total        | 99         | 100.0% | 68                   | 100.0% |

Table 4-16 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by years served as administrator. More than 70% of the respondents who had ten years or less of experience identified strong leadership as a characteristic of a good school more often than the administrators with greater experience.

*Table 4-16 Strong Leadership and Administrative Experience*

| Years of Experience | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|---------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| 0 -10 years         | 74         | 75.0%  | 60                   | 88.2%  |
| 11-15 years         | 13         | 13.0%  | 4                    | 5.9%   |
| 16 or more years    | 11         | 11.0%  | 1                    | 1.5%   |
| Not Reported        | 1          | 1.0%   | 3                    | 4.4%   |
| Total               | 99         | 100.0% | 68                   | 100.0% |

Table 4-17 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by campus rating. None of the principals, and only two assistant principals in the academically unacceptable schools, identified strong leadership as a characteristic of a good school.

*Table 4-17 Strong Leadership and State Accountability*

| Accountability Rating     | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|---------------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| Exemplary                 | 15         | 15.2%  | 6                    | 8.8%   |
| Recognized                | 34         | 34.3%  | 26                   | 38.2%  |
| Academically Acceptable   | 39         | 39.4%  | 26                   | 38.2%  |
| Academically Unacceptable | 0          | 0.0%   | 2                    | 2.9%   |
| Exempt                    | 11         | 11.1%  | 0                    | 0.0%   |
| Not Reported              | 0          | 0.0%   | 8                    | 11.8%  |
| Total                     | 99         | 100.0% | 68                   | 100.0% |

Table 4-18 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by campus level. Elementary administrators reported the highest.

*Table 4-18 Strong Leadership and Setting of Schools*

| Setting of Schools | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |       |
|--------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|-------|
| Elementary         | 50         | 50.5%  | 24                   | 35.3% |
| Middle School      | 21         | 21.2%  | 16                   | 23.5% |
| High School        | 17         | 17.2%  | 9                    | 13.2% |
| Mixed              | 11         | 11.1%  | 0                    | 0.0%  |
| Not Reported       | 0          | 0.0%   | 19                   | 27.9% |
| Total              | 99         | 100.0% | 68                   | 100%  |

### **Positive Climate**

There were multiple responses that categorized a positive climate as a characteristic of a good school.

Examples of the responses that principals provided include:

- *“A good school has a positive, nurturing climate.”*
- *“Staff and students want to attend.”*
- *“A good school feels good when you walk in, inviting and welcoming. The climate is friendly and safe.”*
- *“A place where people listen to each other and respect each other.”*

Examples of the responses that assistant principals provided include:

- *“Positive climate for teachers and students; high morale for teachers; safe environment.”*



- *“The school should be a place where a positive climate exists. Atmosphere of trust and safety.”*
- *“A school where everyone feels welcome and eager to learn. School has harmony, support between employees and students are excited and happy to be there.”*
- *“Positive student learning environment.”*

The common theme in the principals’ and assistant principals’ responses was that a positive climate can be found in a good school. The respondents found that schools with healthy and positive climates create positive learning environments for students and better working environments for staff. The staff is happy and respectful to each other. The overall environment is safe, orderly, inviting, and clean.

Table 4-19 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by gender. Fifty-eight female principals (63.7%) identified positive climate as a characteristic of a good school. Only 33 male principals (36.3%) identified positive climate as a characteristic of a good school. Fifty-eight female assistant principals (63.7%) identified positive climate as a characteristic of a good school. Only 25 male assistant principals (27.5%) identified positive climate as a part of a good school.

This category had several commonalities. There were 91 principals and 91 assistant principals who identified positive climate as a characteristic of a good school. There were 63.7% female principals and assistant principals in this category.

*Table 4-19 Positive Climate and Participants' Gender*

| Gender       | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|--------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| Male         | 33         | 36.3%  | 25                   | 27.5%  |
| Female       | 58         | 63.7%  | 58                   | 63.7%  |
| Not Reported | 0          | 0.0%   | 8                    | 8.8%   |
| Total        | 91         | 100.0% | 91                   | 100.0% |

Table 4-20 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by years served as administrator. Nearly 80.0% of the respondents who had ten years or less of experience identified positive climate as a characteristic of a good school more often than the administrators with greater experience.

*Table 4-20 Positive Climate and Administrative Experience*

| Years of Experience | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|---------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| 0 -10 years         | 71         | 78.0%  | 77                   | 84.6%  |
| 11-15 years         | 12         | 13.2%  | 8                    | 8.8%   |
| 16 or more years    | 8          | 8.8%   | 3                    | 3.3%   |
| Not Reported        | 0          | 0.0%   | 3                    | 3.3%   |
| Total               | 91         | 100.0% | 91                   | 100.0% |

Table 4-21 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by campus rating. Most of the respondents served an academically acceptable school.

*Table 4-21 Positive Climate and State Accountability*

| Accountability Rating     | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|---------------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| Exemplary                 | 13         | 14.3%  | 11                   | 12.1%  |
| Recognized                | 25         | 27.5%  | 20                   | 22.0%  |
| Academically Acceptable   | 50         | 55.0%  | 45                   | 49.4%  |
| Academically Unacceptable | 2          | 2.2%   | 4                    | 4.4%   |
| Exempt                    | 1          | 1.0%   | 0                    | 0.0%   |
| Not Reported              | 0          | 0.0%   | 11                   | 12.1%  |
| Total                     | 91         | 100.0% | 91                   | 100.0% |

Table 4-22 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by campus level. Most respondents from both the principals and assistant principals served an elementary campus.

*Table 4-22 Positive Climate and Setting of Schools*

| Setting of Schools | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|--------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| Elementary         | 44         | 48.3%  | 35                   | 38.4%  |
| Middle School      | 19         | 20.9%  | 13                   | 14.3%  |
| High School        | 24         | 26.4%  | 12                   | 13.2%  |
| Mixed              | 4          | 4.4%   | 0                    | 0.0%   |
| Not Reported       | 0          | 0.0%   | 31                   | 34.1%  |
| Total              | 91         | 100.0% | 91                   | 100.0% |

### **Parental and Community Involvement**

There were several responses that categorized a good school promotes active parent and community involvement.

Examples of the responses that assistant principals provided regarding this category were:

- *“At its core, a good school is one that prioritizes the development of warm, caring, and empathic relationships within its community.”*
- *“Includes participation from all stakeholders (teachers, staff, students, and community).”*
- *“I also feel that parents and the community need to be involved and supportive.”*

- *“A good school is one where teachers have high expectations for “all” students. Also, the difference between a good school and a great school is the involvement of its parents. It makes a difference.”*

Examples of the responses that principals provided regarding parent and community involvement were:

- *“A good school encourages support from parents and the community.”*
- *“A good school has good parental and community involvement.”*
- *“A good school has teachers working together with parents.”*
- *“A good school is one with high volumes of parental involvement; Community involvement: business partners, parents, teachers, and community working together.”*

The common theme in the principals’ and assistant principals’ responses was that parental and community involvement is a characteristic of a good school. These respondents affirmed that making parents feel welcomed and included and establishing working relationships with the community is needed to the overall success of a school.

Table 4-23 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by gender. Forty-four female principals (60.3%) identified parental and community involvement as a characteristic of a good school. Only 29 male principals (39.7%) identified parental and community involvement as a characteristic of a good school. Thirty female assistant principals (56.6%) identified parental and community involvement as a characteristic of a good school. Only 16 male assistant principals (30.2%) identified parental and community involvement as a characteristic of a good school.

*Table 4-23 Parental & Community Involvement and Participants' Gender*

| Gender       | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|--------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| Male         | 29         | 39.7%  | 16                   | 30.2%  |
| Female       | 44         | 60.3%  | 30                   | 56.6%  |
| Not Reported | 0          | 0.0%   | 7                    | 13.2%  |
| Total        | 73         | 100.0% | 53                   | 100.0% |

Table 4-24 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by years served as administrator. More than 70% of the respondents who had ten years or less of experience identified parental and community involvement as a characteristic of a good school more often than the administrators with more experience.

*Table 4-24 Parental & Community Involvement and Administrative Experience*

| Years of Experience | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|---------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| 0 -10 years         | 57         | 78.1%  | 39                   | 73.6%  |
| 11-15 years         | 12         | 16.4%  | 7                    | 13.2%  |
| 16 or more years    | 4          | 5.5%   | 3                    | 5.7%   |
| Not Reported        | 0          | 0.0%   | 4                    | 7.5%   |
| Total               | 73         | 100.0% | 53                   | 100.0% |

Table 4-25 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by campus rating. Most of the respondents served an academically acceptable campus in this category.

