

A STUDY OF THE TRAITS AND BEHAVIORS OF  
AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL AS PERCEIVED  
BY ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY TEACHERS OF  
THE FORT CAMPBELL SCHOOL SYSTEM

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PRINCIPAL AS PERCEIVED BY ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY  
TEACHERS OF THE FORT CAMPBELL SCHOOL SYSTEM

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An Abstract  
Presented to  
Graduate and Research Council  
Austin Peay State University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Education Specialist

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by  
Brenda Hunter

September 1986

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the traits and behaviors of an effective principal as perceived by elementary and secondary teachers. An instrument was used to compare the means of the groups investigated. The instrument consisted of twenty-five traits and behaviors of an effective principal and five demographic data questions.

The group targeted for study was elementary and secondary teachers at the Fort Campbell School System.

Questionnaires were completed by the foregoing and returned to the writer. Two hundred and fifty questionnaires were sent out and one hundred and thirty-one were returned, with 52% responding. The writer tabulated the results by comparing the responses between the two groups. The responses were compared for significance by tabulating the response of each question and those items with the greatest differences were computed by hand using the "t" test for differences between independent means.

Although, there were no significant differences between the two groups of the perceptions of the traits and ratings of an effective principal, there were interesting trends and observations.

Evidences from analysis of the data seemed to support the following conclusions. There seemed to be a difference

in the perceptions of elementary teachers as to the traits and behaviors of a principal as compared to secondary teachers. Elementary teachers rated the twenty-five traits and behaviors "almost always important" over the secondary teachers. There is an indication from the study that elementary teachers are more idealistic and expect more involvement from the principal than secondary teachers. Secondary teachers appear to be more independent and want less control from the administration.

The traits consistently receiving high ratings seem to be of special significance, especially for elementary and secondary principals. The two traits and behaviors rated highest by both groups were: (1) has good working relations with staff and (2) treats teachers as professional workers.

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by  
Brenda Hunter  
September 1986

To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Field Study written by Brenda Hunter entitled "A Study of the Traits and Behaviors of an Effective School Principal as Perceived by Elementary and Secondary Teachers at the Fort Campbell School System." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Education Specialist, with a major in Administration and Supervision.

Donald B. Lambert

We have read this field study  
and recommend its acceptance:

Allan E. Williams

George Rawlins

Accepted for the  
Graduate Council:

William H. Ellis

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

Periodically, the attention of the American people is focused on educational excellence. Almost without exception, the major studies and review of school effectiveness have identified the principal as a strong performer in achieving educational excellence.

In 1979, the U. S. Senate declared, "If a school is a vibrant, innovative, child-centered place; if it has a reputation for excellence in teaching; if students are performing to the best of their ability, one can almost always point to the principal's leadership as the key to success" (Lance, 1984: 11).

Some theorists believe that school effectiveness is directly related to the leadership of the principal. Some of the things that effective principals do are included in the following: (1) help motivate students to learn more, (2) motivate teachers and parents, (3) stay informed, (4) know what is available, (5) know what can be done and (6) "creatively reinterpret" district policies to get things done.

If schools are to prove effective, good leadership from principals is of the utmost importance. Knowing what to look for in these people is of the utmost importance in their selection.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this field study was to examine the perceptions of elementary teachers as compared to secondary teachers in their ratings of the traits and behaviors of an effective principal. The study was conducted with seventy-five elementary teachers and fifty-six secondary teachers.

The second purpose of the study was to compare elementary teachers and secondary teachers of different age groups, academic degrees, and years of teaching experience in their perceptions and ratings of the traits and behaviors of an effective principal.

### Importance of the Study

The importance of effective leadership has increased steadily through the past decade. There is clear evidence that a greater demand is being made upon administrators now and will possibly be even greater in the future.

From this study and its findings there should be an interest and concern generated for realizing a need for better leadership from administrators. Knowing how to recognize and to determine effective leadership is important in the selection of a principal, and in determining performance on the job.

### Limitation of the Study

- (1) The study was limited to responses from teachers in one school district.
- (2) The study was limited by the perceptual nature and

subjective ratings of two different variables, traits and behaviors.

(3) Since the data were collected over a narrow time period the results may not prove reliable in future examinations.

(4) The twenty-five selected variables tested may not include some factors that would have proven more significant or enlightening to the investigation.

(5) The number of administrators in the population was too small for statistical analysis, however, it was felt the personal interviews yielded valuable information.

#### Statement of the Hypotheses

The field study attempted to test two hypotheses about elementary and secondary teachers at the Fort Campbell School System.

