


**A STUDY OF ATTITUDES OF ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE,  
AND HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS TOWARD HOMEWORK**

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**CLIFFORD DEAN CONNER**

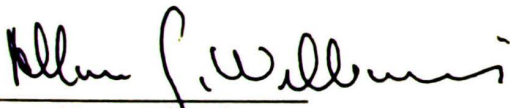
To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a field study written by Gina Byrd-Biter entitled "A Study of Assistant Principals' Roles and Responsibilities Which May Relate to Future Success as Principals". I have examined the final copy of the Field Study for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Education Specialist, with a major in Administration and Supervision.

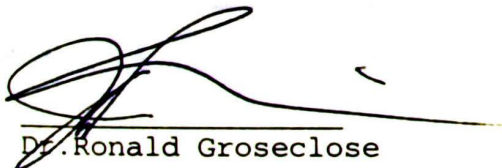


Dr. Donald Luck, Major Professor

We have read this Field  
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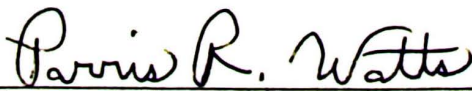


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July 25, 2001

**A STUDY OF ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS'  
ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES  
WHICH MAY RELATE TO  
SUCCESS AS FUTURE PRINCIPALS**

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**A Field Study  
Presented to the  
Graduate and Research Council of  
Austin Peay State University**

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**In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Education Specialist**

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**By  
Gina Byrd-Biter  
July 2001**



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to thank Dr. Donald Luck for his guidance and assistance given during the completion of the Field Study. In addition, I would like to thank Dr. Allan Williams and Dr. Ronald Groseclose for serving on my Field Study Committee and assisting me through my studies at Austin Peay State University. Also, I would like to thank my husband, Chuck, and my children, Steven and Rachel, for their support through the completion of the Education Specialist Degree program. I would also like to thank my parents, Jo and Larry Byrd, for their continued support, love, and encouragement throughout my educational career.

## ABSTRACT

The position of assistant principal is a training ground for future principals. It is important to identify the experiences which aid the assistant principal in becoming an effective principal. Assistant principals are faced with a wide variety of assigned tasks and responsibilities.

This study identifies which specific training experiences assistant principals engage in that are related to future success as principals. Recommendations for assistant principals' training programs are also made.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Assistant principals often lack the training opportunities which can make them successful as principals (Wells, Scollay, and Rinehart, 1999). Their time is consumed with unexpected role demands which often leave them feeling alienated and frustrated. These situations do not allow the needed training opportunities to become effective principals.

In as little as twelve years ago, little thought had been put into the assistant principal's roles, responsibilities, and training. This is evident when examining The Handbook of Research on Educational Administration (Boyan, 1988) and The Encyclopedia of School Administration and Supervision (Gorton, Snyder, and Fisher, 1988). Neither source has the term "assistant principal" in the subject index, defines the roles and responsibilities of the assistant principal, or gives reference the position of the assistant principal other than citing it as the stepping stone for becoming a principal. Nowhere in either source's discussion of the school administration roles is the assistant principal position mentioned. (Hartzell, Williams, and Nelson, 1994). In the past ten years, however, the position of the assistant principal has been mentioned more and more in educational literature. This trend is particularly true in the past five years. The roles and responsibilities of the assistant principal has been often researched and discussed.

In a National Association of Secondary School Principals study of over 1000 principals and assistant principals, it was found that the assistant principals were involved in virtually every aspect of the school operation. This wide range of responsibilities may not allow, however, thorough training in critical areas for success as future principals. The assistant principal's role was found to be one of obscurity in that he/she works "behind the scenes" to ensure the smooth operation of the school's programs and activities. This "hidden" leadership can create feelings of frustration and low efficacy on the part of the assistant principal. These feelings are increased because the assistant principal receives little recognition, appreciation, nor support from above or below them in the educational hierarchy. If these feelings are allowed to intensify, the assistant principals' performance will suffer and he or she may even decide to leave the position. (Hartzell, Williams, and Nelson, 1994).

#### Statement of the Problem

Assistant principals are faced with a wide variety of roles, responsibilities and assigned tasks. The assistant principal's role is not clearly defined. He or she is often assigned tasks by the principal which involve "behind the scenes" work for school programs. These tasks are often less appealing than those of the principal. However, the tasks are critical to the daily operations of the school. In some cases, the assistant principal feels unappreciated. The lack of recognition or appreciation received by the assistant principal can create feelings of low efficacy, isolation, and frustration.



This content-analysis study attempts to identify specific training opportunities which can help the assistant principal prepare to become an effective principal. The recommended training activities identified will also assist the assistant principal in more clearly defining his or her role in the total school program and pinpoint areas to help improve the assistant principal's overall feelings and perceptions about the position.

#### Importance of the Study

The success of a new principal can largely be determined by the breadth and depth of the principal's prior experiences as an assistant principal. It is necessary to identify training activities that meet the assistant principal's career goal of becoming a successful principal. It is equally important to meet the emotional needs of the assistant principal in order to create a feeling of high efficacy and self-worth in relation to his or her current administrative position at the school.