*Table 4-25 Parental & Community Involvement and State Accountability*

| Accountability Rating     | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|---------------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| Exemplary                 | 9          | 12.3%  | 6                    | 11.3%  |
| Recognized                | 20         | 27.4%  | 15                   | 28.3%  |
| Academically Acceptable   | 38         | 52.1%  | 24                   | 45.3%  |
| Academically Unacceptable | 4          | 5.5%   | 2                    | 3.8%   |
| Exempt                    | 2          | 2.7%   | 0                    | 0.0%   |
| Not Reported              | 0          | 0.0%   | 6                    | 11.3%  |
| Total                     | 73         | 100.0% | 53                   | 100.0% |

Table 4-26 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by campus level.

*Table 4-26 Parental & Community Involvement and Setting of Schools*

| Setting of Schools | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|--------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| Elementary         | 37         | 50.7%  | 24                   | 45.3%  |
| Middle School      | 15         | 20.5%  | 4                    | 7.5%   |
| High School        | 16         | 21.9%  | 11                   | 20.8%  |
| Mixed              | 5          | 6.9%   | 0                    | 0.0%   |
| Not Reported       | 0          | 0.0%   | 14                   | 26.4%  |
| Total              | 73         | 100.0% | 53                   | 100.0% |

### **Professional Development/ Professional Learning Communities**

There were many responses that categorized how a good school works collaboratively in regard to professional development and within professional learning communities. Examples of the responses that assistant principals provided regarding this category were:

- *“A school where teachers collaborate and implement staff development.”*
- *“Collaborative and learning communities.”*
- *“A learning community working together to help kids succeed.”*
- *“Involves learning community in decision-making, student achievement is the foundation for decisions.”*



- *“A school where teachers and staff collaborate with teams and across curriculum/grade levels, using data and best practices to make decisions in order to make all students successful.”*

Examples of the responses that principals provided regarding professional development and professional learning communities include:

- *“A good school is a learning community where students, teachers and administrators are always learning.”*
- *“A good school has ongoing teacher professional development.”*
- *“A good school is where teachers are ready to learn.”*
- *“A good school has a faculty who are interested in professional growth.”*

The common theme in the principals’ and assistant principals’ responses was that professional development and professional learning communities is a characteristic of a good school. The respondents declared that good schools create an environment where teachers learn from each other and professional development is an ongoing process. Good schools provide ways for teachers and staff to grow and collaborate with each other.

Table 4-27 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by gender. Nineteen female principals (63.3%) identified professional development and professional learning communities as a characteristic of a good school. Only 11 male principals (36.7%) identified professional development and professional learning communities as a characteristic of a good school. Seventy-seven female assistant principals (65.8%) identified professional development and professional learning communities as a characteristic of a good school. Only 25 male assistant

principals (21.4%) identified professional development and professional learning communities as a characteristic of a good school.

*Table 4-27 Professional Development/PLCs and Participants' Gender*

| Gender       | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|--------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| Male         | 11         | 36.7%  | 25                   | 21.4%  |
| Female       | 19         | 63.3%  | 77                   | 65.8%  |
| Not Reported | 0          | 0.0%   | 15                   | 12.8%  |
| Total        | 30         | 100.0% | 117                  | 100.0% |

Table 4-28 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by years served as administrator. More than 70% of the respondents who had ten years or less of experience identified professional development and PLC.

*Table 4-28 Professional Development/PLCs and Administrative Experience*

| Years of Experience | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|---------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| 0 -10 years         | 22         | 73.3%  | 96                   | 82.0%  |
| 11-15 years         | 3          | 10.0%  | 15                   | 12.8%  |
| 16 or more years    | 5          | 16.7%  | 3                    | 2.6%   |
| Not Reported        | 0          | 0.0%   | 3                    | 2.6%   |
| Total               | 30         | 100.0% | 117                  | 100.0% |

Table 4-29 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by campus rating.

*Table 4-29 Professional Development/PLCs and State Accountability*

| Accountability Rating     | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|---------------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| Exemplary                 | 3          | 10.0%  | 14                   | 12.0%  |
| Recognized                | 6          | 20.0%  | 37                   | 31.6%  |
| Academically Acceptable   | 19         | 63.4%  | 45                   | 38.5%  |
| Academically Unacceptable | 1          | 3.3%   | 8                    | 6.8%   |
| Exempt                    | 1          | 3.3%   | 0                    | 0.0%   |
| Not Reported              | 0          | 0.0%   | 13                   | 11.1%  |
| Total                     | 30         | 100.0% | 117                  | 100.0% |

Table 4-30 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by campus level. Elementary was the highest setting reporting.

*Table 4-30 Professional Development/PLCs and Setting of Schools*

| Setting of Schools | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|--------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| Elementary         | 21         | 70.0%  | 49                   | 41.9%  |
| Middle School      | 6          | 20.0%  | 19                   | 16.2%  |
| High School        | 1          | 3.3%   | 15                   | 12.8%  |
| Mixed              | 2          | 6.7%   | 0                    | 0.0%   |
| Not Reported       | 0          | 0.0%   | 34                   | 29.1%  |
| Total              | 30         | 100.0% | 117                  | 100.0% |

### **Student Discipline**

There were multiple responses that categorized student discipline as a characteristic of a good school by assistant principals. Principals did not report in this category. Examples that assistant principals provided regarding student discipline were:

- *“Culture of discipline where continuous improvement is paramount, relationships and relevance are valued and implemented.”*
- *“You can tell when you walk through the front door what the culture is. Discipline has to do with it.”*
- *“Effective teaching and learning, discipline enforced, effective communication among staff and faculty, and students are motivated.”*
- *“Discipline standards are communicated and enforced and expectations are communicated and practiced.”*

The common theme in the assistant principals' responses was that student discipline is part of a good school. The respondents explained that a good school has a low number of discipline incidents and discipline expectations are communicated and enforced. The focus on discipline will improve the learning environment.

Table 4-31 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by gender. Twelve female campus assistant principals (80.0%) identified student discipline as a characteristic of a good school more often than male assistant principals.

*Table 4-31 Student Discipline and Participants' Gender*

| Gender       | Principals |      | Assistant Principals |        |
|--------------|------------|------|----------------------|--------|
| Male         | 0          | 0.0% | 2                    | 13.3%  |
| Female       | 0          | 0.0% | 12                   | 80.0%  |
| Not Reported | 0          | 0.0% | 1                    | 6.7%   |
| Total        | 0          | 0.0% | 15                   | 100.0% |

Table 4-32 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by years served as administrator. Fourteen assistant principals with ten years of experience or less (93.3%) identified student discipline as a characteristic of a good school.

*Table 4-32 Student Discipline and Administrative Experience*

| Years of Experience | Principals |      | Assistant Principals |        |
|---------------------|------------|------|----------------------|--------|
| 0 -10 years         | 0          | 0.0% | 14                   | 93.3%  |
| 11-15 years         | 0          | 0.0% | 1                    | 6.7%   |
| 16 or more years    | 0          | 0.0% | 0                    | 0.0%   |
| Not Reported        | 0          | 0.0% | 0                    | 0.0%   |
| Total               | 0          | 0.0% | 15                   | 100.0% |

Table 4-33 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by campus rating. Most of the assistant principals in this category served a recognized or an academically acceptable campus.

*Table 4-33 Student Discipline and State Accountability*

| Accountability Rating     | Principals |      | Assistant Principals |        |
|---------------------------|------------|------|----------------------|--------|
| Exemplary                 | 0          | 0.0% | 2                    | 13.3%  |
| Recognized                | 0          | 0.0% | 6                    | 40.0%  |
| Academically Acceptable   | 0          | 0.0% | 6                    | 40.0%  |
| Academically Unacceptable | 0          | 0.0% | 0                    | 0.0%   |
| Not Reported              | 0          | 0.0% | 1                    | 6.7%   |
| Total                     | 0          | 0.0% | 15                   | 100.0% |

Table 4-34 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by campus level. Nearly half of the assistant principal respondents (46.7%) did not report their setting of school in this category.

*Table 4-34 Student Discipline and Setting of Schools*

| Setting of Schools | Principals |      | Assistant Principals |        |
|--------------------|------------|------|----------------------|--------|
| Elementary         | 0          | 0.0% | 5                    | 33.3%  |
| Middle School      | 0          | 0.0% | 2                    | 13.3%  |
| High School        | 0          | 0.0% | 1                    | 6.7%   |
| Not Reported       | 0          | 0.0% | 7                    | 46.7%  |
| Total              | 0          | 0.0% | 15                   | 100.0% |

## **Research Question Two**

*Do principals' and assistant principals' perceptions differ on how they describe the culture of a good school?*

Each principal and assistant principal provided their own original response on how they would describe the culture of a good school. Some respondents provided answers that fell into several different categories due to the nature of the open-ended nature of the survey questions.

There were a total of 445 combined principals' responses. Six characteristics were identified from the principals' responses in Williams' study. The six characteristics included: (1) the culture of a good school has an academic focus- 156 responses (35.1%); (2) the culture of a good school has a positive climate- 93 responses (20.9%); (3) the culture of a good school is student-centered- 89 responses (20.0%); (4) the culture of a



good school has strong leadership -68 responses (15.3%); (5) the culture of a good school has parental and community involvement - 29 responses (6.5%); and (6) the culture of a good school provides professional development experiences for teachers - 6 responses (1.3%).