(1) There will be no significant differences between K-5 teachers and 6-12 teachers regarding their perceptions and ratings of the traits and behaviors of an effective school principal.

(2) There will be no significant difference between K-5 teachers and 6-12 teachers of different age levels, academic degrees and years of teaching experience in their perceptions and ratings of the traits and behaviors of an effective school principal.

The two hypotheses were tested using an instrument of 25 questions prepared by the writer after a literature review of the traits and behaviors of an effective principal.

Additional data were obtained from five demographic questions.

Responses were compared for significances by using the "t" test for differences between independent means.

### Definition of Terms

Definition of the following terms is based upon their usage within this investigation, and may not be consistent with outside, universal terminology.

#### Perceptions

Ideas, stereotypes, attitudes, etc., which individuals have formulated as being truisms due to either experience, past and immediate, good and bad or to various means of communication, regardless of its validity.

#### Traits

Distinguishing features of the character.

#### Behaviors

Actions on specific occasions involving essentially external relationships.

#### Effective

Producing or adapted to produce the desired impression or response.

#### Principal

A person appointed to direct members of a group.

#### Elementary School Teachers

Teachers of students in grades K-5.

#### Secondary School Teachers

Teachers of students in grades 6-12.

## CHAPTER 2

### A Review of Related Literature

According to Little (1982) in his article "The Effective Principal" there are two views concerning effective schools and effective principals which have some support in literature, but remain to be more fully tested. By one view, effectiveness is more readily assured when a principal is knowledgeable about curriculum and instruction, puts forth particular points of view, and participates directly in the work of school improvement. By a second view, effectiveness can be built and sustained by a principal who manages skillfully the technical and physical resources of teaching, preserves teachers' autonomy, and offers wide latitude for teacher initiative.

Since the effective principal has often been difficult to clearly define, a study of the literature could prove to be beneficial in an effort to determine what traits and behaviors are characteristics of effective principals.

It was the intent of this research to identify some common traits and behaviors of effective leadership and to determine how these leadership qualities affect the total school program.

#### History of the Principalship

The role of the school principal as we know it today

can be traced to its present development from around the middle of the nineteenth century. According to Blumbert and Greenfield (1980) the essential features of the principalship were established by the turn of the century and have not changed in any substantial way since that time.

The duties and responsibilities of principals have continued to grow and increase in complexity. The expectations that principals serve the twin functions of providing instructional leadership and managing school affairs had been rooted firmly in the minds of school superintendents and school board members by the early 1900's particularly in America's larger cities.

Pierce (1934) related at least four important factors contributing to the early development of the principalship: (a) the rapid growth of cities during the 1850-1900 period and subsequent problems accompanying the schooling of an ever expanding school-age population; (b) the grading of schools and the introduction of new sets of management problems related to the coordination of pupils and curricula; (c) the reorganization of schools and the consolidation of departments under a single administrative head; (d) the establishment of the position of a head assistant to free the principal from teaching responsibilities.

Knezevich (1975) suggested that "more and more the principal is recognized as an executive or administrator and the principalship as a constellation of positions."

Principals reported in NASSP's study of the principal-

ship (1978) that their typical work week was 56.5 hours. They reported spending their time in (1) school management, (2) personnel supervision, (3) student activities, (4) student behavior, (5) program development, (6) district office, (7) planning, (8) community activities, and (9) professional development (Weldy, 1979).

Weldy (1979) indicated the "route to the principalship" has changed somewhat from 1965 to 1978. There are no predominant subject areas that have led to the principalship, but the greatest number of principals in 1965 were trained in the humanities.

Weldy concluded that principals may have been able to function as benevolent dictators in some past day, but that era has passed. Principals today need enlightened leadership skills and personal qualities to provide direction and impetus to the the educational goals of their schools.

#### Instructional Effectiveness

According to Duke (1983) successful principals traditionally have been described in terms of their personality traits rather than functions or skills. As a result it has been difficult for observers to agree on what to look for when differentiating between more and less effective principals. The following six leadership functions have several representative questions in each category to assist principal-watchers in their efforts to recognize an effective principal:

(1) Staff development - Is the staff encouraged to participate in inservice activities? In what ways does the principal encourage teacher leadership? How does the principal respond when a teacher is having trouble meeting instructional objectives?

(2) Instructional support - What does the principal do to minimize classroom interruptions? Are noninstructional activities carefully scheduled so as not to interfere with classroom instruction? Are school rules reviewed regularly and are unnecessary rules eliminated?