#### Description of the Study

This study is based on a content-analysis of related literature. Thirty major references were analyzed and classified. Each one was examined to identify the roles and responsibilities of the assistant principal as cited in the reference material utilized. Results are presented in the areas of Instructional Leadership, Stakeholder Relations, and School Plant Operations. Specific suggestions for an assistant principal training program are provided. Additionally, areas to improve the assistant principal's

feelings and perceptions of his or her administrative position are explored and discussed.

### Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study are that the specific recommendations for the assistant principal training program have not been field-tested and that all reported information is limited to current research studies regarding principal and assistant principal training programs and experiences which have been published in the last ten years.

### Definition of Terms

Assistant Principal - administrative position directly under the principal in the hierarchy of school administration; also referred to as vice principal or associate principal.

Collegial Collaboration - relationship between the principal and assistant principal which allows and promotes mutual planning and respect.

Curriculum Development - planning and organization of a school's overall academic programs.

Derailment - situations in which groups do not meet organizational objectives or individuals fall short of their career goals.

Effective Principal - an administrator who is successful in instructional leadership and relations with school stakeholders.

Efficacy - one's self-esteem; feeling capable of doing what is needed.

Employee Relations - relationship between an administrator and

the teaching or support staff in regard to evaluation and personnel relations.

Instructional Leadership - the role of an administrator to work with teachers and school personnel to improve teaching effectiveness.

Mentoring - the relationship between two colleagues which promotes assistance and supportive advice.

Parent Relations - the relationship between an administrator and parents in regard to problem solving, counseling, and communication.

Practicum - a set program of training and professional development.

Shared Leadership - administrative duties and responsibilities which are divided between the principal and the assistant principal.

Stakeholders - school faculty, staff, parents, and community members; those persons who are affected by school decisions or activities; those persons who have contact or interest in a particular school.

Student Relations - the relationship between an administrator and students in regard to discipline, counseling, and curriculum.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Assistant principals are involved in the total school program. Much of their responsibilities lie in the areas of instructional leadership, employee relations, student relations, and discipline, parent and community relations, and school plant operations. Many times the assistant principal's role is overlooked or not thought of as valuable because he or she works "behind the scenes" to create the overall smooth operation of the school. This lack of acknowledgment can cause feelings of frustration and low self-esteem. This study will examine the assistant principal's roles and responsibilities in the total school program and how they may relate to success as future principals as found in the educational literature. Specific attention will be given to the assistant principal's feelings of efficacy and self-esteem. Additionally, the study will make recommendations for assistant principal training programs.

Buser, et al (1991) described the assistant principal's roles and responsibilities as being assigned, expected, or assumed. These three categories were then broken down individually with examples of each. Assigned tasks were official tasks expected of all assistant principals in a particular school or school district. These included such activities as teacher observations and evaluations, staff development planning, and student discipline. The expected

tasks were activities which assisted the principal in completing his or her daily workload. The tasks in the "expected" category included instructional leadership, assisting in student activities, helping with special school functions, and actively engaging in administrative decision making. The "assumed" roles of the assistant principal are less definable and very much up to the assistant principal as an individual. The assumed tasks are ones where the assistant principal refines, enhances or creates new school programs and policies. The assistant principal must communicate their own creative, innovative ideas with the principal and take an active leadership role of specific school activities which reflect the assistant principal's individual interests and talents.

One of the many facets of an assistant principal's duties is the role as an instructional leader within the school setting. Under this title, the assistant principal is expected to perform faculty and staff evaluations, provide staff development training, mentor individual teachers, promote organizational teamwork, and make instructional decisions.

When assistant principals engage in the practice of employee evaluations, it is important to refrain from making the process threatening or intimidating. The process itself is to assist the employee in professional growth and skill refinement. In order to accomplish the task of evaluation in a comfortable climate for the employee, the assistant principal must take the steps of setting the stage for the evaluation process. The assistant principal must meet with



teachers and staff both individually and in groups to explain the process. The assistant principal should try to ease any fears or tension of employees by clearly explaining the process, allowing employees to ask questions, and reassuring them that the process is conducted in a non-threatening manner. This is done in order to assist them in sharpening their professional skills (Robbins and Alvy, 1995).

According to Hartzell, Williams, and Nelson (1995), new assistant principals find teacher supervision and evaluation harder than expected. Although the assistant principal was evaluated as a teacher, he or she never considered that the evaluator doing "work" as well. The evaluator's two main tasks are gathering data from the observation and communicating evaluation results with the teacher. The responsibility of communicating the results to the teacher can be very awkward and uncomfortable for a new assistant principal. This may be true, in part, because many times the teacher being evaluated has had more years of teaching experience or is much older than the new assistant principal.

In many cases, the assistant principal is solely in charge of staff development for the teachers at his or her own school. A great amount of planning and preparation is needed to create a successful staff development program (McNeil and Delafield, 1998). Staff development activities include such things as formal training activities, sharing professional articles, discussing classroom successes, and new teaching strategies and working in small groups (Robbins and Alvy, 1995). Assistant principals play a key role in implementing the staff development program for teachers.



Another task of the assistant principal is to mentor individual teachers. Many times the assistant principal will mentor teachers who are new to the profession. In other cases, however, the mentee could be a teacher with many years of teaching experience. The assistant principal, through mentoring, has the opportunity and responsibility to build trusting relationships with teachers. This mentoring process creates a climate for teachers to comfortably discuss their own classroom practice and helps the teacher reach his or her potential (Robbins and Alvy, 1995).