There were a total of 474 combined assistant principals' responses. Six characteristics were identified from the assistant principals' responses in Landry's study. The six characteristics included: (1) the culture of a good school functions in a collaborative manner in terms of professional development and professional learning communities- 126 responses (26.6%); (2) the culture of a good school has a positive school climate- 120 responses (25.3%); (3) the culture of a good school is focused on student achievement- 104 responses (21.9%); (4) the culture of a good school values the student - 57 responses (12.0%); (5) the culture of a good school has parental and community involvement- 34 responses (7.2%); and (6) the culture of a good school has strong leadership- 33 responses (7.0%). Table 4-35 compared the principals' and assistant principals' descriptions of the culture of a good school.

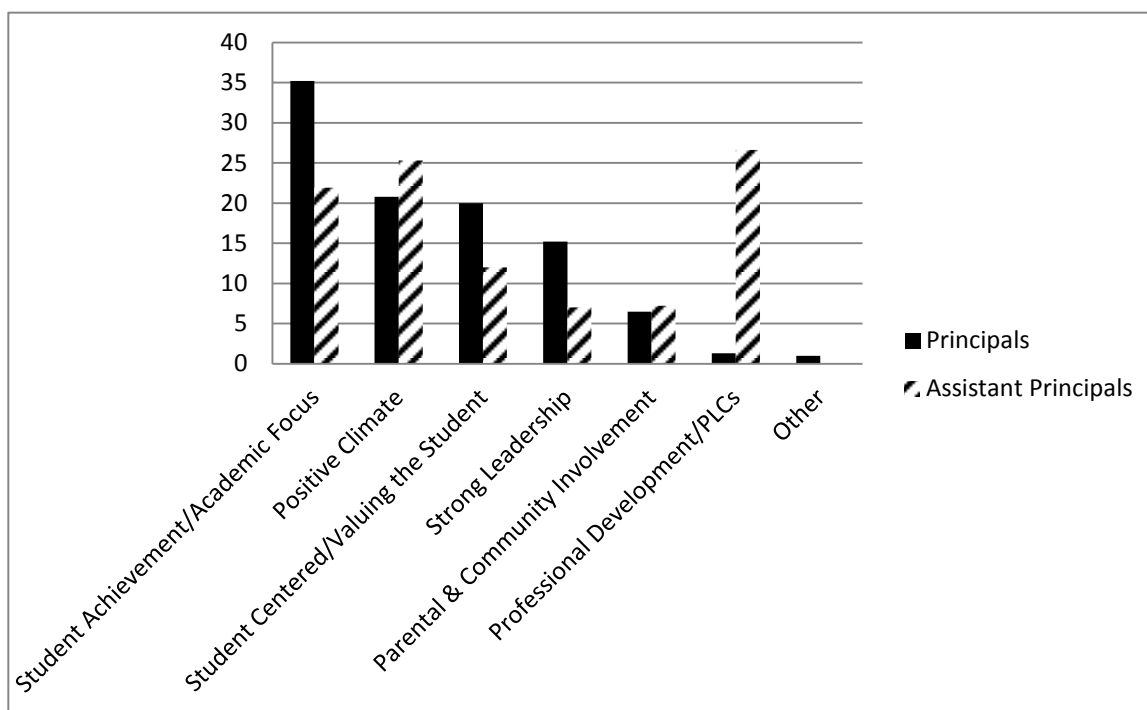
*Table 4-35 Responses of Participants' Descriptions of the Culture of a Good School*

| Responses  | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|--|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| Student Achievement/<br>Academic Focus                                   | 156        | 35.1%  | 104                  | 21.9%  |
| Positive Climate   | 93         | 20.9%  | 120                  | 25.3%  |
| Student Centered/<br>Valuing the Student                                 | 89         | 20.0%  | 57                   | 12.0%  |
| Strong Leadership  | 68         | 15.3%  | 33                   | 7.0%   |
| Parental & Community<br>Involvement                                      | 29         | 6.5%   | 34                   | 7.2%   |
| Professional Development /<br>Professional Learning<br>Communities (PLC) | 6          | 1.3%   | 126                  | 26.6%  |
| Other  | 4          | 0.9%   | 0                    | 0.0%   |
| Total Responses  | 445        | 100.0% | 474                  | 100.0% |

Overall, both principals and assistant principals agreed on six characteristics regarding the culture of a good school including student achievement/academic focus, positive climate, student centered/valuing the student, strong leadership, parental and community involvement, and professional development/professional learning communities. There were four additional responses that the principals responded to for the characteristics regarding the culture of a good, but the assistant principals did not respond to this category.

Most categories identified in the characteristics of a good school and the culture of a good school were the same from both sets of participants. Principals and assistant principals identified student achievement and academic focus, positive climate, student centered and valuing the student, strong leadership, parental and community involvement, and professional development and professional learning communities in both research questions.

*Illustration 4-2 Participants' Descriptions of the Culture of a Good School*



### **Student Achievement/Academic Focus**

There were multiple responses that categorized the culture of a good school as having a focus on student achievement and academic focus.

Examples of the responses that assistant principals provided regarding student achievement were:

- *“A good school is a school that is safe and focused on student achievement.”*
- *“Culture focused on student achievement, where student achievement and successes are the cool thing to do.”*
- *“One in which all stakeholders are vested and the focus on student achievement is evident.”*
- *“One where all involved parties have taken ownership of education and student progress is the main focus.”*

Examples of the responses that principals provided regarding academic focus were:

- *“Every child is learning every day.”*
- *“The culture of a good school is centered on positive learning experiences for all members.”*
- *“Good schools value student learning. They make sure learning is what student needs to learn.”*
- *“The culture is one which supports teaching and learning.”*

The common theme in the principals’ and assistant principals’ responses was that student achievement and academic focus is a characteristic to the culture of a good school. The respondents declared that the culture should focus on teaching and learning, set high expectations for students, and celebrate student successes.

Table 4-36 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by gender. Eighty-two female principals (52.6%) identified academic focus as a characteristic of the culture of a good school. Seventy-four male principals (47.4%) identified academic focus as a characteristic of the culture of a good school.

Sixty-six female assistant principals (63.5%) identified student achievement as a characteristic of the culture of a good school. Only 30 male assistant principals (28.8%) identified.

Student achievement and academic focus was the highest category from both the principals and assistant principals as a characteristic of the culture of a good school.

*Table 4-36 Student Achievement/Academic Focus and Participants' Gender*

| Gender       | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|--------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| Male         | 74         | 47.4%  | 30                   | 28.8%  |
| Female       | 82         | 52.6%  | 66                   | 63.5%  |
| Not Reported | 0          | 0.0%   | 8                    | 7.7%   |
| Total        | 156        | 100.0% | 104                  | 100.0% |

Table 4-37 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by years served as administrator. More than 70% of the respondents who had ten years or less of experience identified student achievement/academic focus as a characteristic of the culture a good school.

*Table 4-37 Student Achievement/Academic Focus and Administrative Experience*

| Years of Experience | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|---------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| 0 -10 years         | 113        | 72.4%  | 84                   | 80.8%  |
| 11-15 years         | 25         | 16.0%  | 15                   | 14.4%  |
| 16 or more years    | 12         | 7.7%   | 3                    | 2.9%   |
| Not Reported        | 6          | 3.9%   | 2                    | 1.9%   |
| Total               | 156        | 100.0% | 104                  | 100.0% |

Table 4-38 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by campus rating. Most of the respondents served an academically acceptable campus in this category.

*Table 4-38 Student Achievement/Academic Focus and State Accountability*

| Accountability Rating     | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|---------------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| Exemplary                 | 18         | 11.5%  | 8                    | 7.7%   |
| Recognized                | 55         | 35.3%  | 25                   | 24.0%  |
| Academically Acceptable   | 73         | 46.8%  | 59                   | 56.7%  |
| Academically Unacceptable | 2          | 1.3%   | 4                    | 3.9%   |
| Exempt                    | 8          | 5.1%   | 0                    | 0.0%   |
| Not Reported              | 0          | 0.0%   | 8                    | 7.7%   |
| Total                     | 156        | 100.0% | 104                  | 100.0% |

Table 4-39 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by campus level. The assistant principals represent an even number of responses from the middle school (20.2%) and high school (20.2%) setting. There were more respondents from elementary principals (41%) in this category.

*Table 4-39 Student Achievement/Academic Focus and Setting of Schools*

| Setting of Schools | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|--------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| Elementary         | 64         | 41.0%  | 29                   | 27.9%  |
| Middle School      | 34         | 21.8%  | 21                   | 20.2%  |
| High School        | 48         | 30.8%  | 21                   | 20.2%  |
| Mixed              | 10         | 6.4%   | 0                    | 0.0%   |
| Not Reported       | 0          | 0.0%   | 33                   | 31.7%  |
| Total              | 156        | 100.0% | 104                  | 100.0% |

### **Positive Climate**

There were many responses that categorized a positive climate as a characteristic of the culture of a good school.