(3) Resource acquisition and allocation - Are resources allocated on the basis of staff input? Does the principal maintain close contact with his/her superiors? Do teachers have the materials they need to initiate orderly learning on the first day of school?

(4) Quality control - Does the school possess clear goals and objectives? What does the principal do to see that the goals and objectives are being achieved? What does the principal do to communicate high expectations to staff and students? What does the principal do to recognize staff and student achievement? Does the principal regularly visit classrooms and meet with teachers?

(5) Coordination - Does the principal regularly review the operations of each department? What does the principal do to encourage schoolwide, systematic planning? Is time for planning made available to staff members?

(6) Trouble shooting - What does the principal do to

encourage staff members to anticipate problems before they arise? To what extent does the principal actively involve staff in problem solving?

The preceding questions are based on the belief that there are specific actions principals can take in order to increase instructional effectiveness.

### Implementation of Change

Research has supported the fact that the principal is the key to the success or failure of the implementation of planned change (McCoy and Shrene, 1983). To understand why some principals were successful and some were not, the behavior of successful principals was studied.

According to McCoy and Shrene (1983) in order to be effective the principal must include all of the following components as a part of his/her behavior to successfully implement change:

(1) Self-actualization and commitment - A high degree of self-actualization is necessary to deal successfully with others when implementing a complex, planned change. Leaders who were self-actualizing were able and willing to commit themselves to changes they felt would better meet the needs of others and at the same time bring a sense of self-satisfaction. With this strong foundation it was possible for these leaders to adapt their style of leadership, interact with others, choose effective strategies, and motivate others to high levels of performance.

(2) Adaptability - The principal must have a range of

style available to accomplish the tasks and goals of the organization.

(3) Interaction - The successful principals involved their subordinates in decision making.

(4) Strategies - The following strategies were important in the implementation of change: communication, providing resources, and risk taking.

(5) Motivation - Principals must be responsible for staff motivation and commitment to any planned change. They are the central figure who has the knowledge of the total plan; they have to believe in it, and establish the necessary communication network to monitor the implementation of the change.

Wiles and Bondi (1979) indicated those who wish to promote planned change should be aware of the political dimensions of change, understand that resistance to change is normal, and perceive change as a chain of interrelated events rather than an isolated event. Administrative personnel, such as school principals, have tremendous influence on what change occurs and how it occurs.

Sciara (1973) indicated consensus comes from a number of sources that one of the most important roles of the principal is that as an agent for change.

A publication of the American Association of School Administrators entitled, "The Right Principal for the Right School," (1967: 11) described this function of the principal as follows:

Of late, considerable emphasis has been placed upon the principal as a change agent because of the notion that the essential task of administration is to cope with innovation. The principal is one of the administrative agents through which change enters the school, and in turn, must live with the environment set in turbulent motion. As an instrument for innovation, the principal contributes his part to the dynamic development of education in a social institution and prevents deterioration through stagnation.

Miller and Vrugink (1983) in their article, "Needed: A Building-Level Instructional Leader", identified six areas of responsibility for an instructional leader: (1) provides the environment for instructional improvement and change, (2) provides the environment for curriculum improvement, (3) provides for continuous evaluation of instructional processes and programs, (4) provides assistance to the instructional staff, (5) provides appropriate instructional programs for each student and (6) evaluates current instructional programs.

Vann (1986) in the article, "Three Principals Discuss the Principal's Leadership Role" concluded that principals who are sharp instructional leaders stick to the task no matter what. This requires stamina and dedication and setting instruction as a top priority for principals.

#### School Climate

Mitchel (1976) contended that the principal is the central leader in a school, especially in the area of school climate. The principal has his/her set of perceptions and

attitudes relative to what the school climate actually is. Duchi (1978) concluded from his findings that principals appear to have higher perceptions of the school climate than other members of the school faculty. Smith's (1977) findings indicated that in an hierarchical arrangement of people connected with a school, the further the person is from the administration the less positive is his/her perceptions of the school's climate. Robinson (1976) added that principals tend to regard their organizational climate as more open than do their faculties.

Good leadership may be difficult to define, but the gauge of principal effectiveness is the school itself. An effective school is seen as an optimum learning environment, one that nurtures the cognitive, affective, social, and aesthetic development of its students. According to Nash (1977) the role of the principal encompasses all the functions essential to achieving this goal. The principal is empowered to make positive or negative changes which certainly affect the climate of a school. Even though school climate is the responsibility of all members of the school, the primary responsibility falls on the principal.