Assistant principals share responsibility with the principal to create a school atmosphere of collaboration and teamwork. According to Wallace (1998), the concept of teamwork in the school empowers teachers because it pools ideas and expertise and leads to more consensus-based decision making in the school. Principals and assistant principals share the decision making responsibilities with teachers to strengthen the overall unity of the school (Trimble and Peterson, 1999).

Making instructional decisions is a necessary function of the assistant principalship. Erlandson's (1994) research study of administrators states that a school administrator "must continue to learn and must enable others to learn so that the school can move forward"(p.4). This learning process allows administrators to make informed, necessary instructional decisions based on facts gathered from school records, standardized test data, and formal and informal observations conducted throughout the school year (Erlandson, 1994).

The second facet of the assistant principal's duties involves promoting positive relationships with stakeholders of the school. The stakeholders of a school include its employees, students, parents, and community and business members. According to MacNeil and Delafield (1998), "school leaders must accept the challenge to create supportive conditions"(p.1) in the school environment. This type of school atmosphere allows for professional growth and skill development for employees and fosters good relationships with school stakeholders.

Benton and Bulach (1994) studied the importance of school climate and carrying out the school goals. It was found that school administrators play a major role in creating the school climate. Furthermore, it is stated that although a favorable school climate does not guarantee school effectiveness, it is a necessary ingredient. In addition to this, "quality educational leadership is essential in sustaining school improvement and enhancing school effectiveness"(p.3).

One way an administrator creates supportive, positive relationships with employees is by being visible and available to them. Ceyanes and MacNeil (1998) surveyed principals in southeast Texas. The surveyors were trying to determine how trusting relationships were formed between school administrators and teachers. It was concluded that sincerity, honesty, fairness, and respect were the main factors to building trust between teachers and their administrators. With this in mind, it is important for the principal and assistant principal to interact with teachers



in a way that shows compassion and respect for them as individuals.

The traits of compassion and respect should also be used by the administrator when dealing with students. One task which is given to to many assistant principals is the responsibility of student discipline. The book New Voices in the Field (Hartzell, Williams, and Nelson, 1995) is based on a five-year case study of ninety new assistant principals. It is stated that out of all of the tasks assigned to new assistant principals, "the administration of discipline most sharply separates their expectations from reality and reshapes their perspective on students, teachers, parents, and themselves"(p.45). It found that over 90% of the assistant principals had the assigned responsibility for student discipline either solely or shared in part with other administrators. In a case study of 19 assistant principals from throughout the United States, one assistant principal shared that she and her principal work together to encourage a positive attitude toward student discipline. She stated, "We emphasize responsibility and consequences rather than punishment. This has contributed to a very positive attitude at our school." (Kealy, 1999, p. 14).

The number of student discipline referrals to an assistant principal is often very large. In fact, many new assistant principals find the large number of discipline referrals to be very unusual. One new assistant principal interviewed stated that he had no idea teachers had so much trouble with student behavior. This is true, in part, because the new assistant principal had very little student

discipline problems when he was a teacher. Many assistant principals, in fact, had outstanding student discipline and control in their classrooms as teachers. Then, when hired into the new position as an assistant principal, they are surprised to find how many other teachers have difficulties with individual student discipline and whole class disciplinary control (Hartzell, Williams, and Nelson, 1995).

Student discipline involves much more than giving out consequences for poor behavior. It can involve planning intervention strategies, counseling, listening, and getting to know the student on an individual basis. This type of discipline counseling is an "eye-opener" for new assistant principals. A great deal is learned about a student's home life and individual financial situation one is an administrator. Sometimes the information learned can be very upsetting or quite confidential in nature.

Many new assistant principals worry about how they are perceived by students. Many assistant principals were popular, well-liked classroom teachers. But when they became an administrator, it was feared that they will no longer be liked or thought of as "cool" by students. Assistant principals can, however, maintain positive relationships with most students by mixing with them before and after school, at lunch, in the classrooms and as opportunities arise throughout the school day. These interactions with students allow the assistant principal to get to know students individually and to build trust and rapport with them. This availability to students shows that the assistant principal has genuine concern for students and wants to be supportive



of the students' needs, interests, and problems (Hartzell, Williams, and Nelson, 1995).

The responsibility of student discipline is a very important function of the assistant principal's duties. It must be carried out in a very professional, caring manner. If it is not handled in that way, the relationship between the school, parents, and community members could become quite negative.

Parent and community relationships with the school are important to the overall success of the school. The public perceptions and image of the school can "make or break" a school and its administrators. By this, it is meant that the parent and community views of the school and its administrators is very important. If the perceptions are good, then the school administration is "good" and doing well with running the school in the eyes of the public. If the perceptions are bad, then the administration is "bad" and doing a poor job in the eyes of the public. Tingley (1992) notes that one way to increase positive support and perceptions of the public is to show up at school functions, classroom activities and special programs. This public visibility allows parents and community members the opportunity to interact with the assistant principal and principal in a less formal setting. This gives the administrators a more "approachable appeal" and makes students, parents, and community members more comfortable when and if they should ever need to meet with the school administration.