Examples of the responses that principals provided include:

- *“Positive climate; everyone wants to be there and has a positive attitude.”*
- *“The culture of a good school is when you walk in and the atmosphere is conducive to learning. The students and teachers are happy. Can feel the spirit from all the stakeholders.”*



- *“The culture of our school is the environment we provide for our faculty, parents, staff, and students. It is the tone of our school and what is valued by everyone.”*
- *“Students and teachers are happy.”*

Examples of the responses that assistant principals provided include:

- *“Positive climate where students are engaged in the learning process.”*
- *“The school climate must be conducive to learning. The school itself should be clean, safe, well organized.”*
- *“A school that is warm and inviting where teachers and students want to come in their pursuit for knowledge and betterment of the future.”*
- *“From the moment you walk into the school, you feel welcome and you can tell learning is happening. Learning is evident in all aspects of the school’s culture.”*

The common theme in the principals’ and assistant principals’ responses was that a positive climate can be found in the culture of a good school. The respondents shared that a positive climate can be felt the moment stakeholders walk in the door. Students and staff feel safe, respected, and happy in the culture of a good school.

Table 4-40 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by gender. Sixty-four female principals (68.8%) identified positive climate as a characteristic of the culture a good school. Only 29 male principals (31.2%) identified positive climate as a characteristic of the culture of a good school. Seventy-one female assistant principals (59.2%) identified positive climate as a characteristic of

the culture of a good school. Only 35 male assistant principals (29.1%) identified positive climate as a part of the culture of a good school.

*Table 4-40 Positive Climate and Participants' Gender*

| Gender       | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|--------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| Male         | 29         | 31.2%  | 35                   | 29.1%  |
| Female       | 64         | 68.8%  | 71                   | 59.2%  |
| Not Reported | 0          | 0.0%   | 14                   | 11.7%  |
| Total        | 93         | 100.0% | 120                  | 100.0% |

Table 4-41 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by years served as administrator. Over 70.0% of the respondents who had ten years or less of experience identified positive climate as a characteristic of the culture of a good school more often than the administrators with greater experience.

*Table 4-41 Positive Climate and Administrative Experience*

| Years of Experience | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|---------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| 0 -10 years         | 67         | 72.0%  | 102                  | 85.0%  |
| 11-15 years         | 15         | 16.1%  | 12                   | 10.0%  |
| 16 or more years    | 9          | 9.7%   | 4                    | 3.3%   |
| Not Reported        | 2          | 2.2%   | 2                    | 1.7%   |
| Total               | 93         | 100.0% | 120                  | 100.0% |

Table 4-42 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by campus rating. Nearly half of the respondents from the principals (48.4%) and assistant principals (50.8%) served an academically acceptable campus.

*Table 4-42 Positive Climate and State Accountability*

| Accountability Rating     | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|---------------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| Exemplary                 | 8          | 8.6%   | 14                   | 11.7%  |
| Recognized                | 34         | 36.6%  | 31                   | 25.8%  |
| Academically Acceptable   | 45         | 48.4%  | 61                   | 50.8%  |
| Academically Unacceptable | 1          | 1.0%   | 4                    | 3.3%   |
| Exempt                    | 5          | 5.4%   | 0                    | 0.0%   |
| Not Reported              | 0          | 0.0%   | 10                   | 8.3%   |
| Total                     | 93         | 100.0% | 120                  | 100.0% |

Table 4-43 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by campus level. Most of the principals' respondents are at the elementary setting (44.1%), as well as the assistant principals (35.0%). There are a large number of assistant principals not reporting their school setting in this category.

*Table 4-43 Positive Climate and Setting of Schools*

| Setting of Schools | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|--------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| Elementary         | 41         | 44.1%  | 42                   | 35.0%  |
| Middle School      | 24         | 25.8%  | 24                   | 20.0%  |
| High School        | 21         | 22.6%  | 16                   | 13.3%  |
| Mixed              | 7          | 7.5%   | 0                    | 0.0%   |
| Not Reported       | 0          | 0.0%   | 38                   | 31.7%  |
| Total              | 93         | 100.0% | 120                  | 100.0% |

### **Student Centered and Valuing the Student**

There were many responses that categorized the culture of a good school is student centered and values the student by the principals and assistant principals.

Examples of the responses that principals provided regarding student centered were:

- *“The culture of a good school cares for the whole child, not just education.”*
- *“Well rounded for the student. Can’t be all academics, or fine arts, or athletics. Students should have a positive experience.”*
- *“The culture of a good school is one that treats the child as an individual and strives to meet their needs at all levels.”*

- *“There are multiple opportunities for students to grow and succeed.”*
- *“The culture of a school is what the school values. A school should value student success.”*
- *“The culture of a good school must build positive relationships. Students must be connected to the campus in some way. They need to be actively involved in school, whether extracurricular or in some other fashion.”*

Examples of the responses assistant principals provided regarding valuing the student were:

- *“All decisions are made with the best interests of the students in mind.”*
- *“One that values children. That’s the customer.”*
- *“A good school’s culture is one where children and their needs are first and foremost. That’s what we are here for.”*
- *“The culture of a good school puts students first. Teachers should be doing what is best for students.”*

The common theme in the principals’ and assistant principals’ responses was that being student centered and valuing the student is a characteristic to the culture of a good school. The respondents declared that good schools care about the overall success of students, not just academics. Good schools work diligently to ensure each student feels connected to the school in some way. The students’ needs are a priority in a good school. Good schools build positive relationships with students and help them reach their full potential.

Table 4-44 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by gender. Sixty-one female campus principals (68.5%) identified student

centered as a characteristic of the culture a good school more often than male principals. Forty-one female assistant principals (71.9%) identified valuing the student as a characteristic of the culture of a good school more often than male assistant principals. Almost 70% of female principals and approximately 70% of female assistant principals identified student centered and valuing the child as a characteristic of the culture of a good school.

*Table 4-44 Student Centered and Participants' Gender*

| Gender       | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|--------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| Male         | 28         | 31.5%  | 14                   | 24.6%  |
| Female       | 61         | 68.5%  | 41                   | 71.9%  |
| Not Reported | 0          | 0.0%   | 2                    | 3.5%   |
| Total        | 89         | 100.0% | 57                   | 100.0% |

Table 4-45 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by years served as administrator. Sixty-one principals with ten years of experience or less (68.5%) identified student centered as a characteristic of the culture of a good school. Forty-seven assistant principals with ten years of experience or less (82.5%) identified valuing the student as a characteristic of the culture of a good school.

*Table 4-45 Student Centered and Administrative Experience*

| Years of Experience | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|---------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| 0 -10 years         | 61         | 68.5%  | 47                   | 82.5%  |
| 11-15 years         | 11         | 12.4%  | 7                    | 12.3%  |
| 16 or more years    | 15         | 16.9%  | 2                    | 3.5%   |
| Not Reported        | 2          | 2.2%   | 1                    | 1.7%   |
| Total               | 89         | 100.0% | 57                   | 100.0% |

Table 4-46 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by campus rating. Nearly half of the reporting principals and assistant principals serve an academically acceptable campus.

*Table 4-46 Student Centered and State Accountability*

| Accountability Rating     | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|---------------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| Exemplary                 | 11         | 12.4%  | 6                    | 10.5%  |
| Recognized                | 35         | 39.3%  | 15                   | 26.3%  |
| Academically Acceptable   | 37         | 41.6%  | 28                   | 49.1%  |
| Academically Unacceptable | 1          | 1.1%   | 5                    | 8.8%   |
| Exempt/Not Reporting      | 5          | 5.6%   | 3                    | 5.3%   |
| Total                     | 89         | 100.0% | 57                   | 100.0% |



Table 4-47 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by campus level. Over half of the elementary principal respondents (57.3%) identified student centered as a characteristic of the culture of a good school more than the principals at the other campus levels. A high number of assistant principals (24.5%) did not report the setting of their school in this category.

*Table 4-47 Student Centered and Setting of Schools*

| Setting of Schools   | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|----------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| Elementary           | 51         | 57.3%  | 18                   | 31.6%  |
| Middle School        | 14         | 15.7%  | 11                   | 19.3%  |
| High School          | 16         | 18.0%  | 14                   | 24.5%  |
| Mixed/ Not Reporting | 8          | 9.0%   | 14                   | 24.5%  |
| Total                | 89         | 100.0% | 57                   | 100.0% |

### **Parental and Community Involvement**

There were many responses that categorized the culture of a good school promotes active parent and community involvement.