Abler (1981) pointed out that effective principals will work toward establishing an atmosphere of trust among staff members where weaknesses can be admitted without fear or recrimination. Encouragement and support should be given to staff members. This attitude and atmosphere can be honestly related to students who rarely achieve

success. Thus, the "domino theory" is applied. The principal's attitudes and approaches determine, to a great extent the teachers' attitudes which determine the attitudes of the students.

Wiles (1967) concluded if a positive climate is to exist, good human relations must prevail. The principal serves as the key person and must have the desire to see the group live and work in harmony. A principal must be guided in his/her faith in staff members and by a concern for the feelings and desires of others.

#### Public Relations

George Gallup (1974) noted in his 1973 Gallup Poll "the more parents know first hand about schools, the more favorable are their perceptions of the school." This should be sufficient reason for motivating leaders to involve parents in all aspects of the education of their children. The influence children have on their parents could lead credence to ideas of utilizing children as a school's principle source of positive communication.

Research seems to indicate that the key public relations person in a school is the principal (Goldstein, 1977). An effective principal will put public relations at the top of his/her priority list. He/she will keep communities well informed regarding school activities and programs. A successful principal will encourage parents and teachers to confer frequently, and make use of community resources including active participation of students in community learning experiences.

Foster (1984) reported as community involvement in the school has increased, one of the most active groups which emerged is the parent advisory council. Today, in public schools, approximately a million parents and local citizens serve on 60,000 advisory councils. Many factors help determine the effectiveness of the council, but the most critical one, according to research, is the attitude of the principal.

An effective principal will bring human and material resources from the larger environment to bear upon the improvement of the ultimate client system to be served: the local school.

#### Student Achievement

Studies show that teachers' perceptions of the value principals place on student achievement affects teachers' efforts to improve student achievement (Matthews, 1976).

Research indicated student achievement is greater in schools where principals and teachers respect students and communicate high standards for their behavior (Chase and Kane, 1983). Matthews (1976) reported that the principal will be most effective in motivating teachers to stress student achievement when teachers have positive attitudes toward the principal and believe he/she values achievement highly.

Matthews (1976) proposed the following strategies to improve student achievement:

- (1) Principals should provide teachers with

inservice training and other opportunities for successful learning experiences in order to improve their ability to teach.

(2) Principals should develop positive relationships with teachers and demonstrate to teachers that they value student achievement highly in order to motivate teachers to exert more effort to improve student achievement.

(3) Principals should foster a belief on the part of teachers that they can improve student achievement.

(4) Principals should support the efforts of teachers to improve the students' self-concept of ability to achieve.

The Maryland State Department of Education concluded in a 1978 study of schools whose students were high achievers on standardized tests that this achievement may be directly related to the daily performance of the principal (Weldy, 1972). The study indicated that schools with principals who have very high expectations of themselves, their teachers, and their students dominate the upper end of the test scale. The study also reported that much of the differences on feelings or sense of direction of the school's instructional program is attributable to the principal's leadership role.

#### Characteristics of Effective Principals

According to Bossert (1984) one of the most important roles in creating effective schools is that of the school principal. Research has shown that the instructional leadership provided by the building administrator is a key

ingredient in school improvement.

Gawelti (1984) identified common traits and characteristics of an effective principal: (1) strong-programmatic leaders who know instruction, (2) one who sets high academic standards, (3) one who maintains student discipline, (4) one who has clear objectives, (5) one who is visible and active in the schools and (6) one who sets goals and plans continuously for improvement.

Weldy (1979) indicated that principals who try to plan much of their day will be frustrated. A principal learns to live with interruptions, and many unexpected crisis and emergencies. Nevertheless, effective principals do learn to control their time and make the best possible use of this important resource.

Bennis (1983) reported that effective principals will begin to communicate their ideas in a way people can understand. A good leader does not have to be articulate, but must possess a knack for communicating with others and be committed and persistent.

Bossert (1984) described an effective leader as one who determines his/her priorities and strives to balance these with other variables in order to meet the goals of the school. An effective leader shows a genuine concern for the evaluation system within the school and systemwide standards for evaluation.

Tead (1935: 113) said:

A good leader will guide and  
develop individuals to organize goals

which they share. As a result vital resources are tapped, morale enhanced, human energies are combined to create harmony and enthusiasm, and inertia is translated into initiative. These are all evidences of good leadership.

Weldy (1979) indicated the principal's greatest strength is not in raw unfettered power, but in skilled leadership, based on knowledge, good human relations and the ability to get things done.