A very important way to assist the school in building positive public relations is to have regular, open lines of communication. This includes promoting the school and the students in a positive manner. Parents should be informed about their child's progress and behavior on a regular basis. This information should not only be given to them if there are problems (Robbins and Alvy, 1995). Parents enjoy and appreciate hearing about their child's school successes, also. One administrator reported that she carried her cell phone and walked the halls and went into the classrooms to "catch the students being good". She then called a particular child's parents and shared the "good news" about the child with the child present. She reported that this type of positive interactions led to better relationships with parents (Robbins and Alvy, 1995).

The third facet of an assistant principal's responsibilities is overseeing the school plant operations. The responsibility of school plant operations is very large. In most cases, the principal and assistant principal share in the oversight of this task. School plant operations include being responsible for the cleanliness, appearance, and safety of the building as well as managing the school's budgets.

Maintaining the upkeep of the building involves working with custodians, electricians, and maintenance workers of the school system. Coordination of grounds cutting, cleaning, painting, remodeling, and repairs many times becomes the assigned responsibility of the assistant principal.

The assistant principal, in partnership with the principal, works to maintain and oversee the school's



budgets. The budgets are broken down into various categories. The main school budget categories are the Instructional Accounts, School Plant Accounts, and individual clubs or organization accounts.

All budget accounts must be carefully monitored to ensure accuracy. The administrators must meet regularly with the school's bookkeeper or account manager to check fund balances, make deposits, and pay school debts. The relationship between the principal, assistant principal, and bookkeeper must be one of complete trust and credibility. The assistant principal must understand each individual account and its restrictions and requirements for use in order to monitor them effectively.

The Instructional Account are used to purchase classroom supplies, materials, and equipment. The three main sub-accounts of the instructional budget are supplies and materials, equipment and special education accounts. The assistant principal is often assigned the task of approving purchase orders for this account. Teachers must complete supplies and materials requests to receive needed instructional items. These requests are then turned in for approval by the assistant principal.

The equipment account is usually a large budget which is earmarked for the purchase of computers, overhead projectors, fax machines, copiers, televisions, video cassette recorders, and other electronic instructional equipment. The school's assistant principal may be assigned the task of "bargain hunter" to find the most competitive prices when purchasing these large ticket items.

The special education account is a highly restricted account. The assistant principal may be required to monitor all account activities of the Special Education Department. The special education teachers must meet each student's individual education plan. In doing so, it may require the purchase of special equipment or instructional materials. Many special education materials which meet the specific needs of individual students are very expensive and can be hard to locate.

The furniture account is utilized to purchase needed teacher and student furniture items. These items may include a teacher and student desks, filing cabinets, bookcases, flat files, tables, and chairs. Requests for items purchased through this account are carefully considered. Many times the assistant principal is able to fill teacher's furniture requests by trading out furniture from other areas of the school building.

The custodial supply account must be carefully planned in order to have enough cleaning and paper supplies to last through the entire school year. Supplies purchased from this account include paper towels, toilet paper, mops, dust pans, brooms, trash cans, floor wax, vacuum cleaners, paint, bleach, and other necessary cleaning supplies and equipment. Shortages in this account can cause major problems for the overall school plant operations.

Individual club or organization accounts are usually maintained by the club or organization sponsor. Some examples of these accounts are band, sports, drama club, and parent-teacher organizations. The principal or assistant



principal, however, must approve and review expenditures and all account activities within the school. The supervision of the school's budgets is a very important responsibility of the school administration. The lack of management of the school's budgetary accounts can result in severe consequences or loss of employment for an administrator. There is a great need to exercise precise accounting practices when handling the school's money (Elsberry and Bishop, 1993).

The assistant principal's roles and responsibilities vary greatly from school building to school building. Many researchers have attempted to determine what specific job assignments are common among assistant principals. Wells, Scollay, and Rinehart (1999) surveyed seventy-five first-year assistant principals in Kentucky to determine the top ten administrative duties assigned to assistant principals. Their findings were then ranked in order:

1. Student Discipline
2. Parent Interactions/Communication
3. Student and Staff Safety
4. Compliance with Policies, Laws, and Regulations
5. School Policies Implementation
6. Assemblies/Special Programs
7. Student Attendance
8. Special Arrangements at Start and Close of School
9. Chairing Committees for Special Students
10. Development of School Policies and Procedures

In the same study, the research team also surveyed fifty-nine first year principals. The top ten list of duties for the new principal was then compiled and ranked in order:

1. Building/Facilities Use
2. School Policies Implementation
3. Student Discipline
4. Student and Staff Safety
5. Communication of School Vision and Mission
6. School Budgets
7. Staff Inservice/Professional Development

8. Instructional Methods
9. School Planning for Improvement
10. Evaluation of Teachers

The findings in this study concluded that the assistant principal's duties were not closely enough aligned with the duties of a first year principal. The researchers went on to point out that the assistant principalship position may be a less than ideal training ground to become an effective principal. It was noted that this is evident because the assistant principal functions like a "designated hitter" on the administrative team and is assigned specific duties instead of assuming the wide range of responsibilities which are necessary to their future success as principals. It was found that duties of the assistant principals, in most cases, were assigned solely by the principal. These duties were usually "less glamorous" than those of the principal and often less desirable tasks to accomplish. Many times the principal delegates responsibilities to the assistant principal that complements his or her own work (Wells, Scollay, and Rinehart, 1999). This can lessen the assistant principal's effectiveness as a leader by hindering him or her from having sole responsibility over projects or duties. This under-utilization of the assistant principal can trigger feelings of frustration and low self-esteem or efficacy.