Examples of the responses that assistant principals provided regarding this category were:

- *“The culture of a good school values the opinions of the community, students and faculty. Modern day schools do not value the community aka stakeholders as we once have.”*
- *“Strong interactions by community members (teachers/parents/students), all working together.”*

- *“High expectations for students and staff. Strong parent, teacher, student relationships. Successful student achievement focus; outcome-strong, productive citizens programs, clubs and organizations that benefit all inclusive atmosphere, with high energy.”*
- *“A school in which all stakeholders- teachers, non-teaching staff, administrators, parents, and community members work together to establish and maintain a common vision for the school as well as goals and standards to achieve that vision.”*

Examples of the responses that principals provided regarding parent and community involvement were:

- *“The culture of a good school is where families and communities are welcome.”*
- *“Building relationships with the community and businesses in the area is important.”*
- *“The culture of a good school would value students, parents and the community and where they come from.”*
- *“School is open to the community.”*
- *“The culture of a good school has an active parent group.”*

The common theme in the principals’ and assistant principals’ responses was that parental and community involvement is a characteristic to the culture of a good school. The respondents identified that establishing working relationships with the community and getting the parents involved is important to the culture of a good school.

Table 4-48 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by gender. Sixteen female principals (55.2%) identified parental and community involvement as a characteristic of the culture of a good school. Only 13 male principals (44.8%) identified parental and community involvement as a characteristic of the culture of a good school. Twenty-one female assistant principals (61.8%) identified parental and community involvement as a characteristic of the culture of a good school. Only 11 male assistant principals (32.4%) identified parental and community involvement.

*Table 4-48 Parental & Community Involvement and Participants' Gender*

| Gender       | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|--------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| Male         | 13         | 44.8%  | 11                   | 32.4%  |
| Female       | 16         | 55.2%  | 21                   | 61.8%  |
| Not Reported | 0          | 0.0%   | 2                    | 5.8%   |
| Total        | 29         | 100.0% | 34                   | 100.0% |

Table 4-49 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by years served as administrator. More than 60% of the respondents who had ten years or less of experience identified parental and community involvement focus as a characteristic of the culture of a good school more often than the administrators with greater experience.

*Table 4-49 Parental & Community Involvement and Administrative Experience*

| Years of Experience | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|---------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| 0 -10 years         | 23         | 79.3%  | 21                   | 61.8%  |
| 11-15 years         | 1          | 3.5%   | 8                    | 23.5%  |
| 16 or more years    | 5          | 17.2%  | 3                    | 8.8%   |
| Not Reported        | 0          | 0.0%   | 2                    | 5.9%   |
| Total               | 29         | 100.0% | 34                   | 100.0% |

Table 4-50 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by campus rating.

*Table 4-50 Parental & Community Involvement and State Accountability*

| Accountability Rating     | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|---------------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| Exemplary                 | 2          | 6.9%   | 5                    | 14.7%  |
| Recognized                | 4          | 13.8%  | 12                   | 35.3%  |
| Academically Acceptable   | 21         | 72.4%  | 12                   | 35.3%  |
| Academically Unacceptable | 0          | 0.0%   | 2                    | 5.9%   |
| Exempt                    | 2          | 6.9%   | 0                    | 0.0%   |
| Not Reported              | 0          | 0.0%   | 3                    | 8.8%   |
| Total                     | 29         | 100.0% | 34                   | 100.0% |

Table 4-51 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by campus level. A large percentage of assistant principals did not report in this category (38.2%).

*Table 4-51 Parental & Community Involvement and Setting of Schools*

| Setting of Schools | Principals |        | Assistant Principals |        |
|--------------------|------------|--------|----------------------|--------|
| Elementary         | 14         | 48.3%  | 12                   | 35.3%  |
| Middle School      | 6          | 20.7%  | 5                    | 14.7%  |
| High School        | 6          | 20.7%  | 4                    | 11.8%  |
| Mixed              | 3          | 10.3%  | 0                    | 0.0%   |
| Not Reported       | 0          | 0.0%   | 13                   | 38.2%  |
| Total              | 29         | 100.0% | 34                   | 100.0% |

### **Professional Development/ Professional Learning Communities**

There were many responses that categorized the culture of a good school works collaboratively in regard to professional development and within professional learning communities.

Examples of the responses that assistant principals provided regarding this category were:

- *“A good school embodies the concept of the professional learning community.”*
- *“A school that works together as a team to educate students.”*
- *“A good school is one that practices professional learning communities. The focus is on students and learning. Teachers have the support they*

*need and the school does whatever it takes to foster learning.*

*Collaboration with a purpose using data and results driven.”*

- *“A good school is a learning community.”*

Examples of the responses that principals provided regarding professional development and professional learning communities include:

- *“The culture of a good school is all about continually improving ourselves so that we can make better instructional decisions for kids.”*
- *“Teacher training and development is emphasized.”*
- *“Ongoing professional development, we are all lifelong learners.”*
- *“Continual willingness to learn and try new things.”*

The common theme in the principals’ and assistant principals’ responses was that professional development and professional learning communities are characteristics in the culture of a good school. The respondents affirmed that the culture of a good school promotes professional development and collaboration among teachers in professional learning communities. Good schools encourage each staff member to grow.

Table 4-52 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by gender. The researcher chose not to display the frequency data reported in this category due to the low number of responses by the participants.

Seventy-eight female assistant principals (61.9%) identified professional development and professional learning communities as a characteristic of the culture a good school. Only 38 male assistant principals (30.2%) identified professional development and professional learning communities as a characteristic of the culture of a good school.

*Table 4-52 Professional Development/PLCs and Participants' Gender*

| Gender       | Principals |      | Assistant Principals |        |
|--------------|------------|------|----------------------|--------|
| Male         | 0          | 0.0% | 38                   | 30.2%  |
| Female       | 0          | 0.0% | 78                   | 61.9%  |
| Not Reported | 0          | 0.0% | 10                   | 7.9%   |
| Total        | 0          | 0.0% | 126                  | 100.0% |

Table 4-53 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by years served as administrator. Over 88% of the assistant principals who had ten years or less of experience identified professional development and professional learning communities as a characteristic of the culture of a good school.

*Table 4-53 Professional Development/PLCs and Administrative Experience*

| Years of Experience | Principals |      | Assistant Principals |        |
|---------------------|------------|------|----------------------|--------|
| 0 -10 years         | 0          | 0.0% | 111                  | 88.1%  |
| 11-15 years         | 0          | 0.0% | 11                   | 8.7%   |
| 16 or more years    | 0          | 0.0% | 0                    | 0.0%   |
| Not Reported        | 0          | 0.0% | 4                    | 3.2%   |
| Total               | 0          | 0.0% | 126                  | 100.0% |



Table 4-54 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by campus rating. Most of the respondents served an academically acceptable campus in this category.

*Table 4-54 Professional Development/PLCs and State Accountability*

| Accountability Rating     | Principals |      | Assistant Principals |        |
|---------------------------|------------|------|----------------------|--------|
| Exemplary                 | 0          | 0.0% | 13                   | 10.3%  |
| Recognized                | 0          | 0.0% | 30                   | 23.8%  |
| Academically Acceptable   | 0          | 0.0% | 66                   | 52.4%  |
| Academically Unacceptable | 0          | 0.0% | 6                    | 4.8%   |
| Exempt                    | 0          | 0.0% | 0                    | 0.0%   |
| Not Reported              | 0          | 0.0% | 11                   | 8.7%   |
| Total                     | 0          | 0.0% | 126                  | 100.0% |

Table 4-55 displayed the pattern of responses that occurred when this category was examined by campus level.

*Table 4-55 Professional Development/PLCs and Setting of Schools*

| Setting of Schools | Principals |      | Assistant Principals |        |
|--------------------|------------|------|----------------------|--------|
| Elementary         | 0          | 0.0% | 43                   | 34.1%  |
| Middle School      | 0          | 0.0% | 26                   | 20.6%  |
| High School        | 0          | 0.0% | 17                   | 13.5%  |
| Mixed              | 0          | 0.0% | 0                    | 0.0%   |
| Not Reported       | 0          | 0.0% | 40                   | 31.8%  |
| Total              | 0          | 0.0% | 126                  | 100.0% |

## **Conclusion**

There were 311 principals and 371 principals who responded to Section B of the survey instrument. Most of the respondents were female, white, with ten years or less administrative experience serving at an academically acceptable elementary campus.

In research question one, the sample of 311 principals provided 602 responses. The sample of 371 assistant principals provided 525 responses. The open nature of the question allowed respondents to provide multiple answers in their responses. Both principals and assistant principals agreed on five major characteristics of a good school including student achievement/academic focus (P-209, 34.7% and AP- 181, 34.5%), strong leadership (P-99, 16.5% and AP- 68, 12.9%), positive climate (P-91, 15.1% and AP- 91, 17.3%), parental and community involvement (P-73, 12.1% and AP- 53, 10.1%), and professional development/professional learning communities (P-30, 5.0% and AP-

117, 22.3%). Principals declared student-centered as a characteristic of a good school (P-100, 16.6%). Assistant principals declared student discipline as a characteristic of a good school (AP- 15, 2.9%).