Blumberg and Greenfield (1980) concluded that leading schools effectively requires expressive abilities, tolerance for ambiguity, vision and initiative, skill at collecting and analyzing data, and a great deal of physical energy and psychological strength.

#### Summary

The role of the principal may change as educational changes take place, but the basic characteristics and traits of an effective leader do not seem to drastically change.

Most studies agreed that the principal is the key to: (1) instructional effectiveness, (2) implementation of planned change, (3) good school climate, (4) the main public relations person and (5) the planner of strategies to improve student achievement.

Successful principals have common traits and characteristics which help them to be effective: (1) strong-programmatic leaders who know instruction, (2) one who sets high academic standards, (3) one who maintains student discipline, (4) one who has clear objectives, (5) one who is visible and active in the schools, (6) one

who sets goals and plans continuously for improvement, (7) a good communicator, (8) one who determines priorities, (9) one who has systemwide standards for evaluation, (10) one who guides individuals to organize goals, (11) one who has good human relations and (12) one who has the ability to get things done.

Successful leadership does not always mean doing something new, but it may mean doing mundane things in a new way. The elements of effective schools are present in most schools, and effective leadership means knowing how to put them together into a school-wide program that ensures positive learning experiences for all children.

Blumber and Greenfield (1980) concluded that an effective principal must be willing to take a few risks and must clearly understand and be able to use the vast opportunities or change inherent in the principalship. The principal who can see this potential and act upon it can indeed make a needed contribution to improving our nation's schools and to creating the kinds of learning and working environment longed for by professional educators.

## CHAPTER 3

### Design and Procedure

The review of the literature revealed the importance of having a strong effective leader in today's schools. There were varied traits and behaviors that were characteristic of an effective principal.

Based on these findings, it was decided that a study could be conducted to determine how elementary and secondary teachers in the Fort Campbell School System perceive the effective principal based on certain traits and behaviors.

An instrument in the form of a questionnaire was sent to 250 teachers. A total of 131 questionnaires were returned for a 52% response.

The questionnaire contained a total of thirty questions consisting of two major parts: parts 1-5 asked for data purely personal or professional in nature, parts 6-30 contained twenty-five variables of traits and behaviors. The teachers were asked to respond to each variable by placing an "X" in the appropriate blank. Each respondent needed to answer on a scale of "1" (almost always important) to a "5" (almost never important) of how he or she perceived the traits and behaviors of an effective school principal.

When the data were collected the groups were divided

between elementary and secondary teachers. Differences were determined according to the responses of each question. Responses were compared for significance by tabulating the responses of each question and those items with the greatest difference were compared by hand using the "t" test for differences between independent means.

## CHAPTER 4

### Presentation of Data

A total of 131 questionnaires was received. This resulted in 52% of the group participating in the study.

When the data were collected the groups were divided between elementary and secondary teachers. Differences were determined according to the responses of each question. Responses were compared for significances by tabulating the responses of each question and those items with the greatest differences were computed by hand using the "t" test for differences between independent means.

It was determined that there were no significant differences among the various demographic categories. Hence, the null hypotheses were supported. There were no significant differences between elementary and secondary teachers of different age levels, academic degrees and years of teaching experiences in the perceptions and ratings of the traits and behaviors of an effective school principal.

Although, there were no significant differences, there were interesting trends and observations as indicated by the data. See Table I, page 34, for the average mean response for each question.

Results of this study seem to indicate elementary

teachers are more idealistic than secondary teachers and appear to almost always want the principal to be involved in all aspects of the school operation. The widest range of differences between elementary and secondary teachers were in the following five items: evaluates instructional programs (7), monitors instructional programs (8), involves community by keeping parents informed (19), is knowledgeable of growth and developmental characteristics of students served (26) and maintains a physical plant that provides an environment appropriate to the instructional program (30).

Elementary teachers usually teach a variety of subjects and have a background in a more general educational program. This may indicate a willingness to involve the principal in the evaluation and monitoring of the instructional program. Secondary teachers have a specific subject area to teach and may feel more confident to monitor and evaluate their programs than elementary teachers.

In the elementary school parents are usually more involved in the child's education than in the secondary schools. This could explain the wider range of difference for item 19, involves community by keeping parents informed. Parents and children may show a lot of enthusiasm and interest in the elementary grades, but as the child progresses there may be a failure of the schools to work to keep the parent informed and involved. This could be of value for secondary principals to look at secondary teachers

and see traits they feel are not always important and to investigate reasons why these ideas may exist.