Efficacy is defined as one's feelings about how he or she is performing at a particular task. In the case of assistant principals, several studies reported that many assistant principals had low self-esteem or efficacy regarding their administrative positions. This was due, in part, because the roles and responsibilities of the



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assistant principals are so ambiguous. In many cases, there is no set job description or evaluation criteria for the assistant principal at all. Therefore, the assistant principal never really knows how he or she is performing. To make matters worse, if the assistant principal does well with a particular assigned task, school program, event, or project, it is usually the principal that receives the congratulations and credit for the accomplishment. On the other hand, if the program or project does not go well, it is the assistant principal who is found to be responsible for the end result (Harris, 1998). It can be difficult for the assistant principal to deal with the fact that he or she is in a secondary leadership role. At times, the assistant principal's position is perceived by others as less of a leader and more like a "gopher" for the principal (Michael, 1996).

Much research has been done on the relationship between the principal and assistant principal. It has been concluded that this relationship is the single most important factor in determining the success of the assistant principal when he or she becomes a principal (Hartzell, Williams, and Nelson, 1995). It was said that the principal has the personal and professional responsibility to help the assistant principal. The principal should be committed to guide and mentor the assistant principal. Furthermore, it was stated that effective principals mentor others by nature. They encourage others to reach their potential. The principal as a mentor provides growth opportunities, helps to develop self-

confidence, and motivates the assistant principal to reach his or her higher goals (Buser, 1991).

A strong relationship between the two also encourages the assistant principal to be resourceful and use his or her special abilities and interests to benefit the school. This, in turn, leads to stronger feelings of efficacy and self-worth on the part of the assistant principal. On the other hand, a poor working relationship and lack of shared leadership responsibilities between the principal and assistant principal can create feelings of animosity, distrust, and disloyalty to the school.

While the position of the assistant principalship is considered a stepping stone for that of a principalship, it should be noted that not all assistant principals want to become a principal. Many assistant principals are happy to retain their current leadership positions until retirement. These persons are known as "career assistant principals" (Marshall, 1993). For those who do desire to become a principal, it is important to understand the term "derailment" and what impact it could have on their future chances of becoming a principal. Derailment is defined by Brubaker and Cobel (1997) as the situation in which individuals fall short of their career goals. This often happens to assistant principals who desire to be principals because of lack of thorough training, lack of resources, or lack of a good mentoring relationship with his or her principal. It is important for the assistant principal to be aware of the possibility of derailment and work toward



overcoming obstacles that get in the way of being selected 21  
for the position of principal.

The specific roles and responsibilities of the assistant principal vary greatly throughout the schools in the United States. It is evident from the information gathered that the assistant principal plays a major role in the overall success of the school. He or she "fills the gaps" to create the smooth operations of the school's programs and facilities. The assistant principal is often not recognized or commended for the role that he or she plays within the school setting. In fact, the assistant principal may not even receive credit for which he or she has had sole responsibility. The honor and recognition many times goes to the principal. This oversight can cause feelings of low self-esteem and animosity on the part of the assistant principal. Specific recommendations to help the assistant principal grow personally and professionally are needed.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

#### Methodology

In order to complete this content-analysis study, over fifty resources identified as possible references. Each one was then examined more closely to determine its usefulness in the study. Each one selected focused specifically on the roles and responsibilities of the school assistant principal. Thirty resources, which were published within the last ten years, were selected to be analyzed.

Much of the literature reviewed was based on case studies and surveys regarding assistant principals from across the United States. Data was collected from elementary, middle, and high school administrators. These persons worked in public and private schools which were located in rural, suburban, and inner city sections of communities across the country.

Three main areas of an assistant principal's roles and responsibilities were identified. These are Instructional Leadership, Stakeholder Relations, and School Plant Operations. Sub-categories under each main area were formed. At that point, each resource was analyzed to identify which assistant principal responsibilities were noted within the context of the reference. These findings were then tabulated by each sub-category. Final tabulation records were reported and percentages for each sub-category were calculated.

### Results

Most studies agreed that there is a great need to define the roles and responsibilities of the assistant principal's position. Many even suggested that there should be handbooks and training programs available when a new assistant principal is hired.

The thirty resources used in this content analysis study were analyzed and classified according to the roles and responsibilities of the assistant principal as cited in each resource. The results were then sorted and tabulated to determine which assistant principals' duties were most often referred to in the research literature utilized in the study (See Tables 1 and 2). The rank order of the assistant principal's duties cited was as follows:

1. Student Relations and Discipline
2. Making Instructional Decisions
3. Employee Relations
3. Parent and Community Relations
4. Faculty and Staff Evaluations
5. Staff Development Training
6. Promoting Organizational Teamwork
7. Mentoring Individual Teachers
7. Building Maintenance
8. School Budgets

It should be noted that items ranked number three and seven both received the same number of citings in the resources utilized. The research continues to support the theory that the main task of the assistant principal is student relations and discipline.



school was given the opportunity to complete the survey. Each principal was contacted, explained the purpose of the survey, and provided information on how to administer the survey.