In research question two, the sample of 311 principals provided 445 responses. The sample of 371 assistant principals provided 474 responses. Both principals and assistant principals agreed on six major characteristics regarding the culture of a good school including student achievement/academic focus (P-156, 35.1% and AP- 104, 21.9%), positive climate (P-93, 20.9% and AP- 120, 25.3%), student centered/valuing the student (P-89, 20.0% and AP- 57, 12.0%), strong leadership (P-68, 15.3% and AP- 33, 7.0%), parental and community involvement (P-29, 6.5% and AP- 34, 7.2%), and professional development/professional learning communities (P-6, 1.3% and AP- 126, 26.6%). Table 4-56 showed a comparison of the principals' and assistant principals' responses to research questions one and two.

*Table 4-56 Comparison of Principals' and Assistant Principals' Perceptions of a Good School & Culture*

| Responses  | Q1f | Principals |     | Q2f  | % | Assistant Principals |      | Q2f | %    |
|--|-----|------------|-----|------|---|----------------------|------|-----|------|
|  |     | %          |     |      |   | Q1f                  | %    |     |      |
| Student Achievement/<br>Academic Focus                       | 209 | 34.7       | 156 | 35.1 |   | 181                  | 34.5 | 104 | 21.9 |
| Strong Leadership  | 99  | 16.5       | 68  | 15.3 |   | 68                   | 12.9 | 33  | 7.0  |
| Positive Climate   | 91  | 15.1       | 93  | 20.9 |   | 91                   | 17.3 | 120 | 25.3 |
| Parental & Community<br>Involvement                          | 73  | 12.1       | 29  | 6.5  |   | 53                   | 10.1 | 34  | 7.2  |
| Professional Development/<br>Professional Learning Community | 30  | 5.0        | 6   | 1.3  |   | 117                  | 22.3 | 126 | 26.6 |

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusions**

Chapter Five provided a summary of the results detailed in Chapter Four. This chapter compared the principals' and assistant principals' responses discussed in the previous chapter as well as connected the results to existing literature. Chapter Five contained an overview of this study, a discussion of results, and implications for school leaders. It also discussed implications for further research.

#### **Overview of Study**

The purpose of this study was to compare the perceptions of principals and assistant principals about the characteristics of a good school and culture. The principal and assistant principal work together as the leadership of a school in order to improve student achievement. Research confirmed a correlation between school leadership and student achievement. In examining this relationship, Davis and Thomas (1989) asserted, "Strong instructional leadership by a principal with vision is the single most critical component of a successful, effective school" (p 39). The school leadership improves student learning by fostering a positive school climate and culture. A positive climate and culture have become part of an effective school (Hoy and Tarter, 1997). The principal is the most potent factor in determining climate (Barth, 1990). The assistant principal maintains the norms and rules of the school culture (Marshall, 1992). Therefore, the principal and assistant principal must collaborate to in their efforts to lead a school. As previously discussed in Chapter Two of this study, leadership has an effect on culture and the overall success of the school.

This study used archival data collected by ninety-nine graduate students in a large research university over an eighteen-month timeframe. Each student selected

administrators to interview, presumably from the same district they worked in. A total of 311 principals and 371 assistant principals were interviewed. The survey instrument consisted of 115 items, 22 items identified the administrator's background and school information, 62 items were Likert-scaled, and 31 were opened-ended questions. The data was collected through a cognitive interview protocol guided by the graduate student (the interviewer). This study focused on the two open-ended questions found in Section B of the survey instrument. The principals' responses were analyzed and categorized by Bryan J. Williams in 2011, *Principal Descriptions of a Good School and the Culture of a Good School*. The assistant principals' responses were analyzed and categorized by Ted J. Landry in 2012, *The Role of School Assistant Principals and Their Perceptions Regarding the Characteristics and Culture of a Good School*. This study used those two data sources to conduct a descriptive, comparative study to analyze the responses of principals and assistant principals about the characteristics of a good school and the culture of a good school.

## **Discussion of Results**

This study contained two research questions designed to compare the perceptions of principals and assistant principals regarding good schools and cultures. The research questions were directly aligned with two of the open-ended questions from Section B in the survey instrument. The two open-ended questions asked principals and assistant principals to comment on what constitutes a good school and culture. The intent of the questions was to gather data to form a better understanding of the perceptions of practicing administrators. The demographic factors of the administrators were examined to identify patterns. The following are research questions examined in this study:

## Research Questions

1. Do principals' and assistant principals' perceptions differ on the characteristics of a good school?
2. Do principals' and assistant principals' perceptions differ on how they describe the culture of a good school?

### Research Question One

The first research question compared the perceptions of principals and assistant principals regarding their beliefs on the characteristics of a good school.

Student achievement and academic focus was the highest category from both the principals and assistant principals as a characteristic of a good school. One third of all respondents, 209 principals (34.7%) and 181 assistant principals (34.5%), declared student achievement and academic focus is a characteristic of a good school.

Professional development and professional learning communities was the second highest category from the assistant principals as a characteristic of a good school, with 117 assistant principals (22.3%) responding. Only 30 principals (5.0%) declared professional development and professional learning communities is a characteristic of a good school, making this the lowest reported category from principals.

Strong leadership was the second highest category from the principals as a characteristic of a good school, with 99 principals (16.5%) responding. Sixty-eight assistant principals (12.9) declared strong leadership is a characteristic of a good school, making this the fourth reported category by assistant principals.

Positive climate was the third highest category as a characteristic of a good school, with 91 principals (15.1%) and 91 assistant principals (17.3%) reporting.

Parental and community involvement, while mentioned by both principals and assistant principals as a characteristic of a good school, represented only 12.1% of the principals' responses and 10.1% of the assistant principals' responses.

### **Research Question Two**

The second research question compared the perceptions of principals and assistant principals regarding their beliefs on the characteristics of the culture of a good school.

Student achievement and academic focus was the highest category from the principals as a characteristic of the culture of a good school, with 156 principals (35.1%) responding. Student achievement and academic focus was the third highest category from the assistant principals. One hundred and four assistant principals (21.9%) believed student achievement and academic focus is a characteristic of the culture of a good school.

Professional development and professional learning communities was the highest category from the assistant principals as a characteristic of the culture of a good school, with 126 assistant principals (26.6%) responding. Only 6 principals (1.3%) declared professional development and professional learning communities as a characteristic of the culture of a good school. This was the lowest reported category by principals.

Positive climate was the second category reported by both administrators. A total of 93 principals (20.9%) and 120 assistant principals (25.3%) asserted that a positive climate is a characteristic of the culture of a good school.

Strong leadership was the third category reported by principals, with 68 principals (15.3%) responding. Only 33 assistant principals (7.0%) asserted that strong leadership

is a characteristic of the culture of a good school. This was their lowest reporting category.

Principals and assistant principals agreed schools that focused on student achievement and academics were indicative of good schools and cultures. Student achievement and academic focus consistently received over 20% of the responses. The number of responses that identified positive climate as a characteristic of a good school and culture remained fairly consistent among principals and assistant principals in both research questions. A noteworthy difference was the assistant principals' frequent responses to both research questions favored professional development and professional learning communities in good schools and cultures. Strong leadership received over 15% of the responses from the principals in both questions, but less than 10% from assistant principals regarding culture. Parental and community involvement received under 12.2% from both administrators in both questions.

The results from both research questions, as perceived by principals and assistant principals, identified five characteristics of a good school and culture. The characteristics included student achievement and academic focus, strong leadership, positive climate, parental and community involvement, and professional development and professional learning communities.

### **Characteristics Describing a Good School and Culture**

**Student achievement/academic focus.** The principals' and assistant principals' responses from the survey indicated the following characteristics for the student achievement and academic focus category:

- High educational standards



- High academic achievement for all students
- Research based instruction
- Students learning every day

This category was aligned with existing literature related to good schools and cultures. Davis and Thomas (1989) asserted that the effectiveness of schools is often measured by student achievement. McEwan (2009) confirmed that educators in highly effective schools set high expectations for their students. Sergiovanni (2009) found effective schools design programs to ensure academic success. Day (2012) affirmed that it is the school principal who leads the way in student achievement. Hudson (2009) explained that teachers and school leaders must work diligently towards creating a culture of achievement.

For research questions one and two, both principals and assistant principals agreed that student achievement and academic focus are characteristics of a good school and culture. In research question one, 209 principals (34.7%) and 181 assistant principals (34.5%) agreed that student achievement and academic focus is a characteristic of a good school. In research question two, 156 principals (35.1%) and 104 assistant principals (21.9%) agreed that student achievement and academic focus is a characteristic of the culture of a good school. Over 20% of both principals and assistant principals responded favorably to this category.