Item 26, is knowledgeable of growth and developmental characteristics of students served, was rated higher for elementary teachers than secondary teachers. This seems appropriate for elementary teachers to rate this higher since knowledge of growth and characteristics are especially important for the early years. But, secondary teachers and secondary principals should be very aware of the adolescent years and the responsibilities they have in meeting the needs of this age group.

Item 30, maintains a physical plant that provides an environment appropriate to the instructional program, was also rated higher by the elementary teachers. This could indicate secondary teachers are more concerned with their subject area and the building is not a major factor. Elementary teachers may sense a greater concern for the environment and arrangement of the physical plant to meet the needs of the younger student.

On the five items showing the widest range of differences, the backgrounds of the elementary and secondary teachers probably is a deciding factor. This could be of value for college professors to look at the preparation students are getting in college when they enter into the educational programs. There appears to be a difference in the philosophy of elementary and secondary teachers in the ways students and subjects are viewed. This probably

could be a result of training and what elementary and secondary teachers are trying to accomplish in the classroom.

From the consistent high scores that were received from the elementary teachers the following items need to be examined: sets high expectations for self and staff (10), communicates well with others (11), has good working relations with staff (16), treats teachers as professional workers (20), maintains an atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning (24) and possesses organizational skills that ensure an efficient school operation (27).

The findings from this study appear to be consistent with research findings concerning elementary teacher expectations for the principal.

According to Gorton (1978) the faculty rates the principal on accessibility, and having good working relations. Teachers want the principal available, accessible, and working with them whenever needed.

Weldy (1979) concluded the major responsibility of principals is to keep schools goal-oriented. No other person in the school has this responsibility as much as the principal. He/she possesses organizational skills that ensures an efficient operation and keeps working toward the goals that he/she and the faculty have planned.

Weldy (1979: 18) recounted from an article featured in the Chicago Daily News, "a successful principal is a person

who keeps in touch and listens to students and teachers. He shows students he cares and encourages teachers to care about kids."

From a study from the Maryland State Department, principals who have high expectations of themselves and teachers, the academic achievement of the students were higher (Weldy, 1979).

A recent research study indicated the most important characteristics of effective schools are strong instructional leadership, a safe and orderly climate, school-wide emphasis on basic skills, high teacher expectations for student achievement, and continuous assessment of pupil progress (Bennett, 1986).

An implication for elementary principals from this study is to look at what teachers expect from them and to work on improving in these areas, and to make the school a better environment for learning.

The only item rated higher for secondary teachers over elementary teacher was item 17, displays consistency in decision making. Several secondary teachers put an asterisk beside this trait, saying this was definitely an important trait of an effective principal. Teachers must know if the principal can be depended upon and to know what to expect. Teacher stress and low morale can result from leaders who do not display consistency in decision making.

Items rated the highest for secondary teachers in this study were: sets high expectations for himself and staff (10),

has good working relations with staff (16), displays consistency in decision making (17), treats teachers as professional workers (20), stimulates a spirit of high morale among staff members (21) and possesses organizational skills that ensure an efficient school operation (27).

One implication for a secondary principal is to examine closely these six traits of an effective principal. Without a principal having most of these traits, especially having good relations with the staff, goals may not be reached, morale may be low, the atmosphere may not be conducive to learning, and student achievement may suffer.

The item rated the lowest for elementary and secondary teachers was item 9, sets instructional strategies. Both groups of teachers may view this trait as their responsibility and not as important for the principal. After years of training and years of experience, the teacher hopefully will set the instructional strategies in his/her classroom.

Perhaps more important than the differences in the ratings of the two groups, were the consistent high scores on certain items. Both elementary and secondary teachers rated item 16, has good working relations with staff, the highest from both groups. The next highest response was item 20, treats teachers as professional workers.

Elementary and secondary principals who have good working relations with the staff and treat teachers as professionals will probably be able to be effective in most all the other areas. Effective principals must know their

faculty, and how to motivate them to accomplish the goals set forth in the program. Effective principals are professional, democratic, and have a high degree of "people orientation," as well as a concern for task accomplishment (Johnston, Markle, Forrer, 1984: 16). These principals emphasize open communication and teacher participation, and they actively involve the staff in decision making.

The principals of the Fort Campbell School System were not a part of the sample for study, but each one was interviewed and asked to relate some ideas concerning good leadership in a school. Some of the ideas are included in the following:

Both elementary and secondary principals indicated the following traits and behaviors to be the most important to them: (1) developing appropriate goals, (2) monitoring instructional programs, (3) communicating well with others, (4) maintaining an atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning, (5) having good working relations with the staff. After several years of administrative experience these seemed to outweigh the other characteristics.