The surveys were dropped off at each school with a letter of instruction to the principals asking them to distribute the surveys. Surveys were placed in each of the teachers' mailboxes. A box for the collection of surveys was placed in the lounge of each school. After one week the surveys were collected.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS OF SURVEY RESPONSES

The purpose of this survey was to investigate the attitudes of elementary, middle school, and high school teachers toward the assignment of homework. The findings reflect the opinions and attitudes of 124 teachers toward the assignment of homework. The total response rate was 47%. The grade level breakdown for the respondents was as follows: elementary, 80 (64.5%); middle school, 18 (14.5%); and high school, 26 (20.9%).

The responses were divided into three groups - elementary, middle school, and high school teachers. The data was organized with regard to academic training, years of experience, and gender. Sixty (48.4%) had a bachelors degree; 45 (36.3%) had a masters degree; and 19 (15.3%) had a degree above a masters. Twenty-nine (23.4%) had 0-4 years teaching experience; 36 (29.0%) had 5-10 years experience; 32 (25.8 %) had 11-20 years experience; and 27 (21.8%) had 21 years or more. Of the 124 respondents 113 (91.1%) were female and 11 (8.9%) were male.

The survey was broken down into five areas - student related questions, teacher related questions, parent related questions, school related questions, and demographic questions. Each of the areas contained a

## CHAPTER IV

### RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

#### Recommendations

Many assistant principal training programs and leadership programs have been established throughout the United States. "A systematically designed and implemented training program has a positive effect on practicing assistant principal." (Richardson and Flannigan, 1991). Assistant principals need a well-planned training program which meets their needs professionally and personally. Program emphasis should be on helping the assistant principals gain the skills necessary to become effective principals. Richardson and Flannigan studied assistant principals' on-the-job-training practices and created a staff development program for assistant principals. They made a list of topics which they felt should be covered for all assistant principals. The training topics recommended were:

1. Development of Quality Schools
2. Characteristics of a Quality Principal
3. Time Management
4. Interpersonal Skills
5. Goal Setting
6. Conferencing Skills
7. Site-Based Management
8. Conflict Management
9. Problem Solving

The topics recommended were then broken down into sub topics for each one. A few of the sub-topics included were staff development, parental involvement, and communication.



The four basic training program objectives were:

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1. To provide a supportive, non-threatening environment in which assistant principals can identify and practice administrative skills.
2. To establish a cadre of assistant principals in order to share experiences, problems, insights, and solutions to common problems and concerns.
3. To provide an environment for continuing personal and professional growth through individualized, concentrated activities.
4. To provide specific alternatives to the traditional training for school leaders.
5. To structure activities in such a way that participants share ownership in the process and the solutions.

Another assistant principal training program was created in El Paso, Texas. The training academy "is a unique professional development program that is tailored specifically to the needs of the assistant principals so that they can eventually become effective principals"(p.1). The school officials there felt that the most important step to help the assistant principal was to pair him or her with a mentoring principal. Specific professional growth goals were identified as the second step in the leadership training program for assistant principals (Parra and Daresh, 1997).

A study by Hartzell, Williams, and Nelson (1995) examined the relationship between the principal and assistant principal. Recommendations were made for the assistant principal to follow. They were as follows:

1. Identify the principal's expectations of the assistant principal.
2. Take initiative in situations.
3. Look for solutions to problems as they arise.
4. Get needed information from others.
5. Create a friendly relationship with the secretary.
6. Respect the chain of command.

Much attention was given to "capturing the principal's attention, increasing the assistant principal's usefulness, increasing the principal's dependence on the assistant principal, and giving the principal a reason to support the assistant principal's activities and requests" (p.1).

A common theme ran throughout the literature reviewed. It was very evident that the roles and responsibilities of the assistant principal must be more clearly defined. Specific guidelines to help the assistant principal must be established. The personal and professional growth sides of the assistant principal's position must be considered. The need for a strong, supportive mentoring relationship between the principal and assistant principal is essential in order to help the assistant principal in become an effective principal in the future.

### Conclusions

Hartzell, Williams, and Nelson's (1995) five-year study of ninety assistant principals made the following conclusions:

1. Beginning assistant principals do not understand the nature of their position.
2. Many new assistant principals lacked the skills necessary to do their job.
3. The assistant principal position did not prepare the administrator to become a principal.
4. Becoming an assistant principal brought professional and personal changes.

When new assistant principals are hired, a set training program should be in place. This will help the assistant principal to grow personally and professionally. A supportive mentoring relationship between the principal and

assistant principal should be formed. The assistant principal should be assigned tasks which train him or her to become an effective principal in the future. 29

It is equally important to help the assistant principal on a personal level. The assistant principal should be assigned to work with a fellow assistant principal that has been in his or her position for a few years. This relationship will allow the new assistant principal the opportunity to ask questions and receive feedback from someone of equal status on the leadership hierarchy. Particular attention should be given to encouraging the assistant principal to utilize his or her own individual skills and talents to better the school. In addition, the assistant principal should be given recognition for accomplishments or school programs for which he or she was responsible. Ongoing positive feedback from the principal is needed to encourage and motivate the assistant principal to reach his or her leadership potential.