**Strong leadership.** The principals' and assistant principals' responses from the survey indicated the following characteristics for the strong leadership category:

- Clear mission and vision
- Open communication

- Good schools have a leader vs. a manager
- Nurtures and sustains a school culture conducive to learning

This category was aligned with existing literature related to good schools and cultures. Davis and Thomas (1989) affirmed, “Strong instructional leadership by a principal with vision is the single most critical component of a successful, effective school” (p 39). Fairman and McLean (2003) declared that effective communication is the glue that holds organizations together. DuFour and Eaker (1998) explained, “Although past images of the principalship have focused on the principals who were strong, assertive and forceful leaders, the more promising contemporary view calls for principals who can work collaboratively with others in building consensus” (p 203).” Langer (2004) declared, “A positive school culture is the critical first step administrators need to foster...” (p 83).

For research questions one and two, both principals and assistant principals agreed that strong leadership is a characteristic of a good school and culture. The frequencies of responses indicate that principals favor strong leadership more than assistant principals. In research question one, 99 principals (16.5%) responded while only 68 assistant principals (12.9%) responded. In research question two, 68 principals (15.3%) responded while only 33 assistant principals (7.0%) responded. Both principals and assistant principals agreed that strong leadership is a characteristic of a good school and culture, but principals tend to favor strong leadership more often than assistant principals.

**Positive climate.** The principals’ and assistant principals’ responses from the survey indicated the following characteristics for the positive climate category:

- Staff and students want to attend
- Staff members listen and respect each other
- Teachers are happy and morale is high
- Positive, nurturing climate

This category was aligned with existing literature related to good schools and cultures. Litwin and Stringer (1968) studied organizational climate and its result on teacher performance. Teachers perform better and have higher job satisfaction in healthy school climates. Bell, Thacker, Schargel (2011) noted that Barth stated, “Listening, rather than speaking, is the basis of relationship building. Building relationships is the only way schools will improve and do what is best for students” (p 34-35). Gonder and Hymes (1994) advised, “Attention to climate is even more important to ensure that morale stays high and the staff can be most effective” (p 6). Freiberg and Stein (1999) explained sustaining climate efforts is a constant in the schooling process.

For research questions one and two, both principals and assistant principals agreed that a positive climate is a characteristic of a good school and culture. This category was fairly consistent with principals and assistant principals. In research question one, 91 principals (15.1%) and 91 assistant principals (17.3%) agreed that a positive climate is a characteristic of a good school. In research question two, 93 principals (20.9%) and 120 assistant principals (25.3%) agreed that a positive climate is a characteristic of the culture of a good school. Existing literature expressed the importance of school climate to student achievement.

**Parental and community involvement.** The principals' and assistant principals' responses from the survey indicated the following characteristics for the parental and community involvement category:

- Encourages support from parents and community
- Teachers working together with parents
- Parents feel welcome
- Values all stakeholders (parents, teachers, community members)

This category was aligned with existing literature related to good schools and cultures. Sergiovanni (2009) stated that effective schools involve parents and the community. Beaudoin and Taylor (2004) declared there are great advantages for teachers when parents become involved in their child's education. Kelley (1980) explained there are roles in which parents and the community can help the school's success. Leithwood (2007) urged that creating a sense of community amongst all stakeholders is important.

For research questions one and two, both principals and assistant principals agreed that parental and community involvement is a characteristic of a good school and culture. However, the results were toward the lowest responses in both questions from both sets of administrators. In research question one, 73 principals (12.1%) and 53 assistant principals (10.1%) agreed that parental and community involvement is a characteristic of a good school. In research question two, 29 principals (6.5%) and 34 assistant principals (7.2%) agreed that parental and community involvement is a characteristic of the culture of a good school. Based on the frequencies of the responses, both sets of administrators believe parental and community involvement is part of the

school culture, with principals and assistant principals responding less than 7.5%. This category was mentioned, but not with frequent responses.

**Professional development and professional learning communities.** The principals' and assistant principals' responses from the survey indicated the following characteristics for the professional development and professional learning communities category:

- Evidence of professional development
- Is a professional learning community
- Faculty is interested in professional growth
- Teachers are lifelong learners and learn from each other

This category was aligned with existing literature related to good schools and cultures. Sergiovanni (2009) asserted effective schools have extensive, meaningful staff development. DuFour and Eaker (1998) explained that teachers collaborate in professional learning communities and are focused on results. Taylor (2010) declared, "If the culture is focused on continuous improvement of learning for both adults and students, it tends to have gains in student achievement" (p 20). McEwan (2009) concluded that professional learning communities result in teachers learning from each other.

For research questions one and two, both principals and assistant principals agreed that professional development and professional learning communities are characteristics of a good school and culture. In research question one, 30 principals (5.0%) and 117 assistant principals (22.3%) agreed that professional development and professional learning communities are characteristics of a good school. In research

question two, 6 principals (1.3%) and 126 assistant principals (26.6%) agreed that a professional development and professional learning communities are characteristics of the culture of a good school. Based on the respondents, assistant principals believed professional development and professional learning communities are more important than principals.

### **Implications for School Leaders**

The principal and assistant principal must work together to lead the school to success. Successful principals lead schools in which students are learning, parents are supportive, and teachers are excited to teach (Brock and Grady, 2012). The principal cannot work alone in an effort to ensure student success (Johnson, 2012). The principal depends on the assistant principal to handle most of the daily functions of a school (Marshall, 1992). The assistant principal is also involved in curriculum and instruction, professional development and professional learning communities, parent-teacher conferences, and continuous student involvement. Marshall (1992) affirmed, “Principals who work as administrative teams with their assistants could multiply, not just supplement, their effectiveness” (p 17). The principal and assistant principal must work collaboratively to ensure the success of the school and build a positive school culture. Davis (1989) confirmed, “Leadership is the hinge upon which school cultures swing” (p 121). School culture begins with the school’s leadership.

School leaders are under pressure from the federal and state governments to establish effective schools and improve student achievement. School leaders must reflect on what it takes to make a good school. The school leadership needs to be able to motivate teachers and encourage students to succeed. Principals should build positive

working relationships, set a vision for the staff, and get the team inspired. Assistant principals need to provide support for the principal in an effort to improve the qualities of the school and culture. The principal and assistant principal must work together with the staff to ensure student success in an effort to answer the demands of state assessment accountability. Guthrie and Schuermann (2011) declared student achievement data is the ultimate source of insight regarding education program effectiveness.

This study identified, as perceived by principals and assistant principals, five characteristics of good schools and cultures. The five characteristics were student achievement and academic focus, strong leadership, positive climate, parental and community involvement, and professional development and professional learning communities. Leaders should reflect on the characteristics in their school to improve.

### **Implications for Further Research**

Principals and assistant principals should examine the five characteristics in their school as identified by this study in their efforts to build a good school and foster a positive school climate. The characteristics are already identified for the school leaders. School leaders should evaluate the success of their school with each characteristic and develop a plan to improve for the overall success of the students. The characteristics were perceived by practicing principals and assistant principals and have existing literature serving as confirmation. School leaders should reflect on the characteristics in their current school and develop a plan for improvement.

There are three areas of future research that would be useful in furthering the research in this study. First, additional research should consider expanding the sample

size of the principals and assistant principals. Only 311 principals and 371 assistant principals reported in the study. A larger sample size would add value to this study.

Second, additional research should consider gathering the collection of data from a different geographical area. It would be interesting to see if principals' and assistant principals' perceptions on this topic would be the same in the northwest region of Texas. Data from another region would be a complementary addition to this study and could be studied comparatively in nature.

Third, additional research should consider including the survey to additional stakeholders within the school. It would be interesting to gather data from teachers, students, parents, and community members about their perceptions of the characteristics of a good school and culture. This data could be studied comparatively to analyze the differences of perceptions of school leadership verses other school stakeholders.

## **Conclusions**

The purpose of this study was to compare principals' and assistant principals' perceptions regarding the characteristics of good schools and cultures. One significant finding was the consistency from both the principals and assistant principals regarding the characteristics of a good school and culture. Five characteristics were identified as student achievement and academic focus, strong leadership, positive climate, parental and community involvement, and professional development and professional learning communities. These characteristics are well established in existing literature on good schools and cultures.

Interestingly, principals and assistant principals differ on their views of professional development and professional learning communities and strong leadership.



Assistant principals valued professional learning communities more than principals. Principals valued strong leadership more than assistant principals. Both agreed that student achievement and academic focus are important. We may see a trend in leadership styles as assistant principals become principals. In addition, both principals and assistant principals place a lower priority on parental and community involvement.

Since most principals begin their administrative career as an assistant principal, it is important to know, value, and understand assistant principals' perceptions regarding good schools and cultures. Allowing the assistant principal to become more involved in the culture, academic focus, and professional learning communities will provide insights on the work capability of the future leader. The principal will also benefit from having more robust assistance in their effort to improve student achievement.

This study is closely aligned with research on effective schools, turnaround schools and studies by the Wallace Foundation. The Wallace Foundation (2013) identified five practices that effective principals do. The practices included shaping a vision of academic success for all students, creating a climate hospitable to education, cultivating leadership in others, improving instruction, and managing people, data and processes to foster school improvement. The five practices are closely aligned with the five characteristics identified in this study.