Three elementary principals interviewed did not actively seek the principalship but they seemed to be at the appropriate place when there was a need for leadership. From their accounts, and from other observations, this writer believes an effective leader of a school has exhibited many of these effective traits and behaviors many times in the classroom and in other school related activities.

From talking to several principals, hard work and persistence seem to be two important characteristics of the principalship, at least an effective principalship.

An important characteristic that was not a part of the survey was pointed out to the writer by a secondary teacher. The trait of "gives positive reinforcement and feedback to staff." This is a very important characteristic of an effective leader, and will definitely make a difference in teacher morale and school climate.

## CHAPTER 5

### Summary of Findings, Conclusions, and Implications

#### Summary of Findings

Summaries of the hypotheses by objectives were:

(1) There will no significant differences between K-5 teachers and 6-12 teachers regarding their perceptions and ratings of the traits and behaviors of an effective school principal.

Findings showed there were no significant differences between K-5 teachers and 6-12 teachers regarding their perceptions and ratings of the traits and behaviors of an effective principal.

(2) There will be no significant differences between K-5 teachers and 6-12 teachers of different age levels, academic degrees and years of teaching experiences in their perceptions and ratings of the traits and behaviors of an effective school principal.

Findings showed there were no significant differences between K-5 teachers and 6-12 teachers of different age levels, academic degrees and years of teaching experience in their perceptions and ratings of the traits and behaviors of an effective school principal.

Although, there were no significant differences there

were interesting trends and observations as were indicated by the data.

Results of this study seem to indicate elementary teachers are more idealistic than secondary teachers and appear to almost always want the principal to be involved in most school operations. The widest range of differences were in the following five items: evaluates instructional program (7), monitors instructional program (8), involves community by keeping parents informed (19), is knowledgeable of growth and developmental characteristics of students served (26) and maintains a physical plant that provides an environment appropriate to the instructional program (30).

The items receiving the consistent high scores from elementary teachers were: sets high expectations for self and staff (10), communicates well with others (11), has good working relations with staff (16), treats teachers as professional workers (20), maintains an atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning (24) and possesses organizational skills that ensure an efficient school operation (27).

Items rated the highest for secondary teachers in this study were: sets high expectations for self and staff (10), has good working relations with staff (16), displays consistency in decision making (17), treats teachers as professional workers (20), stimulates a spirit of high morale among staff members (21), and possesses organizational skills that ensure an efficient school operation (27).

The item rated the lowest for elementary and secondary teachers was item 9, sets instructional strategies.

The two items receiving consistent high scores for both groups were: has good working relations with staff (16) and treats teachers as professional workers (20).

### Conclusions

The results of the present study seem to indicate elementary teachers appear to be more idealistic than secondary teachers in their ratings of a school principal. elementary teachers seem to want more involvement from the principal, and secondary teachers are more independent and want less involvement from the principal.

The findings revealed a difference in the elementary and secondary teachers perceptions of an effective principal which could reflect on the educational background received by these two groups and the type of person entering elementary and secondary education. The elementary teacher has a more "general" education and the secondary teacher is more subject oriented.

The study revealed more than the differences of the item analyzed from the questionnaire. Perhaps it was the similarities of the findings that was of the most value in this present investigation.

The consistent high scores that were received on certain traits seem to be rather significant (1) has good working relations with staff and (2) treats teachers as professional workers.

Elementary and secondary teachers have an awareness of what is involved in being an effective principal, and

seem to realize the importance of this position. Our elementary and secondary schools are very complex, and one principal can make a difference, but all school personnel must work together to have the most "effective" learning environment.

This study may have been beneficial in that it gave elementary and secondary teachers an opportunity to look at the role of the principal, and to see what is involved and what is really important in that position.

#### Implications

This study could be beneficial to school superintendents and board members who are usually responsible for selecting and employing elementary and secondary principals. They may more clearly recognize certain common traits and behaviors in the selection of a principal, and also in evaluating performance on the job.

These findings could prove of value to teachers, or anyone going into the role of an elementary or secondary principal. Teachers of elementary and secondary schools have different perceptions of the role of the principal and the candidate would need to realize the differences and decide how to best prepare himself/herself for the leadership role.

Principals might be wise to recognize that teachers are very proud, and are the most influential person in the classroom. As this study indicated, sometimes it is good judgement to leave teachers alone and let them determine their instructional strategies.