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## VITA

Gina Byrd-Biter is originally from Bowling Green, Kentucky. She attended Western Kentucky University for three years. She then married and transferred to Middle Tennessee State University for one year. She finished her undergraduate work and student teaching through Austin Peay State University in 1989. She completed her Masters of Arts Degree in Educational Administration and Supervision from Austin Peay State University in 1993. In the Fall of 1994, Mrs. Byrd-Biter became the first Assistant Principal at Norman Smith Elementary. She was in that administrative position for two years. She then became the Assistant Principal at Minglewood Elementary. She presently holds that position. Mrs. Byrd-Biter has been employed by the Clarksville-Montgomery County School System for the past twelve years.



different categories of respondents, no significant differences were found among the categories of gender, academic degree, or years of experience. Nor were there significant differences found among the rates at which elementary, middle school, and high school teachers assign homework

Significant differences were found across school levels for some items, however none yielded a negative attitude toward the value of homework. While significant differences were found among the attitudes of elementary, middle school, and high school teachers, there was no forum provided in the survey to explain this difference.

### Conclusions

Based on the analysis of the data, the following conclusions are drawn.

1. No significant differences were found among the attitudes of teachers toward the value of homework regardless of grade level, gender, academic degree, or years of experience. Their attitudes were generally positive.
2. A significant difference was found between those teachers who expressed a positive attitude about homework and those who did not. Those teachers who expressed a positive attitude are likely to assign it

at least weekly. Those with negative attitudes are also likely to assign it, but less often.

3. It would be beneficial to have a larger portion of middle and high school teachers to better balance the number of respondents.
4. It is likely that many more high school and middle school teachers support the use of homework and use it on a regular basis, but did not respond to the survey.

### Recommendations

A study of the entire school district would yield a more accurate assessment of the homework attitudes and practices of teachers in this area. The measure provides an interesting perspective of current attitudes and teaching methods with regard to homework. The survey used in this study could be administered anonymously, then analyzed by various populations.

It would also be beneficial to conduct a qualitative study to discern explanations to answers given by the respondents to this survey.

Finally, it is recommended that a study of school districts in surrounding areas be conducted in an effort to compare teacher attitudes in the middle Tennessee area toward the value of homework.

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## APPENDICES



APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

ifford Conner

From: "Caldwell, Ann (Research & Development)" <ann.caldwell@cmcass.net>  
 To: <connercd@charter.net>; <FreedL@apsu.edu>  
 Cc: <principals@cmcass.net>  
 Date: Tuesday, April 17, 2001 9:58 AM  
 Content: brdpol1.pdf.url  
 Subject: Survey Request  
 Dear Mr. Conner:

Your research, survey and/or research project titled **"Teacher Attitudes Toward the Assignment of**  
 has been approved by the research committee. The date of approval was April 16, 2001.

Now that you have approval from the research committee, you may contact the principals for approval. According  
 to Board Policy File IFA, the principal has the final authority and responsibility for approving or disapproving  
 research conducted in his/her building.

Please read Board Policy File IFA (link below) for all information and requirements concerning research in the  
 Clarksville-Montgomery County Schools.

<http://admin.cmcass.net/BoardPolicy/brdpol1.pdf>

If you have any questions, please call my office at (931) 920-7812.

Sincerely,

Dr. Frank Hodgson, Chairman  
 Research Committee

4/18/01

Conner

From: "Freed, Linda" <FreedL@apsu.edu>  
To: <connercd@charter.net>  
Sent: Tuesday, April 17, 2001 12:23 PM  
Subject: IRB Approval for your Survey "Teacher Attitudes..Homework"  
You have received a copy of approval from the C/MCSS Research office for your study, and have issued you a final approval letter. You are approved, effective immediately, to begin data collection on this study. The formal letter will be sent to you in care of Dr. Williams.  
Good luck!

Linda S. Freed  
Austin Peay State University  
Office of Grants and Sponsored Programs  
931.221.7881 (voice)  
931.221.7304 (fax)  
E-mail: FreedL@apsu.edu <mailto:FreedL@apsu.edu>  
Web: www.apsu.edu/grants <http://www.apsu.edu/grants>



## INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

April 19, 2001

Clarksville Montgomery County School System Teachers

Dear Respondents:

The purpose of this study is to gather, organize and analyze the attitudes of elementary, middle school, and high school teachers toward the assignment of homework.

You are being asked to complete a survey that is divided into two parts - an attitude questionnaire consisting of 29 questions utilizing a Likert Scale and a demographic questionnaire consisting of 17 questions. The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Your response to the survey will greatly enhance the possibility for success in this research.

While your cooperation is most urgently requested, your participation is completely voluntary and anonymous. At no time will you be identified nor will anyone other than the investigator have access to your responses. The data acquired by your response will not be used for any other purpose than for this specific investigation. You may refuse to complete the survey without any negative consequences whatsoever and you have the right to omit any items you choose not to answer.

With these assurances we sincerely hope that you will respond to the items in this survey and return it in the envelope provided. Again, please do not write your name on this survey or make any other identifiable marks.