The identification of the five characteristics indicated a correlation between good schools and cultures. One cannot exist without the other, and both go hand-in-hand. The principals and assistant principals responses compared in this study indicated that good schools also have positive, healthy cultures. In the final analysis, school climate and

culture is important to the overall effectiveness of a good school and student achievement.

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## Appendix A

Approval from the University of Houston Human Subject Research Committee

# UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON

## DIVISION OF RESEARCH

January 10, 2013

Jennifer Winans  
c/o Dr. Michael Emerson  
Dean, Education

Dear Jennifer Winans,

Based upon your request for exempt status, an administrative review of your research proposal entitled "A COMPARISON OF PRINCIPALS AND ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS PERCEPTIONS OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD SCHOOL AND CULTURE" was conducted on January 2, 2013.

In accordance with institutional guidelines, your project is exempt under **Category 4** and is now **APPROVED**.

- Approval Date: January 10, 2013
- Expiration Date: December 1, 2017

As long as you continue using procedures described in this project, you do not have to reapply for review. \* Any modification of this approved protocol will require review and approval by the Committee.

If you have any questions, please contact Alicia Vargas at (713) 743-9215.

Sincerely yours,



Kristin Rochford, MPH, CIP, CPIA  
Director, Research Compliance

\*Approvals for exempt protocols will be valid for 5 years beyond the approval date. Approval for this project will expire **December 1, 2017**. If the project is completed prior to this date, a final report should be filed to close the protocol. If the project will continue after this date, you will need to reapply for approval if you wish to avoid an interruption of your data collection.

Protocol Number: 13185-EX

316 E. Cullen Building Houston, TX 77204-2015 (713) 743-9204 Fax: (713) 743-9577

COMMITTEES FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS

*Create School as Community  
Through Reflective Practice*



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Location: ☐ Rural ☐ Suburban ☐ Urban  The Grades in the school

Number of: Teachers  Students

Percentage of students:  White/Non-Hispanic  Black/Non-Hispanic  Hispanic  
 Asian/Pacific Islander  American Indian/Alaskan Native  
 Non-Resident/International

Other certificated personnel  Non-certificated personnel

TAKS Rating: ☐ Exemplary ☐ Recognized ☐ Acceptable ☐ Low performing

Percentage of students receiving free and reduced Lunch

Name of School District

### Section B:

In this section we are trying to establish how principals conceptualize their notions of what makes a school a "good" school as opposed to a "fair or poor" school.

Much of the current educational leadership literature focuses on effective schools and more currently how we develop our schools as community. The new nomenclature currently used is "good school." How would you describe a good school?

For our purposes school culture is described as "What the school values." How would you describe the culture of a good school?

### Section C

We are trying to understand the importance of the relationship between the principal and the teachers.

Explain how the relationship between the principal and the teacher important for the school.

Describe what you think are the most critical feature for a successful working relationship between teacher and principal.

What do you do to create good relations with your teachers?

Do you look out for the personal welfare of your teachers? If so, how do you do it?

### Section D

In this section we are trying to establish the attitudes beliefs and values that principals have with regard to teacher supervision.

What is the purpose of teacher supervision?

Do our assessment practices (TTAS, FDAS) really work? Do you believe that the process achieves the intended outcome? What do you believe are the outcomes?

Do you think that the principal is the best person in the school to do supervision? For example is there any value for a principal with no education or experience supervising a French language class.

When supervising teachers do you report on what you observe or do you consider other factors when writing your reports? Explain

## Section E

We are trying to establish the understandings that principals have about leadership

Describe the difference between a "linear" leader contrasted to a critical thinker and systematic problem solver?

What do you believe are the most important characteristics of a good leader?



How would you describe yourself as a leader?

To what extent do you allow teachers to take risks to make the school better?

To what extent do you believe that teachers should be involved in leadership roles in your school?

## Section F

We are trying to establish the understanding and value principals attach to the role of parental involvement in their student's education.

What do you believe is an appropriate and necessary level of parental involvement in the student's education? Explain.

What do you do to encourage and support parental involvement in their student's education?

When a parent asks you to change their student's teacher how do you react?  
Check one category below

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I do so willingly                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I do so hesitatingly                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I do so begrudgingly                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I try my best to discourage it          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | I resist their efforts to have a change |

Explain your answer here:

### Section G

In this section we are trying to establish the obstacles frustrations and changes principals are most concerned with

On a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being most and 1 being least, rate the degree to which each of the following presents a feeling of frustration or being discouraged in being able to carry out your duties.

|  | 1                        | 2                        | 3                        | 4                        | 5                        |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Federal Bureaucracy                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| State Bureaucracy                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| School District Bureaucracy              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lack of Money                            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lack of other resources                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lack of parent involvement in the school | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Poor Preparation of Teachers             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lack of Teacher Commitment               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Poor instruction of teachers             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lack of parental involvement at home     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lack of Student Motivation               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Poor basic skills of students            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

On a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being most and 1 being least rate the degree to which each of the following presents a genuine obstacle or restriction that cause you the most concern as you try to carry out your duties as principal.

|  | 1                        | 2                        | 3                        | 4                        | 5                        |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Federal Bureaucracy                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| State Bureaucracy                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| School District Bureaucracy              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lack of Money                            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lack of other resources                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lack of parent involvement in the school | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Poor Preparation of Teachers             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lack of Teacher Commitment               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Poor instruction of teachers             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lack of parental involvement at home     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lack of Student Motivation               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Poor basic skills of students            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

On a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being most and 1 being least rate the following for the things that you would change to make you more enabled in your role as principal.

|  | 1                        | 2                        | 3                        | 4                        | 5                        |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Federal Bureaucracy                      | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| State Bureaucracy                        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| School District Bureaucracy              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lack of Money                            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lack of other resources                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lack of parent involvement in the school | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Poor Preparation of Teachers             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lack of Teacher Commitment               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Poor instruction of teachers             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lack of parental involvement at home     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lack of Student Motivation               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Poor basic skills of students            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### Section H

On a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being most and 1 being least indicate the extent to which each of the following represents important knowledge you should have to be a successful principal.

|                     | 1                        | 2                        | 3                        | 4                        | 5                        |
|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Knowledge of people | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Curriculum          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Law                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Fiscal              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

On a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being most and 1 being least indicate the extent to which each of the following represents important skills you should have to be a successful principal.

|               | 1                        | 2                        | 3                        | 4                        | 5                        |
|---------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Interpersonal | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Communication | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Leadership    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Management    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Technical     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

On a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being most and 1 being least indicate the extent to which each of the following represents important attributes you should have to be a successful principal.

|                      | 1                        | 2                        | 3                        | 4                        | 5                        |
|----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Positive disposition | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Visionary            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Ethical Values       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Good Communicator    | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Organizer            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

### Section I

We are trying to understand the importance of student behavior in the operation of the school

Do you think that schools should teach "virtues" or "character?" Why or why not?  
Do you have any formal programs in your school that focus on character education?

#### Section J

There is probably a lot of advice you could give to someone preparing to become a school principal but if there was one single piece of advice you could give what would advise.

#### Section K

How has the influence of high-stakes testing influenced your role as a principal?  
How is it influenced teachers, parents, and students?

#### Section L

To what extent is the achievement gap a problem in your school? What efforts have you made to reduce achievement differences in school?

### Section M

To what extent has technology make a difference in your school? How has it influenced teachers, counselors, and students? How has it influenced your role as principal?

### Section N

Can you think of an example of research-generated knowledge which you found useful in some aspect of your job as principal? If so please tell me about that knowledge.

All educators need access to new expert knowledge. What sources of information do you find most useful when looking for new professional ideas? On a scale of 1 to 10 (highest), how would you rate each of these types of information sources for the technical knowledge they provide:

- a. Professional meetings of state or national education associations  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10
- b. Workshops  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10
- c. Professional Journals concerned with education  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10
- d. Professional Books concerned with education  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10
- e. Professional Bulletins from regional or national information sources  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10
- f. Professional Bulletins from district or state authorities  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10
- g. Newsletters from professional organizations  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10
- h. University or college courses that you attended for certification or a advanced degree  
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

i. Internet

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

j. Other sources (please explain)

| Rating | Frequency |
|--------|-----------|
| 1      | 1         |
| 2      | 0         |
| 3      | 0         |
| 4      | 0         |
| 5      | 0         |
| 6      | 0         |
| 7      | 0         |
| 8      | 0         |
| 9      | 1         |
| 10     | 10        |

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

On a scale of 1 to 10 (highest), how would you rate the quality of the educational research that you've read over the last year?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

What would it take for you to rate it a 10?

| Rating | Frequency |
|--------|-----------|
| 1      | 1         |
| 2      | 0         |
| 3      | 0         |
| 4      | 0         |
| 5      | 0         |
| 6      | 0         |
| 7      | 0         |
| 8      | 0         |
| 9      | 1         |
| 10     | 10        |