An important implication from this study was the similarities of traits of most effective leaders. The principal who has good working relations with his staff, communicates well with others, stands as a professional guide, and treats teachers as professionals, will be able to be effective and to move the school in a positive direction to its optimum level of learning.

Anyone changing from elementary to secondary or vice-versa might gain from this study an insight into different ways the principal may be perceived by elementary and secondary teachers.

## APPENDICES

## Appendix A

Table I

Average Mean Response For Each Question  
of Elementary and Secondary Teachers

ITEM	ELEMENTARY	SECONDARY
6 Develops Appropriate Goals	4.86	4.65
7 Evaluates Instructional Programs	4.66	4.31
8 Monitors Instructional Programs	4.70	4.31
9 Sets Instructional Strategies	4.27	3.98
10 Sets high expectations for himself and staff	4.92	4.80
11 Communicates well with others	4.90	4.76
12 Interacts openly with students	4.70	4.63
13 Is accessible to staff	4.90	4.78
14 Uses "team" approaches by sharing power and responsibility	4.58	4.41
15 Is an active listener	4.87	4.84
16 Has good working relations with staff	4.94	4.94
17 Displays consistency in decision making	4.77	4.88
18 Is flexible and adjustable in meeting	4.82	4.57
19 Involves community by keeping parents informed	4.59	4.20
20 Treats teachers as professional workers	4.94	4.90
21 Stimulates a spirit of high morale among staff members	4.89	4.80
22 Delegates responsibility for solving problems, but keeps control of major decisions	4.69	4.57
23 Assigns teaching responsibilities efficiently	4.75	4.71
24 Maintains an atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning	4.92	4.76
25 Possesses knowledge of programs, materials instructional methods and/or strategies	4.72	4.55
26 Is knowledgeable of growth and developmental characteristics of students served	4.77	4.45
27 Possesses organizational skills that ensure an efficient school operation	4.92	4.84
28 Provides the environment for instructional improvement and change	4.85	4.61
29 Maximizes the different skills found in the faculty	4.70	4.41
30 Maintains a physical plant that provides an environment appropriate to the instructional program	4.85	4.47

Appendix B

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

TO: Fort Campbell Teachers and Administrators  
FROM: Brenda Hunter, South Middle School  
RE: Traits and Behaviors of an Effective School Principal

Dear Respondents:

As a degree requirement an investigation is being made into the traits and behaviors of an effective school principal. Your response to the questionnaire will greatly enhance the possibility for success in this research.

While your cooperation is most urgently requested, your participation is completely voluntary. The data acquired by your response will not be used for any other purpose than for this specific investigation. You may refuse to answer the questionnaire without any negative consequences whatsoever.

With these assurances we sincerely hope that you will respond to the items in the questionnaire and return it in the envelope provided.

Thank you for your participation in this study.

## Appendix C

### DEMOGRAPHIC DATA SHEET

Please answer the following questions for use in this survey. Names are not needed and all information will be handled with extreme care and confidentiality should names be given.

Circle your response on items 1-5.

1. Age:  
A. 20-30 B. 31-40 C. 41-50 D. 51-60 E. 61 or over
2. Level of Training:  
A. Bachelors B. Masters C. Specialist/Rank I  
D. Doctorate
3. Type of School:  
A. K-5 B. 6-8 C. 9-12
4. How many years have you served as a teacher/administrator?  
A. 1-5 B. 6-15 C. 16 or more
5. What position do you presently hold?  
A. Teacher B. Supervisor C. Principal/Assistant  
Principal

## Appendix D

### The Traits and Behaviors of an Effective School Principal as Perceived by Teachers and Administrators

The following questionnaire was developed after a literature review on the traits and behaviors of an effective principal.

The following questionnaire is comprised of traits and behaviors you as a teacher/administrator may or may not perceive as being significant in influencing the effectiveness of a school principal. It is of the utmost importance that you respond to each item by using an "X" in the box beside each trait or behavior that best describes your perceptions and ratings of the traits and behaviors of an effective principal.

	Almost Always Important	Frequently Important	Occasionally Important	Rarely Important	Almost Never Important
6. Develops appropriate goals					
7. Evaluates instructional programs					
8. Monitors instructional programs					
9. Sets instructional strategies					
10. Sets high expectations for himself and staff					
11. Communicates well with others					
12. Interacts openly with students					
13. Is accessible to staff					
14. Uses "team" approaches by sharing power and responsibility					
15. Is an active listener					
16. Has good working relations with staff					
17. Displays consistency in decision making					
18. Is flexible and adjustable in meeting individual needs					



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