Point of contact information:

Clifford D. Conner  
Phone # - 552-0043  
e-mail - connercd@usit.net

Faculty Supervisor  
Dr. Al Williams, APSU  
Office (931) 221-7532

Any additional questions concerning your rights as participants in this research can be directed to Linda S. Freed, Office of Grants and Sponsored Programs, APSU.  
P. O. Box 4517  
Clarksville, TN 37044  
voice: 931-221-7881; fax: 931-221-7304  
e-mail: FreedL@apsu.edu

Your participation in this study is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Clifford D. Conner

## HOMEWORK ATTITUDE SURVEY



## Teacher Attitudes Toward the Assignment of Homework

Please answer the following questions according to the scale shown below. Circle the number that indicates the degree to which you believe homework affects students, teachers, parents and school climate.

|                   |          |         |       |                |
|-------------------|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| 1                 | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |

1. Completing homework teaches a student to complete work on time.

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

2. Students who complete homework tend to develop a sense of personal responsibility.

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

3. Students who to complete homework tend to be more organized.

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

4. Completing homework does not teach a student how to budget time.

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

5. Completing homework does not develop a student's independent work habits.

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

6. Completing homework increases a student's ability to follow directions.

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

7. Students who complete homework are more likely to understand subject matter.

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

8. Students who complete homework are more likely to do well on tests.

|   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|

9. Students who complete homework are more prepared for class.
- 1                      2                      3                      4                      5
10. Completing homework does not increase a student's ability to retain factual information.
- 1                      2                      3                      4                      5
11. Completing homework increases a student's critical thinking skills
- 1                      2                      3                      4                      5
12. Completing homework does not make students more secure and confident in class.
- 1                      2                      3                      4                      5
13. Students who complete homework have a more positive attitude towards school.
- 1                      2                      3                      4                      5
14. Students who complete homework have a better attitude towards participating in class.
- 1                      2                      3                      4                      5
15. Students who complete homework are more respectful of their teachers.
- 1                      2                      3                      4                      5
16. Students who complete homework create fewer discipline problems.
- 1                      2                      3                      4                      5
17. Students who complete homework have a more positive self-image.
- 1                      2                      3                      4                      5
18. As a teacher, homework makes it easier for me to cover the curriculum.
- 1                      2                      3                      4                      5
19. Homework helps the teacher assess student progress.
- 1                      2                      3                      4                      5

20. Homework provides the teacher with important feedback.  
1 2 3 4 5
21. Reviewing homework gives teachers a starting point for the next day's lesson.  
1 2 3 4 5
22. Homework does not increase school-parent communications.  
1 2 3 4 5
23. Homework does not provide parents with important feedback on a child's progress.  
1 2 3 4 5
24. Homework provides an opportunity for parents and students to interact.  
1 2 3 4 5
25. Homework keeps parents appraised of what is going on in the classroom.  
1 2 3 4 5
26. Students who complete homework tend to have greater parental support.  
1 2 3 4 5
27. Homework offers parents a look at the class curriculum.  
1 2 3 4 5
28. Schools where homework is regularly completed tend to be more productive.  
1 2 3 4 5
29. Regular completion of homework creates schools with a more positive atmosphere.  
1 2 3 4 5



## DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

English Language

and Culture

English Language and Culture

English Language and Culture

# Demographic Information Sheet

52

- 1 How long have you been teaching?  
0-4 yrs      5-10 yrs      11-20 yrs      21 years or more
- 2 What is your educational level?  
BA/BS      Masters      Masters +      Doctorate
- 3 Male      Female      (Circle one)
- 4 Where do you teach?  
Elementary      Middle School      High School
- 5 If Elementary circle one.  
K      1      2      3      4      5
- 6 If Middle School or High School circle those that apply.  
Math      Science      Social Studies      Foreign Language  
Language Arts      Fine Arts      Phy Ed      Technology
- 7 What is the percentage of enrollment in the free/reduced price lunch program at your school?  
10 percent or less      11 - 30 percent      31 - 50 percent      more than 50 percent
- 8 What is your students' ability level?  
above average      average      below average      mixed
- 9 I assign homework:  
Daily      Weekly      Monthly      Rarely
- 10 Do you keep records of who turned in homework?  
Yes      No

11. Do you return homework with grades/corrections?

Yes

No

12. Do you discuss homework assignments in class?

Yes

No

13. Do you communicate clear consequences about successfully completing homework?

Yes

No

14. Do you communicate clear consequences about failure to complete homework?

Yes

No

15. Do you call parents if homework is incomplete?

Yes

No

16. Does failure to complete homework negatively affect your students' grades?

Yes

No

17. Have you assigned homework as a consequence for misbehaving?

Yes

No



## VITA

Clifford Dean Conner was born in Victoria, Texas on August 19, 1957. He graduated from Virginia Tech with a Bachelors Degree in History and a commission as a second lieutenant in the United States Army.

While in the Army, he obtained a teaching certificate and a Masters Degree in Teacher Education from the University of St. Thomas in 1991. He retired from the Army in June 1995.

He obtained an elementary certification at Austin Peay State University in 1997 and began teaching for the Clarksville Montgomery County School System in August 1997.

He is presently teaching fourth grade at Moore Elementary.